**10th Form National Poetry Recitation Contest**

**Title of speech**: Explosion of the Space Shuttle *Challenger*: Address to the Nation, January 28, 1986

**Speaker**: United States President Ronald Reagan

**Link to audio recording of the full speech:** [**https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qa7icmqgsow**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qa7icmqgsow)

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**About the Speaker**

**Ronald Reagan** (February 6, 1911 – June 5, 2004) was an American politician and actor who served as the 40th [President of the United States](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/President_of_the_United_States) from 1981 to 1989. Prior to the presidency, he was a [Hollywood](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hollywood_%28film_industry%29) actor. He was President at the time the Space Shuttle Challenger broke into pieces in the air just 73 seconds after it launched. All seven people on board were killed—six astronauts and one school teacher who had been offered the chance to join the space exploration. Everyone in America was shocked and saddened by the deaths—including many school children who had watched the launch live on TV from their classrooms. The speech President Reagan gave that night was one of the most famous of his presidency.

**Excerpt from speech:**

And I want to say something to the schoolchildren of America who were watching the live coverage of the shuttle's takeoff. I know it is hard to understand, but sometimes painful things like this happen. It's all part of the process of exploration and discovery. It's all part of taking a chance and expanding man's horizons. The future doesn't belong to the fainthearted; it belongs to the brave. The Challenger crew was pulling us into the future, and we'll continue to follow them.

I've always had great faith in and respect for our space program, and what happened today does nothing to diminish it. We don't hide our space program. We don't keep secrets and cover things up. We do it all up front and in public. That's the way freedom is, and we wouldn't change it for a minute…

… The crew of the space shuttle Challenger honored us by the manner in which they lived their lives. We will never forget them, nor the last time we saw them, this morning, as they prepared for their journey and waved goodbye and "slipped the surly bonds of earth" to "touch the face of God."

**Vocabulary:**

“expanding man's horizons” developing a bigger understanding of the world and space

“fainthearted” timid, scared or shy

“to diminish” to make smaller

“ slipped the surly bonds of earth” This is a line from a poem. It means to get away from all the everyday worries we have on earth—it is a way of saying the dead explorers are now in heaven.

**Discussion Guide:**

How does this excerpt from Reagan’s speech make you feel? Happy or sad? Brave or timid? Proud or ashamed?

Why do you think the President decided to speak directly to children in America after Challenger crashed?

Have you ever tried to make a really big change and had it go wrong? What happened? How did you feel? What did you do next?

Would you like to explore space? Why, or why not?