

#9607



GREAT AMERICAN SPEECHES: 80 YEARS OF POLITICAL ORATORY: PROGRAM ONE

FILMS FOR THE HUMANITIES & SCIENCES, 1995

Grade Levels: 10-13+

48 minutes

DESCRIPTION

Archival film footage and insightful commentary illuminate the different oratorical styles of leading politicians from the 1930s, including Franklin D. Roosevelt, Huey Long, Charles Coughlin, and Gerald I. K. Smith. Presents a unique view of this part of American history.

ACADEMIC STANDARDS

Subject Area: United States History – Era 7 – The Emergence of Modern America (1890-1930)

- ★ Standard: Understands how the United States changed between the post-World War I years and the eve of the Great Depression
 - Benchmark: Understands the rise of a mass culture in the 1920s (e.g., the media and recreation available in the 1920s; how increased leisure time promoted the growth of professional sports, amusement parks, and national parks; the impact of recreational areas on the local environment) (See Instructional Goal #1.)

Subject Area: World History – Era 8 – A Half-Century of Crisis and Achievement, 1900-1945

- ★ Standard: Understands the search for peace and stability throughout the world in the 1920s and 1930s
 - Benchmark: Understands the emergence of a new mass and popular culture between 1900 and 1940 (e.g., how new modes of transportation affected world commerce, international migration, and work and leisure habits; how the new media - newspapers, magazines, commercial advertising, film, and radio - contributed to the rise of mass culture around the world; the new approaches to visual art represented by the works of Pablo Picasso and Henri Matisse; the types of leisure activity and sports people enjoyed; changes in clothing fashions for men and women, and how they reflected changes in social attitudes and values) (See Instructional Goal #1.)

Subject Area: Civics - How Does the Government Established by the Constitution Embody the Purposes, Values, and Principles of American Democracy?

- ★ Standard: Understands what is meant by "the public agenda," how it is set, and how it is influenced by public opinion and the media
 - Benchmark: Understands the ways in which television, radio, the press, newsletters, and emerging means of communication influence American politics; and understands the

extent to which various traditional forms of political persuasion have been replaced by electronic media (See Instructional Goals #2 and 3.)

INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS

1. To depict the rise of a mass political culture and how televised speeches influenced politics.
2. To understand ways in which television and radio as emerging means of communication influenced American politics especially on both Roosevelt presidencies.
3. To describe the extent to which various traditional forms of political persuasion have been replaced and changed by televised oratory.

VOCABULARY

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|---------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. eloquent | 12. extemporized |
| 2. archives | 13. monotony |
| 3. oratory | 14. standard versions |
| 4. convention | 15. ovation |
| 5. inaugurals | 16. radio commentator |
| 6. public discourse | 17. broadcast |
| 7. newsreel | 18. endorsement |
| 8. center stage | 19. filibuster |
| 9. campaigning | 20. journalist |
| 10. podium | 21. grassroots |
| 11. footage | |



BEFORE SHOWING

1. Review the significant events and political climate in the United States in the 1920s and 1930s. Consider the Great Depression and presidential races.
2. List possible ways that televising American speeches may have influenced politics and the American public.

AFTER SHOWING

► Discussion Items and Questions

1. How did presidential candidates Calvin Coolidge and Robert La Follette Sr. use oratory in their campaigns? What were the typical components of pre-radio and pre-film oratory?
2. Why was Teddy Roosevelt's political campaign referred to as the bully pulpit? How did his finesse as a public speaker influence his presidential campaigns?
3. What role did FDR play in creating his inaugural speech? How has film changed inaugurals? What determined which parts of FDR's inaugural would be remembered?
4. Why was Charles E. Coughlin called the "radio priest"? What was his initial view of FDR? Why did his enthusiasm for FDR wane? Why did he eventually lose popularity?
5. What brought Huey Long into the spotlight? What was the intent of his "Share the Wealth" oratory? How did Long influence FDR? How did Long's assassination ensure FDR's reelection?



6. How did Eugene Talmadge and his supporters work a crowd before he spoke? How did Talmadge use improvisation and his manuscript? What was the "Wildman from Sugar Creek's" stance on FDR?
7. In what way was Gerald L.K. Smith the "Greatest of Them All?" What was his background? What was his appeal? How did he erase himself from the American political scene?
8. How did FDR project confidence and optimism in the later years of his presidency? How was his speaking style influenced by his handicap? What of his oratorical techniques are still used by presidents today?

► Applications and Activities

1. Research the speakers including time period, background, and personal information. Consider using the Speech Archives and Trivia sections of the video's Web site. (See Related Resources.)
 - a. William Jennings Bryan's "Cross of Gold"
 - b. Theodore Roosevelt's "A Square Deal"
 - c. Robert La Follette's August 1924 speech
 - d. Franklin D. Roosevelt's First Inaugural Speech
 - e. Charles E. Coughlin's "Roosevelt or Ruin"
 - f. Huey Long's "Share the Wealth"
 - g. Franklin D. Roosevelt's "Grilled Millionaire"
2. Compare speeches from the video to modern political equivalents. Consider oratorical styles, the influence of simultaneous broadcasting, and international media. Contrast newspaper, radio, and television coverage.
3. Survey others regarding what role media plays in their opinion of a president and his administration. Consider appearance, oratorical style, and media coverage. Contrast with historical influences.



RELATED RESOURCES



- [Great American Speeches: 80 Years of Political Oratory: Program Two #9608](#)
- [Great American Speeches: 80 Years of Political Oratory: Program Three #9606](#)
- [Great American Speeches: 80 Years of Political Oratory: Program Four #9605](#)



World Wide Web

The following Web sites complement the contents of this guide; they were selected by professionals who have experience in teaching deaf and hard of hearing students. Every effort was made to select accurate, educationally relevant, and "kid safe" sites. However, teachers should preview them before use. The U.S. Department of Education, the National Association of the Deaf, and the Captioned Media Program do not endorse the sites and are not responsible for their content.

- **GREAT AMERICAN SPEECHES: 80 YEARS OF POLITICAL ORATORY**

<http://www.pbs.org/greatspeeches/>

This official website for the video includes an extensive speech archive, American History Challenge scored on-line, and trivia regarding selected speakers from the series. Students can write political speeches, evaluate their skill for reading a speech off a teleprompter, and critique a political speech. The teacher section provides lesson plans specifically related to the video.



- **THE AMERICAN PRESIDENCY: A GLORIOUS BURDEN**

<http://americanhistory.si.edu/presidency/home.html>

This Smithsonian subsite has extensive materials regarding presidential campaigns and presidencies. With extensive teacher's guides for middle school through high school students, this site includes lesson plans, on-line interactive lessons, and a thorough list of related links.



- **GIFTS OF SPEECH: WOMEN'S SPEECHES FROM AROUND THE WORLD**

<http://gos.sbc.edu/>

This site includes a list of 100 American speeches by both men and women including Richard Nixon, Malcolm X, Barbara Jordan, and Hillary Clinton. Some of the material in the collection may not be suitable for younger students.



- **THE MEDIA HISTORY PROJECT**

<http://www.mediahistory.umn.edu/index2.html>

A comprehensive site that explores the effect of media throughout history. Includes an interactive timeline and on-line timeline quiz, in addition to resources for the classroom and an extensive listing of links.

- **CIVITAS INTERNATIONAL** <http://www.civnet.org/>

This searchable site promotes civic education. It has resources for students and teachers including curricular materials, documents (copies of documents and speeches), and related links.