

MAKING HISTORY: The Inaugural Address of Barack Obama



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- Grades:** 6-12, with adaptations for elementary grades
- Content Areas:** Social Studies, Language Arts, Technology
- Objectives:** Students will respond to quotes from President Obama’s inaugural address, and identify the challenges facing their families and other Americans today that he highlighted in his speech. They will then identify “calls to action” in President Obama’s inaugural address, and compare and contrast those priorities with those raised in his past speeches.

Materials Needed: Transcript and/or video clip of President Obama’s inaugural address, Internet access

Instructional Procedures:

Have students break into small groups to identify a theme or idea that was expressed in the speech. (To avoid having students identify the same or similar themes, you might want to assign different themes to each group.) Each group also should identify a quote from the speech that they feel best exemplifies their selected theme. Each group will answer the following questions on their selected quote/theme and should be prepared to share their answers with the entire class.

Sample questions for small-group activity:

- What vision does President Obama have for public education? How will his ideas make a difference for students and their families in my school or in my city?
- How will President Obama make our country more secure? What role does he see our country playing in the world?
- What does he say divides us as country, and how does he want to unify and strengthen America?
- List the major challenges that face our families and communities that President Obama identified in his campaign speeches and that he will address as president.
- How does President Obama view the American worker and the economy? How will his administration help create more and better jobs for Americans?
- What does President Obama ask Americans to do to help strengthen the country?

After each group reports out, hold a discussion about the solutions and changes that are described in the quotes and how they affect Americans today—in their city, school, etc.

Adaptations for elementary teachers: Share with students the sequence of inaugural events. (The events are listed at www.pic2009.org/pages/schedule/ for the activities leading up to Inauguration Day and <http://inaugural.senate.gov/history/dayevents/index.cfm> for the sequence of events scheduled specifically for Inauguration Day.)

Show your students highlights from Inauguration Day: the swearing-in ceremony, walking down Pennsylvania Avenue, Obama arriving by train, the balls, the inaugural address, the crowds of people, etc. What did the students like best and why? Did anything stand out to them or confuse them? Do they think they would like to attend an inauguration when they are older?

You also can show these events by using the Internet or by printing pictures of the various events. If you choose to print pictures, you can ask students to match the picture with the event, or you can ask them to put the pictures in proper sequence.