Objectives

1. Engage students in the language and main ideas of President Ronald Reagan's “Address to Students at Moscow State University” so that they are prepared to discuss and write about the excerpt.

2. Practice and reinforce the following Grade 9–10 ELA Common Core Standards for reading informational text, writing, and speaking/listening:

   - **READING: INFORMATIONAL TEXT - RI.9-10.1-10**
   - **WRITING - W.9-10.1-2, 4-10**
   - **SPEAKING/LISTENING - SL.9-10, 1-4**

Time

165 minutes (with up to an additional 180 minutes of extension possibilities)

Materials

SyncTV Premium Lesson of Ronald Reagan’s “Address to Students at Moscow State University”

Overview

Right on the heels of Mikhail Gorbachev's calls for glasnost (transparency) and perestroika (restructuring) in the Soviet government, U.S. President Ronald Reagan traveled to the USSR to speak to students at Moscow State University—the only U.S. president other than Richard Nixon to stand east of the Berlin Wall and address the communist nation. A year after his famous entreaty to "tear down that wall," Reagan delivered this speech, praised and remembered for its ideas and rhetoric as well as its speaker's masterful oratory ability that later earned him the nickname "The Great Communicator." Close examination of this excerpt will prepare students to consider Reagan's ideas and rhetoric, and to write thoughtful, informed, and textually-rooted responses, consistent with the ELA Common Core Standards for the high school grades.

Background (15 minutes)

1. Watch the Preview (SL.9-10.1-3). As a group, watch the video preview of the premium
lesson. Use the following questions to spur discussion following the preview and to give students some context before reading the excerpt:

a. Why was it dubbed the "Cold" War”? How long did the Cold War last, and what was the significance of its title? Who was fighting whom, and over what?

b. The preview states that in May of 1988, at the time the speech was given, Cold War tensions were "high but waning." What events led to this ebbing of tension?

c. What do you think Reagan's goal was in delivering this speech? What did he hope to communicate to his audience? What do you think were his "dreams for the future"?

Extension (additional 10 minutes)

d. Discuss (SL.9-10.1). As a class, brainstorm and discuss rhetorical strategies for connecting with as broad an audience as possible while not alienating any listeners. What strategies do orators employ when speaking before different audiences? How do politicians and other public speakers connect with their audiences? What kinds of things do they—and don't they—say?

Engaging the Text (150 minutes)

2. Read the Text (40 minutes)

a. Read and Annotate (RI.9-10.1-6, 8-9). Have students read and annotate the excerpt from “Address to Students at Moscow State University." If students are reading it as a homework assignment, ask them to write any questions they have into the annotation tool. These questions are visible to you after the students submit their writing assignments or beforehand if you use the “mimic" function to access the students' accounts.

Have students use the annotation tool to note the rhetorical tactics used throughout the speech. For the purposes of this lesson, refer to these rhetorical tactics:

1. Appeals to reason or logic through references to cause and effect and comparisons and contrasts.

2. Appeals to the character and integrity of listeners through references to moral and ethical standards.

3. Appeals to the audience's emotions through imagery, figurative language, rhythmic repetition, and so forth.

b. Discuss (SL.9-10.1, 3 and RI.9-10.1-2, 6). Once students are finished reading and annotating, come together for a class discussion.

The purpose of this speech, like most speeches of its kind, is to convey some kind of lesson or message to its audience through a series of appeals. There is often a deeper purpose or agenda behind what a speaker is saying. What is that lesson or message? To what or whom does Reagan appeal? What do you think is his agenda?

Extension (additional 30 minutes)
c. **Listen and Discuss** (*SL.9-10.1-3*). As a class, listen to the audio reading of the text. Remember that this text was originally spoken, not written. What are some of the different effects of reading the text versus hearing it read aloud?

d. **Comprehend** (*RL.9-10.1-6*). Have students complete the multiple-choice questions. Collect papers or discuss answers as a class.

### 3. Watch SyncTV (40 minutes)

a. **Watch**. Either watch the SyncTV discussion associated with Ronald Reagan’s “Address to Students at Moscow State University” as a class or ask students to watch it on their individual computers.

b. **Focus** (*RI.9-10.1-2, 7; SL.9-10.1, 3*) From 1:05-1:50 the students discuss the context of Reagan's speech, especially the policies of *glasnost* and *perestroika* that Gorbachev instituted. Focus on how these policies set the stage for the fall of communism in Russia and Eastern Europe.

c. **Focus** (*RI.9-10.1-6, 8-9; SL.9-10.1, 3*) Between roughly 2:30-3:35, the two SyncTV students discuss the effects and potential of empowering individuals with technology and, in the bigger picture, freedom. Take note of this discussion, and the ways in which Reagan uses this one particular issue to sell his greater vision.

d. **Focus** (*RI.9-10.1-6, 8-9; SL.9-10.1, 3*) From 4:00-4:55, both students debate the authenticity of Reagan's descriptions of American life. Consider both viewpoints: are these descriptions valid, or is Reagan performing a "sales job"?

e. **Focus** (*RI.9-10.1-6; SL.9-10.1, 3*) Finally, take note of the portion of the SyncTV episode between 5:45 - 6:15, as the students consider the similarities of the Russian figures Reagan singles out for praise.

f. **Discuss** (*SL.9-10.1-3; RI.9-10.1-6, 8-9*). After watching the model discussion, have a conversation with the class about the ideas discussed in the SyncTV episode that stood out. What new thoughts do they have after hearing the students' discussion? Next, divide students into small groups (3-4 students). Move around the room monitoring the groups as students follow the SyncTV episode as a model to discuss some of the following questions:

1. Discuss portions of the excerpt where Reagan appeals to his audience through logic, morals, and emotions. Do you think he is successful?

2. In what ways does Reagan slip subversive criticism of Soviet Union into his speech? How does he stoke the fires of social and political discontent? Consider word choices and themes that serve to soften his underlying message.

3. How much credit does Reagan deserve for the erosion of communist policies in the former USSR? What was his role in the collapse? What was Secretary General Gorbachev's?

4. What power do speeches like this ultimately have in the course of history? Do speeches effect change, or do they merely reflect the inevitable?

5. Is this dream of freedom Reagan is selling a real one? Are his
6. Who is Reagan’s intended audience for this speech? Was this speech meant solely for students of Moscow State University, or was he playing to a larger house?

Extension (additional 45 minutes)

g. Write (RI.9-10.1-2, 4–6, 8; W.9-10.1, 4). Have students pretend they are reviewers for the former Communist Party newspaper, Pravda. It is their task to review Reagan’s speech and offer a critical response in opposition to the president’s words. Have students argue in at least 300 words why Reagan’s speech was ineffective and/or false. Have them cite specific points and arguments from Reagan’s speech and offer counterarguments against each.

4. Think (10 minutes)

   a. Respond (W.9-10.1, 4, 9). Ask students to read the “Think” questions, watch the corresponding video clips, and respond to the questions, either in class or for homework.

5. Write (60 minutes)

   a. Discuss (SL.9-10.1). Read the prompt you have chosen for students, and then solicit questions regarding the prompt or the assignment expectations. Whichever prompt you have chosen, make sure you are clear about the assignment expectations and the rubric by which you and the other students will be evaluating them.

   b. Organize (RI.9-10.1-6, 8-9 and W.9-10.1-2, 5). Ask students to go back and annotate the text with the prompt in mind. They should be organizing their thoughts and the points they’ll address in their writing as they make annotations. If you’ve worked on outlining or other organizational tools for writing, this is a good place to apply them.

   c. Write (W.9-10.1-2, 4-6, 9-10). Have students go through the writing process of planning, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing their writing responses.

   d. Review (W.9-10.4-6). Use the StudySync “Review” feature to have students complete one to two evaluations of their peers’ work based on your chosen review rubric. Have the students look at and reflect upon the peer evaluations of their own writing. What might you do differently in a revision? How might you strengthen the writing and the ideas?

Extension (additional 20 minutes)

e. Self-Assess (W.11-12.4-6). Use the StudySync assignment creation tool to create a “Writing” assignment that asks students to address the following prompt:

1. Reread your essay and the reviews of your essay on Reagan’s “Address to Students at Moscow State University.” After reading these reviews, what do you believe were the biggest strengths of your essay? What could you do better next time? If you were to go back and write this essay again, what would you change about your writing
process? How has writing this essay made you a better writer?

Extension (additional 120 minutes)

f. Write (W.9-10.1-2, 4-6, 9-10). For homework, have students write an essay using one of the prompts you did not choose to do in class. Students should publish their responses online.

g. Speak (SL.9-10.1-4 and RI.9-10.6, 8). For a longer project, have students think of a topic or idea that they would like to address in a short (one to two minute) speech in the following class. Speeches can be on a wide range of different topics (a good place to start, or have them start, is debatepedia.org), but they must incorporate different argumentative appeals presented and used in Reagan’s “Address to Students at Moscow State University” (logos—appeal to reason, pathos—appeal to emotion, ethos—appeal to moral values). Have them follow Reagan’s model of connecting and empathizing with an audience. Have them present in class the following day.
SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS

Key Vocabulary

1. chrysalis (n.) - 1. the hard shell protecting a moth or butterfly as it grows into an adult 2. a transitional or preparatory stage
2. obsolete (adj.) - no longer used or useful for its given purpose
3. foreordained (adj.) - appointed or decreed beforehand
4. beholden (adj.) - owing something to someone or having obligations to someone
5. legislature (n.) - a group of people tasked with creating or changing laws
6. monopoly (n.) - complete ownership or control over something
7. extol (v.) - to praise something highly
8. cudgel (n.) - a short, heavy club (typically used by cavemen, old-fashioned)
9. eloquent (adj.) - possessing the ability to speak or write clearly and effectively
10. retribution (n.) - revenge or punishment for wrongdoing

Reading Comprehension Questions

1. At the beginning of the excerpt (sentence one), the "one of your most distinguished graduates" refers to _____________.
   a. President Reagan
   b. General Secretary Gorbachev
   c. a member of the graduating class
   d. Boris Pasternak

2. Reagan's primary purpose in the first paragraph of the excerpt seems to be _____________.
   a. criticizing the principles of socialism
   b. listing the important things he's done in office
   c. establishing himself as a friend to the audience
   d. all of the above

3. We can infer that the "mural of your revolution" Reagan is referring to in paragraph two is probably a mural of _____________.
   a. the fall of the Berlin Wall
   b. the Industrial Revolution
   c. the Bolshevik Revolution
   d. World War II

4. Which of the following is NOT true about the modern revolution as Reagan describes it?
   a. its progress is inevitable
   b. freedom is its most valuable commodity
   c. it is based on technological innovation
   d. its potential is infinite
5. Reagan probably quotes Mikhail Lomonosov in paragraph five to ________________.
   a. appeal to an authority the audience respects
   b. demonstrate that he knows something about Russian culture
   c. draw a parallel to his own argument
   d. all of the above

6. The idea that forms the transition between paragraphs five and six is ________________.
   a. exploration
   b. entrepreneurship
   c. prayer
   d. faith in a higher power

7. In this speech, Reagan insinuates that the enemy of a healthy, successful society is ________________.
   a. limited natural resources
   b. the tyranny of government
   c. lack of faith in society
   d. lack of technology and infrastructure

8. Which of the following would make the best title for the excerpt's second half?
   a. The Technological Revolution
   b. The Necessity of Innovation
   c. The Virtues of Freedom
   d. The Limitless Possibilities of the Future

9. In the last paragraph of the excerpt, Reagan seeks to ________________.
   a. subtly offer an alternative to socialist ideas
   b. compliment the Russian people for myriad historical achievements
   c. invite Russians to join the "revolution of the mind"
   d. all of the above

10. Which of the following best describes the intended tone of Reagan's speech?
    a. appeasing
    b. accusatory
    c. dissenting
    d. inspiring

Answer Key

1. B
2. C
3. C
4. A
5. D
6. A
7. B
8. C
9. D
10. D
Further Assignments

1. Have students read the text of another one of Reagan's most famous speeches, *Remarks at the Brandenburg Gate*. Compare and contrast the rhetoric Reagan uses in this speech with “Address to Students at Moscow State University.” *(RI.9-10.1-9)*

2. Show students the video of Reagan delivering “Address to Students at Moscow State University.” Does watching Reagan deliver the speech have a different effect on you than merely reading it? What sorts of oratory skills does Reagan have? Is he a good speaker? Why/why not? *(SL.9–10.1–3)*

3. Paraphrase the quote at the conclusion of this excerpt:
   “I think that if the beast who sleeps in man could be held down by threats--any kind of threat, whether of jail or of retribution after death--then the highest emblem of humanity would be the lion tamer in the circus with his whip, not the prophet who sacrificed himself. But this is just the point--what has for centuries raised man above the beast is not the cudgel, but an inward music--the irresistible power of unarmed truth.” *(RI.9-10.2, 4)*

4. Ronald Reagan cast himself, perhaps ironically, as anti-government; his aim, he stated, was to champion the individual and the entrepreneur. Agree or disagree with his position. Is government detrimental to the rights of the individual? Why/why not? *(RI.9-10.6, 8)*

5. Discuss how Reagan ties the two halves of this excerpt together. What are the common threads between the two halves? How does Reagan turn a discussion about a revolution of technology and innovation into a paean to freedom? Have students trace the progression of his argument throughout the excerpt. *(RI.9-10.3, 5–6, 8)*

6. Reagan gives many examples of “America’s favorite pastime”—freedom. Explore the different examples of freedom with students to ensure comprehension. Have them complete a sentence frame with their own examples: Freedom is when _________________. Accept any short responses. *(ELL)*