John F. Kennedy's Inaugural Address

Multiple Choice
Identify the choice that best completes the statement or answers the question.

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ABOUT THE PASSAGE
John F. Kennedy was one of the most charismatic presidents the United States has had. He was especially adept at delivering speeches that roused the enthusiasm of his listeners. Notice how well he does this in his famous inaugural address.

REASON FOR READING
To notice Kennedy’s effective use of language to express his ideas, and to understand his message.

READ THE PASSAGE
"... Let the word go forth from this time and place, to friend and foe alike, that the torch has been passed to a new generation of Americans born in this century, tempered by war, disciplined by a hard and bitter peace, proud of our ancient heritage – and unwilling to witness or permit slow undoing of those human rights to which this nation has always been committed, and to which we are committed today at home and around the world. . . .

In your hands, my fellow citizens, more than mine, will rest the final success or failure of our course. Since this country was founded, each generation of Americans has been summoned to give testimony to its national loyalty. The graves of young Americans who answered the call to service surround the globe.

Now the trumpet summons us again – not as a call to bear arms, though arms we need – not as a call to battle, though embattled we are – but a call to bear the burden of a long twilight struggle, year in and year out, "rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation" – a struggle against the common enemies of man: tyranny, poverty, disease, and war itself. . . .

In the long history of the world, only a few generations have been granted the role of defending freedom in its hour of maximum danger. I do not shrink from this responsibility – I welcome it. I do not believe that any of us would exchange places with any other people or any other generation. The energy, the faith, the devotion which we bring to this endeavour will light our country and all who serve it – and the glow from that fire can truly light the world.

And so, my fellow Americans: ask not what your country can do for you – ask what you can do for your country. . . ."

1. Find the Main Idea: Choose one answer.
   a. Each person must find ways to fight against tyranny, poverty, disease and war itself.
   b. The torch of the Statue of Liberty shines in New York harbour.
   c. Human rights have been guaranteed by history.
   d. Too many young Americans already have been buried by war.

2. Go beyond the Facts: After reading this passage, we can conclude which one of the following?
   a. Americans should know their own history better.
   b. There have been too many wars.
   c. Each American is responsible for the welfare of the nation.
   d. Modern technology will soon solve the world’s age-old problems.
3. **Determine the Writer's Style and Technique:** Choose one answer.
   a. Makes many grand promises.
   b. Makes the listener feel involved with national ideals.
   c. Develops one idea thoroughly by giving facts.
   d. Outlines his legislative plans.

**Matching**

**Find the Facts: The statements are either true or false.**
   a. True  
   b. False

4. The speech is meant to concern people about other people's rights as well as their own.
5. The new generation of Americans is too inexperienced to help its country.
6. The success or failure of the struggle for American ideals rests with the president alone.
7. The trumpet does not summon us to bear arms.
8. We are called to bear the burden of a long twilight struggle.
9. The common enemies of all people are tyranny, poverty, disease, and war itself.
10. Kennedy was aware of the danger facing America.
11. Kennedy said that it was the government's responsibility to defend freedom.

**Find the Order: Number the following in the order in which the eight events appear in the passage.**

Suggestion: Highlight all eight statements in the passage.
   a. 1  
   b. 2  
   c. 3  
   d. 4  
   e. 5  
   f. 6  
   g. 7  
   h. 8

12. Americans today are committed to upholding human rights at home and abroad.
13. Every generation since America was founded has been called upon to show its loyalty.
14. This generation will fight against war itself.
15. Friends and enemies must hear this message.
16. Americans must seek ways to serve their country.
17. All over the world, young Americans have died serving their country.
18. The struggle facing us will be a long one.
19. A new generation has learned the hard way—from history, from peace, and from war.
VOCABULARY BUILDING: USING THE WORDS

Words and Their Meanings: Find the boldfaced word for these definitions.
Match the correct term to each of the following descriptions. One word has two meanings.

a. burden e. summoned
b. committed f. tempered
c. disciplined g. testimony
d. endeavour h. tyranny

20. called upon
21. an effort to do something; an undertaking
22. a statement used for proof; evidence
23. trained; controlled; given will power
24. a heavy load
25. dedicated or pledged
26. made stronger and more resilient; toughened
27. the cruel or unjust use of power; a government by an absolute ruler
28. moderated; made less harsh by the addition of some other ingredient

Short Answer

Use a separate piece of paper to answer the following questions.

29. What is the main message or challenge in John F. Kennedy’s speech?

30. What does the torch stand for?

31. What does the trumpet call bring to mind?

32. Why does Kennedy use the phrases "my fellow citizens" and "my fellow Americans"?

33. Write a paragraph using three of the vocabulary words from the list above. Underline the vocabulary words in your paragraph.