

# The King's Speech

## Declaration of war against Germany

- ① Summarize the speech of King George VI to the country and the Commonwealth live radio broadcasted on September 3, 1939. Start with an introductory sentence.

In this grave hour, perhaps the most fateful in our history, I send to every household of my peoples, both at home and overseas, this message, spoken with the same depth of feeling for each one of you as if I were able to cross your threshold and speak to you myself.

For the second time in the lives of most of us we are at war. Over and over again we have tried to find a peaceful way out of the differences between ourselves and those who are now our enemies. But it has been in vain. We have been forced into a conflict. For we are called, with our allies, to meet the challenge of a principle which, if it were to prevail, would be fatal to any civilised order in the world.

It is the principle which permits a state, in the selfish pursuit of power, to disregard its treaties and its solemn pledges; which sanctions the use of force, or threat of force, against the sovereignty and independence of other states.

Such a principle, stripped of all disguise, is surely the mere primitive doctrine that might is right; and if this principle were established throughout the world, the freedom of our own country and of the whole British Commonwealth of Nations would be in danger. But far more than this – the peoples of the world would be kept in the bondage of fear, and all hopes of settled peace and of the security of justice and liberty among nations would be ended.

This is the ultimate issue which confronts us. For the sake of all that we ourselves hold dear, and of the world's order and peace, it is unthinkable that we should refuse to meet the challenge.

It is to this high purpose that I now call my people at home and my peoples across the seas, who will make our cause their own. I ask them to stand calm, firm, and united in this time of trial. The task will be hard. There may be dark days ahead, and war can no longer be confined to the battlefield. But we can only do the right as we see the right, and reverently commit our cause to God.

If one and all we keep resolutely faithful to it, ready for whatever service or sacrifice it may demand, then, with God's help, we shall prevail. May He bless and keep us all."

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② Match each stylistic device with its definition.

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| repetition ●         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Usage of contrasting words, phrases, or ideas in a sentence or a paragraph to stress the difference between two opposing ideas or concepts and to create a sense of balance or tension in the text.</li> </ul>  |
| emotive language ●   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Vivid and descriptive language to create mental images experiences in the reader's mind.</li> </ul>   |
| antithesis ●         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Same word, phrase or sentence is repeated multiple times</li> </ul>   |
| metaphor ●           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ creating a sense of rhythm, build momentum, or create a sense of urgency or intensity.</li> </ul>   |
| tone ●               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Figure of speech that describes an object or idea by comparing it to something else sharing similar characteristics or qualities, used to create a deeper understanding of a subject or evoke emotions.</li> </ul>  |
| imagery ●            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Usage of personal pronouns to convey a particular tone, perspective, or relationship between the speaker and the audience (e.g. „I“ = personal, subjective tone, „we“ = sense of unity or shared responsibility, „you“ = direct, engaging tone).</li> </ul> |
| inclusive language ● | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Formal or informal, serious or humorous, sarcastic or sincere: conveyed through choice of words, sentence structure, and other stylistic elements, it creates a particular atmosphere affecting the audience's perception of the message.</li> </ul>        |
|                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Words and phrases „heartbreaking“, „outrageous“, „devastating“ and „tragic“ that evoke strong emotions in the reader or listener. It can be used to create a sense of urgency, to inspire action, or to evoke sympathy or emphasize.</li> </ul>             |

③ All the stylistic devices in number 2 were used in King George VI's speech. Highlight them in a different colour each.

- ④ This is an analysis example of King George VI's speech. Fill in the gaps with the stylistic devices (cf. p. 2) and lines from the speech on page 1.

King George VI's speech given on 3 September, 1939, was delivered at a time of great uncertainty and fear, as Britain was about to enter World War II. It is structured in a way that builds up to the central message of the speech - that the British people must unite and stand firm in the face of a grave threat to the world's order and peace.

The speech begins with a somber [redacted], as the King acknowledges the gravity of the situation and the sacrifices that will be required of the British people. He speaks of a "grave hour" (l. 1), the "time of trial" (l. [redacted]) the people are in as well as the "dark days" (l. 20) that are yet to come. The [redacted] used in this text is quite powerful and stirring. The phrases "grave hour" (l.1), "fateful" (l.1) and "forced into a conflict" (l. 6) all contribute to a sense of impending doom and the idea that action must be taken immediately to avoid disaster. This also appeals to a sense of moral righteousness, as the principle being fought against is portrayed as primitive and unjust. The phrase "stripped of all disguise, is surely the mere primitive doctrine that might is right" (l. 11) is particularly emotive, as it suggests a world where the strong oppress the weak and justice and liberty are lost. At the same time, the King uses the [redacted] "I" and "we" throughout his speech. By the use of [redacted], the King creates a sense of unity and shared purpose, crucial for a nation at the brink of war.

One of the most significant rhetorical devices used in the speech is the [redacted] of the word "principle" (cf. l.7, l.8, l.11, l.12) throughout the speech. This emphasizes the grave nature of the threat facing the British people and the world. This is even highlighted by an [redacted] to contrast the ideals of civilization and barbarism - between the values of the British people and those of their enemies:

"Such a principle, stripped of all disguise, is surely the mere primitive doctrine that might is right; and if this principle were established throughout the world, the freedom of our own country and of the whole British Commonwealth of Nations would be in danger." (ll.11ff.)

The speech also uses powerful [redacted], such as the phrase "the freedom of our own country and of the whole British Commonwealth of Nations would be in danger" (ll. [redacted] ff.). This effectively conveys the message that the war is not just about defending Britain and the Commonwealth of Nations but defending the entire ability to live their lives free from the threat of violence, oppression, or domination.

The speech ends with a call to faith and a recognition that the task ahead will be difficult. The use of religious [redacted] such as "this high purpose" (l.18), "reverently commit our cause to God" (l.21) and "with God's help, we shall prevail" (l.23) suggest a divine purpose behind the call to action. The reference to "dark days ahead" ([redacted]) and the need for resolute faithfulness in the face of hardship also evoke religious themes of perseverance and trust in a higher power.

In conclusion, King George VI's speech is a powerful call to action from a leader during a time of war. The use of rhetorical devices such as repetition, antithesis, imagery, metaphor as well as his use of words helps to reinforce the message and emphasize its importance.