

Working Together for a Better Future



Excerpt from President Richard M. Nixon's First Inaugural Address (1969)

I ask you to share with me today the majesty of this moment. In the orderly transfer of power, we celebrate the unity that keeps us free.

Each moment in history is a fleeting time, precious and unique. But some stand out as moments of beginning, in which courses are set that shape decades or centuries.

This can be such a moment.

Forces now are converging that make possible, for the first time, the hope that many of man's deepest aspirations can at last be realized. The spiraling pace of change allows us to contemplate, within our own lifetime, advances that once would have taken centuries.

In throwing wide the horizons of space, we have discovered new horizons on earth.

For the first time, because the people of the world want peace, and the leaders of the world are afraid of war, the times are on the side of peace.

Eight years from now America will celebrate its 200th anniversary as a nation. Within the lifetime of most people now living, mankind will celebrate that great new year which comes only once in a thousand years—the beginning of the third millennium.

What kind of nation we will be, what kind of world we will live in, whether we shape the future in the image of our hopes, is ours to determine by our actions and our choices.

The greatest honor history can bestow is the title of peacemaker. This honor now beckons America—the chance to help lead the world at last out of the valley of turmoil, and onto that high ground of peace that man has dreamed of since the dawn of civilization.

If we succeed, generations to come will say of us now living that we mastered our moment, that we helped make the world safe for mankind.

This is our summons to greatness.

I believe the American people are ready to answer this call.

The second third of this century has been a time of proud achievement. We have made enormous strides in science and industry and agriculture. We have shared our wealth more broadly than ever. We have learned at last to manage a modern economy to assure its continued growth.

We have given freedom new reach, and we have begun to make its promise real for black as well as for white.

We see the hope of tomorrow in the youth of today. I know America's youth. I believe in them. We can be proud that they are better educated, more committed, more passionately driven by conscience than any generation in our history.

No people has ever been so close to the achievement of a just and abundant society, or so possessed of the will to achieve it. Because our strengths are so great, we can afford to appraise our weaknesses with candor and to approach them with hope.

[. . .]

As we reach toward our hopes, our task is to build on what has gone before—not turning away from the old, but turning toward the new.

In this past third of a century, government has passed more laws, spent more money, initiated more programs, than in all our previous history.

In pursuing our goals of full employment, better housing, excellence in education; in rebuilding our cities and improving our rural areas; in protecting our environment and enhancing the quality of life—in all these and more, we will and must press urgently forward.

We shall plan now for the day when our wealth can be transferred from the destruction of war abroad to the urgent needs of our people at home.

The American dream does not come to those who fall asleep.

But we are approaching the limits of what government alone can do.

Our greatest need now is to reach beyond government, and to enlist the legions of the concerned and the committed.

What has to be done, has to be done by government and people together or it will not be done at all. The lesson of past agony is that without the people we can do nothing; with the people we can do everything.

[. . .]

Let all nations know that during this administration our lines of communication will be open.

We seek an open world—open to ideas, open to the exchange of goods and people—a world in which no people, great or small, will live in angry isolation.

We cannot expect to make everyone our friend, but we can try to make no one our enemy.

Those who would be our adversaries, we invite to a peaceful competition—not in conquering territory or extending dominion, but in enriching the life of man.

As we explore the reaches of space, let us go to the new worlds together—not as new worlds to be conquered, but as a new adventure to be shared.

With those who are willing to join, let us cooperate to reduce the burden of arms, to strengthen the structure of peace, to lift up the poor and the hungry.

But to all those who would be tempted by weakness, let us leave no doubt that we will be as strong as we need to be for as long as we need to be.

Over the past twenty years, since I first came to this Capital as a freshman Congressman, I have visited most of the nations of the world.

I have come to know the leaders of the world, and the great forces, the hatreds, the fears that divide the world.

I know that peace does not come through wishing for it—that there is no substitute for days and even years of patient and prolonged diplomacy.

I also know the people of the world.

I have seen the hunger of a homeless child, the pain of a man wounded in battle, the grief of a mother who has lost her son. I know these have no ideology, no race.

I know America. I know the heart of America is good.

I speak from my own heart, and the heart of my country, the deep concern we have for those who suffer, and those who sorrow.

I have taken an oath today in the presence of God and my countrymen to uphold and defend the Constitution of the United States. To that oath I now add this sacred commitment: I shall consecrate my office, my energies, and all the wisdom I can summon, to the cause of peace among nations.

Source: "Address by Richard M. Nixon, 1969 | Inauguration of the President." *Joint Congressional Committee on Inaugural Ceremonies*, accessed February 6, 2014. <http://www.inaugural.senate.gov/swearing-in/address/address-by-richard-m-nixon-1969>

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. According to Nixon, what title is “the greatest honor history can bestow”?
 - A soldier
 - B diplomat
 - C peacemaker
 - D president

2. In this speech, how does Nixon describe “the second third of this century”?
 - A a time of economic struggles and suffering for the people of America
 - B a time of many achievements in science, industry, and agriculture
 - C a time of war and the failure of diplomacy between nations
 - D a time that showed the limits of what people alone can do

3. Nixon believed that the help of the people was necessary for success. What evidence from the passage best supports this conclusion?
 - A “The lesson of past agony is that without the people we can do nothing; with the people we can do everything.”
 - B “If we succeed, generations to come will say of us now living that we mastered our moment, that we helped make the world safe for mankind.”
 - C “As we reach toward our hopes, our task is to build on what has gone before—not turning away from the old, but turning toward the new.”
 - D “I have seen the hunger of a homeless child, the pain of a man wounded in battle, the grief of a mother who has lost her son.”

4. Based on this speech, what did Nixon most likely hope to accomplish?
 - A to thank Americans for electing him as president
 - B to inform Americans of the current state of world affairs
 - C to tell other nations what his presidential plans are
 - D to rally popular support for Nixon’s peace efforts

5. What is the main message of this speech?
 - A America has the opportunity to bring about peace.
 - B America is the best nation because it is peaceful.
 - C Government is limited and requires the help of the people.
 - D Peace is only possible when leaders are afraid of war.

6. Read the following sentences: "Let all nations know that during this administration our lines of communication will be open. We seek an open world—open to ideas, open to the exchange of goods and people—a world in which no people, great or small, will live in angry **isolation**."

As used in this sentence, what does the word "**isolation**" mean?

- A the state of being upset with others
- B the state of being close to others
- C the state of being separate from others
- D the state of being in disagreement with others

7. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence below.

According to Nixon, peace does not come through wishing for it, _____ through patient and prolonged diplomacy.

- A then
- B but
- C also
- D namely

8. What cause does Nixon swear to dedicate his energy and wisdom to at the end of the speech?

9. According to Nixon, why are the times on the side of peace?

10. Explain how Nixon views the role of the United States in world politics. Support your answer using information from the passage.
