

1 **“Give Me Liberty or Give Me Death”**

2 Patrick Henry

3 To the Second Convention of Delegates Richmond, Virginia

4 March 23, 1776

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6 MR. PRESIDENT: No man thinks more highly than I do of the  
7 patriotism, as well as abilities, of the very worthy gentlemen who have  
8 just addressed the House. But different men often see the same subject in  
9 different lights; and, therefore, I hope it will not be thought disrespectful  
10 to those gentlemen if, entertaining as I do, opinions of a character very  
11 opposite to theirs, I shall speak forth my sentiments freely, and without  
12 reserve. This is no time for ceremony. The question before the House is  
13 one of awful moment to this country. For my own part, I consider it as  
14 nothing less than a question of freedom or slavery; and in proportion to  
15 the magnitude of the subject ought to be the freedom of the debate. It is  
16 only in this way that we can hope to arrive at truth, and fulfill the great  
17 responsibility which we hold to God and our country. Should I keep  
18 back my opinions at such a time, through fear of giving offence, I should  
19 consider myself as guilty of treason towards my country, and of an act of  
20 disloyalty toward the majesty of heaven, which I revere above all earthly  
21 kings.

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23 I have but one lamp by which my feet are guided; and that is the lamp of  
24 experience. I know of no way of judging of the future but by the past.  
25 And judging by the past, I wish to know what there has been in the  
26 conduct of the British ministry for the last ten years, to justify those  
27 hopes with which gentlemen have been pleased to solace themselves,  
28 and the House? Is it that insidious smile with which our petition has  
29 been lately received? Trust it not, sir; it will prove a snare to your feet.  
30 Suffer not yourselves to be betrayed with a kiss. Ask yourselves how  
31 this gracious reception of our petition comports with these war-like  
32 preparations which cover our waters and darken our land. Are fleets and  
33 armies necessary to a work of love and reconciliation? Have we shown  
34 ourselves so unwilling to be reconciled, that force must be called in to  
35 win back our love? Let us not deceive ourselves, sir. These are the  
36 implements of war and subjugation; the last arguments to which kings  
37 resort. I ask, gentlemen, sir, what means this martial array, if its purpose  
38 be not to force us to submission? Can gentlemen assign any other  
39 possible motive for it? Has Great Britain any enemy, in this quarter of  
40 the world, to call for all this accumulation of navies and armies? No, sir,  
41 she has none. They are meant for us; they can be meant for no other. ...  
42 Let us not, I beseech you, sir, deceive ourselves. Sir, we have done  
43 everything that could be done, to avert the storm which is now coming  
44 on. We have petitioned; we have remonstrated; we have supplicated; we  
45 have prostrated ourselves before the throne, and have implored its  
46 interposition to arrest the tyrannical hands of the ministry and  
47 Parliament. Our petitions have been slighted; our remonstrances have  
48 produced additional violence and insult; our supplications have been  
49 disregarded; and we have been spurned, with contempt, from the foot of

comfort  
fake, devious

request

rule over, suppress  
military force

bowed down

protest, objections

50 the throne. In vain, after these things, may we indulge the fond hope of  
51 peace and reconciliation. There is no longer any room for hope. If we  
52 wish to be free if we mean to preserve inviolate those inestimable  
53 privileges for which we have been so long contending if we mean not  
54 basely to abandon the noble struggle in which we have been so long  
55 engaged, and which we have pledged ourselves never to abandon until  
56 the glorious object of our contest shall be obtained, we must fight! I  
57 repeat it, sir, we must fight! An appeal to arms and to the God of Hosts is  
58 all that is left us!

59  
60 They tell us, sir, that we are weak; unable to cope with so formidable an  
61 adversary. But when shall we be stronger? Will it be the next week, or  
62 the next year? Will it be when we are totally disarmed, and when a  
63 British guard shall be stationed in every house? Shall we gather strength  
64 by irresolution and inaction? Shall we acquire the means of effectual  
65 resistance, by lying supinely on our backs, and hugging the delusive  
66 phantom of hope, until our enemies shall have bound us hand and foot?  
67 Sir, we are not weak if we make a proper use of those means which the  
68 God of nature hath placed in our power. Three millions of people, armed  
69 in the holy cause of liberty, and in such a country as that which we  
70 possess, are invincible by any force which our enemy can send against  
71 us. Besides, sir, we shall not fight our battles alone. There is a just God  
72 who presides over the destinies of nations; and who will raise up friends  
73 to fight our battles for us. The battle, sir, is not to the strong alone; it is to  
74 the vigilant, the active, the brave. Besides, sir, we have no election. If we  
75 were base enough to desire it, it is now too late to retire from the contest.  
76 There is no retreat but in submission and slavery! Our chains are forged!  
77 Their clanking may be heard on the plains of Boston! The war is  
78 inevitable and let it come! I repeat it, sir, let it come.

79  
80 It is in vain, sir, to extenuate the matter. Gentlemen may cry, Peace,  
81 Peace but there is no peace. The war is actually begun! The next gale that  
82 sweeps from the north will bring to our ears the clash of resounding  
83 arms! Our brethren are already in the field! Why stand we here idle?  
84 What is it that gentlemen wish? What would they have? Is life so dear, or  
85 peace so sweet, as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery?  
86 Forbid it, Almighty God! I know not what course others may take; but as  
87 for me, give me liberty or give me death!

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flat, passive

downplay

# Teacher Guide

Name of Text: **“Give Me Liberty Or Give Me Death”**

Question Composers: **Nicolle Morrison; Vallarie Larson; Judy Spencer**

**Standards:**

**Nevada State:**

H2.[6-8].13 Evaluate the influence of individuals in the building of a national identity.

H3. [6-8].2 Explain the political and economic causes and effects of the American Revolution.

H3. [6-8].3 Describe key political ideas that influenced the American Revolution and the formation of the United States

**CCSS:** RH.6.8.1, .2, RH.6-8.4, .5 , .6, WHST.6-8.1

Text Dependent Questions	Teacher Notes and Possible Textual Evidence For Student Answers
<p>Who is the author of this speech?</p> <p>Who is this speech intended for? What word or words tell you that? Who else might the author be addressing?</p>	<p>2. Patrick Henry</p> <p>6. Mr. President of Second Convention of Delegates <i>(Student misconception...President of U.S.)</i></p> <p>3. Gentlemen, Second Convention of Delegates</p> <p>12. The House Delegates</p> <p>7-11. His adversaries in the House</p>
<p>Many times during the speech Patrick Henry uses the pronouns “we”, “our”, and “us”. What can you infer from the use of these words?</p>	<p>Patrick Henry is speaking for collective whole/all colonists, all Delegates Colonists, men and women, people at the convention, men already fighting for liberty, people who value liberty.</p>
<p>On line 12, Patrick Henry states, “This is no time for ceremony.” What evidence in the paragraph supports his tone?</p>	<p>11. I shall speak forth my sentiments freely and without reserve</p> <p>17-20. Should I keep back my opinions at such a time, through fear of giving offence, I should consider myself guilty of treason</p> <p>61. Will it be the next week, or the next year?</p> <p>77. The war is inevitable and let it come! I repeat it, sir, let it come!</p>

Text Dependent Questions	Teacher Notes and Possible Textual Evidence For Student Answers
	<p>81. The war is actually begun!</p> <p>83. Our brethren are already in the field! Why stand we here idle?</p>
<p>In line 52, Henry states that, “There is no longer any room for hope.” This statement sets the tone for the entire second paragraph,</p> <p>How would you describe Patrick Henry’s tone in lines 23-58?</p> <p>What evidence is given to support his position?</p>	<p>Confident, Convinced 23-24  Rhetorical 28, 29, 32-33, 33-35,  Forthright  Betrayed,  Let down  Angry, Frustrated,  Passionate  Determined</p> <p><i>Student answers will vary. They should be able to support their descriptions with evidence from the text.</i></p>
<p>In the third paragraph, Henry uses sarcasm to contrast weakness and strength. Cite several examples from the paragraph that show Henry’s use of sarcasm.</p>	<p>61. But when shall we be stronger?  62. Will it be when we are totally disarmed, and when a British guard shall be stationed in every house?  63-4. Shall we gather strength by irresolution and inaction?  64. Shall we acquire by the means of effectual resistance, by lying supinely on our backs, and hugging the delusive phantom of op, until our enemies shall have bound us hand and foot?</p>
<p>At several points in the text, Patrick Henry compares the condition of the American Colonists to that of enslaved people. List several of these comparisons throughout the speech.</p>	<p>14. A question of freedom or slavery  15. The freedom of the debate  51-6. If we wish to be free if we mean to preserve..., we must fight!  76. There is no retreat but in submission and slavery.  76. Our chains are forged!  77. Their clanking may be heard on the plains of Boston!  84-85. Is life so dear, or peace so sweet, as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery?</p>

Text Dependent Questions

Teacher Notes and Possible Textual Evidence  
For Student Answers

<p>Throughout the speech, Patrick Henry uses religion and God as a primary justification and defense for war with Britain. Cite several examples from the text identifying these reasons.</p> <p>Write a statement summarizing the significance of Henry’s faith for his justification of war.</p>	<p>16. Fulfill the great responsibility which we hold to God and our country. 17-21. Should I keep back my opinions at such a time... I should consider myself as guilty of treason towards my country, and of an act of disloyalty toward the majesty of heaven, which I revere above all earthly kings. 30. Suffer not yourselves to be betrayed with a kiss 57. An appeal to arms and to the God of Hosts is all that is left us. 67-8. We are not weak if we make proper use of those means which the God of nature hath placed in our power. 69. The holy cause of liberty 71. We shall not fight our battles alone 72. There There is a just God who</p>
<p>What is Patrick Henry’s purpose in giving this speech?</p>	<p>He wants the colonists to go to war. Some evidence includes: Line 45-46 “...we must fight! I repeat it, sir, we must fight!” Line 41 “There’s no longer any room for hope.” Line 34-35 “We’ve done everything that could be done.” Line 61 “ War is inevitable.” Line 64 “Our brethren are already in the field!”</p>
<p>Why is this speech entitled “Give me liberty or give me death?”</p>	<p>Patrick Henry would rather die than give up his freedom. Some evidence includes: Lines 15-16 “Consider myself guilty of treason...act of disloyalty toward majesty of heaven.” Lines 59-60 “There is no retreat but in submission and slavery.”</p>

Please compose a clear writing prompt or question to follow this close analytic reading. Make sure that your writing prompt/question follows the CCSS writing standards (choose informational or argumentative) and that you use the terminology of the standards. The writing assignment can be a very formal essay or a fairly short piece, as long as it demonstrates that students have understood the document and can use evidence from it effectively.

**What are the reasons why Patrick Henry wants his colleagues in the Convention of Delegates to go to war with Britain?**

- **Begin with a claim**
- **Use and cite evidence from the passage.**
- **Be sure to include your reasoning.**

In the space below, create a very specific checklist that helps teachers what exactly to identify in order to measure student success or difficulty with this particular writing assignment on this particular reading. Make sure to use your grade level's writing standards as a guide. **Be clear!**

- The claim should reflect that Patrick Henry is asking for war.
- Evidence should include phrases and words to support the claim. Line numbers should be included as citations. Evidence can be found throughout the document.
- Students should link the evidence back to the claim to show reasoning.