

UNION *of* WORDS

A History of Presidential Eloquence

WAYNE FIELDS



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UNION of WORDS

First 200 years - 3 Landmarks - each 50 years

- ① The Revolution and Founding
- ② The Civil War
- ③ Great Depression + Ww II



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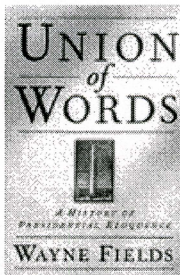
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ABOUT THE BOOK

Synopsis

This is a "study of how acceptance speeches, inaugurations, State of the Union speeches, and farewells are used to define a presidential agenda, while providing continuity between the past and the future." (Libr J) Index.

Annotation

In this unique history of presidential speechmaking, from the founding to the present day, an accomplished storyteller and professor of rhetoric amply documents how presidents have used the bully pulpit to articulate their visions and unite diverse Americans.

From The Publisher

The pursuit of E pluribus unum - "from many, one" - the motto on which the United States was founded, has continually posed one of the greatest challenges our presidents have faced throughout history. How does the presidency foster a spirit of unity among all Americans despite so many divergent interests and backgrounds? In this singular study, accomplished storyteller and professor of English Wayne Fields examines this rhetorical tug-of-war through the historical lens of presidential speechmaking. Beginning with George Washington's inaugural and continuing to the present day, Fields traces the vital role of our presidents in fulfilling the constitutional imperative of a "more perfect union." Following the calendar of presidential life, he examines individual speeches from the announcement of candidacy and the acceptance of nomination to the State of the Union address, the call for war or peace, and the farewell address, recounting with a wealth of historical detail the events surrounding each formal and informal speech. Through these orations, Fields provides a fascinating depiction of our presidents as individuals struggling to assert their principles, exercise leadership, and unite diverse Americans while simultaneously contending with the prejudices and circumstances of their time. But an even greater account emerges, one that resonates just as strongly in the issues of our own time: it is the story of a

nation and a people constantly recreating themselves to try to build a shared identity within a country of endless change.

Reviews

From Gilbert Taylor - BookList

When the office sought the man in the nineteenth century, the presidency elicited from its aspirants a vocabulary of reluctance to serve, and from its occupants an irregularity of utterance, except on, mostly, state occasions, such as declarations of war. In the 1990s, with numberless hordes eager to serve, the office's seekers and holders dispense an incessant deluge of verbiage, on events trivial to momentous. Wherever in that vast database of diction eloquence can be found, Fields finds it, and not just by pointing out obvious gems like the Gettysburg Address. Rather, he groups presidential speech around events of the political cycle: party nominations, campaign, inauguration, delivery of the annual message, and valedictory. He then traces through each its rhetorical development, for example the fall of the taboo against self-promotion. Fields rests his points on hundreds of illustrative excerpts, from Washington through Clinton, which support the author's idea that successful candidates labor under a paradox--they must be divisive to win election, but unifying to govern. Those imperatives impel much of presidential chat, and interested political animals should devour Fields' exposition.

From P. Andrews - Choice

Fields's detailed observations run the gamut from the intrusion of personal biography into presidential speechmaking after 1950 (starting with Eisenhower's 'I have led a crusade,' and reaching Clinton's 'I want to tell you who I am') to fine points like Zachary Taylor's letter of nomination that languished at the post office for lack of a stamp. Superb notes at the end are filled with engaging facts and anecdotes. All levels.

From Library Journal

Fields (American literature, American Univ.) presents a perceptive study of how acceptance speeches, inaugurals, State of the Union speeches, and farewells are used to define a presidential agenda, while providing continuity between the past and the future. In the 19th century these speeches were frequently used to justify the relocation of Native Americans and to rationalize slavery as a necessary human condition. Since World War II, recurring themes of presidential speeches have been civil rights, conservation, peace, and social welfare. The chapters on inaugurals and farewells are the strongest, containing in-depth analyses of some of the most important speeches, notably Lincoln's Second Inaugural, which called for the reconciliation of the North and South and the end of slavery; Washington's Farewell, which challenged his fellow citizens to preserve the young nation; and Eisenhower's Farewell, which warned against the growing military-industrial complex. Although lacking a conclusion comparing and contrasting how successful these speeches were in making the president the symbolic leader of the nation, this is a fine addition to the growing body of literature about the rhetorical presidency. It is especially useful for candidates seeking examples of successful and not-so-successful speeches. Recommended for political science and communications collections.- Karl Helicher, Upper Merion Twp. Lib., King of Prussia, Pa.

FROM THE BOOK

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