

## from The Speeches, May 19, 1940

### Speech by Winston Churchill

VIDEO TRAILER



KEYWORD: HML12-1288A



**READING 6** Understand, make inferences, and draw conclusions about the varied structural patterns and features of literary nonfiction. Analyze the effect of overstatement in speeches. **8** Analyze the consistency and clarity of the expression of the controlling idea and the ways in which the organizational and rhetorical patterns of text support or confound the author's meaning or purpose.

### DID YOU KNOW?

Winston Churchill ...

- prepared the speech you are about to read in only three hours?
- was 65 years old at the time he became prime minister and was active in politics until he was nearly 90?
- popularized the term "Iron Curtain"?

### Meet the Author

## Winston Churchill 1874–1965

It has been said that without Winston Churchill, the Allies might not have achieved victory in World War II. Churchill's heart-stirring speeches defied Hitler and inspired the British people to persevere. "His eloquence," wrote Churchill scholar Manfred Weidhorn, "rallied the free world in the face of mortal perils."

**An Officer and a Journalist** The son of a noble English father and an American mother, Churchill received a traditional English secondary education. Because of his poor performance at school, he attended the Royal Military College at Sandhurst instead of a university. However, he found his niche in the military, serving as both an officer and a war correspondent. In 1899, during the Boer War, he was captured by the Boers, but he made a daring escape.

**A Checkered Career** Churchill entered politics in 1900. His enthusiastic support for an ultimately disastrous naval attack on the Dardanelles during World War I and his switching of party affiliation from Conservative to Liberal and then back to Conservative caused many in England to distrust him. During the 1930s, Churchill warned of the potentially

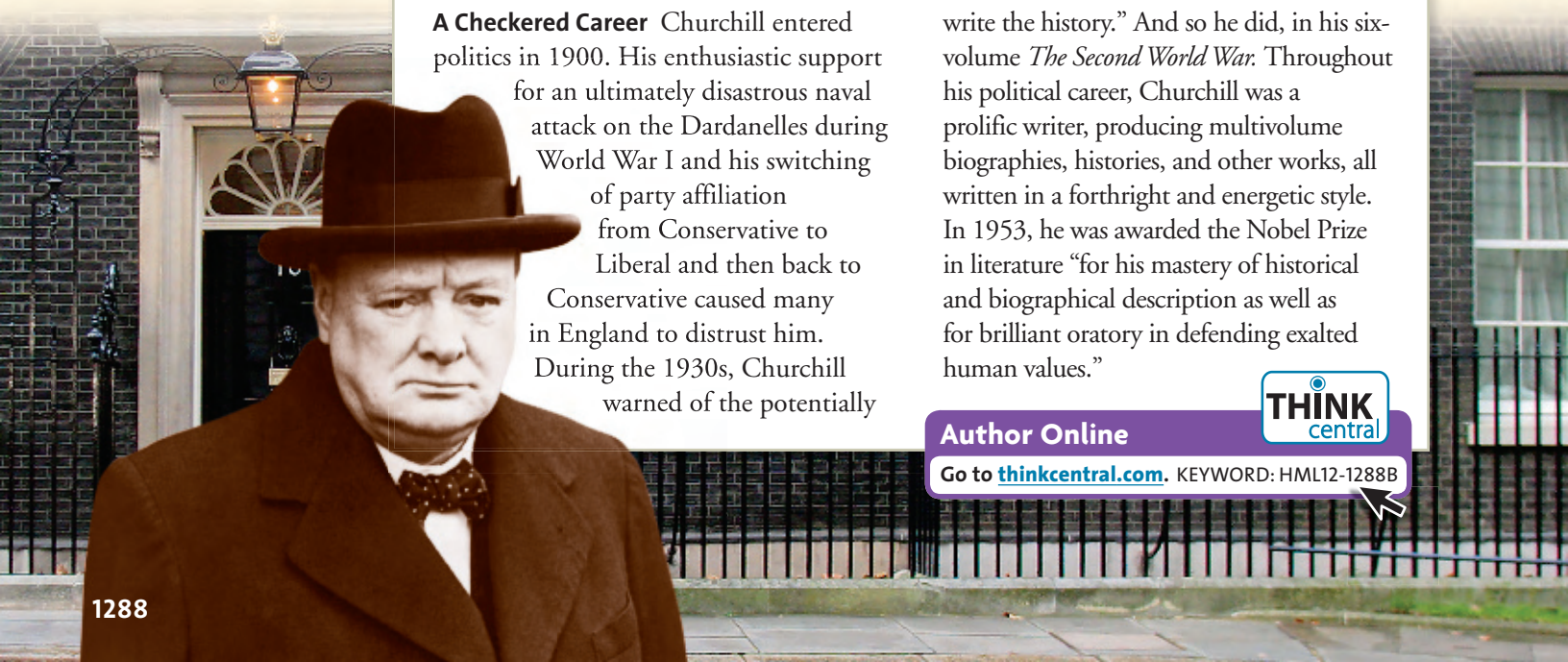
catastrophic consequences of Hitler's increasing power, but his concerns were largely ignored.

However, in 1940, following the resignation of Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain, Churchill became a compromise prime minister in a coalition government. His tenacious leadership and single-minded vision during World War II proved him to be one of England's greatest statesmen. Though his party was ousted from power after the war, he reclaimed his role as prime minister in 1951, at the age of 77, only to resign four years later because of poor health.

**A Seasoned Historian** During the war, Churchill assured Allied leaders President Franklin Roosevelt and Russian premier Joseph Stalin, "History will judge us kindly." When asked how he could be so sure, Churchill answered, "Because I shall write the history." And so he did, in his six-volume *The Second World War*. Throughout his political career, Churchill was a prolific writer, producing multivolume biographies, histories, and other works, all written in a forthright and energetic style. In 1953, he was awarded the Nobel Prize in literature "for his mastery of historical and biographical description as well as for brilliant oratory in defending exalted human values."

### Author Online

Go to [thinkcentral.com](http://thinkcentral.com). KEYWORD: HML12-1288B



## LITERARY ANALYSIS: SPEECH

Although a **speech** is intended to be read aloud, the written texts of some speeches have become an important part of our literature. Winston Churchill was one of the finest speech writers of the 20th century. In the speech you will read, he uses a variety of techniques that make it effective oratory, including

- **Rhetorical devices**—such as repetition and parallelism (using similar grammatical constructions to express related ideas)
- **Persuasive techniques**—such as loaded language and emotional appeals
- **Clear narrative**—or a compelling and easy-to-follow “story”

As you read, look for examples of these techniques and notice how Churchill uses them to make his case for war.

## READING SKILL: IDENTIFY MAIN IDEAS

You know that the **main idea** of a paragraph is the basic point it makes. Winston Churchill delivered the following speech early in World War II, when the war was going badly for the Allies. In addition to describing recent developments in the war, he states his ideas about how Great Britain should respond to these events. As you read, note the main idea in each paragraph.

|             | Main Idea |
|-------------|-----------|
| Paragraph 1 |           |
| Paragraph 2 |           |

## VOCABULARY IN CONTEXT

Restate each phrase, using a different word or words for the boldface term.

1. showed a **dogged** determination
2. ferocious opponent was **formidable**
3. his **invincible** armor
4. threats to **intimidate** the sheriff
5. inspiration to **animate** the troops
6. can't dampen her **indomitable** spirit



Complete the activities in your Reader/Writer Notebook.

## How can a crisis UNITE us?

When a crisis such as a war or a natural disaster occurs, people are often forced to re-evaluate their priorities. Everyday problems and differences of opinion are suddenly overshadowed by the greater public concern. When Winston Churchill took office, the German army threatened the whole of Europe. With his incomparable speaking abilities, Churchill was able to create unity among the British people—and ultimately the Allied forces—in the common goal of defeating the Nazis.

**DISCUSS** With a group of three or four classmates, make a list of some major crises that have occurred since the 21st century began. Then, discuss ways people pulled together to work toward a common goal or strategy for dealing with the crises. Consider the roles played by political leaders, the media, and private citizens.



# The Speeches,

## MAY 19, 1940

Winston Churchill

**BACKGROUND** World War II began in Europe two years before the United States became involved. Between September 1939 and May 1940, Nazi Germany—which had already annexed Austria and most of Czechoslovakia—conquered Poland, Denmark, and Norway. On May 10, 1940, the German army began sweeping through Holland and Belgium on its way to France. When Churchill broadcast this radio speech on May 19, the British troops fighting in western Europe were backed up against the ocean, ready to retreat to England.

I speak to you for the first time as Prime Minister in a solemn hour for the life of our country, of our Empire, of our Allies, and, above all, of the cause of Freedom. A tremendous battle is raging in France and Flanders.<sup>1</sup> The Germans, by a remarkable combination of air bombing and heavily armored tanks, have broken through the French defenses north of the Maginot Line,<sup>2</sup> and strong columns of their armored vehicles are ravaging the open country, which for the first day or two was without defenders. They have penetrated deeply and spread alarm and confusion in their track. Behind them there are now appearing infantry in lorries,<sup>3</sup> and behind them, again, the large masses are moving forward. The regroument of the French armies to make head against, and also to strike at, this intruding wedge has been proceeding for several days, largely assisted by the magnificent efforts of the Royal Air Force.<sup>4</sup> **A**

### Analyze Visuals ►

What is the effect of having the two figures in shadow?

### **A** SPEECH

Summarize the narrative Churchill presents in lines 1–12.

1. **Flanders:** western Belgium.

2. **Maginot** (mäzh'ə-nō') **Line:** a line of fortifications that the French built before World War II on their eastern border with Germany. The Maginot Line was thought to be impossible to penetrate.

3. **lorries** (lôr'ēz): the British term for trucks.

4. **Royal Air Force:** the British air force, offering aerial support to French forces on the ground.

Churchill inspects bombing damage to the Houses of Parliament





We must not allow ourselves to be **intimidated** by the presence of these armored vehicles in unexpected places behind our lines. If they are behind our Front, the French are also at many points fighting actively behind theirs. Both sides are therefore in an extremely dangerous position. And if the French Army, and our own Army, are well handled, as I believe they will be; if the French retain that genius for recovery and counterattack for which they have so long been famous; and if the British Army shows the **dogged** endurance and solid fighting power of which there have been so many examples in the past—then a sudden transformation of the scene might spring into being. **B**

It would be foolish, however, to disguise the gravity of the hour. It would be still more foolish to lose heart and courage or to suppose that well-trained, well-equipped armies numbering three or four millions of men can be overcome in the space of a few weeks, or even months, by a scoop, or raid of mechanized vehicles, however **formidable**. We may look with confidence to the stabilization of the Front in France, and to the general engagement of the masses, which will enable the qualities of the French and British soldiers to be matched squarely against those of their adversaries. For myself, I have **invincible** confidence in the French Army and its leaders. Only a very small part of that splendid army has yet been heavily engaged; and only a very small part of France has yet been invaded. There is good evidence to show that practically the whole of the specialized and mechanized forces of the enemy have been already thrown into the battle; and we know that very heavy losses have been inflicted upon them. No officer or man, no brigade or division, which grapples at close quarters with the enemy, wherever encountered, can fail to make a worthy contribution to the general result. The Armies must cast away the idea of resisting behind concrete lines or natural obstacles, and must realize that mastery can only be regained by furious and unrelenting assault. And this spirit must not only **animate** the High Command, but must inspire every fighting man.

In the air—often at serious odds—often at odds hitherto thought overwhelming—we have been clawing down three or four to one of our enemies; and the relative balance of the British and German Air Forces is now considerably more favorable to us than at the beginning of the battle. In cutting down the German bombers, we are fighting our own battle as well as that of France. My confidence in our ability to fight it out to the finish with the German Air Force has been strengthened by the fierce encounters which have taken place and are taking place. At the same time, our heavy bombers are striking nightly at the taproot of German mechanized power, and have already inflicted serious damage upon the oil refineries on which the Nazi effort to dominate the world directly depends. **C**

We must expect that as soon as stability is reached on the Western Front, the bulk of that hideous apparatus of aggression which gashed Holland into ruin and slavery in a few days, will be turned upon us. I am sure I speak for all when I say we are ready to face it; to endure it; and to retaliate against it—to any extent that

**intimidate** (ĩn-tĩm'ĩ-dāt')  
v. to make timid or afraid

**dogged** (dô'gĩd) *adj.* not giving up; tenacious; stubborn

#### **B MAIN IDEAS**

What is the main point Churchill makes in lines 13–21?

**formidable**  
(fôr'mĩ-də-bəl) *adj.* hard to handle or overcome

**invincible**  
(ĩn-vĩn'-sə-bel) *adj.* not able to be conquered

**animate** (ăn'ə-māt') v. to stimulate to action or effort; inspire

#### **C MAIN IDEAS**

What is the main idea in lines 41–50?



the unwritten laws of war permit. There will be many men, and many women, in this island who when the ordeal comes upon them, as come it will, will feel comfort, and even a pride—that they are sharing the perils of our lads at the Front—soldiers, sailors and airmen, God bless them—and are drawing away from them a part at least of the onslaught they have to bear. Is not this the appointed  
60 time for all to make the utmost exertions in their power? If the battle is to be won, we must provide our men with ever-increasing quantities of the weapons and ammunition they need. We must have, and have quickly, more airplanes, more tanks, more shells, more guns. There is imperious<sup>5</sup> need for these vital munitions. They increase our strength against the powerfully armed enemy. They replace the wastage of the obstinate struggle; and the knowledge that wastage will speedily be replaced enables us to draw more readily upon our reserves and throw them in now that everything counts so much. **D**

Our task is not only to win the battle—but to win the War. After this battle in France abates its force, there will come the battle for our island—for all that  
70 Britain is, and all that Britain means. That will be the struggle. In that supreme emergency we shall not hesitate to take every step, even the most drastic, to call

**D SPEECH**

Reread lines 59–67. Identify examples of **loaded language**—words and phrases with strong emotional content—that Churchill uses in this passage.

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5. **imperious** (ĩm-pĩr'ē-es): urgent; pressing.



Churchill during one of his radio addresses

forth from our people the last ounce and the last inch of effort of which they are capable. The interests of property, the hours of labor, are nothing compared with the struggle for life and honor, for right and freedom, to which we have vowed ourselves.

I have received from the Chiefs of the French Republic, and in particular from its **indomitable** Prime Minister, M. Reynaud,<sup>6</sup> the most sacred pledges that whatever happens they will fight to the end, be it bitter or be it glorious. Nay, if we fight to the end, it can only be glorious.

80 Having received His Majesty's commission, I have found an administration of men and women of every party and of almost every point of view. We have differed and quarreled in the past; but now one bond unites us all—to wage war until victory is won, and never to surrender ourselves to servitude and shame, whatever the cost and the agony may be. This is one of the most awe-striking periods in the long history of France and Britain. It is also beyond doubt the most sublime. Side by side, unaided except by their kith and kin in the great Dominions<sup>7</sup> and by the wide Empires which rest beneath their shield—side by side, the British and French peoples have advanced to rescue not only Europe but mankind from the foulest and most soul-destroying tyranny which has ever  
90 darkened and stained the pages of history. Behind them—behind us—behind the armies and fleets of Britain and France—gather a group of shattered States and bludgeoned races: the Czechs, the Poles, the Norwegians, the Danes, the Dutch, the Belgians—upon all of whom the long night of barbarism will descend, unbroken even by a star of hope, unless we conquer, as conquer we must; as conquer we shall. **E**

Today is Trinity Sunday.<sup>8</sup> Centuries ago words were written to be a call and a spur to the faithful servants of Truth and Justice: “Arm yourselves, and be ye men of valor, and be in readiness for the conflict; for it is better for us to perish in battle than to look upon the outrage of our nation and our altar. As the Will  
100 of God is in Heaven, even so let it be.”<sup>9</sup> ☞

**indomitable**  
(ĭn-dŏm'ĭ-tə-bəl) *adj.*  
not easily discouraged  
or defeated



TEKS 6

**E OVERSTATEMENT**

As a rhetorical technique, **overstatement** is a deliberate exaggeration intended to influence one's audience. Political and military speeches often engage in some degree of exaggeration. Do you think Churchill is engaging in overstatement in this passage? What examples can you cite? Explain your answer.

6. **M. Reynaud** (rā-nō'): Paul Reynaud, who had long argued, like Churchill, for firmness toward Germany and for a close British-French alliance. (*M.* is an abbreviation for *Monsieur* [mō-syœ'], French for "Mister.")

7. **kith . . . Dominions**: friends and relatives in the self-governing nations of the British Commonwealth.

8. **Trinity Sunday**: the eighth Sunday after Easter, dedicated to Christianity's Holy Trinity (the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit).

9. **"Arm yourselves . . . let it be."**: a quotation from 1 Maccabees 3:58–60. The Book of Maccabees is part of the Apocrypha, found in only some versions of the Bible. It tells of the heroism of the Maccabees, a Jewish family who prevented the Syrians from destroying Judaism in the second century B.C.

## Comprehension

1. **Recall** How did England come to the aid of France against Germany?
2. **Summarize** What strategy is Churchill asserting in lines 36–39?
3. **Clarify** What does Churchill expect to happen after the fighting in France subsides?

## Literary Analysis

4. **Identify Main Ideas** Look over the notes you kept while reading. Then, summarize the main ideas in Churchill's speech.
5. **Make Inferences** Reread lines 96–100 and the accompanying footnotes. Why might Churchill have thought this biblical quote would be an effective way to end his speech?
6. **Analyze Author's Attitude** How would you describe Churchill's attitude toward each of the following? Cite specific words and phrases to support your answers.
  - the French troops
  - the British troops
  - the German troops
7. **Evaluate a Speech** Churchill relies heavily on loaded language and emotional appeals in this speech. Which of these **persuasive techniques** did you find most effective? Cite specific examples to illustrate your answer.
8. **Compare Texts** Recall Aldous Huxley's discussion about how language is used in times of war in his essay "Words and Behavior." In this speech, Churchill warns his people about impending German attacks on Britain. To what extent does Huxley's criticism apply to Churchill's speech? Cite examples of what Huxley would consider "falsifying" language in your response. After reading Churchill's speech, and in light of its historical context, have your opinions about language manipulation changed to any degree? Explain.



**READING 6** Understand, make inferences, and draw conclusions about the varied structural patterns and features of literary nonfiction. Analyze the effect of overstatement in speeches. **8** Analyze the consistency and clarity of the expression of the controlling idea and the ways in which the organizational and rhetorical patterns of text support or confound the author's meaning or purpose.

## Literary Criticism

9. **Author's Style** American president John F. Kennedy, who fought with the Allied forces in World War II, said of Churchill that "he mobilized the English language and sent it into battle." How important is a political leader's speaking ability in motivating citizens in times of crisis?

*How can a crisis* **UNITE** *us?*

Based on this speech, how would you describe or characterize Churchill as a leader? How might this speech have united the British against their enemies?



# Vocabulary in Context

## ▲ VOCABULARY PRACTICE

Look for context clues to help you decide which vocabulary word best completes each sentence. Use each word only once.

- 1. He displayed \_\_\_\_\_ persistence in clinging to his ideals.
- 2. A bully often tries to \_\_\_\_\_ smaller children.
- 3. Cataloguing all the books in the United States would be a(n) \_\_\_\_\_ task.
- 4. The team leader’s enthusiasm helped \_\_\_\_\_ all the workers.
- 5. Our \_\_\_\_\_ captain never gives up, even against daunting odds.
- 6. The new weapons are so powerful that those who carry them feel \_\_\_\_\_.

### WORD LIST

animate  
dogged  
formidable  
indomitable  
intimidate  
invincible

## ACADEMIC VOCABULARY IN WRITING

- approach
- assume
- environment
- method
- strategy

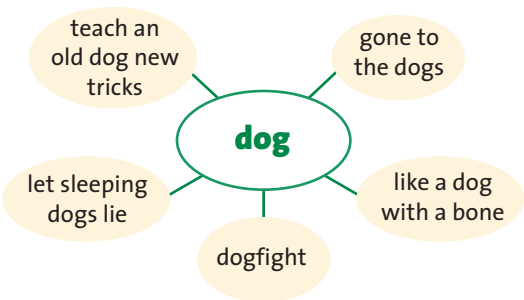
Effective persuasive speaking and writing often requires that the speaker or writer understand how to think from the perspective of his or her audience. What **methods** or techniques reveal Churchill’s knowledge of how to **approach** his audience? Use at least one Academic Vocabulary word in your response.



**READING 1E** Use general and specialized dictionaries (printed or electronic) as needed.

## VOCABULARY STRATEGY: IDIOMS

**General dictionaries** give the meanings of most common idioms; to find them, you have to look up the right key word (*raining cats and dogs*, for example, may be found under *rain*). A dictionary of idioms—a **specialized dictionary** that can be found in libraries—may cover even more idioms and also explain their origins. The entries in a dictionary of idioms are organized alphabetically by key word, and the dictionary is usually indexed. For example, *raining cats and dogs* would probably be covered under *rain*, but an index entry for *dogs* would guide you to the *rain* entry.



**PRACTICE** Complete each sentence with the idiom in the diagram that makes the most sense. Use your knowledge of dog behavior to help you choose the correct idiom. When you are done, try to define each idiom you used.

- 1. The possessive child clutched the toy \_\_\_\_\_.
- 2. I tried showing my grandfather how to use the computer, but you can’t \_\_\_\_\_.
- 3. The combat flyer had a \_\_\_\_\_ with an enemy pilot.
- 4. Service was bad last time, but now it has really \_\_\_\_\_.
- 5. Stop raking up the past; it’s better to \_\_\_\_\_.

Interactive Vocabulary

**THINK**  
central

Go to [thinkcentral.com](http://thinkcentral.com).  
KEYWORD: HML12-1296

## Wartime Perspectives

England was at war for almost the entire first half of the 20th century. Although generally supportive, the British people did engage in critical discussion about how warfare is conducted, both in the trenches and in the political sphere. Aldous Huxley was one outspoken critic of the language used to justify war.

*“We protect our minds by an elaborate system of abstractions, ambiguities, metaphors and similes from the reality we do not wish to know too clearly; we lie to ourselves, in order that we may still have the excuse of ignorance, the alibi of stupidity and incomprehension, possessing which we can continue with a good conscience to commit and tolerate the most monstrous crimes. . . .”*

—Aldous Huxley, “Words and Behavior”

As prime minister during World War II, Winston Churchill used language to rally the British public to the cause.

*“Side by side, the British and French peoples have advanced to rescue not only Europe but mankind from the foulest and most soul-destroying tyranny which has ever darkened and stained the pages of history. Behind them—behind us—behind the armies and fleets of Britain and France—gather a group of shattered States and bludgeoned races: the Czechs, the Poles, the Norwegians, the Danes, the Dutch, the Belgians—upon all of whom the long night of barbarism will descend, unbroken even by a star of hope, unless we conquer, as conquer we must; as conquer we shall.”*

—Winston Churchill, *The Speeches*

## Writing to Persuade

Draft a letter that Churchill might have written to Huxley in which he attempts to persuade Huxley that in a time of war, language must serve the greater good. Then draft Huxley’s response.

### Consider

- Churchill’s reasons for using the language that he did
- how Churchill’s language compares with that described by Huxley in “Words and Behavior”



Winston Churchill broadcasting to the public

## Extension Online

**LISTENING & SPEAKING** Go online or look in your library to find recordings of wartime speeches by Winston Churchill. Choose one speech that you find particularly vivid or compelling, and play it for your class. Discuss Churchill’s purpose for the particular speech and whether you think it was well executed and convincing. How does the experience of listening to Churchill differ from reading his words on the page?



**WRITING 16** Write persuasive texts. **LISTENING AND SPEAKING 24A** Listen responsively to a speaker by framing inquiries that reflect an understanding of the content and by identifying the positions taken and the evidence in support of those positions.