

Warm-Up: Kennedy's Inauguration



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. I do not believe that any of us would exchange places with any other people or any other generation. The energy, the faith, the devotion which we bring to this endeavour will light our country and all who serve it -- and the glow from that fire can truly light the world.

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

-JFK Inaugural Address, 1961

1. According to the speech, what has each generation of Americans been asked to do?
2. What "enemies of man" is Kennedy calling for Americans to battle?
3. According to Kennedy, what is going to "light our country...and light the world"?

4. In your own words, what does the last line of the speech mean?