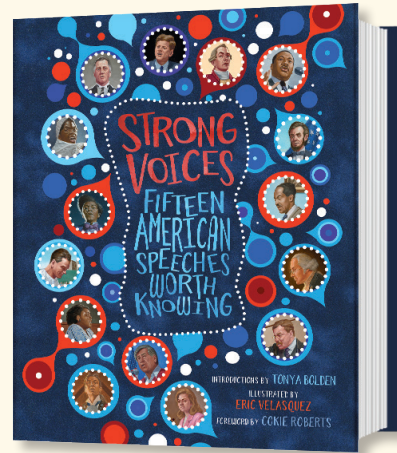


STRONG VOICES: FIFTEEN AMERICAN SPEECHES WORTH KNOWING

INTRODUCTIONS BY **TONYA BOLDEN**
ILLUSTRATED BY **ERIC VELASQUEZ**
FOREWORD BY **COKIE ROBERTS**



BOOKTALK

Strong Voices: Fifteen American Speeches Worth Knowing is a collection of significant speeches, made both by those who held the reins of power and those who didn't, at significant times in American history. Read the original words—sometimes abridged and sometimes in their entirety—that have shaped our cultural fabric. Introductions by acclaimed writer Tonya Bolden provide historical context and critical insights to the meaning and impact of every speech. Illustrations by award-winning artist Eric Velasquez illuminate what it was really like at each moment in history. Complete with foreword by celebrated author and journalist Cokie Roberts, *Strong Voices* is a tremendous introduction to the extraordinary words spoken in history.

QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

1. In the introduction, journalist Cokie Roberts offers an overview of the speeches. Discuss some of her observations, including her assertion that “awful moments provided the context for many of these speeches” (pg. 10). Which speakers does she identify as taking the most risks and making the most sacrifices? Discuss the courage it takes for the less powerful to speak out.
2. Roberts' introduction says that “calls to action . . . abound in these addresses” (pg. 11). Consider her examples and talk about what the speaker was calling for. Find other examples not mentioned by Roberts and identify the speakers' goals. How can a speech lead to action? Can you tell if any of the speakers succeeded?
3. What other goals or reasons for their speeches did these men and women have besides calling for action? For example, why did Lou Gehrig give his “Farewell to Baseball”? Discuss FDR's goal in the speech in which he spoke his famous sentence “The only thing we have to fear is fear itself” (pg. 64). If you've heard a speech in person or on television, what was the speaker's goal?
4. Consider the title and subtitle. What makes these voices strong? Are they all strong in the same way, or do their strengths vary? Do you agree that they are all speeches worth knowing? Why or why not?
5. Review the openings of the speeches and choose some that you find most effective. What do you like about each one? What makes them work well in your opinion? Can you draw conclusions about the best ways to open a speech?
6. What does it mean to be inspired by a speech? Which speeches did you find most inspiring, and why? What parts of those speeches made the biggest impact on you?
7. Similarly, look at how the speakers conclude their remarks. What makes a good ending? Which ones do you find most effective, and why? Do some of them echo other parts of the speech, such as the beginning or a figure of speech used earlier? If so, what does that add?
8. Most of the speeches employ metaphors, similes, or other images. Find examples of such figures of speech, including those in Martin Luther King Jr.'s “I Have a Dream” speech (pg. 90-93). Trace the extended metaphor about oceans and sailing throughout John Fitzgerald Kennedy's speech (pg. 83-85). Discuss the purpose of these figures of speech and how well you think they work.
9. Study the speeches for the use of repetition and find examples in several of them. Martin Luther King Jr.'s “I Have a Dream” speech is an excellent place to start. Discuss specific examples of repetition. How do effective speakers use it? What is its effect on the listener?
10. Make a list of unfamiliar vocabulary as you read. Can you figure out the words from context? If not, look them up and share them with your classmates. Are some of the words unfamiliar because they are no longer used or used differently than they are today? For example, both Patrick Henry and George Washington use the word “moment.” What do they mean by it?

11. Talk about the role of the illustrations in conveying a sense of the speakers, their backgrounds, and the speeches themselves. Illustrator Eric Velasquez says in his note (pg. 121) that he read and reread the speeches, as well as viewed relevant photographs. How does that come across in the pictures? What elements unite the pictures from speaker to speaker? What feelings do the pictures evoke in you?
12. How do Tonya Bolden's introductions to each speech help you understand and appreciate them more? How does she set the speeches in historical and geographical context? What kind of information does she give about the speakers and their lives that makes the speeches more meaningful to read? Use specific examples in your answers.
13. Compare the backgrounds of the speakers. What do some of them have in common? Which are some of the most significant differences? Why do you think their backgrounds differ so much? Choose a few examples and discuss how the speaker's background relates to his or her speech.
14. Where were the speeches in the book given? What were the occasions that prompted them? Have you attended a speech? Have you listened to speeches or viewed them on television or online? Have the adults in your life attended speeches? Discuss these experiences and when people in our society give or attend speeches, and why.
15. Bolden's introductions point to the importance of having the speeches in print as well as delivered to audiences. Talk about some of the facts she gives about printed versions, including Sojourner Truth's speech. Surprisingly, George Washington never gave his "Farewell Address." How has it become so well known?
16. Why do you think the timeline at the back was included in the book? What details does it show? In what ways does it help you understand the speeches, how they relate to each other, and how they relate to history?

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

WORDS WORTH QUOTING. For each speech, pull-out quotes appear in speech bubbles to emphasize a part of the writing. Look through the book at all the pull-out quotes and choose one that you like. Then write an essay about the quote, discussing its role in the speech, how it relates to history and to the speaker, and what it means to you on a personal level.

READ, LISTEN, LEARN. What are the differences between reading a speech and listening to one? Audio recordings of most of the twentieth-century speeches in *Strong Voices* are available online. Listen to one or more speeches with your class or in small groups. After listening, discuss the advantages and disadvantages of each medium. What does the written version offer that the audio version doesn't? What does listening to the speaker add to a speech's effectiveness?

MEET THE SPEAKERS. Those who wrote and gave these speeches are among the most important Americans in our history. Choose one of the speakers and do further research, using print and digital resources. If possible, find at least one other speech by the person. Then prepare a multimedia presentation based on what you learn and share it with the class.

TIME TO SPEAK UP! After reading the speeches and thinking about why they are successful, it's time to give a short speech. Select a topic that you care about, make notes, and compose the speech. Consider using some repetition and figures of speech to make your speech more effective. Once you've written it, practice several times and deliver it to a small group or the whole class.



Photo by Hayden R. Celestin

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Tonya Bolden's books have earned much praise and numerous starred reviews. Her work has been recognized with the NCTE Orbis Pictus Award for Outstanding Nonfiction for Children; CBC/NCSS Notable Social Studies Trade Book for Young People; and the NCSS Carter G. Woodson Middle Level Book Award; and she is the recipient of the Children's Book Guild of Washington, DC's Nonfiction Award for her body of work. *Maritcha: A Nineteenth-Century American Girl* was a Coretta Scott King Author Honor book.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Eric Velasquez has illustrated numerous children's books, most recently *Schomburg: The Man Who Built a Library*, by Carole Boston Weatherford. He won the Pura Belpré Illustrator Award for his illustrations in *Grandma's Gift*. He won the John Steptoe New Talent Illustrator Award for his illustrations of *The Piano Man*, written by Debbi Chocolate. Bolden and Velasquez previously collaborated on the picture book *Beautiful Moon*.



Photo by Elizabeth Rosario