Words Aptly Spoken
AMERICAN DOCUMENTS

A study guide to the documents that shaped our country

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AMERICAN DOCUMENTS

SECOND EDITION

a study of the documents that shaped the United States

compiled and edited by Jen Greenholt

Classical Conversations®
MULTIMEDIA

Foreword

What do you think of when you hear the word "history"? Does it have a positive connotation or a negative one? For many, the idea of history brings to mind elderly teachers droning on and on about this date when that obscurely named figure went before this unimportant council to deliver that news about the rebellion of this farmer and—you get the picture.

While it is possible to make history a dull subject that has little or no contemporary relevance, in its pure form, history is alive with insights into our world. Did you know, for example, that women's rights leaders once crafted an updated version of the Declaration of Independence that stressed the injustice done to women? Or that Osama Bin Laden was once considered an ally of the United States during the Cold War?

The interest history holds for you is connected to the interest you put into learning about history. If you can think of history in terms of a great story in which you are still taking part, then you will be able to find connections between your life and the events of the past.

You cannot understand the modern system of American government without looking at its historical roots. But instead of the usual route of a textbook-style discussion on the history of government, this book follows the theme of a great story, looking at the narratives that shaped this history. If you allow the voices of great Americans to speak for themselves, you will gain insight into the logic behind the system of government that may seem natural and "American."

If you have ever watched or read about a trial in one of the higher courts, especially the Supreme Court, you will know that "past precedent" (how the issue has been handled in the past) is extremely important. The same is often true for the laws and policies of a government. In reading about the history of American government, you gain insight into the rationale for decisions that are made today. Many of these decisions, drawn from the legal precedent of *Brown v. Board of Education* or from the Constitution, for example, are largely based on the documents you will read.

As with the other collections in the *Words Aptly Spoken* series, *American Documents* contains a series of questions about each work. Review Questions ensure that you understand the basic plot, characters, setting, and message of each historical document. Thought Questions take the themes and ideas raised by each author and help you apply them to other, more familiar situations.

All new to this edition, general comprehension questions at the beginning of the book and at the start of each new section will help you navigate the genres in this collection (speeches, poetry, essays, and legal documents) as you compare and contrast their content on the level of ideas. In addition, writing practices at the end of each section will give you practical insight into the use of different genres. Finally, new expanded introductions to each piece provide background information about not only the authors and content of the documents, but also the historical context in which they were written.

Best wishes and happy reading!

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A Note For Parents: Tools for the Journey

If you have ever heard Shakespeare performed before a live audience and marveled at the ease with which the words flowed from the actors' lips; if you have ever envied people who can call on Milton, Dickens, Joyce, and Lewis to lend eloquence to their argument; if you have skimmed a list of the 100 greatest novels of all time and winced as you remembered struggling to finish *The Grapes of Wrath* in high school—you may think that the great conversations of literature are forever closed to you.

The good news is, they're not! Whether you are a student, an adult, a parent, a child, or all of the above, you have the capability to train yourself not only to read great literature, but also to share its beauty, truth, and joy with others.

Although most people learn to read as children, the art of deliberately engaging with the content and ideas of a novel or short story requires ongoing practice.

The *Words Aptly Spoken* series is based on the classical model of education,[1] which breaks learning into three natural stages: grammar, dialectic, and rhetoric. In the grammar stage, you learn the vocabulary of a subject. In the dialectic stage, you learn to develop logical arguments and analyze others' ideas. In the rhetoric stage, you explore the consequences of ideas as you form and express your own. This guide will help you as you begin to apply the classical model to the study of literature.

Why American Documents?

If you think the word "literature" refers only to fiction, you may be surprised to see the documents that formed the U.S. government included in a series of literature guides. Are these documents even literature? Although there is no easy answer to that question, several important features of the documents in this collection explain their presence in "An Introduction to Classical Literature."

Scrooge and Frankenstein are familiar figures, but popular manifestations may differ widely from their literary sources. In the same way, "separate but equal," "cruel and unusual punishment," and "liberty or death" are powerful phrases, but they can be misinterpreted outside their original contexts.

When you study literature, you learn to interpret what you read by paying close attention to the clues in the text. You will need the same skills to read these documents. Each document tells a story about what America could or should be, and many of them have influenced the U.S. profoundly. By studying the arguments, persuasive techniques, and ideas that made American government what it is today, you will be equipped to imagine how it might be different tomorrow.

How to Use This Book

Despite popular belief, reading is not wholly instinctive. Because comprehension, analysis, and critical thinking require practice, each story in this collection comes with a set of questions designed to give structure and guidance to your reading. Treat these questions

[1] See Dorothy Sayers' essay, "The Lost Tools of Learning."

as tools not only for reading, but also for writing, leading discussion, and sharing your ideas with others.

Review Questions pull out the **grammar** for each selection: Who is it about? (Characters) What happens? (Plot) Where does it take place? (Setting) What is the message? (Theme) What is the scope or time frame? (Focus), and so on. For readers of all ages, repeatedly asking these questions will generate good reading habits; eventually, as you read, your brain will automatically take note of this information and store it for future use.

Thought Questions are an exercise in **dialectic**, taking the basic elements from the review questions and encouraging you to analyze that information in light of other knowledge. As you become more familiar with the building blocks of a story, you should begin to ask questions of your own. What does this mean for me? How should I respond to this argument? You can use the thought questions as a jump-start for your own thinking process, as training tools for leading discussion, or as topics for essays and book reports.

You may not be able to answer the questions after just one reading, and because these stories are short, you should take time to read each story at least twice. The first time should be for general enjoyment and to get a feel for the author's writing style. The next reading should look a little deeper at the underlying issues the author confronts.

If you cannot answer some of the questions by the time you have finished the selection, consider going back and re-reading sections you may only have skimmed the first time. A word of caution: don't merely "look up" the answers to the questions and skim the rest. Once established, this habit will make it harder for you to read and understand more difficult books. After all, self-respecting Olympic runners know that they would be at a severe disadvantage in the actual games if they secretly completed only half of their daily training regimen. In the same way, the results you achieve as a reader will reflect the quality and consistency of your training.

Because most of these documents were written a long time ago, some of the language and sentence structures may be difficult to understand. The following tips will make your task easier:

- First, read each piece multiple times. None (with the possible exception of the Constitution) are long, and re-reading them will allow you to notice details you missed.
- Second, read with a dictionary. When you come to an unfamiliar word, look it up and jot down a definition. The next time you read the piece, substitute familiar terminology.
- Third, if a piece is especially complicated, rewrite it paragraph by paragraph in your own words. This exercise will allow you to modernize the language and ideas.

Finally, writing practice exercises at the end of each section will guide you to a better understanding of the different genres represented by these historical documents as you practice rewriting the documents in your own words.

The Journey in Perspective

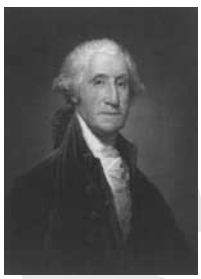
One of the most important things to remember as you start—or resume—this journey

is that it doesn't happen overnight. The art of leading and sharing in conversations about classical literature takes a lifetime to refine. You must begin with the fundamentals: learning to read closely, taking notes, and developing the vocabulary to structure your ideas and explain them to others (grammar). You must practice: adding new techniques, revising old ones, and comparing the results (dialectic). And then you will be ready to start all over again as you share the joy of the journey with others around you (rhetoric). Let's get started!

List of the U.S. Presidents

These basic facts about the presidents are an important part of the grammar of American government. As you read, use these names and dates to organize your knowledge about U.S. government.

Take time to assign each text you read to its proper place in the timeline, and pay attention to the themes that emerge. Remember, comparing a historical document to other events and texts from that same period of history can tell you something about prominent attitudes and concerns at that time.



1 George Washington

2 terms, 1789-1797
None (1st term)

Federalist (2nd)
Vice President:
John Adams

2 John Adams

1 term, 1797-1801
Federalist

Vice President:
Thomas Jefferson

3 Thomas Jefferson

2 terms, 1801-1809
Democratic-Republican

Vice Presidents:
Aaron Burr
George Clinton

4 James Madison

2 terms, 1809-1817
Democratic-Republican

Vice Presidents:
George Clinton
Elbridge Gerry

5 James Monroe

2 terms, 1817-1825
Democratic-Republican
Vice President: Daniel D. Tompkins

6 John Quincy Adams

1 term, 1825-1829
Democratic-Republican

Vice President:
John C. Calhoun

7 Andrew Jackson

2 terms, 1829-1837
Democratic

Vice Presidents:
John C. Calhoun
Martin Van Buren

8 Martin Van Buren

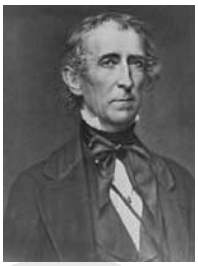
1 term, 1837-1841
Democratic

Vice President:
Richard M. Johnson

9 William H. Harrison

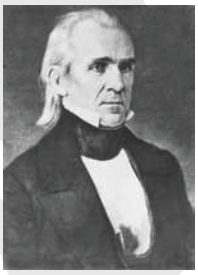
1 term, 1841
Whig

Vice President:
John Tyler



10 John Tyler

1 term, 1841-1845
Whig
Vice President: None



11 James K. Polk

1 term, 1845-1849
Democratic

Vice President:
George M. Dallas

12 Zachary Taylor

1 term, 1849-1850
Whig

Vice President:
Millard Fillmore

13 Millard Fillmore

1 term, 1850-1853
Whig
Vice President: None

14 Franklin Pierce

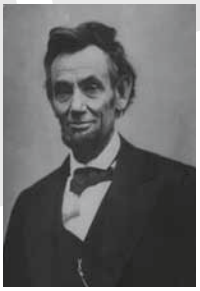
1 term, 1853-1857
Democratic

Vice President:
William R. King

15 James Buchanan

1 term, 1857-1861

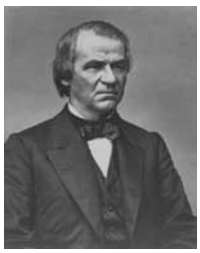
Democratic
Vice President:
John C. Breckinridge



16 Abraham Lincoln

1 term, 1861-1865
Republican

Vice Presidents:
Hannibal Hamlin
Andrew Johnson



17 Andrew Johnson

1 term, 1865-1869
Democratic
Vice President: None

18 Ulysses S. Grant

2 terms, 1869-1877
Republican

Vice Presidents:
Schuyler Colfax
Henry Wilson

19 Rutherford B. Hayes

1 term, 1877-1881
Republican

Vice President:
William A. Wheeler

20 James A. Garfield

1 term, 1881
Republican

Vice President:
Chester A. Arthur

21 Chester A. Arthur

1 term, 1881-1885
Republican
Vice President: None

22 Grover Cleveland

1 term, 1885-1889
Democratic

Vice President:
Thomas A. Hendricks

23 Benjamin Harrison

1 term, 1889-1893
Republican

Vice President:
Levi P. Morton

24 Grover Cleveland

1 term, 1893-1897
Democratic

Vice President:
Adlai E. Stevenson

25 William McKinley

1 term, 1897-1901
Republican

Vice Presidents:
Garret A. Hobart
Theodore Roosevelt

26 Theodore Roosevelt

2 terms, 1901-1909
Republican

Vice President:
Charles W. Fairbanks

27 William H. Taft

1 term, 1909-1913
Republican

Vice President:
James S. Sherman

28 Woodrow Wilson

2 terms, 1913-1921
Democratic

Vice President:
Thomas R. Marshall

29 William G. Harding

1 term, 1921-1923
Republican

Vice President:
Calvin Coolidge

30 Calvin Coolidge

2 terms, 1923-1929

Republican
Vice President:
Charles G. Dawes

31 Herbert C. Hoover

1 term, 1929-1933

Republican
Vice President:
Charles Curtis

32 Franklin D. Roosevelt

3 terms, 1933-1945
Democratic
Vice Presidents:
John N. Garner
Henry A. Wallace
Harry S. Truman

33 Harry S. Truman

2 terms, 1945-1953
Democratic

Vice President:
Alben W. Barkley

34 Dwight D. Eisenhower

2 terms, 1953-1961
Republican

Vice President:
Richard M. Nixon

35 John F. Kennedy

1 term, 1961-1963
Democratic

Vice President:
Lyndon B. Johnson

36 Lyndon B. Johnson

2 terms, 1963-1969
Democratic

Vice President:
Hubert H. Humphrey

37 Richard M. Nixon

2 terms, 1969-1974
Republican

Vice President:
Spiro T. Agnew
Gerald R. Ford

38 Gerald R. Ford

1 term, 1974-1977
Republican

Vice President:
Nelson A. Rockefeller

39 James E. Carter

1 term, 1977-1981
Democratic

Vice President:
Walter F. Mondale

40 Ronald W. Reagan

2 terms, 1981-1989
Republican

Vice President:
George H. W. Bush

41 George H. W. Bush

1 term, 1989-1993
Republican

Vice President:
J. Danforth Quayle

42 William J. Clinton

2 terms, 1993-2001
Democratic

Vice President:
Albert Gore, Jr.

43 George W. Bush

2 terms, 2001-2008
Republican

Vice President:
Richard Cheney

44 Barack H. Obama

1 terms, 2008-
Democratic

Vice President:
Joseph Biden

What's That You Say? SPEECHES

The power of oratory plays a large role in the history of nations around the world. The ability to speak persuasively is invaluable to politicians, activists, and ordinary citizens who want to make a difference.

Because speeches are written to be delivered orally, they use a different set of conventions than documents that are meant to be read. The best way to get a feel for a speech is to read it aloud or have someone else read it to you. Either way, pay particular attention to the following questions:

- How long is the speech?
- Who seems to be the intended audience?
- What is the tone of the speech?
- How formal is the speaker's language?
- What parts of the speech would you emphasize if you were the speaker?
- What effect do you think the speaker was trying to achieve? How do you know?

These speeches are a sample of those that have triggered, contributed to, or responded to important events in American history. As you read, look for the tools that each speaker uses to accomplish his or her objectives.

Remember, most speeches are presented once, but they don't cease to have influence immediately afterward. Instead, subsequent audiences listen to recordings of the speech or see it in written form. Think carefully about how the speech impacted you, and ask yourself how the effects might differ for audiences hearing the speech live, hearing a recording, and reading a transcript.

"Liberty or Death"

Patrick Henry

Patrick Henry (1736-1799) grew up in Virginia and was educated to become a lawyer. He was elected to the Virginia House of Burgesses in 1765, where he proposed the Stamp Act Resolutions in response to British taxation of public documents. Similar radicalism and defiance became a feature of Henry's politics, and in 1774, he represented Virginia at the First Continental Congress. Henry delivered the following speech on March 23, 1775, before the Virginia Congressional delegates in an attempt to persuade Virginia to prepare for revolution. The famous line, "Give me liberty or give me death!" became a slogan for the Revolutionary War. Henry's persuasion was successful, and the delegates passed his resolutions. During the war, Henry went on to serve three consecutive terms and one additional term as governor of Virginia.

No man thinks more highly than I do of the patriotism, as well as abilities, of the very worthy gentlemen who have just addressed the House. But different men often see the same subject in different lights; and, therefore, I hope that it will not be thought disrespectful to those gentlemen, if, entertaining as I do opinions of a character very opposite to theirs, I shall speak forth my sentiments freely and without reserve.

This is no time for ceremony. The question before the House is one of awful moment to this country. For my own part I consider it as nothing less than a question of freedom or slavery; and in proportion to the magnitude of the subject ought to be the freedom of the debate. It is only in this way that we can hope to arrive at truth, and fulfill the great responsibility which we hold to God and our country. Should I keep back my opinions at such a time, through fear of giving offense, I should consider myself as guilty of treason towards my country, and of an act of disloyalty towards the majesty of Heaven, which I revere above all earthly kings.

Mr. President, it is natural to man to indulge in the illusions of hope. We are apt to shut our eyes against a painful truth, and listen to the song of that siren, till she transforms us into beasts. Is this the part of wise men, engaged in a great and arduous struggle for liberty? Are we disposed to be of the number of those who, having eyes, see not, and

having ears, hear not, the things which so nearly concern their temporal salvation?

For my part, whatever anguish of spirit it may cost, I am willing to know the whole truth—to know the worst and to provide for it. I have but one lamp by which my feet are guided; and that is the lamp of experience. I know of no way of judging of the future but by the past. And judging by the past, I wish to know what there has been in the conduct of the British ministry for the last ten years, to justify those hopes with which gentlemen have been pleased to solace themselves and the House?

Is it that insidious smile with which our petition has been lately received? Trust it not, sir; it will prove a snare to your feet. Suffer not yourselves to be betrayed with a kiss. Ask yourselves how this gracious reception of our petition comports with these warlike preparations which cover our waters and darken our land. Are fleets and armies necessary to a work of love and reconciliation? Have we shown ourselves so unwilling to be reconciled that force must be called in to win back our love? Let us not deceive ourselves, sir. These are the implements of war and subjugation—the last arguments to which kings resort. I ask gentlemen, sir, what means this martial array, if its purpose be not to force us to submission? Can gentlemen assign any other possible motives for it? Has Great Britain any enemy, in this quarter of the world, to call for all this accumulation of navies and armies?

No, sir, she has none. They are meant for us; they can be meant for no other. They are sent over to bind and rivet upon us those chains which the British ministry have been so long forging. And what have we to oppose to them? Shall we try argument? Sir, we have been trying that for the last ten years. Have we anything new to offer on the subject? Nothing.

We have held the subject up in every light of which it is capable; but it has been all in vain. Shall we resort to entreaty and humble supplication? What terms shall we find which have not been already exhausted? Let us not, I beseech you, sir, deceive ourselves longer.

Sir, we have done everything that could be done to avert the storm which is now coming on. We have petitioned; we have remonstrated; we have supplicated; we have prostrated ourselves before the throne, and have implored its interposition to arrest the tyrannical hands of the ministry and Parliament.

Our petitions have been slighted; our remonstrances have produced additional violence and insult; our supplications have been disregarded; and we have been spurned, with contempt, from the foot of the throne. In vain, after these things, may we indulge the fond hope of peace and reconciliation. There is no longer any room for hope.

If we wish to be free—if we mean to preserve inviolate those inestimable privileges for which we have been so long contending—if we mean not basely to abandon the noble struggle in which we have been so long engaged, and which we have pledged ourselves never to abandon until the glorious object of our contest shall be obtained, we must fight! I repeat it, sir, we must fight! An appeal to arms and to the God of Hosts is all that is left us!

They tell us, sir, that we are weak—unable to cope with so formidable an adversary. But when shall we be stronger?

Will it be the next week, or the next year? Will it be when we are totally disarmed, and when a British guard shall be stationed in every house? Shall we gather strength by irresolution and inaction? Shall we acquire the means of effectual resistance, by lying supinely on our backs, and hugging the delusive phantom of hope, until our enemies shall have bound us hand and foot?

Sir, we are not weak, if we make a proper use of the means which the God of nature hath placed in our power. Three millions of people, armed in the holy cause of liberty, and in such a country as that which we possess, are invincible by any force which our enemy can send against us. Besides, sir, we shall not fight our battles alone. There is a just God who presides over the destinies of nations, and who will raise up friends to fight our battles for us.

The battle, sir, is not to the strong alone; it is to the vigilant, the active, the brave. Besides, sir, we have no election. If we were base enough to desire it, it is now too late to retire from the contest. There is no retreat but in submission and slavery! Our chains are forged! Their clanking may be heard on the plains of Boston! The war is inevitable—and let it come! I repeat it, sir, let it come!

It is in vain, sir, to extenuate the matter. Gentlemen may cry, "Peace! Peace!"—but there is no peace. The war is actually begun! The next gale that sweeps from the north will bring to our ears the clash of resounding arms! Our brethren are already in the field! Why stand we here idle? What is it that gentlemen wish? What would they have? Is life so dear, or peace so sweet, as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God! I know not what course others may take; but as for me, give me liberty, or give me death!

Review Questions

1. "Different men often see the same subjects in different lights" is a tactful way of saying what?
2. Why did Henry not keep back his opinions? To which authority was he submitting himself?
3. By what one lamp were Henry's feet guided?
4. Why did Henry claim the British were not sincere in their reception of the colonists' petitions?
5. According to Henry, what was the only choice that was left?

Thought Questions

1. What does it mean to be free? What is the opposite of freedom?
2. Were you aware that, at the time of this speech, the leaders of the Revolutionary movement owned slaves? Does this seem hypocritical to you?
3. Is it hard to negotiate peacefully when an army is standing nearby? Why or why not?
4. Are life and peace dearer to you than liberty? Be honest, and defend your answer.
5. Several revolutions have had slogans relating to the idea of liberty/equality or death. Is that slogan appropriate? What expectations does it place on revolutionaries? What does it assume?

SPEECHES

Writing Practice

Now that you have finished reading and studying a number of important speeches in American history, you should have a better sense of what makes a speech powerful and persuasive. Some of the features you may have noticed include memorable phrases, repetition, clear verbal cues for transitions, and vivid language.

Now it is your turn to put those techniques into practice. Below is a paragraph from The Federalist number *47* (an article which you will read in full, later in this book).

> "The accumulation of all powers, legislative, executive, and judiciary, in the same hands, whether of one, a few, or many, and whether hereditary, self-appointed, or elective, may justly be pronounced the very definition of tyranny. Were the federal Constitution, therefore, really chargeable with the accumulation of power, or with a mixture of powers, having a dangerous tendency to such an accumulation, no further arguments would be necessary to inspire a universal reprobation of the system. I persuade myself, however, that it will be made apparent to every one, that the charge cannot be supported, and that the maxim on which it relies has been totally misconceived and misapplied. In order to form correct ideas on this important subject, it will be proper to investigate the sense in which the preservation of liberty requires that the three great departments of power should be separate and distinct."

Read it several times to make sure you understand it. Then, keeping the same basic ideas and some of the wording, rewrite this paragraph in your own words to turn it into a speech. Think about using simpler sentences and more colloquial language, but also feel free to add rhetorical flourishes and devices like those you've seen in the speeches you have just read.