

READING COMPREHENSION

Winning Words

On the following two pages, you will find excerpts of speeches by two candidates for President, Republican Senator John McCain and Democratic Senator Barack Obama. They have been criss-crossing the country, making speeches to crowds of people whose votes they hope to earn.

Different speakers have different styles. But most speeches include elements that are designed to connect the listener to the speaker: personal anecdotes, humor, inspirational images, and claims or opinions supported by examples or arguments.

DIRECTIONS:

1. Pick one of the two speeches. Read it all the way through.
2. Read it again. This time, look for phrases that fit the categories in the chart below, and write them in the appropriate boxes. (If you need more room, use a separate sheet of paper.)
3. Next, read the other speech, following all the same steps. Then compare the chart's two columns. Which speech do you find most effective? Why?

	Senator John McCain	Senator Barack Obama
Attitude or personality as a youth		
Claim or opinion		
Support for stated claim or opinion		
Inspirational comment		

SENATOR JOHN McCAIN

Speaking at Episcopal High School, Alexandria, Virginia

April 1, 2008

I'm happy to be back at Episcopal, my alma mater [school once attended], which I have many happy memories of, and a few that I'm sure former teachers and I would rather forget.

Memory often accords our high school years the distinction of being among the happiest of our lives. I remember Episcopal in that light. The academics were superb. And the honor code here—I will not lie, I will not cheat, I will not steal—was much the same as the code my parents had taught and which would govern my behavior in the Navy.

There was one friendship that enriched my life at EHS beyond measure. William B. Ravenel was head of the English Department and coached the junior varsity football team, on which I played.

He seemed to his students to be as wise and capable as anyone could expect to be. He loved literature and taught us to love it as well. He had a way of communicating with his students that was uniquely personal and effective. He made us appreciate how profound

were the emotions that animated the characters in Shakespeare's tragedies. Macbeth and Hamlet in his care were as compelling to boys as they were to the most learned scholar.

As luck would have it, I was ordered to work off my demerits in Mr. Ravenel's yard. I don't know if school authorities knew that Mr. Ravenel would be able to help repair the all-too-evident flaws in my personality. Neither do I know why he took an interest in me. But I count the fact that he did among the most fortunate relationships in my life. I discussed all manner of subjects with him, from sports to the short stories of Somerset Maugham; from his combat experiences to my future.

I doubt I will ever meet another person who had the impact on my life that my English teacher did. Many years later, when I came home from Vietnam, Mr. Ravenel was the only person outside of my family who I wanted to see urgently. I felt he was someone to whom I could explain what had happened to me, and who would understand.



SENATOR BARACK OBAMA

Speaking at Wesleyan University, Middletown, Connecticut

May 25, 2008

The history of this nation tells us that we are a people whose destiny has never been written for us, but by us—by generations of men and women who believed [that] their story and the American story are not separate, but shared.

I spent much of my childhood adrift. My father left when I was 2. When my mother remarried, I lived in Indonesia for a time, but was mostly raised in Hawaii by her and my grandparents.

My teenage years were filled with more than the usual dose of adolescent rebellion. There were times when I wasn't sure where I was going or what I would do.

But during college, I began to notice a world beyond myself. By the time I graduated, I possessed a crazy idea that I would work at a grassroots level to bring about change. A small group of churches on the South Side of Chicago offered me a job to work as a community organizer in neighborhoods that had been devastated by steel-plant closings.

It wasn't easy, but day by day, block by block, we brought the community

together, registered new voters, set up after-school programs, fought for new jobs, and helped people live lives with some measure of dignity.

I wasn't just helping other people. Through service, I found citizenship that was meaningful. Through service, I discovered how my own improbable story fit into the larger story of America.

Each of you will have the chance to make your own discovery in the years to come. I say "chance" because you won't *have* to take it. You can take your diploma and chase only after the big house and the nice suits. You can live your life in a way that tries to keep your story separate from America's. But I hope you don't. Not because you have an obligation to those who are less fortunate, though you do. Not because you have a debt to all those who helped you get here, though you do. It's because you have an obligation to yourself.

It's only when you hitch your wagon to something larger than yourself that you realize your true potential and discover the role you'll play in writing the next great chapter in America's story.