

# FDR's First Inaugural Address

Learn more about this topic! Each section gives more detail on one of the lyrics from the song. Read each section, and then respond by answering the question or taking notes on key ideas.

1. b"

When Franklin Delano Roosevelt was elected the 32nd President of the United States, he was stepping into a difficult situation. After three years of economic Depression, 13 million Americans were out of work, and countless banks had gone out of business. Expectations were high for the new administration to improve the country's dire economic situation.

\n

Americans were hopeful change was coming. But between the election and Roosevelt's inauguration, the economy took a turn for the worse, with 4,000 banks shutting down and 32 states declaring "bank holidays" to prevent customers from withdrawing all of their money. This led to dire consequences for the economy as many Americans suddenly found themselves unable to make any purchases.

\n

This set the stage for FDR's first inaugural address, where it seemed the entire country was holding their breath, waiting to hear what the incoming President planned to do.

\n"

Notes

2. b'

The most famous line from FDR's first inaugural address is "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself." What has become one of the most well-known phrases in American history appears early in the speech, setting the tone for the full address. Read the opening lines of Roosevelt's speech below.

\n

I am certain that my fellow Americans expect that on my induction into the Presidency I will address them with a candor and a decision which the present situation of our people impel. This is preeminently the time to speak the truth, the whole truth, frankly and boldly. Nor need we shrink from honestly facing conditions in our country today. This great Nation will endure as it has endured, will revive and will prosper. So, first of all, let me assert my firm belief that the only thing we have to fear is fear itself—nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyzes needed efforts to convert retreat into advance. In every dark hour of our national life a leadership of frankness and vigor has met with that understanding and support of the people themselves which is essential to victory. I am convinced that you will again give that support to leadership in these critical days.

\n'

3. b''

Roosevelt won the 1932 presidential election in a landslide, or a victory by a very wide margin, over the incumbent, Herbert Hoover. In his address, Roosevelt acknowledged that the landslide is a sign of the American people's desire for an improved quality of life. In the conclusion of his speech, the new president said, "We face the arduous days that lie before us in the warm courage of national unity... [The American people] have made me the present instrument of their wishes. In the spirit of the gift I take it."

\n''

Notes

Notes