

DOINGWHATWORKS



SAMPLE MATERIAL

Analyzing Speeches: Homework Assignments and Note-Taking Templates

Burlingame High School, California

Topic: Adolescent Literacy

Practice: Engaging Text Discussion

High school teacher Jim Burke uses note-taking templates with his students to help them understand landmark speeches by Martin Luther King, Jr., Cesar Chavez, and Barack Obama. These materials contain excerpts of the speeches with numbered lines to facilitate classroom discussion, as well as specific directions for examining the use of literal and figurative language, and a template for comparing similarities and differences across speeches.

- Directions This is the speech that brought President Obama to the country's attention. As you read it or after you finish, do the following:
- Underline any examples of figurative language (see example in line 15).
 - Identify the subject of each paragraph as you read it by writing a word or phrase in the margin. See my example below in first paragraph.
 - Jot down three lessons you think Barack Obama has learned based on what you read in his speech. Explain how you think he learned each lesson and why that lesson is important.
 - Write a paragraph in which you summarize the main ideas in this speech and discuss how it is similar to or different from the speeches we read by Martin Luther King, Cesar Chavez, and Nelson Mandela.

Barack Obama Keynote Address
2004 Democratic National Convention
July 27, 2004

Obama's
background

- On behalf of the great state of Illinois, crossroads of a nation, land of Lincoln, let me express my deep gratitude for the privilege of addressing this convention. Tonight is a particular honor for me because, let's face it, my presence on this stage is pretty unlikely. My father was a foreign student, born and raised in a small village in Kenya. He grew up herding goats, went to school in a tin-roof shack. His father, my grandfather, was a cook, a domestic servant.
- But my grandfather had larger dreams for his son. Through hard work and perseverance my father got a scholarship to study in a magical place: America, which stood as a beacon of freedom and opportunity to so many who had come before. While studying here, my father met my mother. She was born in a town on the other side of the world, in Kansas. Her father worked on oil rigs and farms through most of the Depression. The day after Pearl Harbor he signed up for duty, joined Patton's army and marched across Europe. Back home, my grandmother raised their baby and went to work on a bomber assembly line. After the war, they studied on the GI Bill, bought a house through FHA, and moved west in search of opportunity.
- And they, too, had big dreams for their daughter, a common dream, born of two continents. My parents shared not only an improbable love; they shared an abiding faith in the possibilities of this nation. They would give me an African name, Barack, or "blessed," believing that in a tolerant America your name is no barrier to success. They imagined me going to the best schools in the land, even though they weren't rich, because in a generous America you don't have to be rich to achieve your potential. They are both passed away now. Yet, I know that, on this night, they look down on me with pride.
- I stand here today, grateful for the diversity of my heritage, aware that my parents' dreams live on in my precious daughters. I stand here knowing that my story is part of the larger American story, that I owe a debt to all of those who came before me, and that, in no other country on earth, is my story even possible. Tonight, we gather to affirm the greatness of our nation, not because of the height of our skyscrapers, or the power of our military, or the size of our economy. Our pride is based on a very simple premise, summed up in a declaration made over two hundred years ago, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal. That they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights. That among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."

That is the true genius of America, a faith in the simple dreams of its people, the insistence on small miracles. That we can tuck in our children at night and know they are fed and clothed and safe from harm. That we can say what we think, write what we think, without hearing a sudden knock on the door. That we can have an idea and start our own business without paying a bribe or hiring somebody's son. That we can participate in the political process without fear of retribution, and that our votes will be counted--or at least, most of the time.

This year, in this election, we are called to reaffirm our values and commitments, to hold them against a hard reality and see how we are measuring up, to the legacy of our forbearers, and the promise of future generations. And fellow Americans--Democrats, Republicans, Independents-- I say to you tonight: we have more work to do. More to do for the workers I met in Galesburg, Illinois, who are losing their union jobs at the Maytag plant that's moving to Mexico, and now are having to compete with their own children for jobs that pay seven bucks an hour. More to do for the father I met who was losing his job and choking back tears, wondering how he would pay \$4,500 a month for the drugs his son needs without the health benefits he counted on. More to do for the young woman in East St. Louis, and thousands more like her, who has the grades, has the drive, has the will, but doesn't have the money to go to college.

Don't get me wrong. The people I meet in small towns and big cities, in diners and office parks, they don't expect government to solve all their problems. They know they have to work hard to get ahead and they want to. Go into the collar counties around Chicago, and people will tell you they don't want their tax money wasted by a welfare agency or the Pentagon. Go into any inner city neighborhood, and folks will tell you that government alone can't teach kids to learn. They know that parents have to parent, that children can't achieve unless we raise their expectations and turn off the television sets and eradicate the slander that says a black youth with a book is acting white. No, people don't expect government to solve all their problems. But they sense, deep in their bones, that with just a change in priorities, we can make sure that every child in America has a decent shot at life, and that the doors of opportunity remain open to all. They know we can do better. And they want that choice.

A while back, I met a young man named Shamus at the VFW Hall in East Moline, Illinois. He was a good-looking kid, six-two or six-three, clear-eyed, with an easy smile. He told me he'd joined the Marines and was heading to Iraq the following week. As I listened to him explain why he'd enlisted, his absolute faith in our country and its leaders, his devotion to duty and service, I thought this young man was all any of us might hope for in a child. But then I asked myself: Are we serving Shamus as well as he was serving us? I thought of more than 900 service men and women, sons and daughters, husbands and wives, friends and neighbors, who will not be returning to their hometowns. I thought of families I had met who were struggling to get by without a loved one's full income, or whose loved ones had returned with a limb missing or with nerves shattered, but who still lacked long-term health benefits because they were reservists. When we send our young men and women into harm's way, we have a solemn obligation not to fudge the numbers or shade the truth about why they're going, to care for their families while they're gone, to tend to the soldiers upon their return, and to never ever go to war without enough troops to win the war, secure the peace, and earn the respect of the world.

Now let me be clear. We have real enemies in the world. These enemies must be found. They must be pursued and they must be defeated. John Kerry knows this. And just as Lieutenant Kerry did not hesitate to risk his life to protect the men who served with him in Vietnam,

90 President Kerry will not hesitate one moment to use our military might to keep America safe and secure. John Kerry believes in America. And he knows it's not enough for just some of us to prosper. For alongside our famous individualism, there's another ingredient in the American saga.

95 A belief that we are connected as one people. If there's a child on the south side of Chicago who can't read, that matters to me, even if it's not my child. If there's a senior citizen somewhere who can't pay for her prescription and has to choose between medicine and the rent, that makes my life poorer, even if it's not my grandmother. If there's an Arab American family being rounded up without benefit of an attorney or due process, that threatens my civil liberties. It's that fundamental belief--I am my brother's keeper, I am my sister's keeper--that makes this
100 country work. It's what allows us to pursue our individual dreams, yet still come together as a single American family. "E pluribus unum." Out of many, one.

Yet even as we speak, there are those who are preparing to divide us, the spin masters and negative ad peddlers who embrace the politics of anything goes. Well, I say to them tonight, there's not a liberal America and a conservative America there's the United States of America.
105 There's not a black America and white America and Latino America and Asian America; there's the United States of America. The pundits like to slice-and-dice our country into Red States and Blue States; Red States for Republicans, Blue States for Democrats. But I've got news for them, too. We worship an awesome God in the Blue States, and we don't like federal agents poking around our libraries in the Red States. We coach Little League in the Blue States and have gay
110 friends in the Red States. There are patriots who opposed the war in Iraq and patriots who supported it. We are one people, all of us pledging allegiance to the stars and stripes, all of us defending the United States of America.

In the end, that's what this election is about. Do we participate in a politics of cynicism or a politics of hope? John Kerry calls on us to hope. John Edwards calls on us to hope. I'm not
115 talking about blind optimism here--the almost willful ignorance that thinks unemployment will go away if we just don't talk about it, or the health care crisis will solve itself if we just ignore it. No, I'm talking about something more substantial. It's the hope of slaves sitting around a fire singing freedom songs; the hope of immigrants setting out for distant shores; the hope of a young naval lieutenant bravely patrolling the Mekong Delta; the hope of a millworker's son
120 who dares to defy the odds; the hope of a skinny kid with a funny name who believes that America has a place for him, too. The audacity of hope!

In the end, that is God's greatest gift to us, the bedrock of this nation; the belief in things not seen; the belief that there are better days ahead. I believe we can give our middle class relief and provide working families with a road to opportunity. I believe we can provide jobs to the
125 jobless, homes to the homeless, and reclaim young people in cities across America from violence and despair. I believe that as we stand on the crossroads of history, we can make the right choices, and meet the challenges that face us. America!

Tonight, if you feel the same energy I do, the same urgency I do, the same passion I do, the same hopefulness I do--if we do what we must do, then I have no doubt that all across the
130 country, from Florida to Oregon, from Washington to Maine, the people will rise up in November, and John Kerry will be sworn in as president, and John Edwards will be sworn in as vice president, and this country will reclaim its promise, and out of this long political darkness a brighter day will come. Thank you and God bless you.

Figurative Language

Name: _____

Directions Speakers often use figurative language to add both style and power to their words. As you read the assigned speech, jot down *five* different lines of powerful figurative speech (see example below). Underline the actual figurative speech in the quotation. Following my example, explain what the speaker *means* and offer some evidence as to why you think that is what he means. When you finish, use your notes to **write a paragraph** about the speech, focusing on how and why he uses figurative language.

Literal: What He Says	Figurative: What He Means	Rationale: Why You Think This
Ex: "[The Emancipation Proclamation] <u>came as a joyous daybreak to end the long night of their captivity.</u> "	Ex: He means that the Emancipation Proclamation was like the light at the end of the tunnel. The slaves suffered with no hope it seemed of ever being free. It was like the door opening and bringing in light to someone in solitary confinement.	Because the Emancipation Proclamation freed all the slaves. This news saved the slaves by bringing joy and hope into their lives the way light comes into the darkness and helps us find our way. When we see the "light at the end of the tunnel" we know we will make it. Until that news came they were captive, slaves, property. The E.P. set them free, restored their humanity.
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		

Please use these notes to help you write a paragraph on the back (or a separate sheet of paper).

Directions After reading Martin Luther King’s “I Have a Dream” speech, we look now at its influence on others, in this case Cesar Chavez, who delivered the following speech on MLK Day in 1990. As you read, do the following:

- 5 • Underline any examples of figurative speech (simile, metaphor, hyperbole, personification). If found *one* on the first page; he has a very different speaking style than Dr. King. He uses much less figurative language.
- 10 • Identify and annotate (with note in the margin) three specific lessons that Chavez, who was the founder and president of the United Farm Workers, learned from Martin Luther King.
- 15 • Write a paragraph (with robust, impressive FODP!) in which you describe and respond to these three lessons Chavez learned. As part of your D (Development), include quotations from Chavez, examples, and comments (your own thoughts) on the meaning and importance of these quotations and examples

Speech by Cesar Chavez: Lessons of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

January 12, 1990

My friends, today we honor a giant among men: today we honor the reverend Martin Luther King, Jr.

- 20 Dr. King was a powerful figure of destiny, of courage, of sacrifice, and of vision. Few people in the long history of this nation can rival his accomplishment, his reason, or his selfless dedication to the cause of peace and social justice.

Today we honor a wise teacher, an inspiring leader, and a true visionary, but to truly honor Dr. King we must do more than say words of praise.

- 25 We must learn his lessons and put his views into practice, so that we may truly be free at last.

Who was Dr. King?

Many people will tell you of his wonderful qualities and his many accomplishments, but what makes him special to me, the truth many people don't want you to remember, is that Dr. King was a great activist, fighting for radical social change with radical methods.

- 30 While other people talked about change, Dr. King used direct action to challenge the system. He welcomed it, and used it wisely.

In his famous letter from the Birmingham jail, Dr. King wrote that "The purpose of direct action is to create a situation so crisis-packed that it will inevitably open the door to negotiation."

- 35 Dr. King was also radical in his beliefs about violence. He learned how to successfully fight hatred and violence with the unstoppable power of nonviolence. [*text continues...*]

Directions Review the two speeches you read (by MLK and Cesar Chavez). Identify several common subjects (e.g., justice) in the middle; in each column jot down quotations and notes about what each person said about that subject. Pay attention to similarities *and* differences. For example, a difference you might list in the middle is that Chavez, who had only an eighth grade education, speaks much more directly and humbly to his audience than Dr. King, who had a doctorate and was a minister.

[illegible]

Use the notes above to write a paragraph (continue onto the back!) in which you compare and contrast the two men as leaders. Include examples and quotations from both speeches. Use appropriate transitions. Remember FODP!

[illegible]