

Eisenhower's "Chance for Peace" Speech

The following excerpt comes from a longer speech President Dwight Eisenhower gave to the American Society of Newspaper Editors in Washington, DC, on April 16, 1953 (during the Cold War and the war in Korea). The text has been broken apart on the following page for the purposes of analysis; use these segments to help you answer the series of questions that follow, aimed to help you get a better understanding of Eisenhower's viewpoint about military spending.

"Chance for Peace" excerpt:

Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed. This world in arms is not spending money alone. It is spending the sweat of its laborers, the genius of its scientists, the hopes of its children.

The cost of one modern heavy bomber is this: a modern brick school in more than 30 cities. It is two electric power plants, each serving a town of 60,000 population. It is two fine, fully equipped hospitals. It is some 50 miles of concrete highway.

We pay for a single fighter plane with a half million bushels of wheat.

We pay for a single destroyer with new homes that could have housed more than 8,000 people.

This, I repeat, is the best way of life to be found on the road the world has been taking. This is not a way of life at all, in any true sense. Under the cloud of threatening war, it is humanity hanging from a cross of iron.

TEXT (organized for analysis)

Segment I:

| Expense | | Opportunity Cost |
|---|-------------------------------|---|
| <i>Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired</i> | <i>signifies a theft from</i> | <i>those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed</i> |

| | | |
|---------------------------|--------------------|---|
| <i>This world in arms</i> | <i>is spending</i> | <i>the sweat of its laborers, the genius of its scientists, the hopes of its children</i> |
|---------------------------|--------------------|---|

Segment II:

| Expense | | Opportunity Cost |
|--|-------------------------------|--|
| <i>one modern heavy bomber</i> | <i>[the cost of] is this:</i> | <i>a modern brick school in more than 30 cities</i> |
| <i>It [one modern heavy bomber]</i> | <i>is [costs]</i> | <i>two electric power plants, each serving a town of 60,000 population.</i> |
| <i>It [one modern heavy bomber]</i> | <i>is [costs]</i> | <i>two fine, fully equipped hospitals.</i> |
| <i>It [one modern heavy bomber]</i> | <i>is [costs]</i> | <i>some 50 miles of concrete highway</i> |
| <i>a single fighter plane</i> | <i>[we pay for] with</i> | <i>a half million bushels of wheat.</i> |
| <i>a single destroyer</i> | <i>[we pay for] with</i> | <i>new homes that could have housed more than 8,000 people.</i> |

Segment III:

"This, I repeat, is the best way of life to be found on **the road the world has been taking**. This is not a way of life at all, in any true sense. Under the cloud of threatening war, it is **humanity hanging from a cross of iron**."

QUESTIONS

Use the segment II chart to answer questions 1 – 3.

1. Much of this part of Eisenhower's speech sets up comparisons of expenses with their potential opportunity costs. Look at the words in bold in the chart above. What type of expenses does Eisenhower describe (column 1)? What type of opportunity costs does he describe (column 3)?

2. Underline any numbers or quantities that Eisenhower mentions, related to both the expenses (column 1) and opportunity costs (column 3). What do you notice in comparing quantities across the two columns?

3. Circle or highlight any other adjectives modifying the opportunity costs (column 3). What kind of attitude do you think Eisenhower has about these opportunity costs?

Use the segment I chart to answer question 4.

4. In his introduction to this part of his speech, Eisenhower sets up a similar type of comparison between the expense of war and the opportunity costs. What kind of attitude is he revealing in this section, and what specific words help you to notice this?

Use the text in segment III to answer questions 5 – 6.

5. What do you think Eisenhower is referring to as “the road the world has been taking”?

6. What might Eisenhower mean by “humanity hanging from a cross of iron”?

Think about the text as a whole to answer question 7.

7. The speech has come to be known as the “Chance for Peace” speech. (Eisenhower used these words in another part of the speech.) How does thinking about this title reinforce or challenge your interpretations of what Eisenhower was trying to express?