



American Speeches: Political Oratory from the Revolution to the Civil War (Library of America)

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Public speeches have profoundly shaped American history and culture, transforming not only our politics but also our language and our sense of national identity. This volume (the first of an unprecedented two-volume collection) gathers the unabridged texts of 45 eloquent and dramatic speeches delivered by 32 American public figures between 1761 and 1865, beginning with James Otis's denunciation of unrestrained searches by British customs officials-hailed by John Adams as the beginning of the American Revolution-and ending with Abraham Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address. Rich in literary allusions, vivid imagery, and emotional appeals, political oratory flourished during this period in Congress and at campaign rallies, public meetings, and reform conventions, and reached a wider audience through newspapers and pamphlets.

Included are Patrick Henry's "liberty or death" speech, George Washington's appeal to mutinous army officers, and Henry Lee's eulogy of Washington. Speeches by John Randolph and Henry Clay capture the political passions of the early republic, while three addresses by Daniel Webster-his first Bunker Hill oration, his second reply to Hayne, and his controversial endorsement of the Compromise of 1850-demonstrate the eloquence that made him the most renowned orator of his time.

Speeches by figures who did not hold office are included as well: union leader Ely Moore attacking economic aristocracy; woman's rights speeches by Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Sojourner Truth; Henry Highland Garnet's incendiary call for slave rebellion; Frederick Douglass's scathing "What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?" John C. Calhoun's defense of slavery, Charles Sumner's "The Crime Against Kansas," Alexander Stephens' "Corner-Stone" speech, and several speeches by Abraham Lincoln reflect the sectional conflicts that culminated in the Civil War. Each volume contains biographical and explanatory notes, and an index

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