

# THE STATE OF OUR UNION

## Our Country And Our Classroom

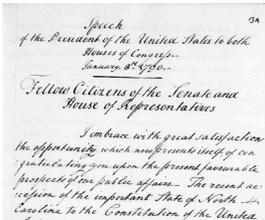
**On Tuesday, 1/20/2015 at 9 pm, President Obama will give the 2015 State of the Union speech.**

**NOTE: As you read, write down at least 3 questions and/or comments that show you read and thought about your reading. Write in the margins.**

This occasion also gives us an opportunity to look at the state of the union in 5S.

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### DID YOU KNOW?



The State of the Union is an **annual** speech (given every year) by the President of the United States to the U.S. Congress. The President reports on how the U.S. is doing and shares his future plans and priorities. George Washington gave the first State of the Union address on January 8, 1790. His speech was \_\_\_\_\_ words. How long ago was that?

Did you know there is a proper protocol to the State of the Union Address? It goes like this:

A formal invitation is made to the President from the Congress. He cannot give the speech without the invitation. At approximately 8:30 p.m., on the evening of the address, Congress gathers in their seats for a **joint session**. A joint session is when both the House of Representatives *and* the Senate get together. Notice the word join is in the word joint. Joint sessions only happen on special occasions like the presidential inauguration or the State of the Union. The House Majority Leader loudly announces the Vice President and members of the Senate. They enter and take assigned seats. More formal announcements are made and then just after 9 p.m., as the President reaches the door to the chamber, it is announced, "Mister [or Madam] Speaker... The President of the United States! As applause and cheering begin, the President walks toward the podium. It takes him a while because he has to pause to shake hands, hug, kiss, and autograph copies of his speech. Finally, the Speaker of the House states, **"Members of Congress, I have the high privilege and distinct honor of presenting to you the President of the United States."** This leads to a further round of applause and, after much clapping; it is time for the President's address. Last year, President Obama's speech began this way:

**Mr. Speaker, Mr. Vice President, Members of Congress, my fellow Americans: Today in America, a teacher spent extra time with a student who needed it, and did her part to lift America's graduation rate to its highest level in more than three decades. An entrepreneur flipped on the lights in her tech startup, and did her part to add to the more than eight million new jobs our businesses have created over the past four years. An autoworker fine-tuned some of the best, most fuel-efficient cars in the world, and did his part to help America wean itself off foreign oil. (The whole speech was 6778 words.)**

State of the Union speeches usually last a little over an hour. There is a lot of applause so it takes a long time for the President to get through it. Traditionally democrats and republicans sit separately and clap at different times. The Supreme Court rarely applauds in order to look non-biased. In 2011, after U.S. Representative Gabrielle Giffords was shot, Senator Mark Udall asked for members of congress from different political parties to sit together, and it worked! Congress mixed it up. Unfortunately it hasn't happened since then. What do you think might get them to sit together again in 2016?

**Intro:** In 5S, we have our own three branches of government. I, (Ms. Stark) am the President. I am the executive branch. I enforce the laws of our land. The Alpha Executive Director is the Vice President. He or she is a member of the Senate and supports the President. The rest of the class is the legislative branch. The founding fifth graders created the laws and it is up to you to create new ones or amend the ones we have. Ms. Cook and Mr. Youkilis are our Supreme Court. They are our judicial branch. They judge if a law has been broken and what the consequence should be. As your President, I decided that on the occasion of the State of the Union, it would be good if I wrote one for you too.

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### PRESIDENT STARK - **The State of Our Union In 5S**

Vice President & Alpha Executive Director, Jiashu, members of 5S Congress, families and fellow citizens of room 302: The seven articles of our class constitution declare that in room 302, *differences will be valued, attention will be given to whomever is talking, full effort will be given to each task, consideration must be paid to the feelings of others, everyone in our class will be safe from harmful words and actions, cooperation between people in our class is required and the property of our citizens and of the classroom will be used only with permission and with care.*

My fellow citizens, as I look around each day and listen to what you say, I hear happy, positive, thoughtful people learning together. I see teams collaborating on projects, I see individuals sharing ideas in front of the class, and I observe boundless curiosity and laughter. I see how much you appreciate the interests of your classmates and I have watched you inspire each other beyond anything I could have done. And, in moments of concern and bravery, I have watched you stand up for others if something unfair has occurred. You are making progress. You are making a difference. So, I say to you on this 20th day of January, that the state of our union in 5S is remarkable for the acts of kindness, cooperation, and care that occur each day.

Do we have work to do? Are there moments in our class when the laws of our land are being broken? Each of us knows the answer is yes. Yes, there are moments when people do not listen to the person who is speaking and instead has side conversations. Yes there are days when people do not pitch in when it is time to clean up or quietly get in line. And yes, there are moments when people forget how much they affect people around them. So, my fellow citizens, we have work to do. But is it too much work? Are we capable of doing better?

I am asking you to slow down, listen, and remember that it is those little, but not insignificant gestures, that will lift the spirits of your peers today and ripple into the future. With your determination, your imagination, and your outstanding ability to explore new solutions, the future will be better in your hands. It can be hard to imagine how far a good deed can go. But I say to you today and every day, now is the perfect time to try.

**TOTAL WORDS: 1887**

Now write a response: Start your response with the following words; **“Thank you Madam President, after thinking about your speech, I would like to add my own comments.”** Then, focus on what is **positive** and **what you think needs work** in our class. Use specific details to support your ideas. End with words of encouragement. Remember: TS, SD1, SM1, SD2, SM2, SD3, SM3, and CS.