Module 9: Nonfiction
Topic 6 Warm-Up: American Speeches

Introduction

American leaders have delivered some of the most stirring speeches throughout history. Click each of the portraits to view an excerpt from a famous speech by Patrick Henry, Abraham Lincoln, or John F. Kennedy. Take your time reading each excerpt and imagine the speaker saying the words aloud.

Patrick Henry

". . . as for me, give me liberty or give me death!"

— Patrick Henry

Abraham Lincoln

". . . government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth."

  — Abraham Lincoln

John F. Kennedy

"... 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."

— John F. Kennedy

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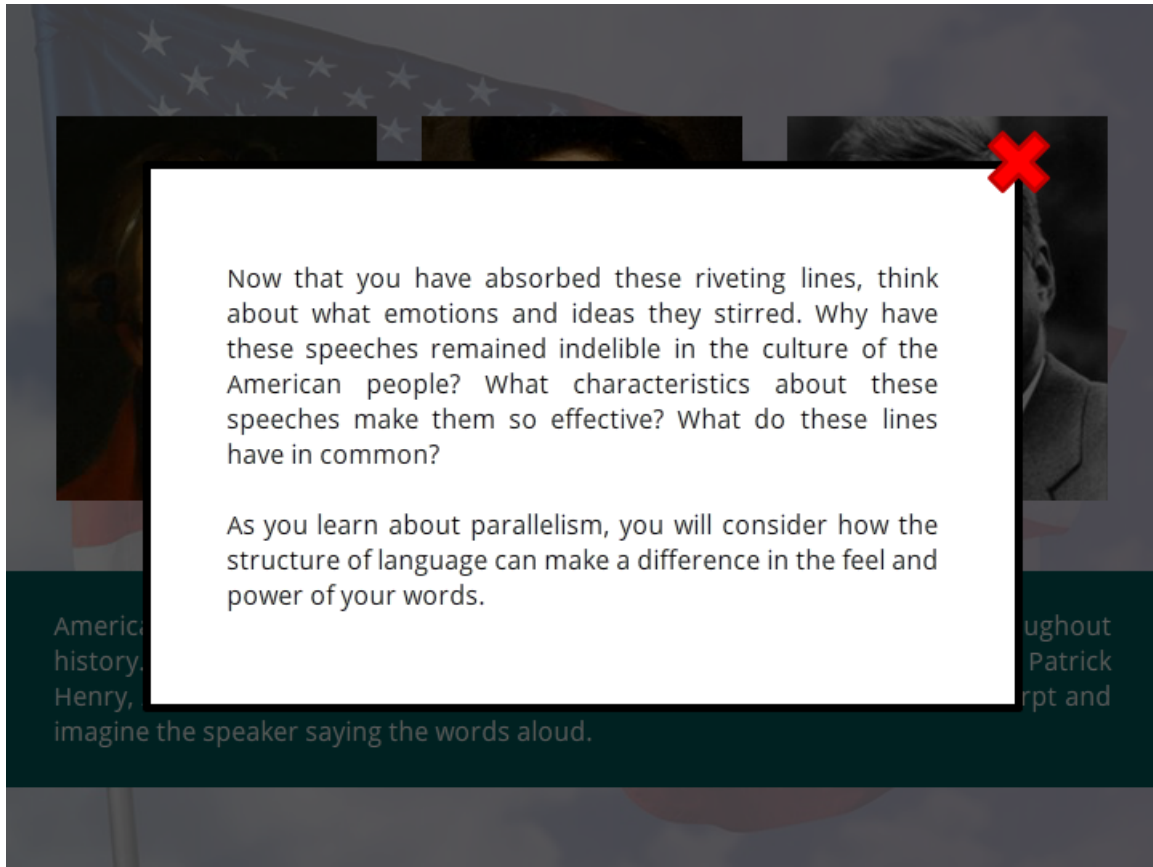
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Reflection

Now that you have absorbed these riveting lines, think about what emotions and ideas they stirred. Why have these speeches remained indelible in the culture of the American people? What characteristics about these speeches make them so effective? What do these lines have in common?

As you learn about parallelism, you will consider how the structure of language can make a difference in the feel and power of your words.