

# Primary Source Analysis

## Address to Congress, Douglas MacArthur, April 19, 1951

- ☐ I can connect actions taken by General Douglas MacArthur to an understanding of hubris and humility.
- ☐ I can summarize the main ideas of a historical text.
- ☐ I can create an argument supported by evidence from primary sources.

### Essential Vocabulary

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| rostrum  | A raised platform on which a person stands to make a public speech, receive an award or medal, play music, or conduct an orchestra.   |
| humility | A recognition that one's ignorance is far greater than one's knowledge. Putting others ahead of ourselves in thought, word, and deed. A willingness to give others credit and to admit when we are wrong. |
| partisan | A strong supporter of a party, cause, or person.  |
| rancor   | Bitterness or resentfulness, especially when long-standing.   |

### Building Context

After being relieved of his command in Korea, Douglas MacArthur returned to the United States and addressed Congress. Millions of Americans heard his speech that was broadcast on television and radio. MacArthur reviewed his career, continued to criticize American strategy in Korea, and dramatically ended the speech with the phrase, "Old soldiers never die, they just fade away."

### Address to Congress, Douglas MacArthur, April 19, 1951

| Document Text  | Notes |
|--|-------|
| <p>“Mr. President, Mr. Speaker and Distinguished Members of the Congress:</p> <p>I stand on this <b>rostrum</b> with a sense of deep <b>humility</b> and pride -- <b>humility</b> in the weight of those great architects of our history who have stood here before me, pride in the reflection that this home of legislative debate represents human liberty in the purest form yet devised.</p> <p>Here are centered the hopes and aspirations and faith of the entire human race.</p> <p>I do not stand here as advocate for any <b>partisan</b> cause, for the issues are fundamental and reach quite beyond the realm of <b>partisan</b> considerations. They must be resolved on the highest plane of national interest if our course is to prove sound and our future protected.</p> <p>I trust, therefore, that you will do me the justice of receiving that which I have to say as solely expressing the considered viewpoint of a fellow American.</p> <p>I address you with neither <b>rancor</b> nor bitterness in the fading twilight of life, with but one purpose in mind: to serve my country....</p> <p>But once war is forced upon us, there is no other alternative than to apply every available means to bring it to a swift end. War's very object is victory, not prolonged indecision.</p> <p>In war there can be no substitute for victory.... I have just left your fighting sons in Korea. They have done their best there, and I can report to</p> |       |

you without reservation that they are splendid in every way.

It was my constant effort to preserve them and end this savage conflict honorably and with the least loss of time and a minimum sacrifice of life. Its growing bloodshed has caused me the deepest anguish and anxiety. Those gallant men will remain often in my thoughts and in my prayers always.

I am closing my 52 years of military service. When I joined the Army, even before the turn of the century, it was the fulfillment of all of my boyish hopes and dreams. The world has turned over many times since I took the oath at West Point, and the hopes and dreams have all since vanished, but I still remember the refrain of one of the most popular barracks ballads of that day which proclaimed most proudly that old soldiers never die; they just fade away. And like the old soldier of that ballad, I now close my military career and just fade away, an old soldier who tried to do his duty as God gave him the light to see that duty.

Good Bye.”

### Primary Source Analysis Questions

1. Who was the intended audience for this speech?
2. How does MacArthur describe Congress? What effect does this have?
3. According to this speech, what were the motivations behind MacArthur’s actions in Korea?
4. MacArthur told members of Congress, “I stand on this rostrum (stage) with a sense of deep humility and pride...”
  - a. Do you believe humility or hubris takes precedence in this particular speech? Use specific examples.