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1500 1550 1600 1650 1700 1750 1800 1850 1900 1950 2000

Public Speaking

Famous African American Orators

African Americans overcame prejudice and had their concerns heard because many of their leaders were impassioned and dynamic public speakers. Earlier orators, such as Frederick Douglass and Sojourner Truth, became leaders in the antislavery movement and were vital participants in the campaign to abolish slavery.

Ida B. Wells, W. E. B. Du Bois, and Mary C. Terrell spoke against the harsh injustices and mistreatment of African Americans in the years after the Civil War. Shirley Chisholm, Barbara Jordan, and many others spoke eloquently during the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s. One of the most eloquent speakers was Reverend Martin Luther King Jr.

Choosing a Style

On these pages, you will acquire skills in delivering a speech, originally given by someone else, and also in creating your own speeches.

- You may choose to deliver a speech first given by a famous leader, such as the speeches by Frederick Douglass or Sojourner Truth on the following pages.
- You may write your own persuasive speech using the outline on pages 58 and 59.
- You may create an impromptu speech that is delivered from an outline or notes.

Famous Speeches by African Americans

Assignment

1. Prepare for "The Morning of July Fourth for the Negro" speech by Frederick Douglass, the "Ain't I a Woman" speech by Sojourner Truth, or one of the speeches given by African Americans or famous American listed below. You can find more speeches on the Internet, in books of famous speeches, in encyclopedias, in books about the speaker, and other sources.
2. Deliver the prepared speech to your class.

African American Speeches

- Keynote speech to the Democratic National Convention in 1970 by Barbara Jordan
- Speech against the Fugitive Slave Law in 1850 by the Reverend Jeremiah W. Logans, an African American minister who refused to go to Canada or to pay for freedom money for his brother
- An address given at the annual meeting of the Niagara Movement in 1906 by W. E. B. Du Bois
- Shirley Chisholm's first speech to Congress in 1968 as the first African American woman elected to the House of Representatives
- Senator Barack Obama's inaugural address on January 20, 2009
- President Barack Obama's inaugural address on January 20, 2009
- Speeches by Martin Luther King Jr., Barbara Jordan, Ida B. Wells, James Forman, Booker T. Washington, James Baldwin, Coretta Scott King, and others.

Other American Speeches

- "The Gettysburg Address" by Abraham Lincoln
- President Kennedy's Inaugural Address
- Franklin D. Roosevelt's First Inaugural Address
- Abraham Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address
- Ronald Reagan's "Challenger" Dinner Address
- Patrick Henry's "Give Me Liberty or Give Me Death" Oration

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Write Your Own Persuasive Speech

Choosing a Topic

Throughout American history, American citizens have heatedly discussed and debated the great issues of their times. Choose a topic for your speech about which you feel passionately. It may deal with the great issues of the day, such as the treatment of minorities, the rights of women, the behavior of the government, war and peace, the care of the environment, global warming, the treatment of animals, or other issues. It could also deal with more personal issues, such as children's rights, school, or local problems.

List your possible topics below.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

Outline Your Speech

Your speech should have at least four to six paragraphs organized like this:

Introduction

Create an opening paragraph that clearly expresses your opinion and indicates why the subject is important to you. Clearly state the purpose of your speech. Include an attention-grabbing sentence to capture the interest of your audience.

Arguments

The second and third paragraphs should describe all of the evidence you can think of to support your position. You should include personal experiences, the opinions of experts, and careful reasoning.

Counter-arguments

A fourth paragraph should describe the arguments and evidence against your position and your responses and reactions to these arguments.

Conclusion

The concluding paragraph should briefly restate your position and clearly draw together all the elements of your thinking.

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Write Your Own Persuasive Speech (cont.)

Refining Your Speech

1. Keep your sentences rather short, only as long, and simple to understand.
2. Use one or two examples from famous people or others if they fit the meaning of your speech.
3. Cut out any repetition or size cushions that don't reinforce the meaning of your speech.
4. Include a humorous line or two if they fit the subject of your speech.
5. Check your facts carefully and include sources for those facts.
6. Use statistics and facts to support each of your main points.
7. Provide evidence and facts to support each of your main points.
8. Use an attention-grabbing opening sentence and a sharply focused closing sentence.

Delivering Your Speech

- You may choose to memorize your speech and simply use your paper as a reference if you forget something.
- Another method is to use keywords and speak extemporaneously, or in an impromptu manner, as if you were speaking off the cuff.
- Rehearse one final time. Give your speech one final full voice in a mirror, a friend, a sibling, or your parents. Practice several times.

Persuasive Speech Outline

Introduction

Arguments

Counter-arguments

Conclusion

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Becoming a Public Speaker

Preparing to Read a Speech by a Famous Person

1. Read through the speech several times.
2. Get a feel for the force and flow of the language.
3. Express the meaning and intent of the speech in one or two sentences.
4. Underline the words or sentences that should be delivered with force or special emphasis.
5. Memorize the speech or know it well enough so that you rarely have to glance at the script.

Tips for Success

- Dress formally. Wear neat clothes or dress clothes.
- Maintain good posture. Stand straight. Balance yourself using both of your feet. Don't lock your knees. Relax your body. Tell yourself to be comfortable.
- Center your mind. Don't get distracted.
- Establish eye contact. Look at various persons in the audience who are paying good attention to what you are saying—teachers, parents, serious students, and people you don't know.
- Speak loudly. Be conversational at times. Speak more forcefully on important points. Never shout, but always be loud enough to hear. Vary your tone of voice to match the mood and feeling of what you are saying. Don't drop your voice at the end of sentences or paragraphs.
- Breathe from your diaphragm. (The diaphragm is the large muscle at the bottom of your rib cage that allows you to control your breathing.) Take deep breaths between paragraphs and important points, but don't be obvious about it.
- Speak slowly and clearly. Speak a little slower than normal speech patterns. Don't race to finish your speech.



Focus on an Orator: Frederick Douglass

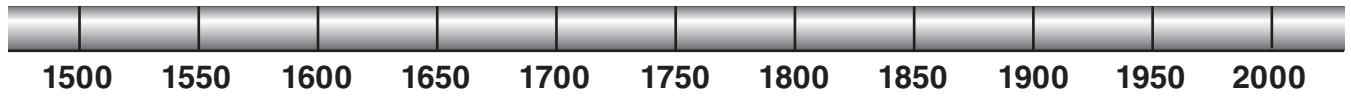
Frederick Douglass was born a slave in Tuckahoe, Maryland, on February 1818. The son of a slave woman and her white owner, Douglass was raised by his grandmother until he was eight years old. He only saw his mother a few times in his lifetime because she lived on a different plantation. At the age of eight, he was given to the Auld family, who lived in Baltimore. The family gave him better clothes and food, and the mother taught him to read until her husband stopped the practice. It was illegal to teach slaves to read in many slave states. Douglass continued to teach himself to read from newspapers.

At the age of fifteen, he was sent away to a plantation where he worked in the fields for a brutal “slavebreaker” named Edward Covey. Here, he witnessed and experienced the brutal reality of slavery. He was frequently whipped and left hungry and cold. He fought with the overseer and eventually ran away or “stole himself,” as he later described his escape. A friend, Anna Murray, made him a sailor suit and helped him escape. He reached New York City in 1838 where he married Anna. Friends raised money to help him buy his freedom from his owner. It cost \$711.66, a sum worth at least ten times as much in today’s currency.

Douglass started giving dynamic speeches at abolitionist meetings. He also attended and spoke at anti-slavery conventions. One of Douglass’s most famous speeches was given at an event celebrating the signing of the Declaration of Independence. During this address, he said, “This Fourth of July is *yours*, not *mine*. You may rejoice, I must mourn.”

In Douglass’s lifetime, he wrote three autobiographies, but his most famous one was written in 1841, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave*. He started three different newspapers advocating the emancipation of slaves. Douglass was a friend and trusted advisor of President Lincoln. He strongly advocated allowing African Americans to fight in the Civil War. In 1877, he became a U.S. Marshal for the District of Columbia. Douglass died in 1895 at his home in Washington, D.C.





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2. Deliver the prepared speech to your class.

African American Speeches

- Keynote Speech to the Democratic National Convention in 1976 by Barbara Jordan
- Speech against the Fugitive Slave Law in 1850 by the Reverend Jermain Wesley Loguen, an escaped fugitive slave who refused to go to Canada or to pay his former master for his freedom
- An address given at the annual meeting of the Niagara Movement in 1906 by W. E. B. Du Bois
- Shirley Chisholm’s first speech to Congress in 1969 as the first African American woman elected to the House of Representatives
- Senator Barack Obama’s speech to the 2004 Democratic National Convention
- President Barack Obama’s Inaugural Address on January 20, 2009
- Speeches by Martin Luther King Jr., Barbara Jordan, Ida B. Wells, James Forman, Booker T. Washington, James Baldwin, Jesse Jackson, and others

Other American Speeches

- “The Gettysburg Address” by Abraham Lincoln
- President Kennedy’s Inaugural Address
- Franklin D. Roosevelt’s First Inaugural Address
- Abraham Lincoln’s Second Inaugural Address
- Ronald Reagan’s *Challenger* Disaster Address
- Patrick Henry’s “Give Me Liberty or Give Me Death” Oration