

Speechmaking  
and  
Speechwriting Activities:

*The Challenger Speech File*

Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and Museum  
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*The Great Communicator Files*



## Challenger: Speech File

### OVERVIEW

Look through the materials in your speech file. List three of the different documents that you see:

	<u>Title of Document</u>	<u>Date on Document</u> (if available)
1)	_____	_____
2)	_____	_____
3)	_____	_____

#### (Document #1)

1. Look at the **President's Back-up Copy**.
  - a. What do you think the backup copy was used for?  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - b. What do you think the marks on the backup copy represent?  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - c. What does the word "Noonan" in parenthesis at the upper left-hand corner of the document represent?  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - d. Where was the speech presented? How do you know this?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

#### (Document #2)

2. Look at the document "**Presidential Remarks: Death of Space Shuttle Challenger Crew Tuesday, January 28, 1986.**"
  - a. What do the initials "RR" stand for? \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. What important address was the president expecting to give that night?  
\_\_\_\_\_

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- c. How do you know? Provide a quote to back-up your response.

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- d. How many astronauts died on board the shuttle Challenger? \_\_\_\_\_

- e. What was unique about this particular mission?

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- f. Had Americans lost astronauts in space prior to this accident? \_\_\_\_\_

- g. List two adjectives to describe the mood of the president and of the nation on this day.

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- h. Pretend you are a teacher watching this space shuttle take-off from your classroom with your class. What would you say to your students after the space shuttle explodes?

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Photo courtesy of NASA

- i. Imagine you are the president and have just been informed of this incident. What do you think your role is in this tragedy?

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### (Document #3)

3. Examine the page titled **“White House Staffing Memorandum.”**

- a. Why is it marked “ASAP”?

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- b. What do you think this memorandum is used for? Why?

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c. What role did Admiral John Poindexter play in the Reagan Administration?

\_\_\_\_\_

d. What is the NSC?

\_\_\_\_\_

e. Why would the NSC be reviewing the president's remarks?

\_\_\_\_\_

f. What role did Ben Elliott play in the Reagan Administration?

\_\_\_\_\_

g. Examine the changes made by the NSC.

List two changes which the president incorporated in his remarks.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

List two changes which the president did **not** incorporate in his remarks.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### (Document #4)

4. Look at the **“Remarks of the President on Space Shuttle Explosion.”**

a. What is the date on this document? \_\_\_\_\_

b. What is the time on this document? \_\_\_\_\_

c. What does the letter “Q” stand for within the document? \_\_\_\_\_

d. From where was this address made? \_\_\_\_\_

e. List three emotions expressed by the president in this document.

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f. Provide evidence for your response to question (e) using 2 or more quotes from the text.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Challenger: Speech File

- g. Do you think the president would continue to support the space program after this accident? \_\_\_\_\_
- h. Explain your response to question (g) using a quote from the document to support your response.

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### (Document #5)

5. Look at the document titled, “**High Flight.**”

- a. What kind of document is this? \_\_\_\_\_
- b. Why is it included in this speech file?

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### (Document Set #6a and 6b)

6. What was the “**Teacher in Space Project?**”

- a. How does it relate to the Space Shuttle Challenger?

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- b. What was the name of the “teacher in space”?

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- c. What was the teacher expecting to do in space?

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## Challenger: Speech Writing

### SPEECH ELEMENTS



#### 1. Elements of a successful speech include:

- Attention-getting devices such as stories or interesting facts or jokes.
- Clear communication – understandable language and specific points, ideas and plans.
- Accurate information.
- Specific examples to back-up your ideas.
- An exciting ending such as a call to action or the repetition of a unifying theme.

#### 2. Multiple Drafts and Lots of Practice

Successful speeches, including presidential speeches, generally have gone through numerous drafts and have often been seen and reviewed by more than one person. Presidents generally practice their speeches and receive suggestions on how to best present information to the public.

#### 3. Know Thyself

Develop your own style. Present your speech in a manner which is consistent with and reflects your own personality.

### QUESTION ON THE CHALLENGER SPEECH ELEMENTS:

(Answer the following question on a separate sheet of paper)

**List, describe and provide three examples** of the elements of successful speech writing evidenced in President Reagan’s “Address to the Nation: Death of Space Shuttle Challenger Crew.”

## Challenger: Speech Writing

### CREATE YOUR OWN SPEECH:

1. **Brainstorm a list of issues which are important to you.** They can be school-based, local, state, national or international issues.

Some examples may include:

- creating grade restrictions for playing on an athletic team,
  - school-improvement efforts,
  - lowering the age required to obtain a drivers' license,
  - election reform,
- or
- foreign policy.

2. **Write a 250 word speech.** Make sure you incorporate the “elements of a successful speech” described above.
3. **Ask at least two other people you trust** to read over your speech and make comments and suggestions.
4. **Incorporate at least two of the** suggestions and change your speech to reflect these suggestions.
5. **Practice your speech** in front of at least two other people.
6. **Email your speech to [reaganeducation@nara.gov](mailto:reaganeducation@nara.gov).**

Excerpts from the very best speeches will be posted on the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and Museum website.

Additionally, three times a year, one speech will be selected as the Great Communicator Student Winner. The student winner's speech will be posted in the rotunda of the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library.

Each student winner will receive:

- ☺ four free passes to the Ronald Reagan Presidential Museum
- ☺ a certificate
- ☺ additional prizes from the museum gift store