Franklin D. Roosevelt's First Inaugural Address, 1933

Franklin D. Roosevelt giving his first inaugural address at the Capitol, Washington, DC, March 4, 1933, photographed by Harris & Ewing (Library of Congress)

THE GILDER LEHRMAN INSTITUTE of AMERICAN HISTORY

TL TH TEACHING LITERACY THROUGH HISTORY

Franklin D. Roosevelt's First Inaugural Address, 1933

BY TIM BAILEY (created in 2012, updated in 2025)

Tim Bailey taught middle school and elementary school in Utah for over two decades. Named the 2009 National History Teacher of the Year, he is the Gilder Lehrman Institute's director of curriculum development and instructional design.

GRADE LEVELS: 7–12

RECOMMENDED TIME FOR COMPLETION: Five 45-minute class periods (although some lessons may be combined and/or assigned as homework)

UNIT OVERVIEW

This unit is one of the Gilder Lehrman Institute's Teaching Literacy through History™ (TLTH) resources, designed to align with the Common Core State Standards. Students will learn and practice skills that will help them analyze, assess, and develop knowledgeable and well-reasoned points of view on primary source documents. These skills will enable students to understand, summarize, and evaluate documents and other resources of historical significance.

Over the course of five lessons, students will read, analyze, and gain a clear understanding of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's First Inaugural Address delivered on March 4, 1933. The first four lessons require students to read excerpts from the speech "like a detective." Employing summary organizers, practice, review, and discussion, they will master the technique of identifying key words, creating summaries of excerpts and, as an assessment in the final lesson, writing an argumentative essay.

Students will be able to

- Close-read informational text proficiently
- Identify and explain the meaning of keywords and important phrases in a historical text
- Explain and summarize the meaning of the text, on both literal and inferential levels
- Develop a viewpoint and write a persuasive (argumentative) essay supported by evidence from the text

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- How did Franklin Roosevelt describe the scale and nature of the Great Depression?
- How did Franklin Roosevelt describe the cause of the Great Depression?
- What policies did Franklin Roosevelt plan to enact?

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.6: Identify aspects of a text that reveal an author's point of view or purpose (e.g., loaded language, inclusion or avoidance of particular facts).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.1: Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.2: Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary describing political, social, or economic aspects of history/social studies.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1: Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9-10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

CCCS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.1: Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.

MATERIALS

- Excerpts from President Franklin D. Roosevelt's First Inaugural Address, March 4, 1933, Yale Law School, Lillian Goldman Law Library, Avalon Project, avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/froos1.asp
- Summary Organizers 1–4
- Creating an Essay: Analyzing Franklin D. Roosevelt's First Inaugural Address

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

FDR's First Inaugural Address

by Davis W. Houck
(excerpted from a longer essay published in *History Now* 36 [Summer 2013],
gilderlehrman.org/history-resources/essays/fdr%E2%80%99s-first-inaugural-address)

The person who drafted the first complete version of FDR's inaugural address was a Columbia University political science professor by the name of Raymond Moley. An Ohio native, Moley had come to the attention of Roosevelt when he'd become governor of New York in 1929. Not long after the two men reconnected in 1932, Moley was essentially running Roosevelt's presidential campaign—including the very important task of drafting major policy speeches. The political science professor could hardly believe the transformation: from lecturing undergraduates to advising and speaking for the man who would likely become America's next president![1]

By September of 1932, and after months of campaigning, it had become clear to Roosevelt that he would be the nation's thirty-second president. And, because of the country's dire economic situation [three years into the Great Depression], he would need to move quickly to catalyze the momentum of a newly elected Congress and a new administration. On the evening of September 22, at the Palace Hotel in San Francisco, California, Roosevelt asked Moley to draft the inaugural address, to which the professor replied that he would be honored.[2]

But more than four months later, and after Roosevelt's crushing defeat of the Republican incumbent, Herbert Hoover, Moley's important task had gone unfulfilled. We know this today because Moley kept careful notes and a detailed diary of his activities. He also kept drafts of his attempts at a compelling speech. And by even the most charitable estimates, his initial efforts to compose the inaugural address were awful. His first draft, after several initial outlines, started thus: "America is a sick nation in the midst of a sick world. We are sick because of our failure to recognize economic changes in time, and to make provision against their consequences." The same February 13 draft only got worse as the professor continued: "He [the good neighbor] is not moved or deceived by the unsubstantial and sometimes trivial results of broad pretensions of interrelationships."[3] These were the vague sentiments of an uninspired and vastly overworked man. Was he drafting an economic textbook or attempting to craft a vitally important speech?

Everything seemed to change for Raymond Moley as a result of two events on February 15 and February 17. On the 15th, Moley was in Florida to consult with the vacationing President-Elect when his boat docked in Miami. That evening, before a large gathering at Bayfront Park, Roosevelt delivered some brief and impromptu remarks from the back of an open-canopied car. As Roosevelt concluded, gunfire rang out. Because of a wobbly park bench and the quick thinking of one spectator, the shots, fired by a 33-year-old unemployed Italian bricklayer, Giuseppe Zangara, and clearly meant for the soon-to-be president, missed their target.[4] Moley witnessed the entire event. Later that evening, expecting to find a very frightened Roosevelt, Moley instead noted how relaxed, calm, and perhaps even placid Roosevelt was in the face of mortal danger. Two days later, while flying to Cincinnati from Florida in a two-seated Army airplane, Moley's pilot lost his way and ran out of gas; they crash-landed in a farmer's field near Maynardville, Tennessee. Remarkably, both the pilot and Moley were unharmed.

Just days after these two harrowing encounters with death, Raymond Moley completed a draft—finally—of what would become FDR's first inaugural address. That draft was far different from his earlier efforts; it was eloquent, specific, memorable, and yes, moving. Moley knew he was lucky to even be alive, let alone writing a presidential inaugural address.

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1. Moley's papers are housed at the Hoover Library on the campus of Stanford University. An excellent source for understanding the complicated relationship between Moley and Roosevelt is Raymond Moley, *After Seven Years* (Harper & Brothers, 1939).

2. For a comprehensive account of the drafting of the FDR's First Inaugural Address, see Davis W. Houck, *FDR and Fear Itself: The First Inaugural Address* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2002).

3. Franklin D. Roosevelt's Inaugural Address, 1932, Raymond Moley Papers, Box 245, Folders 13–16, Hoover Institution, Stanford University, Stanford, California.

4. For more on the would-be assassin, see Blaise Picchi, *The Five Weeks of Giuseppe Zangara: The Man Who Would Assassinate FDR* (Chicago: Academy, 1998).

On the evening of February 27 in Hyde Park, New York, Moley showed Roosevelt the draft he had carefully composed. The President-Elect read through it and was very pleased; Moley had gotten the message and the tone just right. The two men stayed up late editing the draft—and putting it in Roosevelt's own handwriting. Moley had understood all along that his role in the speech would have to be minimized—or removed altogether.[5] Thanks to the diary he dictated to his secretary Celeste Jedell, and later amended, we know what transpired in the early hours of February 28.[6]

After Roosevelt finished writing, Moley gathered up the scattered pages of his typed draft, walked to the fireplace, and threw them into the embers. He said to Roosevelt, "This is your speech."[7] Moley's role in the drafting of FDR's first inaugural address would remain a well-kept secret for nearly four decades. Perhaps more importantly, even today guardians of the Roosevelt legacy are eager to showcase the handwritten draft of one of the most important state papers in our nation's history. Raymond Moley would hardly be surprised.

But what of that draft and its rhetorical contents? Beyond authorship, what does the Moley/Roosevelt draft tell us about how they perceived the demands of the moment? While space doesn't permit extensive rhetorical criticism, the first paragraph of the draft is illustrative. The final draft of the speech reads:

> I am certain that on this day my fellow Americans expect that upon my induction into the presidency I will address them with a candor and a decision which the present situation of our people impels. This is preeminently the time to speak the truth, the whole truth, frankly and boldly.

Let's note several important things about this most consequential opening: first, the nation was starved for rhetorical leadership that was "certain." We should remember that Roosevelt had been very silent for the better part of four months. Moreover, the Congress displayed almost no leadership from December 1932 to March 1933 when the country's economic system was imploding. Unemployment neared 25%, the nation's banks were closing minute by minute, and nobody in a position of authority seemed to have any idea how to stem the tide. The nation yearned for a leadership that expressed itself with "I am certain."

Second, note that Roosevelt and Moley open the address with expectations about what to say; in other words, the speech opens with a comment about presidential speech—and its expectations. That "candor" and "decision" was a rather direct critique of Herbert Hoover's rhetorical leadership. Perhaps the most important context in making sense of this speech is the Hoover presidency—and its almost daily insistence that the economic crisis was caused and then exacerbated by a lack of collective confidence. If only the nation would believe that things were improving, that confidence would engender money staying in banks and people taking out loans, which in turn would begin to stoke the nation's economic engines. Since Black Monday, October 29, 1929, Hoover had relied almost exclusively on this rhetorical appeal of collective confidence.[8] Notice that the Roosevelt/Moley draft begins with a rather heavy-handed pronouncement that the Roosevelt administration would not be making daily appeals to confidence; the nation needed "candor" and "truth," not false promises.

Third, the discerning reader will see that Roosevelt's candor is punctuated with a familiar oath: "This is preeminently the time to speak the truth, the whole truth, frankly and boldly." Just after the new president had taken a solemn oath administered by the chief justice of the Supreme Court to uphold the nation's Constitution, Roosevelt made another oath often heard in a court of law: "to speak the truth, the whole truth, so help you God." Unlike Hoover, Roosevelt pledged to tell the nation the truth, even if it was unpleasant or disagreeable. Their witness to that oath secured an important new bond between leader and led.

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5. The world first got to see Moley's document in 1966 with publication of his memoir; see Raymond Moley and Elliot A. Rosen, *The First New Deal* (New York: Harcourt, 1966).

6. Note that Jedell's account of what transpired was amended by Moley at the bottom of the page. He noted, "Not how it happened. I threw the whole thing in the fire at end of copying. RM."

7. Franklin D. Roosevelt's Inaugural Address, 1932, Raymond Moley Papers, Box 245, Folders 16, Hoover Institution, Stanford University, Stanford, California.

8. For Hoover's handling of the economic crisis, see Davis W. Houck, "Rhetoric as Currency: Herbert Hoover and the 1929 Stock Market Crash," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 3 (2000): 155–181. See also, Davis W. Houck, *Rhetoric as Currency: Hoover, Roosevelt, and the Great Depression* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2001).

From the very first ten-point outline of the speech, Roosevelt and Moley agreed that action must be stressed; the nation would be starved for some sort of collective attempts to deal with the collapsing economy. In the middle of the address, note the important repetition:

> Yes, the task [of economic improvement] can be helped by definite efforts to raise the values of agricultural products . . . it can be helped by preventing the tragedy of the growing loss through foreclosure of our small homes and our farms. It can be helped by insistence that the Federal, the State, and the local governments act forthwith on the demand that their cost be drastically reduced. It can be helped by the unifying of relief activities . . . It can be helped by national planning for and supervision of all forms of transportation and communication . . . There are many ways in which it can be helped but it can never be helped by merely talking about it. We must act, we must act quickly.

The repetition of such actions were unmistakably not Hoover's talking cure; even as these actions were delivered in a speech, the new president promised far more than mere words. The famous First 100 Days of the Roosevelt administration would bear strong testimony to this promise.[9]

Davis W. Houck, the Fannie Lou Hamer Professor of Rhetorical Studies at Florida State University, is the author of Rhetoric as Currency: Hoover, Roosevelt, and the Great Depression *(2001) and* FDR and Fear Itself: The First Inaugural Address *(2002).*

9. For an excellent history of the first 100 days of the Roosevelt administration, see Jonathan Alter, *The Defining Moment: FDR's Hundred Days and the Triumph of Hope* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2007).

LESSON 1

BY TIM BAILEY (created in 2012, updated in 2025)

OVERVIEW

Students will "read like a detective" to gain a clear understanding of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's First Inaugural Address, given on March 4, 1933. Through reading and analyzing the original text, the students will know what is explicitly stated, draw logical inferences, and demonstrate these skills by writing a succinct summary using the author's words and then restating that summary in their own words. The first lesson, focusing on the first selection from the speech, will be a whole-class exercise.

Tim Bailey taught middle school and elementary school in Utah for over two decades. Named the 2009 National History Teacher of the Year, he is the Gilder Lehrman Institute's director of curriculum development and instructional design.

GRADE LEVELS: 7–12

TIME FOR COMPLETION: One 45-minute class period

UNIT OVERVIEW: This unit is one of the Gilder Lehrman Institute's Teaching Literacy through History™ (TLTH) resources, designed to align with the Common Core State Standards. Students will learn and practice skills that will help them analyze, assess, and develop knowledgeable and well-reasoned points of view on primary source materials. Over the course of five lessons the students will analyze President Franklin D. Roosevelt's First Inaugural Address given in 1933.

MATERIALS

- Teacher's Resource: Historical Background:
  Excerpt from Davis W. Houck, "FDR's First Inaugural Address," *History Now* 36 (Summer 2013), The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, gilderlehrman.org/history-resources/essays/fdr%E2%80%99s-first-inaugural-address

- Optional: Complete First Inaugural Address of Franklin D. Roosevelt, March 4, 1933, Yale Law School, Lillian Goldman Law Library, Avalon Project, avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/froos1.asp

  Audio/Video resources:

  - "Franklin D. Roosevelt's First Inaugural Address (1933)," American History TV C-SPAN, youtube, youtube.com/watch?v=khFwYWWF6Tc

  - "Washington, DC - First inaugural address," Recorded Speeches and Utterances of Franklin D. Roosevelt, 1920–1945, Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum, fdrlibrary.org/utterancesfdr

- Excerpts from the First Inaugural Address of Franklin D. Roosevelt, March 4, 1933, Yale Law School Lillian Goldman Law Library, Avalon Project, avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/froos1.asp

- Summary Organizer 1: President Franklin D. Roosevelt's First Inaugural Address

PROCEDURE

1. The Historical Background essay by Professor Davis W. Houck has been included in this unit to provide you with content information and the context for FDR's speech. Resist the temptation to provide this extensive historical information regarding the speech to the students before completing the unit as the goal is for the students to develop ideas and draw conclusions based solely on the text of the speech.

2. Optional: You may choose to distribute copies of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's complete First Inaugural Address of March 4, 1933, and then ask the students to read it silently to themselves. You may also have the students listen to a recording of President Roosevelt's speech. Explain that the students will learn how to do in-depth analysis for themselves by reading and understanding Roosevelt's First Inaugural Address and then being

able to tell, in their own words, what Roosevelt meant. In this first lesson, the whole class will work together to summarize the first selection from the text.

3. Distribute the excerpts from Roosevelt's First Inaugural Address. Explain the purpose of the ellipsis points to indicate where text has been removed if they do not already know this convention.

4. "Share read" the excerpts with the students. This is done by having the students follow along silently while you begin to read aloud, modeling prosody, inflection, and punctuation. Then ask the class to join in with the reading after a few sentences while you continue to read aloud, still serving as the model. This technique will support struggling readers as well as English language learners (ELL).

5. Describe the process for the class: The first objective is to select "keywords" from the text and use those words to create a summary sentence that gets at the gist of what Roosevelt was saying.

    a. Guidelines for Selecting the Keywords: Keywords are important contributors to understanding the text. They are usually nouns or verbs. Advise students not to pick "connector" words (*are*, *is*, *the*, *and*, *so*, etc.). The number of keywords depends on the length of the text. This excerpt is 165 words; therefore, students should select 6 or 7 keywords. Since the students must know the meaning of the words they choose, you will have opportunities to teach students how to use context clues, word analysis, and dictionary skills to discover word meanings. They can write any words they cannot figure out on the back of their organizer for discussion at the end of the class.

    b. The students will now select 6 or 7 words that they believe are keywords and circle or highlight them or write them in the Keywords section of the organizer.

    c. Survey the class to find out what the most popular choices were. You can write them down and have the class discuss the options and vote on the final choice, based on guidance from you. For example, the class could select the following words: *presidency*, *truth*, *endure*, *prosper*, *fear itself* (you can allow a very short phrase if it makes sense as a unit), *leadership*, and *victory.* Now, no matter which words the students had previously selected, have them write the words agreed upon by the class or chosen by you into the Keywords section of the organizer.

6. Explain to the class that they will use these keywords to write a sentence (or two) that summarizes the meaning of the first selection from the text. This keyword summary sentence should be developed through a whole-class negotiation process. The students might decide they don't need some of the words to make the sentence even more streamlined. This is part of the negotiation process. Their summary using Roosevelt's words might be "My presidency will tell the truth about our situation so that we will not only endure but prosper. We will overcome fear itself, and through leadership we will achieve victory." The students will copy the final negotiated sentence into the Keyword Summary section of the organizer.

7. Guide the students in restating the summary sentence in their own words, not having to use the keywords from the text. Again, this is a class negotiation process. They might say, for example, "With honest leadership our country will prosper." This sentence should be copied into the In Your Own Words section of the organizer.

8. Wrap-up: Discuss vocabulary that the students found confusing or difficult. The students can record these words and their meaning on the back of the organizer or on a separate vocabulary form.

LESSON 2

BY TIM BAILEY (created in 2014, updated in 2025)

OVERVIEW

In this lesson the students will "read like a detective" and explore the second selection from President Franklin Roosevelt's First Inaugural Address. Through reading and analyzing the original text, the students will know what is explicitly stated, draw logical inferences, and demonstrate these skills by writing a succinct summary and then restating that summary in their own words. In this lesson the students will work with partners and in small groups.

Tim Bailey taught middle school and elementary school in Utah for over two decades. Named the 2009 National History Teacher of the Year, he is the Gilder Lehrman Institute's director of curriculum development and instructional design.

GRADE LEVELS: 7–12

TIME FOR COMPLETION: One 45-minute class period

UNIT OVERVIEW: This unit is one of the Gilder Lehrman Institute's Teaching Literacy through History™ (TLTH) resources, designed to align with the Common Core State Standards. Students will learn and practice skills that will help them analyze, assess, and develop knowledgeable and well-reasoned points of view on primary source materials. Over the course of five lessons the students will analyze President Franklin D. Roosevelt's First Inaugural Address given in 1933.

MATERIALS

- Summary Organizer 2: President Franklin D. Roosevelt's First Inaugural Address, 1933

PROCEDURE

1. Discuss what the class read and analyzed in the previous lesson and what they decided was the meaning of the first selection from Roosevelt's First Inaugural Address.
2. Distribute Summary Organizer 2 with the second selection and share read the text as described in Lesson 1.
3. Review the procedure from Lesson 1, reminding students that they will select keywords from the text, use the keywords to summarize the text, and then restate the summary in their own words. Because this excerpt is longer (245 words), the students should select up to 10 keywords.
4. Pair students up to complete the first task. Each pair should negotiate the selection of up to 10 keywords and write their list in the Keywords section of the organizer.
5. Now put two pairs together into a group of four. Be strategic in how you make your groups to ensure the most participation by all group members. These groups should then repeat the same negotiation process to finalize a list of up to 10 keywords and write that new list into the Keywords section.
6. Each group will use the selected words to build a sentence that summarizes Roosevelt's message in this part of the text. Each member of the group should write the final sentence into their organizer.
7. Have the groups share out their summary sentences. This should act as a catalyst for a discussion that points out the qualities of the interpretations of the text. How successful were the groups at understanding the address, and were they careful to use the keywords in summarizing the text?
8. Each group will now restate the summary sentence in their own words. Again, this is a group negotiation process. After they have decided on a sentence, they should write the final version into their organizers.
9. Have the groups share out and discuss the clarity and quality of the restatements.
10. Wrap-up: Discuss vocabulary that the students found confusing or difficult. The students can record these words and their meaning on the back of the organizer or on a separate vocabulary form.

LESSON 3

BY TIM BAILEY (created in 2014, updated in 2025)

OVERVIEW

In this lesson the students will "read like a detective" and explore the third selection from President Roosevelt's First Inaugural Address. Through reading and analyzing the original text, the students will know what is explicitly stated, draw logical inferences, and demonstrate these skills by writing a succinct summary and then restating that summary in their own words. In this lesson the students will be working individually unless you believe they need another day of support from a partner or small group.

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GRADE LEVELS: 7–12

TIME FOR COMPLETION: One 45-minute class period

UNIT OVERVIEW: This unit is one of the Gilder Lehrman Institute's Teaching Literacy through History™ (TLTH) resources, designed to align with the Common Core State Standards. Students will learn and practice skills that will help them analyze, assess, and develop knowledgeable and well-reasoned points of view on primary source materials. Over the course of five lessons the students will analyze President Franklin D. Roosevelt's First Inaugural Address given in 1933.

MATERIALS

- Summary Organizer 3: President Franklin D. Roosevelt's First Inaugural Address, 1933

PROCEDURE

1. Briefly discuss the summaries the students came up with for the first and second selections from the text and the meaning of Roosevelt's message to the American people to this point.
2. Distribute Summary Organizer 3, which contains the third selection from Roosevelt's address. They can read the text to themselves or you can share read the text as described in Lesson 1.
3. Review the process of selecting keywords, writing a summary using those keywords, and then restating the summary in their own words.
4. Because this excerpt is 221 words, the students can pick 8 or 9 keywords.
5. Have the students select their keywords and write their keyword summaries and restatements.
6. Have the students share out their restated summaries and discuss the clarity and quality of the different interpretations of Roosevelt's message.
7. Wrap-up: Discuss vocabulary that the students found confusing or difficult; they can record these words and their meaning on the back of the organizer or a separate vocabulary form.

LESSON 4

BY TIM BAILEY (created in 2014, updated in 2025)

OVERVIEW

In this lesson the students will "read like a detective" and explore the fourth selection from President Roosevelt's First Inaugural Address. Through reading and analyzing the original text, the students will know what is explicitly stated, draw logical inferences, and demonstrate these skills by writing a succinct summary and then restating that summary in their own words. In this lesson the students will be working individually.

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GRADE LEVELS: 7–12

TIME FOR COMPLETION: One 45-minute class period

UNIT OVERVIEW: This unit is one of the Gilder Lehrman Institute's Teaching Literacy through History™ (TLTH) resources, designed to align with the Common Core State Standards. Students will learn and practice skills that will help them analyze, assess, and develop knowledgeable and well-reasoned points of view on primary source materials. Over the course of five lessons the students will analyze President Franklin D. Roosevelt's First Inaugural Address given in 1933.

MATERIALS

- Summary Organizer 4: President Franklin D. Roosevelt's First Inaugural Address, 1933

PROCEDURE

1. Briefly discuss the summaries the students came up with for the first, second, and third selections from the address.
2. Distribute Summary Organizer 4, which contains the fourth selection from Roosevelt's First Inaugural Address. They can read the text to themselves or you can share read the text as described in Lesson 1.
3. Review the process of selecting keywords, writing a summary using those keywords, and then restating the summary in their own words. Tell the students that they will be working on their own again to summarize this part of the text.
4. Because this paragraph is 263 words in length, the students can pick up to 10 keywords.
5. Have the students share out their restated summaries and discuss the clarity and quality of the different interpretations of Roosevelt's message.
6. Wrap-up: Discuss vocabulary that the students found confusing or difficult. The students can record these words and their meaning on the back of the organizer or a separate vocabulary form.

LESSON 5

BY TIM BAILEY (created in 2014, updated in 2024)

OVERVIEW

This lesson has two objectives. First, the students will synthesize the work of the last four lessons and demonstrate that they understand the message of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's First Inaugural Address. Second, they will answer a question in a short persuasive or argumentative essay that requires them to make inferences from the text and support their conclusions with explicit information from the text.

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GRADE LEVELS: 7–12

TIME FOR COMPLETION: One 45-minute class period

UNIT OVERVIEW: This unit is one of the Gilder Lehrman Institute's Teaching Literacy through History™ (TLTH) resources, designed to align with the Common Core State Standards. Students will learn and practice skills that will help them analyze, assess, and develop knowledgeable and well-reasoned points of view on primary source materials. Over the course of five lessons the students will analyze President Franklin D. Roosevelt's First Inaugural Address given in 1933.

MATERIALS

- Excerpts from President Franklin D. Roosevelt's First Inaugural Address, 1933
- Completed Summary Organizers 1–4
- Creating an Essay: Analyzing President Franklin Roosevelt's First Inaugural Address, 1933

PROCEDURE

1. Distribute the handout with the excerpts from Roosevelt's First Inaugural Address and ask the students to read it silently to themselves.
2. Lead a discussion in which the students summarize selection one in their own words. Write this sentence on the overhead or similar device. The same procedure is used for selections two, three, and four, so the students have a summary of Roosevelt's First Inaugural Address in a few sentences.
3. Each student will write a short persuasive or argumentative essay addressing one of the prompts below. If they are not familiar with writing an argumentative essay, you can lead a short lesson on the process, and then assign the essay for homework or for the next lesson. Remind the students that any arguments they make must be backed up with words taken directly from President Roosevelt's First Inaugural Address. The first prompt is designed to be the easiest.

Prompts

a. Who did President Roosevelt blame for the situation in the United States in 1933, what role could the government play in resolving the crisis, and what role would ordinary American citizens have in the nation's recovery?

b. According to President Roosevelt, what were the nation's real problems, and what measures would be taken to solve those problems?

c. Roosevelt stated that he would use "broad Executive power" to improve the economy. How did he explain why this was necessary? What forms of executive power did he plan to use?

You may choose to distribute the Creating an Essay activity sheet to help the students organize their arguments and evidence.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt's First Inaugural Address, 1933 (Complete)

I am certain that my fellow Americans expect that on my induction into the Presidency I will address them with a candor and a decision which the present situation of our Nation impels. This is preeminently the time to speak the truth, the whole truth, frankly and boldly. Nor need we shrink from honestly facing conditions in our country today. This great Nation will endure as it has endured, will revive and will prosper. So, first of all, let me assert my firm belief that the only thing we have to fear is fear itself--nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyzes needed efforts to convert retreat into advance. In every dark hour of our national life a leadership of frankness and vigor has met with that understanding and support of the people themselves which is essential to victory. I am convinced that you will again give that support to leadership in these critical days.

In such a spirit on my part and on yours we face our common difficulties. They concern, thank God, only material things. Values have shrunken to fantastic levels; taxes have risen; our ability to pay has fallen; government of all kinds is faced by serious curtailment of income; the means of exchange are frozen in the currents of trade; the withered leaves of industrial enterprise lie on every side; farmers find no markets for their produce; the savings of many years in thousands of families are gone.

More important, a host of unemployed citizens face the grim problem of existence, and an equally great number toil with little return. Only a foolish optimist can deny the dark realities of the moment.

Yet our distress comes from no failure of substance. We are stricken by no plague of locusts. Compared with the perils which our forefathers conquered because they believed and were not afraid, we have still much to be thankful for. Nature still offers her bounty and human efforts have multiplied it. Plenty is at our doorstep, but a generous use of it languishes in the very sight of the supply. Primarily this is because the rulers of the exchange of mankind's goods have failed, through their own stubbornness and their own incompetence, have admitted their failure, and abdicated. Practices of the unscrupulous money changers stand indicted in the court of public opinion, rejected by the hearts and minds of men.

True they have tried, but their efforts have been cast in the pattern of an outworn tradition. Faced by failure of credit they have proposed only the lending of more money. Stripped of the lure of profit by which to induce our people to follow their false leadership, they have resorted to exhortations, pleading tearfully for restored confidence. They know only the rules of a generation of self-seekers. They have no vision, and when there is no vision the people perish.

The money changers have fled from their high seats in the temple of our civilization. We may now restore that temple to the ancient truths. The measure of the restoration lies in the extent to which we apply social values more noble than mere monetary profit.

Happiness lies not in the mere possession of money; it lies in the joy of achievement, in the thrill of creative effort. The joy and moral stimulation of work no longer must be forgotten in the mad chase of evanescent profits. These dark days will be worth all they cost us if they teach us that our true destiny is not to be ministered unto but to minister to ourselves and to our fellow men.

Recognition of the falsity of material wealth as the standard of success goes hand in hand with the abandonment of the false belief that public office and high political position are to be valued only by the standards of pride of place and personal profit; and there must be an end to a conduct in banking and in business which too often has given to a sacred trust the likeness of callous and selfish wrongdoing. Small wonder that confidence languishes, for it thrives only on honesty, on honor, on the sacredness of obligations, on faithful protection, on unselfish performance; without them it cannot live.

Restoration calls, however, not for changes in ethics alone. This Nation asks for action, and action now.

Our greatest primary task is to put people to work. This is no unsolvable problem if we face it wisely and courageously. It can be accomplished in part by direct recruiting by the Government itself, treating the task as we would treat the emergency of a war, but at the same time, through this employment, accomplishing greatly needed projects to stimulate and reorganize the use of our natural resources.

Hand in hand with this we must frankly recognize the overbalance of population in our industrial centers and, by engaging on a national scale in a redistribution, endeavor to provide a better use of the land for those best fitted for the land. The task can be helped by definite efforts to raise the values of agricultural products and with this the power to purchase the output of our cities. It can be helped by preventing realistically the tragedy of the growing loss through foreclosure of our small homes and our farms. It can be helped by insistence that the Federal, State, and local governments act forthwith on the demand that their cost be drastically reduced. It can be helped by the unifying of relief activities which today are often scattered, uneconomical, and unequal. It can be helped by national planning for and supervision of all forms of transportation and of communications and other utilities which have a definitely public character. There are many ways in which it can be helped, but it can never be helped merely by talking about it. We must act and act quickly.

Finally, in our progress toward a resumption of work we require two safeguards against a return of the evils of the old order; there must be a strict supervision of all banking and credits and investments; there must be an end to speculation with other people's money, and there must be provision for an adequate but sound currency.

There are the lines of attack. I shall presently urge upon a new Congress in special session detailed measures for their fulfillment, and I shall seek the immediate assistance of the several States.

Through this program of action we address ourselves to putting our own national house in order and making income balance outgo. Our international trade relations, though vastly important, are in point of time and necessity secondary to the establishment of a sound national economy. I favor as a practical policy the putting of first things first. I shall spare no effort to restore world trade by international economic readjustment, but the emergency at home cannot wait on that accomplishment.

The basic thought that guides these specific means of national recovery is not narrowly nationalistic. It is the insistence, as a first consideration, upon the interdependence of the various elements in all parts of the United States—a recognition of the old and permanently important manifestation of the American spirit of the pioneer. It is the way to recovery. It is the immediate way. It is the strongest assurance that the recovery will endure.

In the field of world policy I would dedicate this Nation to the policy of the good neighbor—the neighbor who resolutely respects himself and, because he does so, respects the rights of others—the neighbor who respects his obligations and respects the sanctity of his agreements in and with a world of neighbors.

If I read the temper of our people correctly, we now realize as we have never realized before our interdependence on each other; that we can not merely take but we must give as well; that if we are to go forward, we must move as a trained and loyal army willing to sacrifice for the good of a common discipline, because without such discipline no progress is made, no leadership becomes effective. We are, I know, ready and willing to submit our lives and property to such discipline, because it makes possible a leadership which aims at a larger good. This I propose to offer, pledging that the larger purposes will bind upon us all as a sacred obligation with a unity of duty hitherto evoked only in time of armed strife.

With this pledge taken, I assume unhesitatingly the leadership of this great army of our people dedicated to a disciplined attack upon our common problems.

Action in this image and to this end is feasible under the form of government which we have inherited from our ancestors. Our Constitution is so simple and practical that it is possible always to meet

extraordinary needs by changes in emphasis and arrangement without loss of essential form. That is why our constitutional system has proved itself the most superbly enduring political mechanism the modern world has produced. It has met every stress of vast expansion of territory, of foreign wars, of bitter internal strife, of world relations.

It is to be hoped that the normal balance of executive and legislative authority may be wholly adequate to meet the unprecedented task before us. But it may be that an unprecedented demand and need for undelayed action may call for temporary departure from that normal balance of public procedure.

I am prepared under my constitutional duty to recommend the measures that a stricken nation in the midst of a stricken world may require. These measures, or such other measures as the Congress may build out of its experience and wisdom, I shall seek, within my constitutional authority, to bring to speedy adoption.

But in the event that the Congress shall fail to take one of these two courses, and in the event that the national emergency is still critical, I shall not evade the clear course of duty that will then confront me. I shall ask the Congress for the one remaining instrument to meet the crisis—broad Executive power to wage a war against the emergency, as great as the power that would be given to me if we were in fact invaded by a foreign foe.

For the trust reposed in me I will return the courage and the devotion that befit the time. I can do no less.

We face the arduous days that lie before us in the warm courage of the national unity; with the clear consciousness of seeking old and precious moral values; with the clean satisfaction that comes from the stem performance of duty by old and young alike. We aim at the assurance of a rounded and permanent national life.

We do not distrust the future of essential democracy. The people of the United States have not failed. In their need they have registered a mandate that they want direct, vigorous action. They have asked for discipline and direction under leadership. They have made me the present instrument of their wishes. In the spirit of the gift I take it.

In this dedication of a Nation we humbly ask the blessing of God. May He protect each and every one of us. May He guide me in the days to come.

From "First Inaugural Address of Franklin D. Roosevelt, March 4, 1933," Yale Law School, Lillian Goldman Law Library, Avalon Project, avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/froos1.asp

Excerpts from President Franklin D. Roosevelt's First Inaugural Address, 1933

I am certain that my fellow Americans expect that on my induction into the Presidency I will address them with a candor and a decision which the present situation of our Nation impels. This is preeminently the time to speak the truth, the whole truth, frankly and boldly. Nor need we shrink from honestly facing conditions in our country today. This great Nation will endure as it has endured, will revive and will prosper. So, first of all, let me assert my firm belief that the only thing we have to fear is fear itself--nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyzes needed efforts to convert retreat into advance. In every dark hour of our national life a leadership of frankness and vigor has met with that understanding and support of the people themselves which is essential to victory. I am convinced that you will again give that support to leadership in these critical days.

In such a spirit on my part and on yours we face our common difficulties. They concern, thank God, only material things. Values have shrunken to fantastic levels; taxes have risen; our ability to pay has fallen; government of all kinds is faced by serious curtailment of income; the means of exchange are frozen in the currents of trade; the withered leaves of industrial enterprise lie on every side; farmers find no markets for their produce; the savings of many years in thousands of families are gone.

More important, a host of unemployed citizens face the grim problem of existence, and an equally great number toil with little return. Only a foolish optimist can deny the dark realities of the moment.

Yet our distress comes from no failure of substance. We are stricken by no plague of locusts. Compared with the perils which our forefathers conquered because they believed and were not afraid, we have still much to be thankful for. . . . Plenty is at our doorstep, but a generous use of it languishes in the very sight of the supply. Primarily this is because the rulers of the exchange of mankind's goods have failed, through their own stubbornness and their own incompetence, have admitted their failure, and abdicated. . . .

True they have tried, but their efforts have been cast in the pattern of an outworn tradition. Faced by failure of credit they have proposed only the lending of more money. . . . They have no vision, and when there is no vision the people perish. . . .

Our greatest primary task is to put people to work. This is no unsolvable problem if we face it wisely and courageously. It can be accomplished in part by direct recruiting by the Government itself, treating the task as we would treat the emergency of a war, but at the same time, through this employment, accomplishing greatly needed projects to stimulate and reorganize the use of our natural resources. . . .

It can be helped by preventing realistically the tragedy of the growing loss through foreclosure of our small homes and our farms. . . . It can be helped by the unifying of relief activities which today are often scattered, uneconomical, and unequal. It can be helped by national planning for and supervision of all forms of transportation and of communications and other utilities which have a definitely public character. There are many ways in which it can be helped, but it can never be helped merely by talking about it. We must act and act quickly.

Finally, in our progress toward a resumption of work we require two safeguards against a return of the evils of the old order; there must be a strict supervision of all banking and credits and investments; there must be an end to speculation with other people's money, and there must be provision for an adequate but sound currency. . . .

[W]e now realize as we have never realized before our interdependence on each other; that we can not merely take but we must give as well; that if we are to go forward, we must move as a trained and loyal army willing to sacrifice for the good of a common discipline. . . .

I assume unhesitatingly the leadership of this great army of our people dedicated to a disciplined attack upon our common problems. . . .

Our Constitution is so simple and practical that it is possible always to meet extraordinary needs by changes in emphasis and arrangement without loss of essential form. . . .

It is to be hoped that the normal balance of executive and legislative authority may be wholly adequate to meet the unprecedented task before us. But it may be that an unprecedented demand and need for undelayed action may call for temporary departure from that normal balance of public procedure.

I am prepared under my constitutional duty to recommend the measures that a stricken nation in the midst of a stricken world may require. . . .

[I]n the event that the national emergency is still critical, I shall not evade the clear course of duty that will then confront me. I shall ask the Congress for the one remaining instrument to meet the crisis—broad Executive power to wage a war against the emergency, as great as the power that would be given to me if we were in fact invaded by a foreign foe.

For the trust reposed in me I will return the courage and the devotion that befit the time. I can do no less. . . .

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Summary Organizer 1: President Roosevelt's First Inaugural Address, 1933

Original Text

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Summary Organizer 2: President Roosevelt's First Inaugural Address, 1933

Original Text

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Summary Organizer 3: President Roosevelt's First Inaugural Address, 1933

Original Text

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NAME PERIOD DATE

Summary Organizer 4: President Roosevelt's First Inaugural Address, 1933

Original Text

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Creating an Essay: Analyzing President Roosevelt's First Inaugural Address, 1933

Select one of the following questions as an essay prompt. Support your response with evidence from Roosevelt's First Inaugural Address.

1. Who did President Roosevelt blame for the situation in the United States in 1933, what role could the government play in resolving the crisis, and what role would ordinary American citizens have in the nation's recovery?
2. According to President Roosevelt, what were the nation's real problems, and what measures would be taken to solve those problems?
3. Roosevelt stated that he would use "broad Executive power" to improve the economy. How did he explain why this was necessary? What forms of executive power did he plan to use?

Topic Sentence or Paragraph:

Evidence:

Evidence:

Evidence:

Concluding Sentence or Paragraph: