

Activities for Analyzing and Understanding the Speech – A Majority of Minorities

Activity One: Identifying Major Themes and Supporting Evidence

- 1) Identify three or four major themes Mrs. Roosevelt cites for supporting John F. Kennedy for President in 1960.
 - a)
 - b)
 - c)
 - d)
- 2) What evidence does Mrs. Roosevelt present to support these themes?
- 3) What is Mrs. Roosevelt's main reason for supporting Mr. Kennedy for President?
- 4) What does Mrs. Roosevelt suggest we all do before we cast our vote for a candidate?
- 5) In what ways might we go about "examining the record?"

Activity Two: Melting Pot or Not?

- 1) What does Mrs. Roosevelt mean when she says that the United States is a “melting pot?”

- 2) Is “melting pot” the best way to describe the citizens in our democracy? What are some other terms that might better describe the workings of the United States? What makes these a better term to describe what America has become?

- 3) Compare and contrast several waves of immigration throughout America’s history. In what ways were the experiences the same? In what ways did they differ?

- 4) How have American’s views towards immigration changed over the years? What factors might account for these changes? How do you think Mrs. Roosevelt would feel about these changes?

- 5) What are three advantages Mrs. Roosevelt sites for our country if we stick to the pledge on the Statue of Liberty? Do you agree or disagree?

Advantage 1	Agree	Disagree	Why or Why Not?
Advantage 2			
Advantage 3			

Activity three: Identifying and Understanding Key Points

Restate and describe what Mrs. Roosevelt means when she uses each of the terms or phases below.

Key Point:

In Your Own Words:

<p><i>"America is a great melting pot..."</i></p>	
<p><i>"Ideas and cultures merge to make exciting prospects for the pursuit of happiness..."</i></p>	
<p><i>"As the spokesman of the Free World..."</i></p>	
<p><i>"A leader must have moral courage..."</i></p>	
<p><i>"A leader must have a sense of history..."</i></p>	
<p><i>"We must examine the record..."</i></p>	

What makes Mrs. Roosevelt qualified to raise or present these points? By what authority does she speak?

Activity Four: Sizing Up a Candidate by Examining the Record

Free and fair elections are a critical element to maintaining a democracy. Making good choices about who we elect depends on having good information about the candidates, and the issues, we are presented with. Though you may be too young to actually cast a vote, you are not too young to begin “examining the record” as Mrs. Roosevelt describes it.

Think about how you feel concerning each of the issues below and fill in the first column in the chart. Now select two candidates in a state, local or national election and identify where they stand on each of the issues. There are three spaces for additional issues that might be important to you.

Which candidate do you most closely identify with? Is that who you would support in the election?

Topic or Issue	Your Views on the Topic	Candidate A’s Views	Candidate B’s Views
Crime			
Education			
Government Spending			
Gun Violence			
Immigration			
Taxes			
Trade			
The Environment			

Activity Five: Immigration and the Promise of America

The poem on the base of the Statue of Liberty is titled, **The New Colossus** and reads:

“Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, the wretched refuse of your teeming shore. Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me, I lift my lamp beside the golden door!”

Emma Lazarus 1883

In the film clip Mrs. Roosevelt talks about the skills, customs, and talents that immigrants have contributed to our American democracy.

- 1) What is it about this country that allows people who seem to be so in need when they come here to transform themselves and their conditions and become such contributors to our national identity?
- 2) When immigrants and refugees come seeking the “promise of America” what do they expect that promise to deliver? Are their expectations a valid reason to come to this country? If so why? If not, what has changed?
- 3) Despite the world-renowned image of the United States as being open and welcoming to everyone, each wave of immigrants has faced a certain amount of hostility, suspicion, and in some cases outright opposition. What factors account for this apparent disconnect?
- 4) What are the arguments for and against welcoming immigrants into the United States? How do you suppose Mrs. Roosevelt might support or counter those arguments were she alive today? How would you support or counter the arguments?

Arguments For Immigration	Mrs. Roosevelt’s Support	Your Support
1)		
2)		

3)		
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Arguments Against Immigration	Mrs. Roosevelt's Counter	Your Counter
1)		
2)		
3)		

Activity Five: What Does It Mean to Have a Sense of History?

Mrs. Roosevelt describes Senator Kennedy as having a “sense of history.” She believes this to be an important attribute in a leader. President Roosevelt believed this to be true as well. At the dedication of his Presidential Library in 1941 he said:

“To bring together the records of the past and to house them in buildings where they will be preserved for the use of men and women in the future, a Nation must believe in three things. It must believe in the past. It must believe in the future. It must, above all, believe in the capacity of its own people so to learn from the past that they can gain in judgement in creating their own future.”

- 1) What does it mean to have a “sense of history?” Why do you suppose it is so important to good leadership?

- 2) What kinds of “lessons” can leaders learn from the past?

- 3) Can lessons from the past always be applied and relied upon to guide us in the future? If so why? If not why not?

- 4) In addition to a sense of history what other attributes does Mrs. Roosevelt hint at being important for a leader to have? How will these help him or her be an effective leader?