

Lesson Name : 23

Lesson Title : Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address

Course Name : English 2 Part 1 [Honors]

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Essential Instruction

Please read Abraham Lincoln's "[Second Inaugural Address](#)," that was given on Saturday, March 4, 1865.



### Rhetorical Work

A **rhetorical work** is one that is usually analyzed to determine *how* the author makes his or her points about a topic, instead of analyzing *what* the author says. Some of the most commonly used works for **rhetorical analysis** are speeches, because they are given to an audience by an important figure. This important figure usually plays a role in the pursuit of the goals that are being discussed in the speech, and these speeches are often about politics. A **rhetorical work** relies on the audience's emotions, morals, and values to get across its message.

Let's review how to analyze a **rhetorical work** by using Lincoln's "Second Inaugural Address."

First, identify what the work or speech is about. This will help you to understand why Lincoln gave this speech. We know from the title that this is his second inaugural address, which is the ceremony that inducts each president into office. This is his second inauguration, so it is the beginning of his second term in office. Let's look at an example from the text that will help you to figure out what he is speaking about specifically

Both parties deprecated war, but one of them would *make* war rather than let the nation survive, and the other would *accept* war rather than let it perish, and the war came.

This statement shows that Lincoln was reflecting about the Civil War.

Because this is a **rhetorical work**, the reader needs to think about why and how Lincoln is addressing this crowd. He is trying to reunite the country during this time of war that literally divided the country into two. The next question to ask yourself is: What is the purpose of this speech? Is it to inform, to criticize, or to persuade?

Here is an example from the speech that will help you to decide.

With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in, to bind up the nation's wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan, to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations.

The purpose is to persuade the people of the country to try to mend their wounds of the war and to try to move on in peace, and now you understand *how* he gave the speech.

### Cultural and Historical Significance

The **cultural significance** that you should be thinking about is about how the American people who suffered many recent losses during this war were looking towards President Lincoln to ease their troubles. People wanted to know that the war was not in vain, and that their concerns and beliefs for the future would be taken into account. Because this war split the country, Lincoln stood by his and the Union's position that slavery was wrong. He also had to try not to alienate, or push away, the Confederacy and try to unite the country.

The **historical significance** of this speech is that this speech is for Lincoln's second inauguration, and his first term was completely consumed by the Civil War. The war began very quickly after he took office, and ended shortly after this speech. It is also an important fact to note that John Wilkes Booth assassinated Lincoln only about a month after he gave this speech. Booth thought that he would help the Confederacy by killing Lincoln.

### Context Clues

**Context clues** are *helper* words that help to give meaning to unfamiliar vocabulary words. As you read a word that you aren't familiar with, try to see what the rest of the sentence or paragraph means and then fill in the blank with your best logical guess. Let's look at an example for review.

While the inaugural address was being delivered from this place, devoted altogether to *saving* the Union without war, insurgent agents were in the city seeking to *destroy* it without war—seeking to **dissolve** the Union and divide effects by negotiation. Both parties deprecated war, but one of them would *make* war rather than let the nation survive, and the other would *accept* war rather than let it perish, and the war came.”

The bolded word **dissolve** is an unfamiliar vocabulary word. The context clues that will help you to understand the meaning of **dissolved** are: “insurgent agents,” “seeking to destroy it,” “divide effects,” and “let it perish.”

All of these words should lead you to conclude that **dissolve** means there is something that is being forced to end. In fact, it means to close down or dismiss.



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### Vocabulary

Understanding the vocabulary can really help you to gain understanding from the material. Here are some vocabulary words that are used in this lesson.

1. **expiration** – noun – the ending of a period of time
2. **engross** – verb – absorb all the attention or interest of
3. **ventured** – verb – offered; volunteered; submitted
4. **impending** – adj. – close; near; approaching
5. **deprecate** – verb – express disapproval of
6. **localize** – verb – restrict something to a particular place
7. **constituted** – verb – created; generated
8. **perpetuate** – verb – preserve or maintain
9. **fundamental** – adj. – forming a necessary base or core; of central importance
10. **unrequited** – adj. – not returned or rewarded