

## George W. Bush: Inaugural Speech

Thank you all. Chief Justice Rehnquist, President Carter, President Bush, President Clinton,  
distinguished guests and my fellow citizens. The peaceful transfer of authority is rare in history, yet  
5 common in our country. With a simple oath we affirm old traditions and make new beginnings. As I  
begin, I thank President Clinton for his service to our nation, and I thank Vice-President Gore for a  
contest conducted with spirit and ended with grace. I am honored and humbled to stand here where so  
very of America's leaders have come before me and so many will follow.

We have a place, all of us, in a long story – a story we continue, but whose end we will not see. It is  
10 the story of a new world that became a friend and liberator of the old, the story of a slave-holding  
society that became a servant of freedom. the story of a power that went into the world to protect but  
not possess, to defend but not to conquer.

It is the American story– a story of flawed and fallible people, bunted across the generations by grand  
and enduring ideals. The grandest of these ideals is an unfolding American promise that everyone  
15 belongs, that everyone deserves a chance, that no insignificant person was ever born.  
Americans are called to enact this promise in our lives and in our laws . And though our nation has  
sometimes halted, and sometimes delayed, we must follow no other course. Through much of the last  
century, America's faith in freedom and democracy was a rock in a raging sea. Now it is a seed upon  
the wind, taking root in many nations. Our democratic faith is more than the creed of our country, it is  
20 the inborn hope of our humanity, an ideal we carry but do not own, a trust we bear and pass along.  
And even after nearly 225 years, we have a long way yet to travel.

While many of our citizens prosper, others doubt the promise, even the justice, of our own country.  
The ambitions of some Americans are limited by failing schools and hidden prejudice and the  
circumstances of their birth. And sometimes our differences run so deep, it seems we share a  
25 continent, but not a country. We do not accept this, and we will not allow it. Our unity, our union is the  
serious work of leaders and citizens in every generation. And this is my solemn pledge: I will work to  
build a single nation of justice and opportunity.

I know this is in our reach because we are guided by a power larger than ourselves who creates us  
equal in His image. And we are confident in principles that unite and lead us onward. America has  
30 never been united by blood or birth or soil. We are hound by ideals that move us beyond our  
backgrounds, lift us above our interests and teach us what it means to be citizens. Every child must be  
taught these principles. Every citizen must uphold them. And every immigrant, by embracing these  
ideals, makes our country more, not less, American.

Today, we affirm a new commitment to live out our nation's promise through civility, courage,  
35 compassion and character. America, at its best, matches a commitment to principle with a concern for  
civility. A civil society demands from each of us good will and respect, fair dealing and forgiveness.  
(...)

America, at its best, is also courageous. Our national courage has been clear in times of depression and  
war, when defeating common dangers defined our common good. Now we must choose if the example  
40 of our fathers and mothers will inspire us or condemn us. We must show courage in a time of blessing  
by confronting problems instead of passing them on to future generations.

Together, we will reclaim America's schools, before ignorance and apathy claim more young lives.  
We will reform Social Security and Medicare, sparing our children from struggles we have the power  
to prevent. And we will reduce taxes, to recover the momentum of our economy and reward the effort  
45 and enterprise of working Americans.

We will build our defenses beyond challenge, lest weakness invite challenge. We will confront  
weapons of mass destruction, so that a new century is spared new horrors. The enemies of liberty and  
our country should make no mistake, America remains engaged in the world by history and by choice,  
shaping a balance of power that favors freedom. We will defend our allies and our interests. We will  
50 show purpose without arrogance. We will meet aggression and bad faith with resolve and strength.  
And to all nations, we will speak for the values that gave our nation birth.

America, at its best, is compassionate. In the quiet of American conscience, we know that deep, persistent poverty is unworthy of our nation's promise. And whatever our views of its cause, we can agree that children at risk are not at fault. Abandonment and abuse are not acts of God, they are failures of love.

55 And the proliferation of prisons, however necessary, is no substitute for hope and order in our souls. Where there is suffering, there is duty. Americans in need are not strangers, they are citizens, not problems but priorities. And all of us are diminished when any are hopeless.

60 Government has great responsibilities for public safety and public health, for civil rights and common schools. Yet compassion is the work of a nation, not just a government. And some needs and hurts are so deep they will only respond to a mentor's touch or a pastor's prayer. Church and charity, synagogue and mosque lend our communities their humanity, and they will have an honored place in our plans and in our laws.

65 Many in our country do not know the pain of poverty, but we can listen to those who do. And I can pledge our nation to a goal: When we see that wounded traveler on the road to Jericho, we will not pass to the other side.

70 America, at its best, is a place where personal responsibility is valued and expected. Encouraging responsibility is not a search for scapegoats, it is a call to conscience. And though it requires sacrifice, it brings a deeper fulfillment. We find the fullness of life not only in options, but in commitments. And we find that children and community are the commitments that set us free.

Our public interest depends on private character, on civic duty and family bonds and basic fairness, on uncounted, unhonored acts of decency which give direction to our freedom. Sometimes in life we are called to do great things. But as a saint of our times has said, every day we are called to do small things with great love. The most important tasks of a democracy are done by everyone. [...]

75 God bless you all, and God bless America.

80 fallible: able and likely to make mistakes creed: system of religious beliefs solemn: serious pledge: promise civility: politeness, consideration compassion: pity for the suffering of another person Social Security: (in the USA) government programme providing unemployment benefits and old-age insurance Medicare: (in the USA) system of medical care for old people provided by the government lest (fml): damit nicht act of God an event caused by natural forces beyond human control, such as a storm, a flood or an earthquake proliferation rapid increase in numbers wounded traveler allusion to the Biblical parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37) scapegoat: Sündenbock a saint of our times: Mother Teresa of Calcutta

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#### Assignments:

- 1) Did what Bush said reflect what you had expected?
- 2) Describe Bush's vision of America at its best.
- 3) Identify the recurring themes in this speech.
- 4) Analyse the stylistic devices he uses.
- 5) What is your personal reaction to this inaugural address? Explain in some detail.
- 6) From what you know about the USA, its history, background and attitudes, list and analyse the elements that you would consider typically American.