

A level English Language Y11-12 Summer Independent learning

Welcome to A Level English Language. Please complete the following tasks ready for your first day at New College. You must bring this work to your first lessons, so you are able to show it to your teacher.

1. Read Text A (on pages 3 and 4), a speech by American President, John F Kennedy, and complete the tasks beneath it.
2. Write your own speech (envisage giving your very own TED Talk) in which you discuss an issue important to you.

You could write about:

- An issue in society, such as the environment
- Politics in the UK or around the world
- An issue or experience personal to you
- Anything else that interests you.

Aim to write around 750 words.

The following TED Talks should give you some ideas for possible topics and style.

https://www.ted.com/playlists/171/the_most_popular_ted_talks_of_all_time

3. Write 250 words to answer the question: how have you used language to interest and engage your audience? Refer to a range of language features and use evidence from your speech.

Language features you could refer to include:

- Repetition
- Semantic fields
- Rhetorical questions
- Imperatives (commands)
- Nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs
- Figurative language like metaphors and similes
- Grammatical choices like tense and active/passive voice
- Sentence types (like simple, complex and compound)
- Structural devices (like juxtaposition, a cyclical structure, lists, shifts, etc)
- Pragmatic features (like pop culture references, intertextuality, politeness, humour, etc)

4. Write a 500-word language autobiography. You could discuss:
 - How the place you were born and the place you grew up (if it's different) have affected your language
 - How your language has changed throughout your life
 - How your friends and family influence the way you speak
 - How you use language when you speak vs how you use it on social media
 - How your language is influenced by any interest groups you belong to
 - Anything else about your use of language that you would like to share.

Start by researching the following language concepts and include them in your autobiography:

- Accent
- Dialect
- Sociolect
- Idiolect

The following video might also help: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jAGgKE82034>

Here is an extract from an example of a language autobiography to give you some ideas and inspiration.

Example Language Autobiography

There are a number of factors which have had influence on my speech over the course of my life. The first of these is probably the speech of my parents. My father has a moderate Yorkshire accent, but my mother has a slight Midlands accent, so my Yorkshire accent was never as strong as that of my neighbours. However, I did, as a child, speak with a definite and at times strong Yorkshire accent, especially when interacting with other children from my area.

My mother's speech has influenced me in other ways, too. She uses a number of idioms regularly, some of which I have adopted. Examples of these are 'It's black over our Bill's mother's', 'Too slow to catch a cold', and 'She's no better than she ought'. These generally sound rather old-fashioned, and perhaps humorous in tone: I would not use them in a formal situation.

My education has also had considerable effect on my idiolect – at school my social group and general surroundings were such that I lost my Yorkshire accent to a great extent, by process of convergence with those around me (who were, largely, speakers of Received Pronunciation or other 'prestigious' accents).

My accent and general speech behaviour change considerably according to context. In formal situations, I take care not to drop [h] sounds at the beginnings of words, and [t] sounds at the end. I am also careful that word-final [ŋ] sounds, such as in 'going' or 'happening' do not become [n], as in 'goin' or 'happenin'.

Text A**John Fitzgerald Kennedy's Inaugural Address (20 January 1961)**

[1] Vice President Johnson, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Chief Justice, President Eisenhower, Vice President Nixon, President Truman, Reverend Clergy, fellow citizens:

[2] We observe today not a victory of party but a celebration of freedom—symbolizing an end as well as a beginning—signifying renewal as well as change. For I have sworn before you and Almighty God the same solemn oath our forbears prescribed nearly a century and three-quarters ago.

[3] We dare not forget today that we are the heirs of that first revolution. Let the word go forth from this time and place, to friend and foe alike, that the torch has been passed to a new generation of Americans—born in this century, tempered by war, disciplined by a hard and bitter peace, proud of our ancient heritage—and unwilling to witness or permit the slow undoing of those human rights to which this nation has always been committed, and to which we are committed today at home and around the world.

[4] Let every nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that 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.

[5] This much we pledge—and more.

[6] To those old allies whose cultural and spiritual origins we share, we pledge the loyalty of faithful friends. United there is little we cannot do in a host of cooperative ventures. Divided there is little we can do—for we dare not meet a powerful challenge at odds and split asunder.

[7] To those new states whom we welcome to the ranks of the free, we pledge our word that one form of colonial control shall not have passed away merely to be replaced by a far more iron tyranny. We shall not always expect to find them supporting our view. But we shall always hope to find them strongly supporting their own freedom—and to remember that, in the past, those who foolishly sought power by riding the back of the tiger ended up inside.

[8] To those people in the huts and villages of half the globe struggling to break the bonds of mass misery, we pledge our best efforts to help them help themselves, for whatever period is required—not because the communists may be doing it, not because we seek their votes, but because it is right. If a free society cannot help the many who are poor, it cannot save the few who are rich.

[9] Finally, to those nations who would make themselves our adversary, we offer not a pledge but a request: that both sides begin anew the quest for peace, before the dark powers of destruction unleashed by science engulf all humanity in planned or accidental self-destruction.

[10] So let us begin anew—remembering on both sides that civility is not a sign of weakness, and sincerity is always subject to proof. Let us never negotiate out of fear. But let us never fear to negotiate.

[11] Let both sides explore what problems unite us instead of belaboring those problems which divide us.

[12] Let both sides seek to invoke the wonders of science instead of its terrors. Together let us explore the stars, conquer the deserts, eradicate disease, tap the ocean depths and encourage the arts and commerce.

[13] And so, my fellow Americans: ask not what your country can do for you—ask what you can do for your country.

[14] My fellow citizens of the world: ask not what America will do for you, but what together we can do for the freedom of man.

[15] Finally, whether you are citizens of America or citizens of the world, ask of us here the same high standards of strength and sacrifice which we ask of you. With a good conscience our only sure reward, with history the final judge of our deeds, let us go forth to lead the land we love, asking His blessing and His help, but knowing that here on earth God's work must truly be our own.

Your task: Annotate the above speech, identifying as many interesting language features as you can find.

You could comment on:

- Rhetorical devices like repetition, imperatives, direct address, emotive language, etc
- Word classes like nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, etc
- Figurative language like similes and metaphors, etc
- Sentence types like simple, compound, complex, etc
- Structural devices like listing, juxtaposition, discourse markers, etc
- Anything else you notice of interest

*The above list is not exhaustive. It is recommended you research these different areas and consider what additional language features you could comment on.

Then, answer the following questions about the contexts affecting how this speech has been written:

1. Who is the target audience of this text?
2. What is the purpose of this text? (Why was it written by a script writer and delivered by Kennedy?)
3. What other contextual factors might have influenced how this text was written? It is recommended that you do some independent research in order to answer this question.

Using your annotations and answers to the above questions as a starting point, analyse how Kennedy uses language in the text to interest and engage the audience. Write at least one detailed paragraph.