

'The Winds of Change' by Harold Macmillan

The Speech

- Watch the speech delivered by John Heffernan.

Duration: 9 minutes

<https://www.speech.almeida.co.uk/speech/winds-of-change>

- Discuss students' initial responses.

Context

Harold Macmillan was a British Conservative MP, who served as Prime Minister from 1957 to 1963. Through close friendships with President Eisenhower and President Kennedy he was able to repair the relationship between the UK and the USA that had been damaged during the Suez Crisis in 1956.

He was also responsible for leading the country through the Cuban Missile crisis in 1962 and his stance on apartheid in South Africa gave momentum to the process of decolonisation within Africa.

- Ask students to research the immediate event at which Macmillan spoke and where it fits into the history of Apartheid in South Africa.
- Ask students to find out what impact the speech had? To what extent was it a success?

Content

- Watch the speech again.
- Ask students which of these words best describes Macmillan's approach in their opinion? Ask them to explain why with evidence from the speech.

Diplomatic

Cautious

Firm

Indirect

Dignified

- Discuss the following questions as a class:
 - To what extent does the argument depend on persuading the audience to accept a wider context?
 - How else does the speaker try to make the argument palatable for those who resist change?
 - Which of his arguments is the most convincing in your opinion?
 - What is the impact of alluding to John Donne's words?

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Language and Structure

- Ask students to read a copy of the speech and explore the rhetorical devices used. **A transcript of the speech is included at the end of this document.**
- This exercise encourages students to identify features of rhetorical language, and more importantly to comment on their effect.
- Provide students with the chart below. This exercise could be done individually with each student completing the full table or by splitting the class in to groups and allocating three lines of the table to each group and asking them to feedback on one.

Language/ Structural Device	Example	Effect
Themes and Key Words		
Register e.g. formal or informal		
Ethos – a demonstration of the speaker’s credibility or strength of character		
Pathos – the emotional appeal of the speech		
Logos – appealing to the audience with reason and using facts and figures		
Imagery		
Contrasts		
Anecdotes		

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Discussion

- Watch the discussion between John Heffernan and members of the Almeida's Young Company.

Duration: 3 minutes

<https://www.speech.almeida.co.uk/reaction/winds-of-change>

- Lead a discussion around whether students think politicians should present their theories diplomatically or candidly?

Extension Task

- Ask students to write a response to the comment, 'We need something like this. Now!' providing examples to support their argument.

Useful Links

Websites

[Harold Macmillan](#) – Gov.UK Biography

[Harold Macmillan](#) – Guardian Obituary

[From Empire to Europe](#) – A turning point in Britain's relationship with Europe

[Wind of Change Reception](#) – BBC Report

[A Continent Transformed](#) – UN Article on the decolonization of Africa

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THE WINDS OF CHANGE Harold Macmillan | 3 February 1960

This is an edited version of the speech by British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan to the Parliament of South Africa in Cape Town.

My tour of Africa — certain parts of Africa — the first ever made by a British Prime Minister in office, is now alas, nearing its end, but it is fitting that it should culminate in the Union Parliament here, in Cape Town, in this historic city, so long Europe's gateway to the Indian Ocean, and to the East.

As I've travelled around the Union I have found everywhere, as I expected, a deep preoccupation with what is happening in the rest of the African continent. I understand and sympathise with your interests in these events and your anxiety about them. Ever since the break-up of the Roman Empire one of the constant facts of political life in Europe has been the emergence of independent nations. They have come into existence over the centuries in different forms, different kinds of government, but all have been inspired by a deep, keen feeling of nationalism.

In the twentieth century, and especially since the end of the war, the processes which gave birth to the nation states of Europe have been repeated all over the world. We have seen the awakening of national consciousness in peoples who have for centuries lived in dependence upon some other power. Fifteen years ago this movement spread through Asia. Many countries there, of different races and civilisations, pressed their claim to an independent national life. Today the same thing is happening in Africa, and the most striking of all the impressions that I have formed since I left London a month ago is of the strength of this African national consciousness. In different places it takes different forms, but it is happening everywhere. The wind of change is blowing through this continent and whether we like it or not, this growth of national consciousness is a political fact. And we must all accept it as a fact, and our national policies must take account of it.

I sincerely believe that if we cannot do so, we may imperil the precarious balance between East and West on which the peace of the world depends.

The struggle is joined, and it is a struggle for the minds of men. What is now on trial is much more than our military strength or our diplomatic and administrative skill. It is our way of life.

At the same time we must recognise that in this shrinking world in which we live today the internal policies of one nation may have effects outside it. So we may sometimes be tempted to say 'mind your own business', in these days I would expand the old saying so that it says: 'Mind your own business, but mind how it affects my business, too'.

As a fellow member of the Commonwealth we always try I think and perhaps succeeded in giving to South Africa our full support and encouragement, but I hope you won't mind my saying frankly that there are some aspects of your policies which make it impossible for us to do this without being false to our own deep convictions about the political destinies of free men to which in our own territories we are trying to give effect. I think therefore that we ought, as friends, to face together, without seeking I trust to apportion credit or blame, the fact that in the world of the day, today, this difference of outlook lies between us.

The population of America, like yours, is a blend of many different strains, and over the years most of those who have gone to North America have gone there in order to escape conditions in Europe which they found intolerable. The Pilgrim Fathers were escaping from persecution as Puritans, the Marylanders from persecution as Roman Catholics. And throughout the nineteenth century a stream of immigrants flowed across the Atlantic from the old world to the new to escape from the poverty in their homelands, and now in the twentieth century the United States have provided asylum for the victims of political oppression in Europe.

And so for the majority of its inhabitants America has been a place of refuge, or a place to which people went because they wanted to get away from Europe. It is not surprising, therefore, that for many years the main objective

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of American statesmen, supported by the American public, was to isolate themselves from Europe, and with their great material strength, and the vast resources open to them, this seemed an attractive and a practicable course. Nevertheless, twice in my lifetime, in the two great wars of this fifty years, they have been unable to stand aside. Twice their manpower in arms has streamed back across the Atlantic to shed its blood in those European struggles from which their ancestors thought they could escape by emigrating to the New World; and when the second war was over, they were forced to recognise that in the small world of today, isolationism is out of date and more than that, offers no assurance of security.

The fact is that in this modern world no country, not even the greatest, can live for itself alone. What Dr. John Donne said of individual men three hundred years ago is true today of my country, of your country, and all the countries of the world:

Any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in Mankind. And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee.

All nations are now interdependent one upon another, and this is generally realised throughout the Western World. Russia has been isolationist in her time and still has tendencies that way, but the fact remains that we must live in the same world with Russia, and we must find a way of doing so.

The independent members of the Commonwealth do not always agree on every subject. It is not a condition of their association that they should do so. On the contrary, the strength of our Commonwealth lies largely in the fact that it is a free association of free and independent states, each responsible for ordering its own affairs but co-operating in the pursuit of common aims and purposes in world affairs. Moreover, these differences may be transitory. In time they may be resolved. Our duty is to see them in this perspective, in perspective, against the background of our long association. Of this at any rate I am certain — those of us who by the grace or favour of the electors are temporarily in charge of affairs in your country and in mine, we fleeting transient phantoms of the great stage of history, we have no right to sweep aside on this account the friendship that exists between our countries, that is the legacy of history. It is not ours alone to deal with. To adapt a famous phrase, it belongs to those who are living, it belongs to those who are dead and to those who are yet unborn. We must face the differences, but let us try to see a little beyond them down the long vista of the future.

For as time passes and one generation yields to another, human problems change and fade. Let us therefore resolve to build and not to destroy, and let us also remember that weakness comes from division and in words familiar to you, strength from unity.