

★ Supplementary Material ★

We the People

The
Government and Politics
of the
United States of America



An Introduction

Readings, Vocabulary, and Discussion

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Explanation and Contents List

Here are some free supplemental materials that may help when discussing the readings in *We the People*. Much of this material is in the public domain and available for free on the internet from many sources.

We may from time to time add material to this file. If there is something in the public domain or not needing copyright protection that you think should be added, please let us know at andy@ProLinguaAssociates.com or 800-366-4775.

We did not include these materials in the book to keep the book price down, but we have put them here for your convenience.

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The US Constitution and Amendments

<https://constitutioncenter.org/media/files/constitution.pdf>
or <https://constitutionus.com>

Formal Oaths in the US

Americans swear or affirm an oath before taking official offices. New citizens swear an oath when they become citizens at naturalization ceremonies. In some states, citizens may be asked to swear or sign a voter's oath when they register to vote, although this becoming less common. When people are chosen to serve on a jury at all levels, from local courts to the federal courts, they swear an oath. Witnesses in trials are required to swear an oath to "tell the truth and nothing but the truth." In some situations if people lie under oath, they may be charged with a crime.

People taking public office are sworn in take an oath of office. This is true of anyone joining the military at any level. It is true of all local, state, and federal legislators, judges, and administrators. These oaths vary. There is a lot of information on them that you can search for on the internet; Wikipedia is a good source.

As stated in the US Constitution, at their inauguration when US Presidents become President either for the first time or for a second term, they must take the following Oath or Affirmation:

"I do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will faithfully execute the Office of President of the United States, and will to the best of my Ability, preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution of the United States."

Starting with George Washington, most Presidents have added to the end of this oath the phrase "so help me God." Most Presidents, governors, legislators, judges, and military officers raise their right hand and put their left hand on a bible or similar book when swearing. However, this is not necessary. Many people do not believe in God and in some religions and cultures it is not permitted to swear on oath; for this reason, officers are allowed to substitute "I affirm" for "I swear."

Wikipedia says about oaths of citizenship around the world: "An Oath of Citizenship is an oath taken by immigrants that officially naturalizes immigrants into citizens. It is often the final step in this process, and is usually done in a ceremonial capacity. An oath of citizenship is designed to be a statement of loyalty and patriotism to the new country. In countries which retain a monarchical system of government, an oath of allegiance to the monarch is often required as well. Adding an oath to God to the end of an oath is usually optional."

The standard Oath of Citizenship in the United States as of July 4th, 2019 is:

"I hereby declare, on oath, that I absolutely and entirely renounce and abjure all allegiance and fidelity to any foreign prince, potentate, state, or sovereignty, of whom or which I have heretofore been a subject or citizen; that I will support and defend the Constitution and laws of the United States of America."

A longer, official version is: *"I hereby declare, on oath, that I absolutely and entirely renounce and abjure all allegiance and fidelity to any foreign prince, potentate, state, or sovereignty of whom or which I have heretofore been a subject or citizen; that I will support and defend the Constitution and laws of the United States of America against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that I will bear arms on behalf of the United States when required by the law; that I will perform noncombatant service in the Armed Forces of the United States when required by the law; that I will perform work of national importance under civilian direction when required by the law; and that I take this obligation freely without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion; so help me God."*

Pledging Allegiance to the American Flag

Americans are often expected to pledge allegiance to the American Flag. This is a patriotic statement and not a legal oath. In school, in Congress and other governmental and public meetings, and in some cases in church and other places of worship, people remove their hats and put their right hands over their hearts, or they salute or raise their right hands, saying:

“I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one Nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.”

Wikipedia explains the history of the pledge:

“The Pledge of Allegiance of the United States is an expression of allegiance to the flag of the United States and to the republic of the United States of America. It was originally composed by Captain George Thatcher Balch, a Union Army Officer during the Civil War and later a teacher of patriotism in New York City schools. [After the Civil War, he wanted people to say clearly and in public that the United States is one, indivisible nation.]

“The form of the pledge used today was largely devised by Francis Bellamy in 1892, and formally adopted by Congress as the pledge in 1942. The official name of The Pledge of Allegiance was adopted in 1945. The most recent alteration of its wording came on Flag Day in 1954, when the words “under God” were added.”

Some people feel that it is not right to say “under God” in the pledge. Some of these people are not religious; however, others are religious but feel that it is wrong to “mix church and state,” that the Constitution explicitly forbids the establishment of any religion. These people either refuse to join the pledge or they say the traditional form: *“one Nation, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.”*

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The Star-Spangled Banner

(The National Anthem of the United States)

Oh, say can you see, by the dawn's early light,
What so proudly we hail'd at the twilight's last gleaming?
Whose broad stripes and bright stars, thro' the perilous fight,
O'er the ramparts we watch'd, were so gallantly streaming?
And the rockets' red glare, the bombs bursting in air,
Gave proof thro' the night that our flag was still there.
Oh, say does that star-spangled banner yet wave
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave?

Oh, thus be it ever when free-men shall stand
Between their lov'd home and the war's desolation;
Blest with vict'ry and peace, may the heav'n-rescued land
Praise the Pow'r that hath made and preserv'd us a nation!
Then conquer we must, when our cause it is just,
And this be our motto: "In God is our trust!"
And the star-spangled banner in triumph shall wave
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave!

The Gettysburg Address

Abraham Lincoln, 1863

Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation or any nation so conceived and so dedicated can long endure. We are met on a great battlefield of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field as a final resting-place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.

But in a larger sense, we can not dedicate, we can not consecrate, we can not hallow this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living rather to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us – that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion – that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain, that this nation under God shall have a new birth of freedom, and that government of the people, by the people, for the people shall not perish from the earth.



Just before the end of the Civil War, in his **second inaugural address** on March 4th, 1865, President Lincoln said: *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.*

Lincoln was assassinated on April 15th.

“I Have A Dream”

Martin Luther King, Jr.’s Address at the Lincoln Memorial, 1963

Five score years ago, a great American, in whose symbolic shadow we stand, signed the Emancipation Proclamation. This momentous decree came as a great beacon light of hope to millions of Negro slaves who had been seared in the flames of withering injustice. It came as a joyous daybreak to end the long night of captivity. But one hundred years later, we must face the tragic fact that the Negro is still not free.

One hundred years later, the life of the Negro is still sadly crippled by the manacles of segregation and the chains of discrimination. One hundred years later, the Negro lives on a lonely island of poverty in the midst of a vast ocean of material prosperity. One hundred years later, the Negro is still languishing in the corners of American society and finds himself an exile in his own land. . . .

I say to you today, my friends, that in spite of the difficulties and frustrations of the moment, I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream.

I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: “We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal.”

I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slaveowners will be able to sit down together at a table of brotherhood.

I have a dream that one day even the state of Mississippi, a desert state, sweltering with the heat of injustice and oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice.

I have a dream that my four children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.

I have a dream today. I have a dream that one day the state of Alabama, whose governor’s lips are presently dripping with the words of interposition and nullification, will be transformed into a situation where little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls and walk together as sisters and brothers.

I have a dream today. I have a dream that one day every valley shall be exalted, every hill and mountain shall be made low, the rough places will be made plain, and the crooked places will be made straight, and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together.

This is our hope. This is the faith with which I return to the South. With this faith we will be able to hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope. With this faith we will be able to transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood. With this faith we will be able to work together, to pray together, to struggle together, to go to jail together, to stand up for freedom together, knowing that we will be free one day.

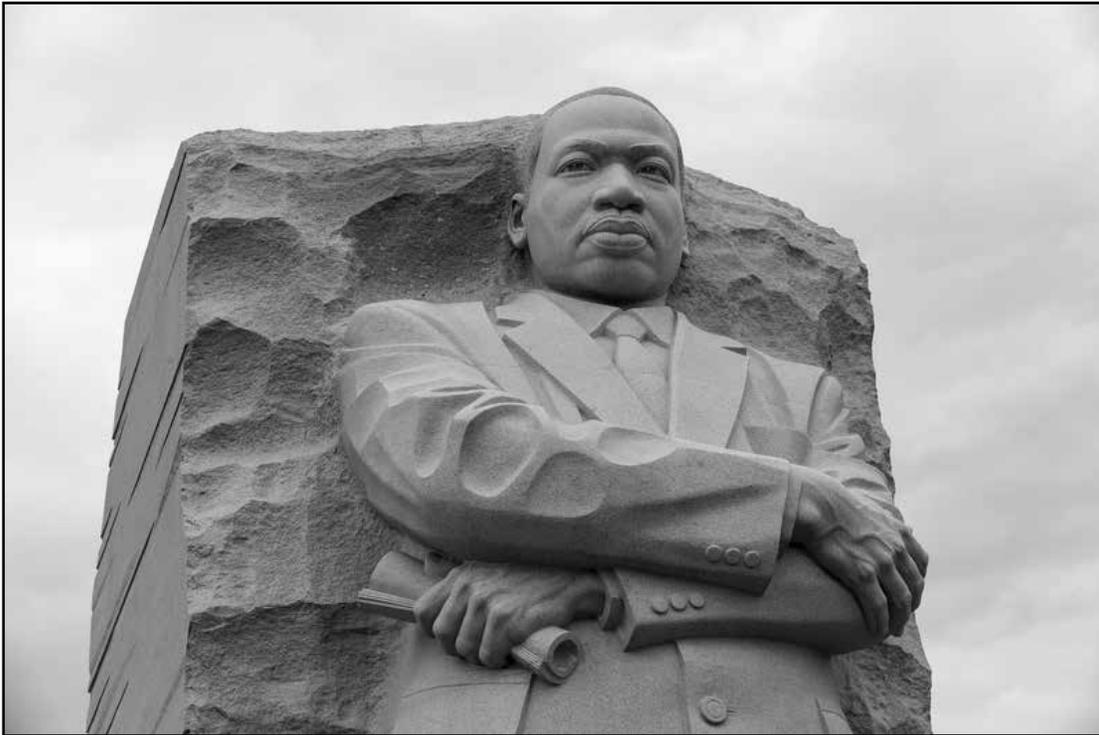
This will be the day when all of God’s children will be able to sing with a new meaning,

“My country, ‘tis of thee,
sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing.
Land where my fathers died,
land of the Pilgrims’ pride,
from every mountainside, let freedom ring.”

And if America is to be a great nation, this must become true. So let freedom ring from the prodigious hilltops of New Hampshire. Let freedom ring from the mighty mountains of New York. Let freedom ring from the heightening Alleghenies of Pennsylvania! Let freedom ring from the snowcapped Rockies of Colorado! Let freedom ring from the curvaceous peaks of California! But not only that; let freedom ring from Stone Mountain of Georgia! Let freedom ring from Lookout Mountain of Tennessee! Let freedom ring from every hill and every molehill of Mississippi. From every mountainside, let freedom ring.

When we let freedom ring, when we let it ring from every village and every hamlet, from every state and every city, we will be able to speed up that day when all of God's children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual, "Free at last! free at last! thank God Almighty, we are free at last!"

From *We the People*, page 66.



King Memorial by sculptor Lei Yixin, Washington, DC

*This statue of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., is inscribed,
"Out of the Mountain of Despair, a Stone of Hope" words from King's 1963
I Have a Dream speech given at the Lincoln Memorial.*

Other inscriptions at the memorial are:

"We shall overcome because the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice."

"Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."

"I have the audacity to believe that peoples everywhere can have three meals a day for their bodies, education and culture for their minds, and dignity, equality, and freedom for their spirits."

"True peace is not merely the absence of tension: it is the presence of justice."

Inaugural Address

John F. Kennedy, 1961

We dare not forget today that we are the heirs of that first revolution. Let the word go forth from this time and place, to friend and foe alike, that the torch has been passed to a new generation of Americans -- born in this century, tempered by war, disciplined by a hard and bitter peace, proud of our ancient heritage -- and unwilling to witness or permit the slow undoing of those human rights to which this nation has always been committed, and to which we are committed today at home and around the world.

Let every nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe to assure the survival and the success of liberty....

In your hands, my fellow citizens, more than mine, will rest the final success or failure of our course. Since this country was founded, each generation of Americans has been summoned to give testimony to its national loyalty. The graves of young Americans who answered the call to service surround the globe.

Now the trumpet summons us again -- not as a call to bear arms, though arms we need -- not as a call to battle, though embattled we are -- but a call to bear the burden of a long twilight struggle, year in and year out, "rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation" -- a struggle against the common enemies of man: tyranny, poverty, disease, and war itself.

Can we forge against these enemies a grand and global alliance, North and South, East and West, that can assure a more fruitful life for all mankind? Will you join in that historic effort?

In the long history of the world, only a few generations have been granted the role of defending freedom in its hour of maximum danger. I do not shrink from this responsibility -- I welcome it....

And so, my fellow Americans: ask not what your country can do for you -- ask what you can do for your country.

My fellow citizens of the world: ask not what America will do for you, but what together we can do for the freedom of man.