

## Master Speeches in a Lower Lexile

### Master Speech #1: "The Gettysburg Address" by Abraham Lincoln

"Eighty and seven years ago our fathers created on this continent a new nation, understood/created in freedom and dedicated to the suggestion/possible plan of action that all men are created equal. Now we are involved in a great (war between groups that all live in one country), testing whether that nation or any nation so understood/created and so dedicated can long last through/tolerate. We are met on a great battlefield of that war. We have come to dedicate a part of/amount of that field as a final resting-place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is completely fitting and proper that we should do this. But in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate, we cannot bless, we cannot make holy this ground. The brave men, living and dead who struggled here have blessed it far above our poor power to add or take away. The world will little note nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living rather to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have so far so honorably advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great job remaining before us--that from these honored dead we take increased loving loyalty to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of loving loyalty--that we here highly resolve that these dead will not have died without success (or without purpose), that this nation under God will have a new birth of freedom, and that government of the people, by the people, for the people will not die/go bad from the earth."

### Master Speech #2: President Ronald Reagan on the Challenger Disaster

Ladies and Gentlemen, I'd planned to speak to you tonight to report on the state of the Union, but the events of earlier today have led me to change those plans. Today is a day for suffering (in sadness) and remembering. Nancy and I are pained to the core by the terrible event of the shuttle Challenger. We know we share this pain with all of the people of our country. This is truly a national loss.

Nineteen years ago, almost to the day, we lost three space travelers in a terrible (sudden unplanned bad event/crash) on the ground. But, we've never lost a space traveler in flight; we've never had a terrible event like this. And maybe we've forgotten the courage it took for the crew of the shuttle; but they, the Challenger Seven, were aware of the dangers, but overcame them and did their jobs brilliantly. We suffer (with sadness) seven heroes: Michael Smith, Dick Scobee, Judith Resnik, Ronald McNair, Ellison Onizuka, Gregory Jarvis, and Christa McAuliffe. We suffer (with sadness) their loss as a nation together.

For the families of the seven, we cannot bear, as you do, the full hit/effect of this terrible event. But we feel the loss, and we're thinking about you so very much. Your loved ones were daring and brave, and they had that special grace, that special spirit that says, "give me a challenge and I'll meet it with joy." They had a hunger to explore the universe and discover its truths. They wished to serve, and they did. They served all of us.

We've grown used to wonders in this century. It's hard to amaze us. But for twenty-five years the United States space program has been doing just that. We've grown used to the idea of space, and maybe we forget that we've only just begun. We're still pioneers. They, the member of the Challenger crew, were pioneers.

And I want to say something to the schoolchildren of America who were watching the live

coverage of the shuttle's takeoff. I know it is hard to understand, but sometimes painful things like this happen. It's all part of the process of exploring things and discovery. It's all part of taking a chance and expanding man's horizons. The future doesn't belong to the easily scared; it belongs to the brave. The Challenger crew was pulling us into the future, and we'll continue to follow them.

I've always had great faith in and respect for our space program, and what happened today does nothing to reduce it. We don't hide our space program. We don't keep secrets and cover things up. We do it all up front and in public. That's the way freedom is, and we wouldn't change it for a minute. We'll continue our search in space. There will be more shuttle flights and more shuttle crews and, yes, more volunteers, more people not in the military, more teachers in space. Nothing ends here; our hopes and our trips continue. I want to add that I wish I could talk to every man and woman who works for NASA or who worked on this mission and tell them: "Your dedication and (acting maturely and honestly while doing an excellent job) have moved and impressed us for at least 20 years. And we know of your severely upset feelings. We share it."

There's a coincidence today. On this day 390 years ago, the great explorer Sir Francis Drake died (on a train, plane, etc.) ship off the coast of Panama. In his lifetime the great edges of something/unexplored areas were the oceans, and a history expert later said, "He lived by the sea, died on it, and was buried in it." Well, today we can say of the challenger crew: Their dedication was, like Drake's, complete.

The crew of the space shuttle Challenger honored us by the manner in which they lived their lives. We will never forget them, nor the last time we saw them, this morning, as they prepared for the trip and waved goodbye and "slipped the rude (forces that join things together/promises to pay money back) of earth" to "touch the face of God."

### **"To Kill A Mockingbird" (1962) Atticus Finch delivers his Closing Argument at the Trial of Tom Robinson "To Kill A Mockingbird" (1962)**

Atticus Finch: To begin with, this case should never have come to trial. The State has no produced one tiny amount of medical evidence that the crime Tom Robinson is charged with ever happened. It has relied instead upon the statements (in court) of two witnesses whose evidence has not only been called into serious question on cross examination, but has been definitely went against/argued against by the person (who is being sued or who was sued). Now there is (evidence that strongly hints at, but does not prove, something) to point to/show that Mayella Ewell was beaten terribly by someone who led, almost only, with his left [hand]. And Tom Robinson now sits before you, having taken "The Promise" with the only good hand he possesses - his right.

I have nothing but pity in my heart for the Chief Witness for the State. She is the victim of cruel poorness and (the state of having no knowledge). But, my pity does not extend so far as to her putting a man's life in danger of being lost, which she has done in an effort to get rid of her own guilt. Now I say "guilt," gentlemen, because it was guilt that (gave a reason to do something) her. She's committed no crime. She has only broken a stiff/not flexible and time-honored code of our (community of people/all good people in the world), a code so extreme that whoever breaks it is nagged from our middle as unfit to live with. She must destroy the evidence of her offense. But, what was the evidence of her offense? Tom Robinson, a human being. She must put Tom

Robinson away from her. Tom Robinson was to her a daily reminder of what she did. Now what did she do? She tempted a negro. She was white and she tempted a negro. She did something that in our (community of people/all good people in the world) is (too terrible to speak about): She kissed a black man. Not an old uncle, but a strong, young negro man. No code mattered to her before she broke it, but it came crashing down on her later/after that. The witnesses for the State, with the exception of the sheriff of Lincoln County, have presented themselves to you gentlemen - to this Court - in the (distrustful and suspicious of people) confidence that their statements (in court) would not be doubted; confident that you gentlemen would go a long with them on the idea (you think is true), the evil idea (you think is true), that all negroes lie; all negroes are basically socially wrong beings; all negro men are not to be trusted around our women, an idea (you think is true) that one associates with minds of their ability/quality/gun size, and which is in itself, gentlemen, a lie - which I do not need to point out to you. And so, a quiet, humble, respectable negro, who has had the complete and total TEMERITY to feel sorry for a white woman, has had to put his word against two white peoples. The person (who is being sued or who was sued) is not guilty. But somebody in this courtroom is. Now, gentlemen, in this country our courts are the great levelers. In our courts, all men are created equal. I'm no (person who believes anything can be done) to believe firmly in the (honest and good human quality/wholeness or completeness) of our courts and of our jury system. That's no ideal to me. That is a living, working reality! Now I am confident that you gentlemen will review without passion the evidence that you have heard, come to a decision, and restore this man to his family. In the name of God, do your duty. In the name of God, believe Tom Robinson.

Finch delivers his Closing Argument at the Trial of Tom Robinson

## **Master Speech #4: Winston Churchill First Speech as Prime Minister to House of Commons**

On May 10, 1940, Winston Churchill became Prime Minister. When he met his Cabinet on May 13 he told them that "I have nothing to offer but blood, **work hard**, tears and sweat." He repeated that phrase later in the day when he asked the House of Commons for a vote of confidence in his new all-party government. The response of Labour was heart-warming; the Conservative reaction was luke-warm. They still really wanted Neville Chamberlain. For the first time, the people had hope but Churchill commented to General Ismay: "Poor people, poor people. They trust me, and I can give them nothing but disaster for quite a long time."

I beg to move,

That this House welcomes the **(creation and construction/ group of objects)** of a Government representing the united and **stubborn/unable to move** resolve of the nation to **(start a trial in court against someone/perform an action)** the war with Germany to a **successful (in a battle or contest) end/end result**.

On Friday evening last I received His Majesty's commission to form a new Management. It as the obvious wish and will of Parliament and the nation that this should be understood/created on the broadest possible basis and that it should include all parties, both those who supported the late Government and also the parties of the (fighting force/bad feelings). I have completed the most important part of this job. A War Cabinet has been formed of five Members, representing, with the (fighting force/bad feelings) Liberals, the togetherness of the nation. The three party Leaders have agreed to serve, either in the War Cabinet or in high executive office. The three Fighting Services have been filled. It was necessary that this should be done in one single day, on account of the extreme extreme importance and rigour of events. Some other positions, key positions, were filled yesterday, and I am submitting a further list to His Majesty to-night. I hope to complete the appointment of the principal Ministers during to-morrow. the appointment of the other Ministers usually takes a little longer, but I trust that, when Parliament meets again, this part of my job will be completed, and that the management will be complete in all respects.

I thought about/believed it in the public interest to suggest that the House should be brought to meet today. Mr. Speaker agreed, and took the necessary steps, (going along with/obeying) the powers gave/discussed upon him by the Resolution of the House. At the end of the (series of events) today, the (ending a meeting) of the House will be proposed until Tuesday, 21st May, with, of course, provision for earlier meeting, if need be. The business to be thought about/believed during that week will be told to Members at the earliest opportunity. I now invite the House, by the Movement which stands in my name, to record its approval of the steps taken and to declare its confidence in the new Government.

To form an Management of this scale and complex difficulty is a serious difficult project in itself, but it must be remembered that we are in the early (and subject to change) stage of one of the greatest fights in history, that we are in action at many other points in Norway and in Holland, that we have to be prepared in the Mediterranean, that the air fight is continuous and that many preparations, such as have been pointed to/showed by my hon. Friend below the Gangway, have to be made here at home. In this serious problem I hope I may be pardoned if I do not address the House at any length today. I hope that any of my friends and fellow workers, or former fellow workers, who are affected by the political reconstruction, will make (sum of money given/freedom to move within limits), all (sum of money given/freedom to move within limits), for any lack of (formal, special event or series of actions) with which it has been necessary to act. I would say to the House, as I said to those who have joined this government: "I have nothing to offer but blood, work hard, tears and sweat."

We have before us a struggle of the most terrible kind. We have before us many, many long months of struggle and of suffering. You ask, what is our policy? I can say: It is to wage war, by sea, land and air, with all our might and with all the strength that God can give us; to wage war against a monster-like very bad treatment, never went past in the dark, very unfortunate (big list of items) of human crime. That is our policy. You ask, what is our aim? I can answer in one word: It is victory, victory at all costs, victory in spite of all terror, victory, however long and hard the road may be; for without victory, there is no survival. Let that happen/be made real; no

survival for the British Empire, no survival for all that the British Empire has stood for, no survival for the strong desire and sudden (unplanned) desire of (throughout history/many years to come), that people will move forward towards its goal. But I take up my job with floating ability and hope. I feel sure that our cause will not be suffered to fail among men. At this time I feel entitled to claim the aid of all, and I say, "come then, let us go forward together with our united strength."

## Master Speech #5: President John F. Kennedy's Inaugural speech

Vice President Johnson, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Chief Justice, President Eisenhower, Vice President Nixon, President Truman, reverend clergy, fellow people (who lawfully live in a country, state, etc.), we watch/ notice/ celebrate/ obey today not a victory of party, but a celebration of freedom--showing (by using a physical object to represent an idea or emotion) an end, as well as a beginning--showing/indicating renewal, as well as change. For I have sworn before you and God the same serious promise our parents/grandparents prescribed nearly a century and three quarters ago.

The world is very different now. For man holds in his mortal hands the power to permanently end all forms of human poorness and all forms of human life. And yet the same (related to fighting authority or causing huge, important changes) beliefs for which our parents/grandparents fought are still at issue around the globe--the belief that the rights of man come not from the help (by giving money, by sharing, etc.) of the state, but from the hand of God.

We dare not forget today that we are the heirs of that first revolution. Let the word go forward from this time and place, to friend and enemy alike, that the torch has been passed to a new generation of Americans--born in this century, reduced by war, controlled/punished by a hard and bitter peace, proud of our very old history--and unwilling to see or permit the slow undoing of those human rights to which this Nation has always been committed, and to which we are committed today at home and around the world.

Let every nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that we will pay any price, bear any heavy load, meet any suffering/difficult situation, support any friend, argue (against) any enemy, in order to promise the survival and the success of freedom.

This much we promise--and more.

To those old friends whose cultural and (related to religion or the soul) origins we share, we promise the loyalty of faithful friends. United, there is little we cannot do in many cooperative trips/businesses. Divided, there is little we can do--for we dare not meet a powerful challenge fighting and split into parts.

To those new States whom we welcome to the ranks of the free, we promise our word that one form of colonial control will not have died only to be replaced by a far more iron very bad treatment. We will not always expect to find them supporting our view. But we will always hope to find them strongly supporting their own freedom--and to remember that, in the past, those who foolishly searched for/tried to get power by riding the back of the tiger ended up inside.

To those peoples in the huts and villages across the globe struggling to break the (forces that join things together/promises to pay money back) of mass extreme unhappiness/extreme pain, we promise our best efforts to help them help themselves, for whatever period is needed/demanded--not because the Communists may be doing it, not because we look (for) their votes, but because it is right. If a free (community of people/all good people in the world) cannot help the many who are poor, it cannot save the few who are rich.

To our sister republics south of our border, we offer a special promise--to convert our good words into good deeds--in a new friendly partnership for progress--to help free men and free governments in casting off the chains of poorness. But this peaceful revolution of hope cannot become the prey of hateful powers. Let all our neighbors know that we will join with them to argue (against) (angry, violent behavior) or (weakening or destroying authority) anywhere in the Americas. And let every other power know that this (half of a globe, ball, etc.) intends to remain the master of its own house.

To that world (group of people/device made up of smaller parts) of independent countries, the United Nations, our last best hope in an age where the instruments of war have far ran faster than/won over the instruments of peace, we renew our promise of support--to prevent it from becoming only a forum for verbal abuse--to strengthen its shield of the new and the weak--and to enlarge the area in which its (official written order) may run.

Finally, to those nations who would make themselves our enemy, we offer not a promise but a request: that both sides begin again the search for peace, before the dark powers of destruction freed/released by science surround all people/(the kindness of people) in planned or (happening by chance, without any planning) self-destruction.

We dare not tempt them with weakness. For only when our arms are (good) enough beyond doubt can we be certain beyond doubt that they will never be employed.

But neither can two great and powerful groups of nations take comfort from our present course--both sides overloaded by the cost of modern weapons, both rightly nervous and upset because of the steady spread of the deadly atom, yet both racing to change that uncertain balance of terror that stays the hand of people's final war.

So let us begin again--remembering on both sides that kindness is not a sign of weakness, and honesty is always subject to proof. Let us never (work or talk with others to reach agreement/get through successfully) out of fear. But let us never fear to (work or talk with others to reach agreement/get through successfully).

Let both sides explore what problems unite us instead of overexplaining (or overworking) those problems which divide us.

Let both sides, for the first time, plan serious and exact proposals for the (careful examination of something) and control of arms--and bring the complete and total power to destroy other nations under the complete and total control of all nations.

Let both sides try to call for/use the wonders of science instead of its terrors. Together let us explore the stars, win (by force) the deserts, destroy/permanently remove disease, tap the ocean depths, and encourage the arts and commerce.

Let both sides unite to listen to in all corners of the earth the command of Isaiah--to "undo the very heavy loads ... and to let the badly mistreated go free."

And if an (important military or business position/important part of a beach) of cooperation may push back the jungle of (feeling that something is wrong or bad, but without proof), let both sides join in creating a new effort, not a new balance of power, but a new world of law, where the strong are just and the weak secure and the peace preserved.

All this will not be finished in the first 100 days. Nor will it be finished in the first 1,000 days, nor in the life of this Management, nor even maybe in our lifetime on this planet. But let us begin.

In your hands, my fellow people (who lawfully live in a country, state, etc.), more than in mine, will rest the final success or failure of our course. Since this country was founded, each generation of Americans has been brought to give statements (in court) to its national loyalty.



The graves of young Americans who answered the call to service surround the globe. Now the trumpet calls us again--not as a call to bear arms, though arms we need; not as a call to fight, though (involved in a fight/beat-up) we are--but a call to carry the responsibility of a long (the soft light just before sunrise or after sunset) struggle, year in and year out, "joyfully celebrating in hope, patient in trouble"--a struggle against the common enemies of man: very bad treatment, poorness, disease, and war itself.

Can we form/create against these enemies a grand and worldwide friendly partnership, North and South, East and West, that can promise to a more productive life for all people? Will you join in that historic effort?

In the long history of the world, only a few generations have been granted the role of defending freedom in its hour of maximum danger. I do not shrink from this responsibility--I welcome it. I do not believe that any of us would exchange places with any other people or any other generation. The energy, the faith, the loving loyalty which we bring to this effort will light our country and all who serve it--and the glow from that fire can truly light the world.

And so, my fellow Americans: ask not what your country can do for you--ask what you can do for your country.

My fellow people (who lawfully live in a country, state, etc.) of the world: ask not what America will do for you, but what together we can do for the freedom of man.

Finally, whether you are people (who lawfully live in a country, state, etc.) of America or people (who lawfully live in a country, state, etc.) of the world, ask of us the same high standards of strength and sacrifice which we ask of you. With a good sense of right and wrong our only sure reward, with history the final judge of our deeds, let us go forward to lead the land we love, asking His blessing and His help, but knowing that here on earth God's work must truly be our own.

### **Masters Speech #6: Robert F. Kennedy –April 4, 1968 On the Death of Martin Luther King**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I'm only going to talk to you just for a minute or so this evening, because I have some -- some very sad news for all of you -- Could you lower those signs, please? -- I have some very sad news for all of you, and, I think, sad news for all of our fellow people (who lawfully live in a country, state, etc.), and people who love peace all over the world; and that is that Martin Luther King was shot and was killed tonight in Memphis, Tennessee.

Martin Luther King dedicated his life to love and to justice between fellow human beings. He died in the cause of that effort. In this very hard day, in this very hard time for the United States, it's maybe well to ask what kind of a nation we are and what direction we want to move in. For those of you who are black -- (thinking about/when one thinks about) the evidence (based on facts and other evidence) is that there were white people who were responsible -- you can be filled with anger, and with hatred, and a desire for revenge.

We can move in that direction as a country, in greater (dividing of people into two groups with very different opinions) -- black people among blacks, and white among whites, filled with hatred toward one another. Or we can make an effort, as Martin Luther King did, to understand, and to understand, and replace that violence, that stain of violence and death that has spread across our land, with an effort to understand, kindness, and love.

For those of you who are black and are tempted to fill with -- be filled with hatred and lack of trust of the terribly unfair treatment of such an act, against all white people, I would only say

that I can also feel in my own heart the same kind of feeling. I had a member of my family killed, but he was killed by a white man.

But we have to make an effort in the United States. We have to make an effort to understand, to get beyond, or go beyond these rather **very hard** times.

My favorite poem, my -- my favorite poet was Aeschylus. And he once wrote:

Even in our sleep, pain which cannot forget

falls drop by drop upon the heart,

until, in our own **feelings that there is no hope,**

against our will,

comes wisdom

through the awful grace of God.

What we need in the United States is not division; what we need in the United States is not hatred; what we need in the United States is not violence and lawlessness, but is love, and wisdom, and **kindness** toward one another, and a feeling of justice toward those who still suffer within our country, whether they be white or whether they be black.

So I ask you tonight to return home, to say a prayer for the family of Martin Luther King -- yeah, it's true -- but more importantly to say a prayer for our own country, which all of us love -- a prayer for understanding and that **kindness** of which I spoke.

We can do well in this country. We will have **very hard** times. We've had **very hard** times in the past, but we -- and we will have **very hard** times in the future. It is not the end of violence; it is not the end of lawlessness; and it's not the end of **sickness/problem**.

But **almost all** white people and **almost all** black people in this country want to live together, want to improve the quality of our life, and want justice for all human beings that **accept/tolerate/obey** in our land.

And let's dedicate ourselves to what the Greeks wrote so many years ago: to **(not wild; easily controlled)** the **animal-like behavior** of man and make gentle the life of this world. Let us dedicate ourselves to that, and say a prayer for our country and for our people.

Thank you very much.

## **Masters Speech #7: Franklin Delano Roosevelt Pearl Harbor Speech**

Mr. Vice President, Mr. Speaker, Members of the Senate, and of the House of Representatives: Yesterday, December 7th, 1941 -- a date which will live in **fame (for something bad)** -- the United States of America was suddenly **and (in a carefully-planned way)** attacked by naval and air forces of the Empire of Japan.

The United States was at peace with that nation and, at the **asking for/encouraging** of Japan, was still in conversation with its government and its **(male ruler of a country)** looking toward the maintenance of peace in **the Pacific Ocean**.

**In fact**, one hour after Japanese air **large groups** **had begun** bombing in the American island of Oahu, the Japanese **representative** to the United States and his **fellow worker** delivered to our Secretary of State a formal reply to a recent American message. And while this reply stated that it seemed useless to continue the existing **polite/(to improve relationships with people) (back-and-forth conversations to agree on something)**, it contained no threat or hint of war or of armed attack.

It will be recorded that the distance of Hawaii from Japan makes it obvious that the attack **was**



(in a carefully-planned way) planned many days or even weeks ago. During the (in-between/helping) time, the Japanese government has (in a carefully-planned way) tried to lie to/fool the United States by false statements and expressions of hope for continued peace. The attack yesterday on the Hawaiian islands has caused extreme damage to American naval and military forces. I regret to tell you that very many American lives have been lost. Also, American ships have been reported torpedoed on the high seas between San Francisco and Honolulu.

Yesterday, the Japanese government also launched an attack against Malaya.

Last night, Japanese forces attacked Hong Kong.

Last night, Japanese forces attacked Guam.

Last night, Japanese forces attacked the Philippine Islands.

Last night, the Japanese attacked Wake Island.

And this morning, the Japanese attacked Midway Island.

Japan has, therefore, begun/tried a surprise offensive extending throughout the Pacific area.

The facts of yesterday and today speak for themselves. The people of the United States have already formed their opinions and well understand the effects/results/suggestions to the very life and safety of our nation.

As Commander in Chief of the Army and Navy, I have directed that all measures be taken for our defense. But always will our whole nation remember the character of the attack against us. No matter how long it may take us to overcome this pre-planned (sudden, unwanted entry into a place), the American people in their morally right might will win through to complete and total victory.

I believe that I understand/explain the will of the Congress and of the people when I strongly defend/strongly express that we will not only defend ourselves to the uttermost, but will make it very certain that this form of sneaky, criminal behavior will never again endanger us.

Angry feelings exist. There is no blinking at the fact that our people, our (land area owned or controlled by someone), and our interests are in serious danger.

With confidence in our armed forces, with the unbounding strong desire/formal decision about something of our people, we will gain the unavoidable victory -- so help us God.

I ask that the Congress declare that since the (without any reason) and cruel attack by Japan on Sunday, December 7th, 1941, a state of war has existed between the United States and the Japanese empire.

## **Master Speeches #8: Chief Joseph Thunder Traveling to the Loftier Mountain Heights - 1877**

Chief Joseph of the Nez Perce (1840?-1904) was known to his people as "Thunder Traveling to the Higher Mountain Heights." He led his people in an attempt to resist the takeover of their lands in the Oregon (land area owned or controlled by someone) by white settlers. In 1877, the Nez Perce were ordered to move to a reservation in Idaho. Chief Joseph agreed at first. But after members of his tribe killed a group of settlers, he tried to run away to Canada with his followers, traveling over 1500 miles through Oregon, Washington, Idaho, and Montana. Along the way they fought (more than two, but not a lot of) fights with the chasing after U.S. Army. Chief Joseph spoke these words when they finally gave up on October 5th, 1877.

Tell General Howard I know his heart. What he told me before, I have it in my heart. I am tired of fighting. Our Chiefs are killed; Looking Glass is dead, Ta Hool Hool Shute is dead. The old men are all dead. It is the young men who say yes or no. He who led on the young men is dead. It is cold, and we have no blankets; the little children are freezing to death. My people, some of them, have run away to the hills, and have no blankets, no food. No one knows where they are - maybe freezing to death. I want to have time to look for my children, and see how many of them I can find. Maybe I will find them among the dead. Hear me, my Chiefs! I am tired; my heart is sick and sad. From where the sun now stands I will fight no more forever.

### **Master Speeches #9: Queen Elizabeth's speech to troops at Tilbury (1588)**

My loving people,

We have been convinced by some that are careful of our safety, to pay attention how we commit our selves to armed large numbers, for fear of sneaky, criminal behavior; but I promise to you I do not want to live to not trust my faithful and loving people. Let very mean rulers fear, I have always so behaved myself that, under God, I have placed my biggest/most important strength and safeguard in the loyal hearts and good-will of my subjects; and therefore I am come among you, as you see, at this time, not for my recreation and play, but being resolved, in the middle and heat of the fight, to live and die among you all; to lay down for my God, and for my kingdom, and my people, my honor and my blood, even in the dust. I know I have the body but of a weak and weak woman; but I have the heart and stomach of a king, and of a king of England too, and think foul reject/rejection that Parma or Spain, or any prince of Europe, should dare to (suddenly enter a place in an unwanted way) the borders of my world; to which rather than any dishonour will grow by me, I myself will take up arms, I myself will be your general, judge, and rewarder of every one of your good qualities/advantages in the field. I know already, for your forwardness you have deserved rewards and crowns; and We do promise to you in the word of a prince, they will be duly paid you. In the meantime, my lieutenant general will be in my stead, than whom never prince commanded a more noble or worthy subject; not doubting but by your (quality where all rules and orders are followed) to my general, by your peace (between people) in the camp, and your bravery in the field, we will shortly have a famous victory over those enemies of my God, of my kingdom, and of my people.

### **Master Speeches #10: David McCullough Graduation Speech**

Dr. Wong, Dr. Keough, Mrs. Novogroski, Ms. Curran, members of the board of education, family and friends of the graduates, ladies and gentlemen of the Wellesley High School class of 2012, for the privilege of speaking to you this afternoon, I am honored and thankful. Thank you. So here we are... beginning/graduation ceremony... life's great forward-looking (formal, special event or series of actions). (And don't say, "What about weddings?" Weddings are one-sided and not enoughly effective. Weddings are bride-centric showiness. Other than agreeing to a list of unreasonable demands, the groom just stands there. No beautiful, hey-everybody-look-at-me procession. No being given away. No identity-changing statement. And can you imagine a television show dedicated to watching guys try on tuxedos? Their fathers sitting there misty-eyed with joy and shock/not believing, their brothers waiting (in a creepy way) in the corner mumbling with jealousy. Left to men, weddings would be, after limits-testing delaying working,

unplanned (and sudden), almost carelessly accidental... during halftime... on the way to the refrigerator. And then there's the frequency of failure: statistics tell us half of you will get divorced. A winning percentage like that'll get you last place in the American League East. The Baltimore Orioles do better than weddings.)

But this (formal, special event or series of actions)... beginning/graduation ceremony... a beginning/graduation ceremony works every time. From this day forward... truly... in sickness and in health, through (related to managing money) complete failures, through midlife serious problems and passably attractive sales reps at trade shows in Cincinnati, through reducing tolerance for annoyingness, through every difference, unsolvable and otherwise, you will stay forever graduated from high school, you and your diploma as one, 'til death do you part.

No, beginning/graduation ceremony is life's great ceremonial beginning, with its own attendant and highly appropriate (using physical things to show big ideas or feelings). Fitting, for example, for this lucky ceremony of passage, is where we find ourselves this afternoon, the location/stadium. (usually/ in a common and regular way), I avoid old and boring expressions like the terrible disease, wouldn't touch them with a ten-foot pole, but here we are on a literal level playing field. That matters. That says something. And your ceremonial costume...

shapeless, uniform, one-size-fits-all. Whether male or female, tall or short, educated person or lazy person, spray-tanned prom queen or (between stars and planets) X-Box killer, each of you is dressed, you'll (see/hear/become aware of), exactly the same. And your diploma... but for your name, exactly the same.

All of this is as it should be, because none of you is special.

You are not special. You are not (excellent/very unusual).

Opposite to what your u9 soccer trophy suggests, your glowing seventh grade report card, (even though there is the existence of) every promise of a certain fat purple dinosaur, that nice Mister Rogers and your crazy Aunt Sylvia, no matter how often your mother-based caped (person who tries to improve things or change things) has swooped in to save you... you're nothing special.

Yes, you've been spoiled (like a child who gets everything), spoiled (like a child who gets everything), (show love and attention)d upon, helmeted, bubble-wrapped. Yes, capable adults with other things to do have held you, kissed you, fed you, wiped your mouth, wiped your bottom, trained you, taught you, taught you, coached you, listened to you, counseled you, encouraged you, comforted you and encouraged you again. You've been nudged, convinced (in a sneaky way), sweet-talked and begged. You've been gave a party to and kissed up to and called sweetie pie. Yes, you have. And, certainly, we've been to your games, your plays, your (public speeches or performances), your science fairs. Completely and totally, smiles (start a fire/catch on fire) when you walk into a room, and hundreds (sudden, short breath in) with delight at your every tweet. Why, maybe you've even had your picture in the Townsman! [Editor's upgrade: Or The Swellesley Report!] And now you've won (by force) high school... and, clearly, here we all have gathered for you, the pride and joy of this fine community, the first to come out from that beautiful new building...

But do not get the idea you're anything special. Because you're not.

The evidence (that was actually seen) is everywhere, numbers even an English teacher can't ignore. Newton, Natick, Nee... I am allowed to say Needham, yes? ...that has to be two thousand high school graduates right there, give or take, and that's just the neighborhood Ns. Across the country no fewer than 3.2 million seniors are graduating about now from more than 37,000

high schools. That's 37,000 (people with the highest grades in their graduating classes)... 37,000 class presidents... 92,000 (singing together well/working together well) low female singing voices... 340,000 bragging jocks... 2,185,967 pairs of Uggs. But why limit ourselves to high school? After all, you're leaving it. So think about this: even if you're one in a million, on a planet of 6.8 billion that means there are nearly 7,000 people just like you. Imagine standing somewhere over there on Washington Street on Long, difficult race Monday and watching sixty-eight hundred yous go running by. And think about/believe for a moment the bigger picture: your planet, I'll remind you, is not the center of its solar system, your solar system is not the center of its (large star system/large group of things), your (large star system/large group of things) is not the center of the universe. In fact, star and planet scientists promise to us the universe has no center; therefore, you cannot be it. Neither can Donald Trump... which someone should tell him... although that hair is quite an important thing/big event.

"But, Dave," you cry, "Walt Whitman tells me I'm my own version of perfection! Epictetus tells me I have the spark of Zeus!" And I don't disagree. So that makes 6.8 billion examples of perfection, 6.8 billion sparks of Zeus. You see, if everyone is special, then no one is. If everyone gets a trophy, trophies become (without any point or purpose). In our unspoken but not so difficult to notice/skillful (related to Charles Darwin's ideas of evolution) competition with one another-which springs, I think, from our fear of our own unimportance, a subset of our fear (of a terrible future) of death -- we have of late, we Americans, to our harm, come to love complements more than real/honest (action of accomplishing or completing something challenging). We have come to see them as the point -- and we're happy to agree (after everyone gives something up) standards, or ignore reality, if we suspect that's the quickest way, or only way, to have something to put on the mantelpiece, something to present/ask/stand in a showy and fake way with, crow about, something with which to take advantage of ourselves into a better spot on the social symbol/important object pole. No longer is it how you play the game, no longer is it even whether you win or lose, or learn or grow, or enjoy yourself doing it... Now it's "So what does this get me?" As a result, we cheapen worthy efforts/tries, and building a Guatemalan medical clinic becomes more about the application to Bowdoin than the well-being of Guatemalans. It's a widespread disease -- and in its way, not even dear old Wellesley High is unable to be harmed... one of the best of the 37,000 nationwide, Wellesley High School... where good is no longer good enough, where a B is the new C, and the midlevel school courses are called Advanced College Placement. And I hope you caught me when I said "one of the best." I said "one of the best" so we can feel better about ourselves, so we can completely enjoy a little easy honor/difference, however unclear and unverifiable, and count ourselves among the elite, whoever they might be, and enjoy a perceived leg up on the perceived competition. But the phrase doesn't have a good explanation. By definition there can be only one best. You're it or you're not.

If you've learned anything in your years here I hope it's that education should be for, rather than material advantage, the excitement of learning. You've learned, too, I hope, as Sophocles promised to/certain us, that wisdom is the chief element of happiness. (Second is ice cream... just an fyi) I also hope you've learned enough to recognize how little you know... how little you know now... at the moment... for today is just the beginning. It's where you go from here that matters.

As you begin, then, and before you scatter to the winds, I strongly encourage you to do whatever you do for no reason other than you love it and believe in its importance. Don't

bother with work you don't believe in any more than you would a (husband or wife) you're not crazy about, (because of fear that the following will happen:) you too find yourself on the wrong side of a Baltimore Orioles comparison. Resist the easy comforts of satisfaction (while ignoring threats), the false and misleading (shiny, twinkling substance) of (wanting, more than anything else, to buy and own lots of nice things), the narcotic (state of being unable to move) of self-happiness (from meeting a need or reaching a goal). Be worthy of your advantages. And read... read all the time... read as (related to somebody sticking to what he or she believes is right), as a matter of self-respect. Read as a (giving food to/keeping alive) staple of life. Develop and protect a moral thinking and feeling and demonstrate the character to apply it. Dream big. Work hard. Think for yourself. Love everything you love, everyone you love, with all your might. And do so, please, with a sense of extreme importance, for every tick of the clock subtracts from fewer and fewer; and as surely as there are beginnings/graduation ceremonies there are endings, and you'll be in no condition to enjoy the (formal, special event or series of actions) attendant to that possible event no matter how very pleasant the afternoon.

The satisfying life, the (having a unique quality) life, the (clearly connected or related) life, is an (action of accomplishing or completing something challenging), not something that will fall into your lap because you're a nice person or mommy ordered it from the caterer. You'll note the founding fathers took pains to secure your non-transferable right to life, freedom and the pursuit of happiness-quite an active verb, "pursuit"-which leaves, I should think, little time for lying around watching birds roller-skate on YouTube. The first President Roosevelt, the old Rough Rider, (fought for/pleaded for) the difficult life. Mr. Thoreau wanted to drive life into a corner, to live deep and suck out all the (the deep insides of the bones). The poet Mary Oliver tells us to row, row into the circular flow and boil/upset. Locally, someone... I forget who... from time to time encourages young educated people to carpe the heck out of the diem. The point is the same: get busy, have at it. Don't wait for inspiration or passion to find you. Get up, get out, explore, find it yourself, and grab hold with both hands. (Now, before you dash off and get your YOLO tattoo, let me point out the stupidity of that trendy little expression-because you can and should live not only once, but every day of your life. Rather than You Only Live Once, it should be You Live Only Once... but because YLOO doesn't have the same ring, we (lift both shoulders) and decide it doesn't matter.)

None of this day-grabbing and taking control of, though, this YLOOing, should be understood/explained as license for (doing a lot of selfish things just to make yourself happy). Like complements should be, the satisfied life is a result, a pleasing (something produced along with something else). It's what happens when you're thinking about more important things. Climb the mountain not to plant your flag, but to support the challenge, enjoy the air and look/see the view. Climb it so you can see the world, not so the world can see you. Go to Paris to be in Paris, not to cross it off your list and congratulate yourself for being worldly. Exercise free will and (showing the ability to create interesting new things), independent thought not for the happiness (from meeting a need or reaching a goal)s they will bring you, but for the good they will do others, the rest of the 6.8 billion-and those who will follow them. And then you too will discover the great and curious truth of the human experience is that kindness is the best thing you can do for yourself. The sweetest joys of life, then, come only with the recognition that you're not special. Because everyone is. Congratulations. Good luck. Make for yourselves, please, for your sake and for ours, amazing/very unusual lives.

David McCullough