



Social Studies Exemplary Text Student Handout

We have gathered here to affirm a faith, a faith in a common purpose, a common conviction, a common devotion. Some of us have chosen America as the land of our adoption; the rest have come from those who did the same. For this reason we have some right to consider ourselves a picked group, a group of those who had the courage to break from the past and brave the dangers and the loneliness of a strange land. What was the object that nerved us, or those who went before us, to this choice? We sought liberty; freedom from oppression, freedom from want, freedom to be ourselves. This we then sought; this we now believe that we are by way of winning. What do we mean when we say that first of all we seek liberty? I often wonder whether we do not rest our hopes too much upon constitutions, upon laws and upon courts. These are false hopes; believe me, these are false hopes. Liberty lies in the hearts of men and women; when it dies there, no constitution, no law, no court can even do much to help it. While it lies there it needs no constitution, no law, no court to save it. And what is this liberty which must lie in the hearts of men and women? It is not the ruthless, the unbridled will; it is not freedom to do as one likes. That is the denial of liberty, and leads straight to its overthrow. A society in which men recognize no check upon their freedom soon becomes a society where freedom is the possession of only a savage few; as we have learned to our sorrow.

What then is the spirit of liberty? I cannot define it; I can only tell you my own faith. The spirit of liberty is the spirit which is not too sure that it is right; the spirit of liberty is the spirit which seeks to understand the mind of other men and women; the spirit of liberty is the spirit which weighs their interests alongside its own without bias; the spirit of liberty remembers that not even a sparrow falls to earth unheeded; the spirit of liberty is the spirit of Him who, near two thousand years ago, taught mankind that lesson it has never learned but never quite forgotten; that there may be a kingdom where the least shall be heard and considered side by side with the greatest. And now in that spirit, that spirit of an America which has never been, and which may never be; nay, which never will be except as the conscience and courage of Americans create it; yet in the spirit of that America which lies hidden in some form in the aspirations of us all; in the spirit of that America for which our young men are at this moment fighting and dying; in that spirit of liberty and of America I ask you to rise and with me pledge our faith in the glorious destiny of our beloved country.

Hand, L. (1944). "I Am an American Day Address."

This is an example of exemplary text found in *Common Core Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects: Appendix B Text Exemplars and Sample Performance Tasks*. Retrieved from http://www.corestandards.org/assets/Appendix_B.pdf

Social Studies Exemplary Text Teacher Resource

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Teacher introduces the text with minimal commentary and students read it independently. Teacher then reads passage aloud. Give a brief definition to words students would likely not be able to define from context (underlined in text). Teacher guides the students through a series of text-dependent questions. Complete the performance task as a cumulative evaluation of the close-reading.

Text-Dependent Questions

1. Hand creates a growing sense of the importance of the occasion by asserting that those gathered have a common “purpose,” then a shared “conviction,” and finally a joint “devotion.” What do these words mean, and how does the progression of them emphasize the gravity of the event?
2. How does Hand create a sense of camaraderie and shared experience in the second sentence?
3. What qualities make the “picked group” so special in Hand’s eyes? What qualities does Hand imply the “picked group” possess when he says they “had the courage to break from the past”?
4. Does Hand think we ought to reject seeking liberty through the legal system? Write a two sentence explanation that captures the essence of Hand’s viewpoint.
5. What is the problem Hand sees with granting people “unbridled will”?
6. How has the definition of liberty evolved over the course of this first paragraph?
7. How does Hand’s explanation of his vision of the spirit of liberty explain why he could not define the spirit of liberty?

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Hand, L. (1944). "I Am an American Day Address."

EFL 5
Word Count 511

8. Who is Hand referring to when he speaks of "the spirit of Him"? What lesson did he teach that has neither been learned or forgotten?
9. Why does Hand employ the phrase "And now in that spirit"?
10. Midway through the second paragraph Hand shifts from talking about the spirit of liberty to the spirit of America. Why does he do this?

Performance Tasks for Informational Texts

Students evaluate the argument and specific claims about the "spirit of liberty" in Learned Hand's *I Am an American Day Address*, assessing the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence and the validity of his reasoning. [RI.9–10.8]

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