

Speech Analysis of Obama's Inaugural Address (2009)

Barack Obama's Inaugural Address		
Washington, D.C. -Tuesday, January 20, 2009.		
Use of the possessive <i>my</i> , as if all the audience was his property, his electors, his people Three-part list (service, generosity, cooperation) Assonance: <i>task/us;</i> <i>grateful/mindful;</i> <i>nation/cooperation</i> Thanks to President Bush	1.	My fellow citizens: I stand here today <u>humbled</u> by the <u>task</u> before us, <u>grateful</u> for the trust you have bestowed, <u>mindful</u> of the sacrifices borne by our ancestors. I thank President Bush for his <u>service</u> to our <u>nation</u> , as well as the <u>generosity</u> and <u>cooperation</u> he has shown throughout this transition.
Meteorological metaphors: <i>rising tides of prosperity, still waters of peace, gathering clouds, raging storms</i> We the people: intertextuality reference to the Preamble of the Constitution Suggestion of the ideals of the <i>ancestors</i> , the past	2.	Forty-four Americans have now taken the presidential oath. The words have been spoken during <u>rising tides of prosperity</u> and the <u>still waters of peace</u> . Yet, every so often the oath is taken amidst <u>gathering clouds</u> and <u>raging storms</u> . At these moments, America has carried on not simply because of the skill or vision of those in high office, but because We the People have remained faithful to the <i>ideals</i> of our <i>forebearers</i> , and true to our founding documents.
<u>Bicolon</u> or syntactic parallelism	3.	<u>So it has been.</u> <u>So it must be</u> with this generation of Americans.
<i>We</i> gives a sense of collectivity Repetition of the possessive <i>our</i> . Difficult issues: war, crisis, economy, health care, school, energy: all these problems affect the whole society, including the President Alliteration: (/sh/) Assonance: <i>strengthen/threaten</i>	4.	That we are in the midst of <i>crisis</i> is now well understood. <u>Our</u> nation is at <u>war</u> , against a far-reaching network of violence and hatred. <u>Our</u> <u>economy</u> is badly weakened, a consequence of greed and irresponsibility on the part of some, but also <u>our</u> <u>collective failure</u> to make hard choices and prepare the nation for a new age. Homes have been lost; jobs <u>shed</u> ; businesses <u>shuttered</u> . <u>Our</u> <u>health care</u> is too costly; <u>our</u> schools fail too many; and each day brings further evidence that the ways we use energy strengthen <u>our</u> <u>adversaries</u> and <u>threaten</u> <u>our</u> <u>planet</u> .
This paragraph starts again with the " <i>crisis</i> " Syntactic parallelism: <i>sapping/nagging</i>	5.	These are the indicators of <i>crisis</i> , subject to data and statistics. <u>Less</u> measurable but no <u>less</u> profound is a <i>sapping</i> of confidence across our land - a <i>nagging</i> fear that America's decline is inevitable, and that the next generation must lower its sights.
You: addressing audience directly (everyone in the country) engaging the public <i>they:</i> anaphoric repetition <u>Bicolon</u>	6.	Today I say to you that the challenges we face are real. <u>They</u> are serious and <u>they</u> are many. <u>They will not be met</u> easily or in a short span of time. But know this, America - <u>they will be met</u> .
Contrastive pairs: <i>hope/fear;</i> <i>unity of purpose/discord, conflict</i>	7.	<u>On this day, we</u> gather because we have chosen <i>hope</i> over <i>fear</i> , <i>unity of purpose</i> over <i>conflict</i> and <i>discord</i> .
Anaphora: <i>On this day</i> Assonance: <i>grievances/promises</i> Metaphor: politics humanized	8.	<u>On this day, we</u> come to proclaim an end to the petty <u>grievances</u> and false <u>promises</u> , the recriminations and worn out dogmas, that for far too long have <u>strangled</u> our politics.

<p>Persuading by authority: the words of Scripture (God, the highest authority) Metaphor: <i>God-given promise</i> Bicolon Three-part lists: <i>to reaffirm, to choose, to carry forward</i></p>	9.	<p>We remain a young nation, but in <u>the words of Scripture</u>, <u>the time has come</u> to set aside childish things. <u>The time has come</u> to reaffirm our enduring spirit; to choose our better history; to carry forward that precious gift, that noble idea, passed on from generation to generation: the God-given promise that all are equal, all are free, and all deserve a chance to pursue <u>their full measure of happiness</u>.</p>
<p>Metaphor of journey: <i>our journey, short-cuts, the path, the long, rugged path towards prosperity and freedom.</i> Three-part lists: <i>the risk-takers, the doers, the makers of things</i></p>	10.	<p>In reaffirming the <u>greatness</u> of our nation, we understand that <u>greatness</u> is never a given. It must be earned. <u>Our journey</u> has never been one of <u>short-cuts</u> or settling for less. It has not been <u>the path</u> for the faint-hearted - for those who prefer leisure over work, or seek only the pleasures of riches and fame. Rather, it has been <u>the risk-takers, the doers, the makers of things</u> - some celebrated but more often men and women obscure in their labor, who have carried us up <u>the long, rugged path towards prosperity and freedom</u>.</p>
<p>Anaphoric repetition: “<i>For us</i>” (paragraphs 11,12,13) Referring to the past (ancestors, pioneers)</p>	11.	<p>For us, they packed up their few worldly possessions and traveled across oceans in search of a new life.</p>
<p>Referring to the past (emigration and slavery)</p>	12.	<p>For us, they toiled in sweatshops and settled the West; endured the lash of the whip and plowed the hard earth.</p>
<p>Series of metonymies: Concord: Battle of Concord (1755) during American Revolutionary War (1775–1783); Gettysburg: Battle of Gettysburg (1863): during the American Civil War; Normandy: Invasion of Normandy (1944) during World War II; Khe Sahn: battle of Khe Sahn, Vietnam War (1968)</p>	13.	<p>For us, they fought and died, in places like Concord and Gettysburg; Normandy and Khe Sahn.</p>
<p>Analogies/Comparisons</p>	14.	<p>Time and again these men and women struggled and sacrificed and worked till their hands were raw so that we might live a better life. They saw America as <u>bigger</u> than the sum of our individual ambitions; <u>greater</u> than all the differences of birth <u>or</u> wealth <u>or</u> faction.</p>
<p>Metaphor of journey: (referring to paragraph 10) Superlatives: <i>most prosperous, powerful nation on Earth</i> Three-part lists/ syntactic parallelism Climax: <i>last week or last month or last year</i></p>	15.	<p>This is the <u>journey we</u> continue today. We remain <i>the most prosperous, powerful</i> nation on Earth. Our workers are no less productive than when this crisis began. Our minds are no less inventive, our goods and services no less needed than they were last week or last month or last year. Our capacity remains undiminished. But our time of <i>standing</i> pat, of <i>protecting</i> narrow interests and <i>putting</i> off unpleasant decisions - that time has surely passed. Starting today, we must pick ourselves up, <u>dust ourselves off</u>, and</p>

<p>Metaphor: <i>dust ourselves off</i></p>		<p>begin again the work of remaking America.</p>
<p>Repetition: <i>we will</i></p> <p>Lists of Obama's gifts</p> <p>Three-part lists: <i>the sun and the winds and the soul</i></p> <p>Metaphor</p> <p><i>Climax: schools and colleges and universities</i></p> <p><u>Bicolon</u> (syntactic parallelism in the last two sentences)</p>	<p>16.</p>	<p>For everywhere we look, there is work to be done. The state of the economy calls for action, bold and swift, and <u>we will act</u> - not only to create <u>new</u> jobs, but to lay a <u>new</u> foundation for growth. <u>We will build</u> the roads and bridges, the electric grids and digital lines that feed our commerce and bind us together. <u>We will restore</u> science to its rightful place, and wield technology's wonders to raise health care's quality and lower its cost. <u>We will harness the sun and the winds and the soil</u> to fuel <u>our</u> cars and run <u>our</u> factories. <u>And we will transform our schools and colleges and universities</u> to meet the demands of a <u>new</u> age. <u>All this we can do. And all this we will do.</u></p>
<p><i>Some/they:</i> the people who did not support Obama, his opponents</p> <p>Abstract words: <i>imagination, purpose, necessity, courage</i></p>	<p>17.</p>	<p>Now, there are some who question the scale of <u>our</u> ambitions - who suggest that <u>our</u> system cannot tolerate too many big plans. Their memories are short. For they have forgotten what this country has already done; what free men and women can achieve when <i>imagination</i> is joined to <i>common purpose</i>, and <i>necessity</i> to <i>courage</i>.</p>
<p>Cynics: the Republicans</p> <p>Contrastive Pairs/Antithesis: <i>big/small; good/ill</i></p> <p><i>Those of us:</i> those in high office, who manage public money</p> <p>Repetitions</p> <p>Three-part lists and syntactic parallelism</p>	<p>18.</p>	<p>What the cynics fail to understand is that the ground has shifted beneath them - that the stale political arguments that have consumed us for so long no longer apply. The <u>question</u> we ask today is not <u>whether</u> our government is <i>too big or too small</i>, but <u>whether</u> it works - <u>whether</u> it helps families find jobs at a decent wage, care they can afford, a retirement that is dignified. <u>Where the answer is yes, we</u> intend to move forward. <u>Where the answer is no,</u> programs will end. And those of us who manage the public's dollars will be held to account - to spend wisely, reform bad habits, and do our business in the light of day - because only then can we restore the vital trust between a people and their government. Nor is the <u>question</u> before us <u>whether</u> the <u>market</u> is a force for <i>good or ill</i>. Its power to generate wealth and expand freedom is unmatched, but this crisis has reminded us that without a watchful eye, the <u>market</u> can spin out of control - and that a nation cannot prosper long when it favors only the prosperous. The success of <u>our</u> economy has always depended not just <u>on the size</u> of <u>our</u> Gross Domestic Product, but <u>on the reach</u> of <u>our</u> prosperity; on the ability to extend opportunity to every willing heart - not out of charity, but because it is the surest route to <u>our</u> common good.</p>
<p><i>Founding Fathers:</i> reference to the past</p> <p>Metaphor: <i>those ideals still light the world</i></p> <p>Directly addressing all other peoples and governments</p> <p><i>The small village where my father was born:</i> personal involvement</p>	<p>19.</p>	<p>As for our common defense, we reject as false the choice between our safety and our ideals. <u>Our Founding Fathers</u>, faced with perils we can scarcely imagine, drafted a charter to assure the rule of law and the rights of man, a charter expanded by the blood of generations. Those ideals <u>still light the world</u>, and we will not give them up for expedience's sake. And so to all other peoples and governments who are watching today, from the grandest capitals to the small village where my father was born:</p>

<p>in the speech Three-part list Metaphor of journey</p>		<p>know that America is a friend of each nation and every man, woman, and child who seeks a future of peace and dignity, and we are ready to lead once more.</p>
<p>Contrastive pairs/antithesis Repetitions/Three-part lists with syntactic parallelism</p>	<p>20.</p>	<p>Recall that earlier generations faced down <u>fascism</u> and <u>communism</u> not just with missiles and tanks, but with the <u>sturdy alliances and enduring convictions</u>. They understood that <u>our power</u> alone cannot <u>protect us</u>, nor does it <u>entitle us</u> to do as we please. Instead, they knew that <u>our power</u> grows through its prudent use; <u>our</u> security emanates from the justness of our cause, the force of our example, the tempering qualities of humility and restraint.</p>
<p>Reference to global issues: Iraq, Afghanistan, global warming, terrorism, nuclear threat Repetitions The syntactic parallelism <i>We will</i> is repeated many times Alliterations: sounds /f/ and /w/ Final direct address “<i>we say to you</i>”: <i>to terrorists</i></p>	<p>21.</p>	<p>We are the keepers of this legacy. Guided by these principles once more, we can meet those new <u>threats</u> that demand <u>even greater effort</u> - <u>even greater cooperation</u> and understanding between nations. <u>We will</u> begin to responsibly leave Iraq to its people, and forge a hard-earned peace in Afghanistan. With old friends and former foes, <u>we'll</u> work tirelessly to lessen the nuclear threat, and roll back the specter of a warming planet. <u>We will</u> not apologize for our way of life, nor <u>will we</u> waver in its defense, and for those who seek to advance their aims by inducing terror and slaughtering innocents, we say to you now that our spirit is stronger and cannot be broken; you cannot outlast us, and we will defeat you.</p>
<p>Contrastive pair: <i>strength, weakness</i> Longer list Three-part lists/syntactic parallelism That-shall Must Reference to religion, language and cultural differences</p>	<p>22.</p>	<p>For we know that our <u>patchwork</u> heritage is a <u>strength</u>, not a <u>weakness</u>. We are a nation of <u>Christians and Muslims</u>, <u>Jews and Hindus</u> - and non-believers. We are shaped by every language and culture, drawn from every end of this Earth; and because we have tasted the bitter swill of civil war and segregation, and emerged from that dark chapter stronger and more united, we cannot help but believe that the old hatreds shall someday pass; that the lines of tribe shall soon dissolve; that as the world grows smaller, our common humanity shall reveal itself; and that America must play its role in ushering in a new era of peace.</p>
<p>Repetition <i>you</i>: direct address Contrastive pairs: <i>build/destroy</i> Metaphor of fight (<i>to unclench your fist/ to extend a hand</i>)</p>	<p>23.</p>	<p><u>To the</u> Muslim world, we seek a new way forward, based on <u>mutual</u> interest and <u>mutual</u> respect. <u>To those</u> leaders around the globe who seek to sow conflict, or blame their society's ills on the West - know that your people will judge you on what you can <u>build</u>, not what you <u>destroy</u>. <u>To those</u> who cling to power through corruption and deceit and the silencing of dissent, know that you are on the wrong side of history; but that we will <u>extend a hand</u> if you are willing to <u>unclench your fist</u>.</p>
<p>Reference to African people Metaphor (<i>to nourish starved bodies and feed hungry minds</i>) Alliteration (sound/double f) <u>Bicolon</u> at the end</p>	<p>24.</p>	<p><u>To the</u> people of poor nations, we pledge to work alongside you to make your farms flourish and let clean waters flow; <u>to nourish starved bodies and feed hungry minds</u>. <u>And to those</u> nations like ours that enjoy relative plenty, we say we can no longer <u>afford indifference</u> to the <u>suffering</u> outside our borders; nor can we consume the world's resources without regard to <u>effect</u>. <u>For the world has changed, and we must change with it.</u></p>
<p>Metaphor of journey Metonymy: Arlington</p>	<p>25.</p>	<p>As we consider <u>the road that unfolds before us</u>, we remember with humble gratitude those brave Americans who, at this very hour, patrol far-off deserts and distant</p>

<p>National Cemetery, in Virginia, military cemetery established during the American Civil War Contrastive pair Repetitions</p>		<p>mountains. They have something to tell us, just as the fallen heroes who lie in Arlington whisper through the ages. We honor them <u>not only because they</u> are guardians of our liberty, <u>but because they</u> embody the spirit of service; a willingness to find meaning in something greater than themselves. And yet, at this <u>moment</u> - a <u>moment</u> that will define a generation - it is precisely this spirit that must inhabit us all.</p>
<p>Abstract words: <i>faith, determination, kindness, selflessness, willingness, courage, fate</i> Three-part lists Metaphor (<i>sees us through our darkest hours</i>)</p>	<p>26.</p>	<p>For as much as government can do and must do, it is ultimately the <u>faith</u> and <u>determination</u> of the American people upon which this nation relies. It is the kindness to take in a stranger when the levees break, the selflessness of workers who would rather cut their hours than see a friend lose their job which <u>sees us through our darkest hours</u>. It is the firefighter's <u>courage</u> to storm a stairway filled with smoke, but also a parent's willingness to nurture a child, that finally decides our <u>fate</u>.</p>
<p>Contrastive pair: <i>new/old</i> Soundbite: <i>a new era of responsibility</i> Three-part lists: <i>to ourselves, our nation, and the world</i> Syntactic parallelism</p>	<p>27.</p>	<p>Our challenges <u>may be new</u>. The instruments with which we meet them <u>may be new</u>. But those values upon which our success depends - <u>honesty and hard work, courage and fair play, tolerance and curiosity, loyalty and patriotism</u> - <u>these things are old</u>. These things are true. They have been the quiet force of progress throughout our history. <u>What is demanded then is a return to these truths. What is required of us now is a new era of responsibility</u> - a recognition, on the part of every American, that we have duties to ourselves, our nation, and the world, <u>duties</u> that we do not grudgingly accept but rather seize gladly, firm in the knowledge that there is nothing <u>so satisfying to the spirit, so defining of our character</u>, than giving our all to a difficult task.</p>
<p>Anaphora: <i>This is</i> (paragraphs 28,29,30)</p>	<p>28.</p>	<p>This is the price and the promise of citizenship.</p>
<p>Metaphor (<i>God calls on us to shape an uncertain destiny</i>) First of three following paragraphs in which God is mentioned: persuading by authority</p>	<p>29.</p>	<p>This is the source of our confidence - the knowledge that <u>God calls on us to shape an uncertain destiny</u>.</p>
<p>Abstract words (<i>liberty, creed, faith, race</i>) Three-part lists Repetitions <i>a man:</i> Obama puts himself and his private life in the speech <i>you:</i> direct address</p>	<p>30.</p>	<p>This is the meaning of our <u>liberty</u> and our <u>creed</u> - why men and women and children of <u>every</u> race and <u>every</u> faith can join in celebration across this magnificent mall, and why a man whose father less than sixty years ago might not have been served at a local restaurant can now stand before you to take a most sacred oath.</p>
<p>Metaphor of journey Reference to history: American revolution and the Battles in winter 1776 Three-part lists with syntactic parallelism Metonymy: <i>the father of our</i></p>	<p>31.</p>	<p>So let us mark this day with remembrance, of who we are and <u>how far we have traveled</u>. In the year of America's birth, in the coldest of months, a small band of patriots huddled by dying campfires on the shores of an icy river. The capital was abandoned. The enemy was advancing. The snow was stained with blood. At a moment when the outcome of our revolution was most in doubt, the father of our nation ordered these words be read to the people: <i>"Let it be told to the future world...that in the depth of</i></p>

<p><i>nation</i> (referring to George Washington) Last lines: George Washington's speech to his troops in the battle against the British</p>		<p><i>winter, when nothing but hope and virtue could survive...that the city and the country, alarmed at one common danger, came forth to meet [it]."</i></p>
<p>Analogy with the past Reference to the previous paragraph (<i>let us remember ...</i>) Meteorological metaphor (<i>endure what storms may come</i>) Metaphor of journey (<i>let this journey end</i>) <i>God's grace: referring to the highest authority</i> Reference to the future (<i>our children's children</i>)</p>	<p>32.</p>	<p>America. In the face of our common dangers, in this winter of our hardship, <u>let</u> us remember these timeless words. With hope and virtue, let us brave once more the icy currents, and endure what storms may come. <u>Let</u> it be said by our children's children that when we were tested we refused to <u>let this journey end, that we did not turn back nor did we falter</u>; and with eyes fixed on the horizon and God's grace upon us, we carried forth that great gift of freedom and delivered it safely to future generations.</p>
	<p>33.</p>	<p>Thank you. God bless you and God bless the United States of America.</p>