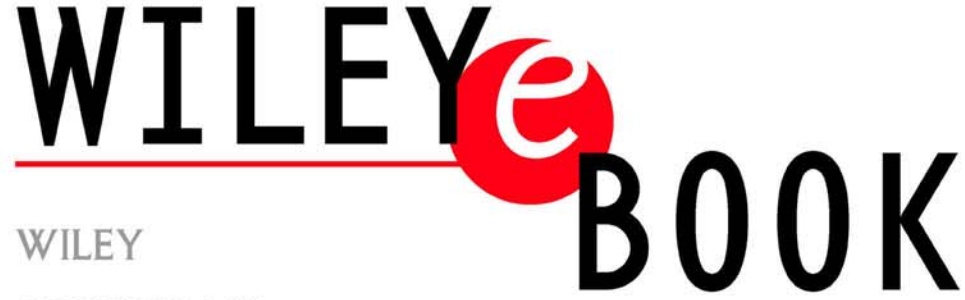
Business Culinary Architecture
Computer General Interest
Children Life Sciences Biography
Accounting Finance Mathematics
History Self-Improvement Health
Engineering Graphic Design
Applied Sciences Psychology
Interior Design Biology Chemistry



WILEY
JOSSEY-BASS
PFEIFFER
J.K.LASSER
CAPSTONE
WILEY-LISS
WILEY-VCH
WILEY-INTERSCIENCE

AmericanHeritage®
Book of Great American Speeches for Young People

Edited by Suzanne McIntire

John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
New York • Chichester • Weinheim • Brisbane • Singapore • Toronto

For my children,
Phinney and Will

Copyright © 2001 by Suzanne McIntire. All rights reserved

American Heritage and the eagle logo are registered trademarks of American Heritage Inc. Their use is pursuant to a license agreement.

Published by John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Design and production by Navta Associates, Inc.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, scanning, or otherwise except as permitted under Section 107 or 108 of the 1976 United States Copyright Act, without either the prior written permission of the Publisher, or authorization through payment of the appropriate per-copy fee to the Copyright Clearance Center, 222 Rosewood Drive, Danvers, MA 01923, (978) 750-8400, fax (978) 750-4744. Requests to the Publisher for permission should be addressed to the Permissions Department, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 605 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10158-0012, (212) 850-6011, fax (212) 850-6008, e-mail: PERMREQ@WILEY.COM.

The publication is designed to provide accurate and authoritative information in regard to the subject matter covered. It is sold with the understanding that the publisher is not engaged in rendering professional services. If professional advice or other expert assistance is required, the services of a competent professional person should be sought.

This title is also available in print as ISBN 0-471-38942-0. Some content that appears in the print version of this book may not be available in this electronic edition.

For more information about Wiley products, visit our web site at www.Wiley.com

Acknowledgments

It has been my great pleasure in compiling this collection to work with dedicated historians and librarians of historical societies and state and university libraries across the country who so willingly hunted up information, often the same day. There are too many to name here, but their efforts were most appreciated. I must especially thank the librarians of Arlington, Virginia, particularly Dan Cannole, Lynn Kristianson, and Diane Marton and Kristi Beavin of the Children's Room. More thanks go to Celia Blotkamp of the Northern Virginia Speech League; the faculty of Potomac School, especially Cathy Farrell, Christine Hunt, Curt Bland, and Dan Newman; Carol Fonteyn and Joe Lerner; Lydia Schurman; Kirsten Manges and Clyde Taylor; and Kate Bradford and Michelle Whelan, who had many good ideas for the book. And my family, who pitched in when I needed them.

Freedom of speech is indivisible. You cannot deny it to one man and save it for others. Over and over again, the test of our dedication to liberty is our willingness to allow the expression of ideas we hate. If those ideas are lies, the remedy is more speech. . . . The price of liberty to speak the truth as each of us sees it is permitting others the same freedom.

—Archibald Cox

Contents

Introduction

"Is life so dear, or peace so sweet, as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God! I know not what course others may take; but as for me, give me liberty or give me death."

—Patrick Henry (1775)

Americans in every century have found inspiration in the speech-making of Patrick Henry. His daring address to the Virginia Convention in Richmond, with its famous call to revolution, persuaded the assembled delegates to arm the Virginia militia to resist British oppression, and could have cost him his life had the British won the Revolutionary War.

Some forty years after Patrick Henry's address, Frederick Douglass was born. He was a Maryland slave who would also fight for his freedom, and for the freedom of all slaves in America. He founded an anti-slavery newspaper and entered politics, but his great weapon was his speech-making.

As a boy he owned a book not unlike the one you're now holding, which he bought with the few pennies a slave boy could save. The book was called *The Columbian Orator*, and contained speeches to teach schoolchildren the art of public speaking. The speeches exposed him to exciting ideas about liberty and equality. "Every opportunity I got, I used to read this book," he explained in his autobiography. Although young Frederick was never allowed to go to school, he must have learned from the book, for he became one of the greatest orators the United States ever produced. When he escaped from slavery, the book was one of the few things he took with him.

Oratory such as that of Patrick Henry or Frederick Douglass flourishes wherever you find freedom of speech, a right guaranteed to Americans by the Constitution but withheld from many people of the world who live under dictatorships and totalitarian governments. Events in United States history—slavery, war, women's rights, child labor, the atomic bomb, to mention a few—have always supplied issues to debate. The American town meeting gave people with ideas a place to be heard. And in the days before TV or radio, the speeches of the popular frontier "stump speaker" (who stood on a tree stump to speak) were attended by whole families who traveled miles by wagon to enjoy the scene.

Over a hundred great speeches by Americans are gathered together in this new book of oratory for a new generation of young people. The selection spans almost four centuries of the best of American eloquence, from Powhatan's warning to Captain John Smith in 1609 to Senator Charles Robb's thoughtful reflection, in the year 2000, on the meaning of the flag.

But what is eloquence? Eloquence is the power to persuade with forceful and fluent speech. It relies on passion and straightforwardness for its influence over a crowd. When we read these speeches, we begin to understand why a Chicago newspaper reported that people fought in the halls to get into the courtroom to hear Clarence Darrow speak, and why Martin Luther King wept on hearing President Johnson exclaim "We shall overcome." We can almost see in our mind's eye the thousand tomahawks that early frontiersmen saw brandished by the impassioned hearers of Tecumseh. Sometimes the passion is for a special person, or people, instead of a cause: such as the moving tributes to Lincoln and Lafayette, to the men who fought and died at Gettysburg and Iwo Jima, and to the four innocent girls who died in the bombing of a Birmingham, Alabama, church.

Eloquence always comes from the heart and depends little on a formal education, as true for self-taught Abraham Lincoln as it was for Frederick Douglass. Unschooled American slaves did much for the anti-slavery cause through their speech-making. Native Americans possessed one of the world's richest oratorical traditions despite, or because of, having no written language. Theirs were governments that relied on oral persuasion, with leaders like Big Mouth and Red Jacket who were recognized as great orators not only by their tribes, but also by the Europeans who first encountered them.

You may notice that there are few female speakers before the 1900s in this collection. Women first had to fight for the right to address an audience before they could speak for the reforms (like abolition and women's rights) they hoped to win. For a woman to deliver an address before men remained almost scandalous until 1890. When we read this book from beginning to end we are watching, among other things, the exciting spectacle of women, black Americans, and other minorities breaking free of the laws and traditions that bound them.

One hundred and fifty years after Frederick Douglass, public speaking is still an important skill for leaders of any age. The young people whose speeches appear occasionally in the news—Harry Gladstone and Samantha Smith are two in this book—have found a way to get their passion for reform before the world. We hope these speeches inspire you today, in the same way Frederick Douglass was stirred by the great orators of the past, to speak out yourself for what you believe in.

☆

Powhatan, Chief of the Powhatan Confederacy

To Captain John Smith

Jamestown, Virginia
1609

The first colonists in Jamestown, Virginia, arrived from England in 1607. Building homes and finding food in the New World was difficult, and those who survived the first winters owed their lives to the help they received from the many tribes of the Powhatan Confederacy. However, the settlers took lands for their own use that the Indians considered theirs, and disputes arose over the trading of food and weapons. Chief Wahunsonacock (called Powhatan by the colonists), the father of Pocahontas, warned Captain John Smith against abusing the Indians' friendship.

☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

I am now grown old, and must soon die; and the succession must descend, in order, to my brothers, Opitchapan, Opekankanough, and Catataugh, and then to my two sisters, and their two daughters. I wish their experience was equal to mine; and that your love to us might not be less than ours to you.

Why should you take by force that from us which you can have by love? Why should you destroy us, who have provided you with food? What can you get by war? We can hide our provisions, and fly into the woods; and then you must consequently famish by wronging your friends. What is the cause of your jealousy? You see us unarmed, and willing to supply your wants, if you will come in a friendly manner, and not with swords and guns, as to invade an enemy.

I am not so simple, as not to know it is better to eat good meat, lie well, and sleep quietly with my women and children; to laugh and be merry with the English; and, being their friend, to have copper, hatchets, and whatever else I want,

than to fly from all, to lie cold in the woods, feed upon acorns, roots, and such trash, and to be so hunted, that I cannot rest, eat, or sleep. In such circumstances, my men must watch, and if a twig should but break, all would cry out, "Here comes Captain Smith"; and so, in this miserable manner, to end my miserable life; and, Captain Smith, this might be soon your fate too, through your rashness and unadvisedness.

I, therefore, exhort you to peaceable councils; and, above all, I insist that the guns and swords, the cause of all our jealousy and uneasiness, be removed and sent away.

☆

Big Mouth, Onondaga Chief

To De la Barre, Governor of Canada

New York State, near Lake Ontario
September 1684

Big Mouth is the English translation of Grande Gueule, *the name this Onondaga chief received from the French because he was such an impressive speaker. The Indians pronounced it Garangula. The aged Big Mouth met in what is now New York State with the French governor of Canada, De la Barre (called by the Indians* Yonondio*), who had crossed Lake Ontario with plans to make war on the Five Nations of the Iroquois Confederacy. Big Mouth knew that De la Barre's men were too sick to fight, and he cautioned both De la Barre and New York governor Thomas Dongan (called by the Indians* Corlear*) to preserve the peace. At the end of his address, he presented two beaded wampum belts to make his speech official.*

☆ ☆

Yonondio! I honor you, and the warriors that are with me all likewise honor you. Your interpreter has finished your speech; I now begin mine. My words make haste to reach your ears. Hearken to them. . . .

Hear, Yonondio! What I say is the voice of all the Five Nations. Hear what they answer. Open your ears to what they speak. The Senecas, Cayugas, Onondagas, Oneidas and Mohawks say, that when they buried the hatchet at Cadarackui, in the presence of your predecessor, in the middle of the fort, they planted the tree of peace in the same place, to be there carefully preserved: That in the place of a retreat for soldiers, that fort might be a rendezvous for merchants; that in place of arms and ammunition of war, beavers and merchandize should only enter there.

Hear, Yonondio! Take care for the future that so great a number of soldiers as appear there, do not choke the tree of

peace planted in so small a fort. It will be a great loss, if, after it had so easily taken root, you should stop its growth, and prevent its covering your country and ours with its branches. I assure you, in the name of the Five Nations, that our warriors shall dance to the calumet of peace under its leaves. They shall remain quiet on their mats, and shall never dig up the hatchet, till their brother Yonondio, or Corlear, shall either jointly or separately endeavor to attack the country which the Great Spirit has given to our ancestors. This belt preserves my words, and this other the authority which the Five Nations have given me.

Andrew Hamilton

In Defense of John Peter Zenger and the Freedom of the Press

New York City
August 4, 1735

Andrew Hamilton, born in Scotland, practiced law in Maryland and was later attorney general in Pennsylvania. He defended John Peter Zenger, printer and publisher of the New York Weekly Journal, *when Zenger was arrested for libeling the royal governor of New York, William Cosby. The nearly 70-year-old Hamilton took the case because local lawyers were prevented from defending Zenger. His eloquent defense convinced the jury that the published articles were true and thus not libelous, and Zenger's subsequent acquittal set an important precedent for freedom of the press in the colonies.*

* * *

May it please your honors, I agree with Mr. Attorney [Richard Bradley] that government is a sacred thing, but I differ very widely from him when he would insinuate that the just complaints of men, who suffer under a bad administration, is libeling that administration. . . .

There is heresy in law as well as in religion, and both have changed very much; and we well know that it is not two centuries ago that a man would have burned as a heretic for owning such opinions in matters of religion as are publicly written and printed at this day. . . . I think it is pretty clear that in New York a man may make very free with his God, but he must take special care what he says of his Governor. It is agreed upon by all men that this is a reign of liberty, and while men keep within the bounds of truth, I hope they may with safety both speak and write their sentiments of the conduct of men of power; . . . were this to be denied, then the next step may make them slaves. For what notions can be entertained of

slavery beyond that of suffering the greatest injuries and oppressions without the liberty of complaining. . . .

It is said, and insisted upon by Mr. Attorney, that government is a sacred thing, that it is to be supported and reverenced; it is government that protects our persons and estates; that prevents treasons, murders, robberies, riots, and all the train of evils that overturn kingdoms and states and ruin particular persons; and if those in the administration, especially the supreme magistrates, must have all their conduct censured by private men, government cannot subsist. This is called a licentiousness not to be tolerated. It is said that it brings the rulers of the people into contempt so that their authority is not regarded. . . .

But I wish it might be considered at the same time how often it has happened that the abuse of power has been the primary cause of these evils, and that it was the injustice and oppression of these great men which has commonly brought them into contempt with the people. . . .

If a libel is understood in the large and unlimited sense urged by Mr. Attorney, there is scarce a writing I know that may not be called a libel, or scarce any person safe from being called to account as a libeler, for Moses, meek as he was, libeled Cain; and who is it that has not libeled the devil? . . .

The loss of liberty to a generous mind is worse than death; and yet we know there have been those in all ages who, for the sakes of preferment or some imaginary honor, have freely lent a helping hand to oppress, nay, to destroy, their country. . . . Upon the other hand, the man who loves his country prefers its liberty to all other considerations, well knowing that without liberty life is a misery. . . .

Power may justly be compared to a great river; while kept within its bounds, it is both beautiful and useful, but when it overflows its banks, it is then too impetuous to be stemmed; it bears down all before it, and brings destruction and desolation wherever it comes. If, then, this be the nature of power, let us

at least do our duty, and, like wise men who value freedom, use our utmost care to support liberty, the only bulwark against lawless power, which, in all ages, has sacrificed to its wild lust and boundless ambition the blood of the best men that ever lived. . . .

I cannot but think it mine and every honest man's duty that, while we pay all due obedience to men in authority, we ought, at the same time, to be upon our guard against power wherever we apprehend that it may affect ourselves or our fellow subjects. . . .

The question before the court, and you, gentlemen of the jury, is not of small nor private concern; it is not the cause of a poor printer, nor of New York alone, which you are now trying. No! It may, in its consequence, affect every free man that lives under a British government on the main continent of America. It is the best cause; it is the cause of liberty. . . .

Every man who prefers freedom to a life of slavery will bless and honor you as men who have baffled the attempt of tyranny, and, by an impartial and uncorrupt verdict, have laid a noble foundation for securing to ourselves, our posterity, and our neighbors that to which nature and the laws of our country have given us a right—the liberty of both exposing and opposing arbitrary power (in these parts of the world at least) by speaking and writing truth.

☆

Canasatego, Onondaga Chief

"We Will Make Men of Them"

Lancaster, Pennsylvania
July 4, 1744

Canasatego was a spokesman for the Six Nations of the Iroquois Confederacy (better known as the Five Nations before the admission of the Tuscarora in about 1722) at the signing of the 1744 Treaty of Lancaster with Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia. His tribe was then offered a chance by the Virginia Legislature to send six of their young men to the College of William and Mary. As he explained to the Virginians, the Native Americans had different ideas from the colonists about what constituted a good education for the young.

☆ ☆ ☆

We know you highly esteem the kind of Learning taught in these Colleges, and the maintenance of our young Men, while with you, would be very expensive to you. We are convinced, therefore, that you mean to do us Good by your Proposal; and we thank you heartily. But you who are so wise must know that different Nations have different Conceptions of things; and you will not therefore take it amiss, if our Ideas of this kind of Education happens not to be the same with yours.

We have had some experience of it. Several of our young People were formerly brought up in the Colleges of the Northern Provinces; they were instructed in all your Sciences; but, when they came back to us, they were bad Runners, ignorant of every means of living in the Woods, unable to bear either Cold or Hunger, knew neither how to build a Cabin, take a deer, or kill an enemy, spoke our language imperfectly, were therefore neither fit for Hunters, Warriors, nor Counsellors; they were totally good for nothing.

We are however not the less obliged for your kind Offer, tho' we decline accepting it; and to show our grateful Sense of it, if the Gentlemen of Virginia shall send us a Dozen of their Sons, we will take great care of their Education, instruct them in all we know, and make Men of them.

John Hancock

On the Fourth Anniversary of the Boston Massacre

Boston, Massachusetts
March 5, 1774

John Hancock was a leading citizen of Massachusetts who became president of the Continental Congress and was the first signer of the Declaration of Independence. In the years leading up to the Declaration, he spoke forcefully against British treatment of the colonists, and along with Samuel Adams he was wanted under a British warrant of arrest. In this speech, Hancock commemorated the fourth anniversary of the 1770 Boston Massacre, in which King George III's troops had fired on unarmed citizens, killing five Americans.

* * *

It was easy to foresee the consequences which so naturally followed upon [the king] sending troops into America, to enforce obedience to acts of the British Parliament which neither God nor man ever empowered them to make. It was reasonable to expect that troops, who knew the errand they were sent upon, would treat the people whom they were to subjugate with a cruelty and haughtiness which too often buried the honorable character of the soldier in the disgraceful name of an unfeeling ruffian.

The [king's] troops, upon their first arrival, took possession of our senate house, and pointed their cannon against the judgment hall, and even continued them there whilst the supreme court of juridicature for this province was actually sitting to decide upon the lives and fortunes of the king's subjects. Our streets nightly resounded with the noise of riot and debauchery; our peaceful citizens were hourly exposed to shameful insults, and often felt the effects of their violence and outrage. But this was not all; as though they thought it not enough to violate our civil rights, they endeavored

to deprive us of the enjoyment of our religious privileges, to vitiate our morals, and thereby render us deserving of destruction. . . .

I come reluctantly to the transactions of that dismal night, when in such quick succession we felt the extremes of grief, astonishment, and rage. . . .

Let this sad tale of death never be told without a tear; let not the heaving bosom cease to burn with a manly indignation at the barbarous story through the long tracts of future time; let every parent tell the shameful story to his listening children until tears of pity glisten in their eyes, and boiling passion shake their tender frames; and whilst the anniversary of that ill-fated night is kept a jubilee in the grim court of pandemonium let all America join in one common prayer to Heaven, that the inhuman, unprovoked murders of the fifth of March, 1770, planned by Hillsborough, and a knot of treacherous knaves in Boston, and executed by the cruel hand of Preston and his sanguinary coadjutors, may ever stand in history without parallel.

But what, my countrymen, withheld the ready arm of vengeance from executing instant justice on the vile assassins? . . . May that generous compassion which often preserves from ruin even a guilty villain, forever actuate the noble bosoms of Americans. But let not the miscreant host vainly imagine that we feared their arms. No, them we despised; we dread nothing but slavery. Death is the creature of a poltroon's brain; 'tis immortality to sacrifice ourselves for the salvation of our country.

We fear not death. That gloomy night, the pale-faced moon, and the affrighted stars that hurried through the sky, can witness that we fear not death. Our hearts which, at the recollection, glow with rage that four revolving years have scarcely taught us to restrain, can witness that we fear not death; and happy it is for those who dared to insult us, that their naked bones are not now piled up an everlasting monument of Massachusetts' bravery.

Logan, Mingo Chief

To Lord Dunmore

Near Chillicothe, Ohio
October 1774

Logan was long loyal to the colonists, taking no part in the French and Indian Wars. But in May of 1774, when members of his family and tribe were killed by whites near Wheeling, West Virginia, Logan's tribe retaliated against local settlers. Lord Dunmore, governor of Virginia, then marched with troops to fight the Indians in a campaign known as Dunmore's War. After the battle of Point Pleasant, Logan refused to participate in peace negotiations, sending an address to be delivered by Dunmore's messengers. The speech became famous for its simple eloquence—though Logan would later discover that it was not Michael Cresap who murdered his family.

I appeal to any white man to say if he ever entered Logan's cabin hungry and he gave him not meat; if he ever came cold and naked and he clothed him not.

During the course of the last long and bloody war, Logan remained idle in his cabin, an advocate for peace. Such was my love for the whites that my countrymen pointed as I passed and said, "Logan is a friend of the white man." I had even thought to have lived with you but for the injuries of one man.

Colonel Cresap, the last spring in cold blood and unprovoked, murdered the relatives of Logan, not even sparing his wives and children. There runs not a drop of my blood in the veins of any living creature.

This called on me for revenge. I have sought it. I have killed many. I have fully glutted my vengeance. For my country I rejoice in the beams of peace; but do not harbor a thought that mine is the joy of fear. Logan never felt fear. He will not turn on his heel to save his life. Who is there to mourn for Logan? Not one.

☆

Patrick Henry

"Give Me Liberty or Give Me Death"

Richmond, Virginia
March 23, 1775

Patrick Henry was a self-taught lawyer who served for many years in the Virginia House of Burgesses and became famous for his superb oratory. At the second Virginia Convention of Delegates assembled in Richmond's St. John's Church, Henry introduced a radical resolution urging that Virginia prepare to arm and defend itself against British oppression. His speech electrified his audience, and as he spoke the splendid last lines, he thrust an imaginary dagger into his chest and fell back into his seat. No written record of the speech existed until it was reconstructed forty years later by William Wirt, Henry's biographer.

☆ ☆

Mr. President: No man thinks more highly than I do of the patriotism, as well as abilities of the very worthy gentlemen who have just addressed the House. But different men often see the same subject in different lights; and, therefore, I hope that it will not be thought disrespectful to those gentlemen, if, entertaining as I do, opinions of a character very opposite to theirs, I shall speak forth my sentiments freely and without reserve. This is no time for ceremony. The question before the House is one of awful moment to this country. For my own part I consider it as nothing less than a question of freedom or slavery. . . .

Mr. President, it is natural to man to indulge in the illusions of hope. We are apt to shut our eyes against a painful truth. . . . For my part, whatever anguish of spirit it may cost, I am willing to know the whole truth; to know the worst and to provide for it.

I have but one lamp by which my feet are guided; and that is the lamp of experience. I know of no way of judging of the