

John Fitzgerald Kennedy (1917-1963)

## Address at Rice University in Houston on the Nation's Space Effort (SHORTENED)

*given at Rice University, in Houston, Texas on September 12, 1962*

William Bradford<sup>1</sup>, speaking in 1630 of the founding of the Plymouth Bay Colony, said that all great and honorable actions are accompanied with great difficulties, and both must be enterprised<sup>2</sup> and overcome with answerable<sup>3</sup> courage.

If this [...] [the] history of our progress teaches us anything, it is that man, in his quest<sup>4</sup> for knowledge and progress, is determined and cannot be deterred<sup>5</sup>. The exploration of space will go ahead, whether we join in it or not, and it is one of the great adventures of all time, and no nation which expects to be the leader of other nations can expect to stay behind in this race for space.

Those who came before us made certain that this country rode the first waves of the industrial revolutions, the first waves of modern invention, and the first wave of nuclear power, and this generation does not intend to founder<sup>6</sup> in the backwash<sup>7</sup> of the coming age of space. We mean to be a part of it--we mean to lead it. For the eyes of the world now look into space, to the moon and to the planets beyond, and we have vowed<sup>8</sup> that we shall not see it governed by a hostile flag of conquest, but by a banner of freedom and peace. We have vowed that we shall not see space filled with weapons of mass destruction, but with instruments of knowledge and understanding.

Yet the vows of this Nation can only be fulfilled if we in this Nation are first, and, therefore, we intend to be first. In short, our leadership in science and in industry, our hopes for peace and security, our obligations to ourselves as well as others, all require us to make this effort, to solve these mysteries, to solve them for the good of all men, and to become the world's leading space-faring<sup>9</sup> nation.

We set sail on this new sea because there is new knowledge to be gained, and new rights to be won, and they must be won and used for the progress of all people. For space science, like nuclear science and all technology, has no conscience of its own. Whether it will become a force for good or ill depends on man, and only if the United States occupies a position of pre-eminence<sup>10</sup> can we help decide whether this new ocean will be a sea of peace or a new terrifying theater of war. I do not say that we should or will go unprotected against the hostile misuse of space any more than we go unprotected against the hostile use of land or sea, but I do say that space can be explored and mastered without feeding the fires of war, without repeating the mistakes that man has made in extending his writ<sup>11</sup> around this globe of ours.

There is no strife<sup>12</sup>, no prejudice, no national conflict in outer space as yet. Its hazards<sup>13</sup> are hostile to us all. Its conquest deserves the best of all mankind, and its opportunity for peaceful cooperation may never come again. But why, some say, the moon? Why choose this as our goal? And they may well ask why climb the highest mountain. Why, 35 years ago, fly the Atlantic? [...]

We choose to go to the moon. We choose to go to the moon in this decade and do the other things, not because they are easy, but because they are hard, because that goal will serve to organize and measure the best of our energies and skills, because that challenge is one that we are willing to accept, one we are unwilling to postpone<sup>14</sup>, and one which we intend to win, and the others, too.

It is for these reasons that I regard the decision last year to shift our efforts in space from low to high gear as among the most important decisions that will be made during my incumbency<sup>15</sup> in the Office of the Presidency. [...]

To be sure, we are behind, and will be behind for some time in manned flight. But we do not intend to stay behind, and in this decade we shall make up<sup>16</sup> and move ahead. [...]

And finally, the space effort itself, while still in its infancy, has already created a great number of new companies, and tens of thousands of new jobs. Space and related industries are generating new demands in investment and skilled personnel, and this city and this State, and this region, will share greatly in this growth. What was once the furthest outpost on the old frontier of the West will be the furthest outpost on the new frontier of science and space. Houston, your City of Houston, with its Manned Spacecraft Center, will become the heart of a large scientific and engineering community. [...]

To be sure, all this costs us all a good deal of money. This year's space budget is three times what it was in January 1961, and it is greater than the space budget of the previous 8 years combined. That budget now stands at \$5,400 million a year--a staggering<sup>17</sup> sum, though somewhat less than we pay for cigarettes and cigars every year. Space expenditures<sup>18</sup> will soon rise some more, from 40 cents per person per week to more than 50 cents a week for every man, woman, and child in the United States, for we have given this program a high national priority-even though I realize that this is in some measure an act of faith and vision, for we do not now know what benefits await us. [...]

50 However, I think we're going to do it, and I think that we must pay what needs to be paid. I don't think we ought to<sup>19</sup> waste any money, but I think we ought to do the job. And this will be done in the decade of the sixties. It may be done while some of you are still here at school at this college and university. It will be done during the terms of office of some of the people who sit here on this platform. But it will be done. And it will be done before the end of this decade. [...]

55 Many years ago the great British explorer George Mallory<sup>20</sup>, who was to die on Mount Everest, was asked why did he want to climb it. He said, "Because it is there."

Well, space is there, and we're going to climb it, and the moon and the planets are there, and new hopes for knowledge and peace are there. And, therefore, as we set sail we ask God's blessing on the most hazardous<sup>21</sup> and dangerous and greatest adventure on which man has ever embarked<sup>22</sup>. [...]

(1125 words)

Quelle: <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=8862>

<sup>1</sup>**William Bradford (1590-1657)** English Separatist leader and governor of settlers in Plymouth, Massachusetts – <sup>2</sup>**to enterprise** to tackle, to handle, deal with – <sup>3</sup>**answerable** here: appropriate; responsible – <sup>4</sup>**quest** search – <sup>5</sup>**deterred** to prevent; to discourage – <sup>6</sup>**to founder** here: to sink below the surface of the water; to fail utterly – <sup>7</sup>**backwash** waves that spread behind a boat as it moves forward; wake – <sup>8</sup>**to vow** to make a firm promise to do sth.; to swear – <sup>9</sup>**to fare** to travel – <sup>10</sup>**pre-eminence** highest authority or greatest power; hegemony, superiority, supremacy – <sup>11</sup>**writ** here: power – <sup>12</sup>**strife** violent or angry disagreement, quarrel – <sup>13</sup>**hazard** danger, risk – <sup>14</sup>**to postpone** to delay – <sup>15</sup>**incumbency** mandate, term, period during which sb. has a particular position – <sup>16</sup>**to make up** to catch up on a delay – <sup>17</sup>**staggering** shocking – <sup>18</sup>**expenditure** amount (of money) spent – <sup>19</sup>**ought to** should – <sup>20</sup>**George Herbert Leigh Mallory (1886-1924)** English mountaineer who took part in the first three British expeditions to Mount Everest in the early 1920s – <sup>21</sup>**hazardous** dangerous; risky – <sup>22</sup>**to embark (on)** to board a ship; to start sth. big or important

## Aufgaben

1. Contrast the old frontier to this new frontier: what do they have in common, what is different?
2. Examine the rhetorical devices Kennedy employs to convince the audience.
3. In 1962 there were other problems that required a great deal of money. Is the money for the space program well spend? Discuss.
4. As a journalist you have attended the meeting where Kennedy gave this speech. Under the heading "President Kennedy wants every American to spend 50 cents a week for space travel" write an article outlining the main arguments given in the text.