
Objectives:

- Students will be able to analyze a rhetorical work and to understand its cultural influence and its historical significance.
- Students will be able to use context clues to determine the meanings of unfamiliar words.
- Students will be able to correctly use vocabulary words.

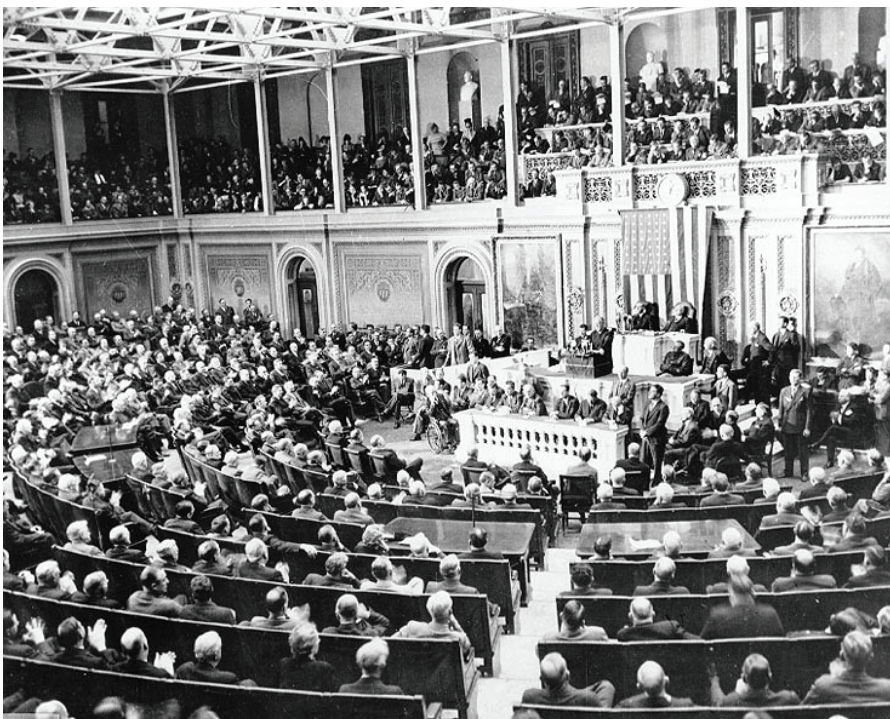
Franklin Delano Roosevelt (1882 – 1945)

Franklin D. Roosevelt, also known by his initials FDR, was the 32nd President of the United States. His “1944 State of the Union Address” is known as the *Second Bill of Rights* or the *Economic Bill of Rights* speech. In it, President Roosevelt addresses the rising concerns about war, economy, and the need for America to become a truly unified nation.

Historical and Cultural Significance

A lot is going on in the world in 1944, especially in America. President Roosevelt references the need Americans have for one another in order to survive. While America’s brave soldiers are dying in foreign lands for ideals they believe in, American civilians here in the states fight over meaningless things. America is having trouble cooperating as a unified whole.

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



The President continues:

If ever there was a time to subordinate individual or group selfishness to the national good, that time is now. Disunity at home—bickerings, self-seeking partisanship, stoppages of work, inflation, business as usual, politics as usual, luxury as usual these are the influences which can undermine the morale of the brave men ready to die at the front for us here.

The next passage contains a very **historically and culturally significant** message:

A national service law which ... will make available for war production or for any other essential services every able-bodied adult in this Nation.

Pay attention to the fact the President says, “every able-bodied adult.” Until this point in American **history**, there were very few jobs for women outside the home. Women could work as either teachers or nurses. President Roosevelt is saying that “war production or any other essential service” should be open to women. And women by the tens of thousands went to work in the factories making the necessary goods America needed for the war effort. The place for women in society was forever changed due to this revolutionary change.

Context Clues

Context clues are “helper” words and phrases that will help you determine the meaning of unfamiliar words. They can be found within the same sentence or in surrounding sentences. There may be words unfamiliar to you in President Roosevelt’s *Second Bill of Rights* speech. Let’s have a look.

To place a reasonable floor under the prices the farmer may expect for his production; and to place a **ceiling** on the prices a consumer will have to pay for the food he buys.

To determine the word “ceiling” means in this context, look at the entire passage. The President is making a contrasting comparison. He wants to place a “floor under the prices” for farmers and a “ceiling” on the prices Americans will have to pay for food. You know that a floor is the stable lower limit of a room. So, “a *ceiling* on the prices” must mean an upper limit, and that is exactly what the President means. He wants to ensure that Americans will not be charged too much money for the food they buy.

Vocabulary

Understanding the vocabulary used by President Roosevelt in his *Second Bill of Rights* speech will help you understand and better appreciate the power it had over the American people. Let’s look at some words found within this section of the speech that may be unfamiliar to you.

Morale – noun – The positive mental state or condition of someone

They had been at sea for months; the *morale* of the ship’s crew was at an all-time low.

Partisanship – noun – Dedicated support to a particular group or cause

Self-seeking *partisanship* fueled the disunity of America during the 1940s.

Seizure – noun – The sudden act of being taken or seized

The deputy oversaw the *seizure* of the criminal's property.

Undermine – verb – To weaken

Even the harsh reality of war can *undermine* the morale of brave men.

Growth & Assessment

1. What did President Roosevelt say would happen if Americans do not unite?
 - a. Help the Germans
 - b. Undermine morale
 - c. Lose the war
 - d. Taxes will rise
2. What historically significant event occurred as a result of President Roosevelt's speech that ultimately changed America?
 - a. Radio was allowed to broadcast live news
 - b. African Americans were allowed to vote
 - c. Women finally entered the workforce
 - d. Land was given back to the native Americans
3. What is the meaning of the word, undermine?
 - a. To find a landmine
 - b. A mine shaft
 - c. To be under a mine
 - d. To weaken
4. Why is the Second Bill of Rights speech considered persuasive?
5. What does the word morale mean? Use it in a sentence.

