

1. **Mark your confusion.**
2. **Show evidence of a close reading.**
3. **Write a 1+ page reflection.**

Michelle Obama's Final Speech

Source: WhiteHouse.gov, January 6, 2017

Two weeks before the Obamas are due to leave office, First Lady Michelle Obama gave her final public speech. She was speaking to a group of high school counselors, and here is an excerpt from that speech:

...and as I end my time in the White House, I can think of no better message to send our young people in my last official remarks as First Lady. So for all the young people in this room and those who are watching, know that this country belongs to you — to all of you, from every background and walk of life. If you or your parents are immigrants, know that you are part of a proud American tradition — the infusion of new cultures, talents and ideas, generation after generation, that has made us the greatest country on earth.

If your family doesn't have much money, I want you to remember that in this country, plenty of folks, including me and my husband — we started out with very little. But with a lot of hard work and a good education, anything is possible — even becoming President. That's what the American Dream is all about.

If you are a person of faith, know that religious diversity is a great American tradition, too. In fact, that's why people first came to this country — to worship freely. And whether you are Muslim, Christian, Jewish, Hindu, Sikh — these religions are teaching our young people about justice, and compassion, and honesty. So I want our young people to continue to learn and practice those values with pride. You see, our glorious diversity — our diversities of faiths and colors and creeds — that is not a threat to who we are, it makes us who we are.

So the young people here and the young people out there: Do not ever let anyone make you feel like you don't matter, or like you don't have a place in our American story — because you do. And you have a right to be exactly who you are. But I also want to be very clear: This right isn't just handed to you. No, this right has to be earned every single day. You cannot take your freedoms for granted. Just like generations who have come before you, you have to do your part to preserve and protect those freedoms. And that starts right now, when you're young.

Right now, you need to be preparing yourself to add your voice to our national conversation. You need to prepare yourself to be informed and engaged as a citizen, to serve and to lead, to stand up for our proud American values and to honor them in your daily lives. And that means getting the best education possible so you can think critically, so you can express yourself clearly, so you can get a good job and support yourself and your family, so you can be a positive force in your communities.

And when you encounter obstacles — because I guarantee you, you will, and many of you already have — when you are struggling and you start thinking about giving up, I want you to remember something that my husband and I have talked about since we first started this journey nearly a decade ago, something that has carried us through every moment in this White

House and every moment of our lives, and that is the power of hope — the belief that something better is always possible if you're willing to work for it and fight for it.

It is our fundamental belief in the power of hope that has allowed us to rise above the voices of doubt and division, of anger and fear that we have faced in our own lives and in the life of this country. Our hope that if we work hard enough and believe in ourselves, then we can be whatever we dream, regardless of the limitations that others may place on us. The hope that when people see us for who we truly are, maybe, just maybe they, too, will be inspired to rise to their best possible selves.

That is the hope of students like Kyra who fight to discover their gifts and share them with the world. It's the hope of school counselors like Terri and all these folks up here who guide those students every step of the way, refusing to give up on even a single young person. Shoot, it's the hope of my — folks like my dad who got up every day to do his job at the city water plant; the hope that one day, his kids would go to college and have opportunities he never dreamed of.

That's the kind of hope that every single one of us — politicians, parents, preachers — all of us need to be providing for our young people. Because that is what moves this country forward every single day — our hope for the future and the hard work that hope inspires.

So that's my final message to young people as First Lady. It is simple. I want our young people to know that they matter, that they belong. So don't be afraid — you hear me, young people? Don't be afraid. Be focused. Be determined. Be hopeful. Be empowered. Empower yourselves with a good education, then get out there and use that education to build a country worthy of your boundless promise. Lead by example with hope, never fear. And know that I will be with you, rooting for you and working to support you for the rest of my life.

And that is true I know for every person who are here — is here today, and for educators and advocates all across this nation who get up every day and work their hearts out to lift up our young people. And I am so grateful to all of you for your passion and your dedication and all the hard work on behalf of our next generation. And I can think of no better way to end my time as First Lady than celebrating with all of you.

So I want to close today by simply saying thank you. Thank you for everything you do for our kids and for our country. Being your First Lady has been the greatest honor of my life, and I hope I've made you proud.

Possible Response Questions:

- Pick a passage from the speech and respond to it.
- Comment on the craft moves made in this speech. What do you notice?