

## Topic 1: Morality

### OBJECTIVES

- Identify main ideas, major details, minor details of semi-academic texts on politics and global issues.

### READING ONE: In Politics, Morality Always Matters

#### Warm-Up

**Do you know why the Lincoln Memorial was built? What does the Lincoln Memorial symbolize?** Read the following text. **Highlight** the main ideas and underline the major details to help answer these questions.



**Abraham Lincoln** (February 12, 1809 – April 15, 1865) was an American lawyer, politician, and statesman who served as the 16th president of the United States from 1861 until his assassination in 1865. Lincoln led the United States through the American Civil War, defending the nation as a constitutional union, defeating the insurgent Confederacy, playing a major role in the abolition of slavery, expanding the power of the federal government, and modernizing the U.S. economy.

When visitors approach the memorial dedicated to Abraham Lincoln, many are taken aback by its majestic temple-like appearance. The individual responsible for this design was architect Henry Bacon who modeled the memorial after the Greek temple known as the *Parthenon*. **Bacon felt that a memorial to a man who defended democracy should be based on a structure found in the birthplace of democracy.** The final design featured **36 exterior columns to symbolize the 36 states in the Union at the time of Lincoln's death.** The names of these states appear in the mural above the columns.

The interior of the Lincoln Memorial is divided into three chambers. The central chamber contains the statue of the president, while the **two contiguous chambers commemorate the two Lincoln speeches that reflected Lincoln's character as well as celebrate his accomplishments during his presidency.** The two speeches selected were the Gettysburg Address and the Second Inaugural Address.

Lincoln delivered the Gettysburg Address on November 19, 1863. This address was selected for its familiarity to many, but also because it displayed the president's strength and determination to see a successful conclusion to the American Civil War.

That successful conclusion meant not just reuniting the nation, but finishing what our founders had started. This nation must be one in which the belief that all are “created equal” is upheld both in law and in practice.

Selected for the north chamber of the memorial was Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address delivered on March 4, 1865. That speech, which he gave just one month before the conclusion of the Civil War, creates the policy for reuniting the divided states. The reelected president firmly believed that the northern states should welcome their southern brothers and sisters back into the Union with open arms. While the feeling among many northerners at the end of the Civil War was anger toward the South for having left the Union, Lincoln's willingness to show compassion to the southern people “with **malice** towards none; charity for all” helped **quell** the hostility among northerners.

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### Main ideas and major details

**Compare what you have identified with your friends.**

- Which parts did you **highlight**? Which parts did you underline?

**In small groups of 3-4, help each other answer the questions: Why was the Lincoln Memorial built? What does the Lincoln Memorial symbolize?** To help you explore the meanings and symbolism behind the design, follow the text descriptions and draw up the Lincoln Memorial from your understanding.

**Later, prepare a short presentation (2-3 minutes) to share your drawing and answers with the class.**

*Draft your answers here...*

### Discuss these questions with a partner.

1. Do you think personal morality is an important consideration of a leader?
2. In what ways can voters assess the moral character of a political candidate?
3. Thinking about political figures you know, past or present, what challenges might arise when voters overlook morality in choosing their leaders?

### Pre-reading: Vocabulary

Here is a list of academic vocabulary that you will encounter in this text. Check to see how many of them you already know. Put a check mark next to the ones you know and try to explain the words to your friends.

abundance	virtue	integrity	conspicuous	temperament	reproach
contemporaries	descendants	anointed	fabrication	scrupulous	stature
shrewd	overriding	resolve	preside	squabbling	immeasurably
menacing	amounts to	dubious	restraint	fidelity	formidable

For the words that you don't know yet, try analyzing the words by identifying their **roots**, **prefixes**, and **suffixes**. Note that the root carries the core meaning of the word, the prefix modifies that meaning in some way, and the suffix modifies its grammatical function in the sentence. See the list below and try to guess the meanings of the words. You may choose to guess only 5 words from this list to save you time.

### Vocabulary Breakdown: Prefixes, Roots, and Suffixes

Word	Prefix	Root	Suffix	Guess the Meaning
Abundance	ab- (from)	unda (wave)	-ance (n)	
Virtue	—	virtus (goodness, strength)	—	
Integrity	—	integer (whole)	-ity (n)	
Conspicuous	con- (together)	spic (look)	-uous (n)	
Temperament	—	temperare (to mix)	-ment (n)	
Reproach	re- (again / back)	proach (test/approve)	—	
Contemporaries	con- (together)	temp (time)	-ary, -ies (n)	
Descendants	de- (down)	scend (climb)	-ant, -s (n)	
Anointed	an- (on)	oint (smear)	-ed	
Fabrication	—	fabric (to make)	-ation (n)	
Scrupulous	—	scrupul (small sharp stone)	-ous (adj)	
Stature	—	stat (stand)	-ure (n)	
Shrewd	—	shrew (clever)	-ed (adj)	

Overriding	over- (above)	ride	-ing	
Resolve	re- (again)	solve (loosen)	—	
Preside	pre- (before)	side/sed (sit)	—	
Squabbling	—	squabble (argue)	-ing	
Immeasurably	im- (not)	measur (measure)	-ably (adv)	
Menacing	—	menac (threat)	-ing	
Amounts to	ad- (towards)	mount (go up)	—	
Dubious	—	dub (doubt)	-ious (adj)	
Restraint	re- (back)	strain (pull tight)	-t (n)	
Fidelity	—	fidel (faith)	-ity (n)	
Formidable	—	formid (fear)	-able (adj)	

It is important to note that most of these academic words can be expressed in simpler terms. For example, the word 'abundance' can be replaced by the phrase 'a lot of' in this context. However, you may notice that using 'a lot of' would have made the text sound less academic or less written-like, changed the tone of the description, and changed the group of intended audience the author had written the text for. Therefore, as we continue learning the academic genre of English, it's a good idea to build your academic vocabulary to expand your toolbox for expressing ideas more precisely.

## Discussion

1. Who do you think the author is writing this text for?
2. Compare the two following sentences. One is written in academic vocabulary, the other uses more general terms. How would you describe the difference between the two sentences? Why did the author choose to write it the way he did? (After you read: Can you find more examples from the text?)
  - a. History shows that **virtue** and **integrity** can be essential for the office-holders we select.
  - b. History shows that **being good** and **honest** is very important for the presidents we choose.

## Reading

Read the text "In Politics, Morality Always Matters" by Michael Medved, published in 2023 around one year before a general election in the United States. **Highlight** the main ideas and underline the major details of each paragraph. Answer the comprehension questions in the next section to check your understanding.

### In Politics, Morality Always Matters

By Michael Medved

Published Sep 24, 2023 | Newsweek

- p.1 Does it make sense to evaluate the personal morality of politicians while judging their suitability for high office? Should a candidate's pattern of ethical—or unethical—behavior, influence our choices in a fiercely contested election?
- p.2 These questions have become painfully relevant given the likelihood that both major-party presidential nominees in 2024 will display an **abundance** of character flaws that attract attention and inspire fierce debate in the months ahead. History shows that **virtue** and **integrity** can be essential for the office-holders we select—even more so than for those who occupy other positions of **conspicuous** responsibility.
- p.3 To embrace the idea that elected leaders should be honored exclusively for their policy achievements and that questions of character mean nothing to the quality of their leadership is to reduce their jobs and their impact to a bloodless, almost mechanistic two dimensions. Historians often cite James K. Polk as a rare example of a chief executive who managed to keep each of his major campaign promises, but he's seldom rated as "great" or "near great," thanks to the dry, insecure, quarrelsome and self-righteous **temperament** he brought to the nation's highest office.
- p.4 Consider the American presidents who have inspired the most intense and durable admiration over the last 235 years. None of them count as flawless or altogether beyond **reproach**, but those we remember most fondly and honor most consistently displayed personalities that struck their **contemporaries** and **descendants** as decent, honorable, and often noble.
- p.5 Which brings us to the leader generally recognized as the greatest of them all: Abraham Lincoln, or "Honest Abe" as his appreciative contemporaries consistently **anointed** him, even as a very young man. Richard Carwardine, a Lincoln biographer at Oxford University, wrote: "The nickname 'honest Abe' was not the **fabrication** of party publicists but a mark of the universal respect in which he was held as a lawyer of **scrupulous** honesty. This reputation spilled into the political arena, where he was widely perceived as just and fair-minded in debate and adverse to gaining an advantage by foul-means."

- p.6 In fact, his character earned so much respect that even his political adversaries acknowledged his integrity and **stature**. "I shall have my hands full," an uneasy Senator Stephen Douglas commented when notified that the Republicans had designated Lincoln to challenge him for his seat in 1858. "He is the strong man of his party—full of wit, facts, dates—and the best **stump speaker**, with his witty ways and dry jokes, in the West. He is as honest as he is **shrewd**, and if I beat him my victory will be hardly won."
- p.7 Lincoln earned this admirable reputation because in his speeches, letters, and private conversations he consistently emphasized the **overriding** significance of personal morality and ethical conduct above any other standard of success. In 1850, in notes that he made for a talk to aspiring attorneys, he wrote: "**Resolve** to be honest at all events; and if in your own judgment you cannot be an honest lawyer, resolve to be honest without being a lawyer."
- p.8 No one can reasonably doubt that Lincoln's personal qualities—including his ability to work constructively with one-time adversaries, and to **preside** over a "team of rivals" in his cabinet and a **squabbling**, newly organized Republican Party—contributed **immeasurably** to his success in leading America through its most **menacing** and heartbreaking ordeal.
- p.9 The notion that there is anything dated, old-fashioned, or irrelevant about an ongoing association between personal morality, depth of character and political achievement **amounts to** one of the most dangerous and **dubious** misunderstandings of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Part of the problem is the reductionist tendency to focus on sexual **restraint** and marital **fidelity** as the prime measure of personal morality, by which standard some of our most revered leaders (FDR and JFK, not to mention Clinton and Donald Trump) fall far short of traditional standards. Yes, a stable, honorable, long-term marriage indicates qualities like reliability, predictability, communication skills, and the flexibility to compromise. Those can be **formidable** assets for any political endeavor. But those abilities and personality strengths can be demonstrated as conclusively by relationships outside of marriage as well as within the home, reflecting basic reasonableness as much as romance does.
- p.10 As we assess our potential presidents, we should value a gift for friendship as well as for fidelity and honor the capacity to control oneself even more than track records of controlling others. We also need to remember that morality means not only the absence of vice, but the presence of virtue—something our most admirable past presidents have abundantly displayed.

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**Stump speech** is a term used today to describe a candidate's standard speech, delivered day after day during a typical political campaign. Stump speeches got their name for a good reason: they would often be delivered by candidates who literally stood atop a tree stump. A reference book in the 1840s defined the terms "to stump" and "stump speech." And by the 1850s newspaper articles from around the United States often referred to a candidate "taking to the stump." There are numerous examples where politicians were said to be "stumping" for themselves or for other candidates. The ability to give an effective stump speech was considered an essential political skill. Many notable 19th-century politicians, including Henry Clay, Abraham Lincoln, and Stephen Douglas, were respected for their skills as stump speakers.

**COMPREHENSION: Identifying main ideas**

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1. Main idea of paragraphs 1-2: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Main idea of paragraph 3: \_\_\_\_\_
3. What type of support did the author use in paragraph 3? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Main idea of paragraph 4: \_\_\_\_\_
5. Main idea of paragraph 5: \_\_\_\_\_
6. What type of supports did the author use in paragraph 5? \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_
7. Main idea of paragraph 6: \_\_\_\_\_
8. What type of support did the author use in paragraph 6? \_\_\_\_\_
9. Main idea of paragraph 7: \_\_\_\_\_
10. What type of support did the author use in paragraph 7? \_\_\_\_\_
11. Main idea of paragraph 8: \_\_\_\_\_
12. What does "one of the most dangerous and dubious misunderstandings of the 21st century" refer to? \_\_\_\_\_
13. According to the author, what mistakes did the reductionist make about morality? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
14. Overall, what is the main argument that the author is trying to make?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
15. What is the supporting evidence the author used to support his claim? \_\_\_\_\_
16. How many times did the author mention the viewpoint(s) that are different from his own (counter argument)? \_\_\_\_\_
17. Check the article again to see what comment the author made about each opposing point. Make a list of those opposing points and the author's refutations.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
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\_\_\_\_\_
18. What is the author's suggestion at the end of the article?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**POST-READING: Discussion questions**

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1. Which ONE sentence from the reading "*In Politics, Morality Always Matters*" that is the most memorable to you? Explain your reasons to your partners.
2. Why do some people argue that character doesn't matter as much as policy? Do you agree or disagree? Why?
3. In your opinion, what personal qualities should every leader have? Are these always easy to see during an election? Why?
4. What can we learn from the way we judge the morality of leaders that can help us think about our own values and actions in everyday life?

## LANGUAGE IN FOCUS: Noun phrase

A noun phrase, as the term suggests, is a group of two or more words that functions like a noun when put together. It is potentially infinite in length, and it can include any number of other phrases (e.g. noun, adjective, adverb) within its structure. Noun phrases serve to specify subjects and objects in the sentences, providing clarity and detail.

A noun phrase can be divided into two main parts, the head noun and modifiers. The head noun carries the most meaning of the whole noun phrase. In reading and writing—especially in academic English—noun phrases play a central role in how information is packaged, developed, and understood. Most academic texts use a high percentage of complex noun phrases, so practice in constructing them will definitely help both your reading and your writing.

1. **Structure of a noun phrase:** Noun phrases usually consist of a noun and any modifiers which can be in front of the head noun or following the head noun. Premodifiers usually consist of adjectives or nouns. Possible post modifiers can be (1) prepositional phrase (2) relative clause or (3) participial phrase (see the next topic for more detail) which can be identified as verbs in *-ing* (present participle) or *-ed* (past participle) forms.



**Example 1:** “a rare example of a chief executive who managed to keep each of his major campaign promises”

- a. Head noun: **example**
- b. Premodifier: a (*determiner*), rare (*adjective*)
- c. Postmodifier: of a chief executive (*prepositional phrase*), who managed to keep each of his major campaign promises (*relative clause*)

**Example 2:** “the dry, insecure, quarrelsome and self-righteous temperament he brought to the nation's highest office”

- a. Head noun: **temperament**
- b. Premodifier: the (*determiner*), dry (*adjective*), insecure (*adjective*), quarrelsome (*adjective*), self-righteous (*adjective*)
- c. Postmodifier: (which) he brought to the nation's highest office (*relative clause*)

**Practice:** “Lincoln's personal qualities—including his ability to work constructively with one-time adversaries, and to preside over a “team of rivals” in his cabinet and a squabbling, newly organized Republican Party”

- a. Head noun: \_\_\_\_\_
- b. Premodifier: \_\_\_\_\_
- c. Postmodifier: \_\_\_\_\_



- 2. Noun phrase in a sentence:** Noun phrases can do anything a regular noun can do. This means they can be used as a/an:

**a. Subject**

*Example 3: “The notion that there is anything dated, old-fashioned, or irrelevant about an ongoing association between personal morality, depth of character and political achievement amounts to one of the most dangerous and dubious misunderstandings of the 21st century.”*

**b. Object**

*Example 4: “Lincoln earned this admirable reputation because in his speeches, letters, and private conversations he consistently emphasized the overriding significance of personal morality and ethical conduct above any other standard of success.”*

**c. Appositive**

*Example 5: “Richard Carwardine, a Lincoln biographer at Oxford University, wrote [...]”*

**Exercise 1**

Practice identifying noun phrases in paragraph 9 of the essay In Politics, “Morality Always Matters” we have read earlier. Fill in the diagram below with the head nouns you can identified from the article. Check to see if this helps you understand the paragraph better.

1)  that morality and political achievement are unrelated is one of the most dangerous . 2) The  to reduce morality to marital  can be problematic. 3) While it is true that having a stable  can be considered a strong , these  can also be observed in  other than the romantic ones.

- 3. Recommended use:** Noun phrases are powerful tools in academic writing, but like all tools, they work best when used thoughtfully. Here's a recommendation and a caveat to guide your use of noun phrases:

- Use noun phrases to reduce the need for personal pronouns and verbs. This can help make your academic writing become more formal which can be used to engage your audience at a more abstract concept.

Example:

***We found that students' performance has improved.***

**→ *Improvement in student performance was observed.***

- Avoid overloading your sentences with long, complex noun phrases because too many layered noun phrases—especially when stacked together—can make your writing *dense, hard to follow, and impersonal*. An easy check if you are overusing your noun phrase is to read the sentence out loud. If a sentence feels hard to breathe through, your noun phrases may be doing too much.

Example:

***The government's proposed long-term sustainable development strategy implementation plan lacks clarity.***

**→ *The government's plan to implement a long-term sustainable development strategy lacks clarity.***

## Exercise 2

### Practice using complex noun phrases in your writing: "My kind of candidate"

On a title of "My kind of candidate", write a short paragraph (of approximately 200 words) describing the qualities of a political candidate whom you would vote for in a major election and explain your reasons. Use complex noun phrases to provide detail and make your writing more precise.

Switch your work with a partner and read it out loud. See if there are any more places that you can make into noun phrases. Also, check if there any noun phrases that you should take out. Work together to see if there are other ideas that need further clarification. Revise the paragraphs together and check your work with the instructor.

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## REVISION: VOCABULARY

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Complete the essay with the highlighted words from the two readings of Topic 1 (Morality). Use the synonym in parentheses to help you select the correct word or phrase.

### Morality Crisis in World Leaders

In recent years, headlines around the world have been filled with stories of political scandals and ethical failures. From corruption to abuse of power, many citizens have begun to question whether their leaders act with (1) \_\_\_\_\_ (moral uprightness) or simply pursue their own interests.

Some leaders have faced public (2) \_\_\_\_\_ (the expression of disapproval) for accepting bribes or using their positions for personal gain. In such situations, their lack of (3) \_\_\_\_\_ (self-control) often becomes clear—choosing immediate benefit over long-term trust. What's worse, actions driven by (4) \_\_\_\_\_ (ill will), rather than justice or fairness, can deepen public distrust and even spark protests.

During these crises, leaders often attempt to (5) \_\_\_\_\_ (suppress) the anger of their people through speeches, apologies, or symbolic actions. But without real change or accountability, these efforts may appear insincere. Citizens expect their leaders to be not only clever or (6) \_\_\_\_\_ (showing sharp powers of judgment), but also morally grounded and responsible.

A leader's (7) \_\_\_\_\_ (characteristic of one's emotional response) also plays a critical role in how they respond to scandals. While some react defensively or deny wrongdoing, others take responsibility with calm and dignity. In the end, what many people truly want is for their leaders to be (8) \_\_\_\_\_ (acting in strict regard for what is considered right or proper) —carefully honest, fair, and respectful of the trust placed in them.

As moral failures continue to make global news, the call for ethical leadership becomes stronger than ever.

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