

Lesson Name : 29

Lesson Title : Roosevelt's State of the Union Address, Section 1

Course Name : English 2 Part 1 [Honors]

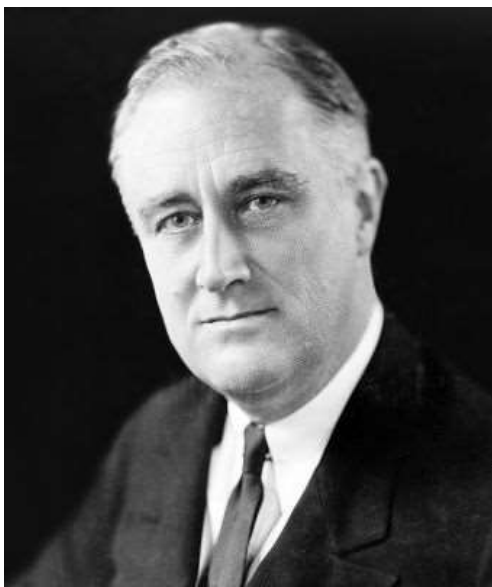
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Essential Instruction

Please read Franklin Delano Roosevelt's "[State of the Union Address](#)" from the beginning through the line, "In this war, we have been compelled to learn..."



Rhetorical Work

A **rhetorical work** is one that is analyzed to determine *how* and *why* the author is speaking or writing the work. This is different from most literary analysis, which explores *what* the author is writing. Simply put, the author's intentions and success in realizing these intentions with his or her writing are more important than what he or she actually wrote.

The 32nd president of the United States, Franklin Delano Roosevelt (FDR), gave his annual address to Congress on January 11, 1944. This is considered an example of a **rhetorical work**, because, as president, he was, theoretically, the most powerful person in the country. This means that everything that he said or did either gained support or lost the support of the American people.

The first step that a reader should take in beginning a **rhetorical analysis** is to understand about what topic the author is writing or speaking about. President Roosevelt's State of the Union Address was given during a very problematic time in history, when there was both a World War and an economic, or money, crisis in the US. Let's look at an example from the text that explains what this speech is about.

In this war, we have been compelled to learn how interdependent upon each other are all groups and sections of the population of America.

Next, the reader should think about why the speaker is addressing the audience. Is the purpose to inform, to criticize, or to persuade? Although the answer can include a combination of all three, it is helpful to have this question in mind as you proceed with your **rhetorical analysis**.

Now you should think of some of the **rhetorical devices** that the author used to make the work effective. More specifically, which words, phrases, or literary techniques engaged the audience the most in the work? President Roosevelt repeats the phrases “this war” and “that war” many times throughout his speech as both a way to emphasize the importance of the wars and to contrast the differences between them, as well as the importance of not committing the same mistakes that were made in the past. Let’s look at an example from the text.

In the last war such discussions, such meetings, did not even begin until the shooting had stopped and the delegates began to assemble at the peace table. There had been no previous opportunities for man-to-man discussions which lead to meetings of minds. The result was a peace which was not a peace.

That was a mistake which we are not repeating in this war.

Cultural and Historical Significance

It is also very important to note the **cultural and historical significance** of President Roosevelt’s “State of the Union Address.” During this time period, the country was still hopeful that the Second World War was close to an end. Additionally, the American people were still struggling financially from the lack of jobs and, therefore, lack of money. Between these two devastating occurrences, President Roosevelt had a lot of people to console, or make feel better. It is also important to note that this was the beginning of President Roosevelt’s fourth and final term as President of the United States.

Context Clues

President Roosevelt uses some complex terms throughout his speech. You should use **context clues**, as “helper” words in the surrounding paragraphs and sentences to help you to uncover the meaning of unfamiliar vocabulary words. Let’s look at an example from the text:

If we analyze American history impartially, we cannot escape the fact that in our past we have not always forgotten individual and selfish and partisan interests in time of war—we have not always been united in purpose and direction. We cannot overlook the serious **dissensions** and the lack of unity in our war of the Revolution, in our War of 1812, or in our War Between the States, when the survival of the Union itself was at stake.

The context clues that will help you to identify the meaning of the word **dissensions** are: “individual and selfish and partisan interests,” “have not always been united,” “lack of unity,” and “the survival of the Union itself was at stake.” All of these clues talk about a lack of unity and point to the fact that a **dissension** must be something that causes people to disagree or separate. In fact, **dissensions** are *disagreements that cause people in a group to argue about things that are important to them.*



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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. **gangster** – noun – a member of a group of violent criminals
2. **interim** – noun – the intervening time
3. **ostrich** – noun – a person who refuses to face reality or accept facts
4. **isolationism** – noun – a policy of remaining apart from the affairs or interests of other groups, especially those of other countries
5. **candor** – noun – the quality of being open and honest in expression; frankness
6. **conversant** – adj. – familiar with or knowledgeable about something
7. **preferment** – noun – promotion or appointment to a position or office
8. **hampers** – verb – hinders or impedes the movement or progress of
9. **partisan** – noun – a strong supporter of a party, cause, or person
10. **dissensions** – noun – disagreements that lead to arguments