**The Puritan Tradition**

**from Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God**

Sermon by Jonathan Edwards

**Meet the Author**

Jonathan Edwards 1703–1758

When Jonathan Edwards delivered a sermon, with its fiery descriptions of hell and eternal damnation, people listened. Edwards believed that religion should be rooted not only in reason but also in emotion. Although 19th-century editors tried to tone down his style, Edwards is recognized today as a masterful preacher.

**A Spiritual Calling** Born in East Windsor, Connecticut, Edwards was a child prodigy and entered what is now Yale University at the age of 12. While a graduate student there, Edwards experienced a spiritual crisis that led to what he later described as “religious joy.” He came to believe that such an intense religious experience was an important step toward salvation.

In 1722, after finishing his education, Edwards followed the path of his father and grandfather and became a Puritan minister. In 1726, Edwards began assisting his grandfather, who was the minister at the parish church in Northampton, Massachusetts. When his grandfather died three years later, Edwards became the church’s pastor.

**Religious Revivalist** Edwards soon became an effective preacher. In 1734 and 1735, he delivered a series of sermons that resulted in a great number of conversions. The converts believed they had felt God’s grace and were “born again” when they accepted Jesus Christ.

Edwards’s sermons helped trigger the Great Awakening, a religious revival that swept through New England from 1734 to 1750. The movement grew out of a sense among some Puritan ministers that their congregations had grown too self-satisfied. Delivered at the height of the Great Awakening, “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God” is the most famous of Edwards’s nearly 1,200 sermons.

**Last Years** Although Edwards inspired thousands, his church dismissed him in 1750 because he wanted to limit membership to those who had undergone conversion. A year later, Edwards went to Stockbridge, Massachusetts, where he became a missionary in a Native American settlement. In 1757, he accepted an appointment as president of what is now Princeton University.

By the time of Edwards’s death the following year, the extremism of the Great Awakening had been rejected. However, his vision of humanity suspended, like a spider, over the burning pit of hell still maintains its emotional impact.

**Selection Resources**

See resources on the Teacher One Stop DVD-ROM and on thinkcentral.com.

- **Best Practices Toolkit**
  - Open Mind, p. D9
- **Adapted Interactive Reader**
- **ELL Adapted Interactive Reader**
- **Technology**
  - Teacher One Stop DVD-ROM
  - Student One Stop DVD-ROM
  - PowerNotes DVD-ROM
  - Audio Anthology CD
  - GrammarNotes DVD-ROM
  - ExamView Test Generator on the Teacher One Stop DVD-ROM

- **Resouce Manager Unit 1**
  - Plan and Teach, pp. 167–174
  - Summary, pp. 175–176
  - Text Analysis and Reading Skill, pp. 177–180
  - Vocabulary, pp. 181–183
- **Diagnostic and Selection Tests**
  - Selection Tests, pp. 57–60

*Resources for Differentiation † Also in Spanish ‡ Also in Haitian Creole and Vietnamese
**TEXT ANALYSIS: PERSUASION**

Puritan theologian Jonathan Edwards delivered powerfully persuasive sermons. As in all persuasive writing, an Edwards sermon is shaped by the author’s purpose, his audience, and his context—that is, his reason for preaching, his Puritan congregation, and the times in which the Puritans lived. One of Edwards’s most prominent rhetorical or persuasive techniques is the use of biblical allusions—references to figures, events, or places in the Bible that he assumed his congregation would recognize.

As you read Edwards’s sermon, look for passages that reveal how purpose and audience affect the tone of his sermon.

**READING SKILL: ANALYZE EMOTIONAL APPEALS**

Emotional appeals are messages designed to persuade an audience by creating strong feelings. They often include sensory language to create vivid imagery and loaded words to create these types of feelings:
- fear, which taps into a fear of losing one’s safety or security
- pity, which draws on a sympathy or compassion for others
- guilt, which relies on one’s sense of ethics or morality

As you read, use a chart like the one below to record examples of language that appeals to the emotions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Examples</th>
<th>Emotional Appeals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“arrows of death fly unseen”</td>
<td>appeals to fear by creating anxiety,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>unease</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**VOCABULARY IN CONTEXT**

Jonathan Edwards uses the listed words to help convey his spiritual message. Choose a word from the list that is a synonym for each of the numbered words.

**WORD LIST**
- abhor (abh-hôr) v. to regard with disgust
- abominable (ə-bôm-i-nə-bal) adj. thoroughly detestable
- appease (ə-pěz) v. to bring peace, quiet, or calm to; to soothe
- ascribe (ə-skrib) v. to attribute to a specified cause or source
- deliverance (dél-iv’ar-ens) n. rescue from danger
- discern (dërs-n) v. to perceive or recognize something
- incense (in-sëns) v. to cause to be extremely angry
- induce (in-dūs) v. to succeed in persuading someone to do something
- mitigation (mi-tā-shon) n. lessening of something that causes suffering
- whet (wët) adj. sharpened

Complete the activities in your Reader/Writer Notebook.

**Vocabulary Study p. 181**

**TEXT ANALYSIS**

Model the Skill: PERSUASION

Help students understand the persuasive writing used in this selection by reading this example aloud:

You who gossip about your neighbors—your tongues will shrivel even as you speak. End your gossiping ways!

Point out that these words have a specific purpose, audience, and context. They are meant to warn people to stop gossiping, spoken to an audience of townspeople who attend a church or revival meeting.

**GUIDED PRACTICE** Ask students to identify the purpose, audience, and context for some advertisements they have read or seen.

**Model the Skill: ANALYZE EMOTIONAL APPEALS**

Reread the example in the previous note. Examine Edwards’s sensory language by pointing out that “tongues will shrivel” creates a fear of pain and physical harm.

**GUIDED PRACTICE** Have students reword the example to make listeners feel pity for those who gossip or guilt about having gossiped.

**RESOURCES MANAGER—Copy Master**

Analyze Emotional Appeals p. 179 (for student use while reading the selection)

**IN LINE?**

What keeps you IN LINE?

A sense of morality probably keeps you from cheating on a test. In other words, you know cheating is wrong. But there are other reasons for behaving morally. Some people are anxious to please. Others fear the consequences of breaking the rules. Jonathan Edwards uses fear to get his point across in the sermon you’re about to read.

**ROLE-PLAY** With a partner, take turns role-playing a conversation with a child who has been stealing. Your mission is to persuade him or her to stop. Before you begin, consider how best to keep the child in line. For example, you might frighten or shame the child or appeal to his or her pride.
Jonathan Edwards delivered his sermon “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God” in 1741 to a congregation in Enfield, Connecticut. Edwards read the sermon, as he always did, in a composed style, with few gestures or movements. However, the sermon had a dramatic effect on his parishioners, many of whom wept and moaned.

We find it easy to tread on and crush a worm that we see crawling on the earth; so it is easy for us to cut or singe a slender thread that any thing hangs by; thus easy is it for God when he pleases to cast his enemies down to hell. . . . They are now the objects of that very same anger and wrath of God, that is expressed in the torments of hell. And the reason why they do not go down to hell at each moment, is not because God, in whose power they are, is not then very angry with them; as angry as he is with many miserable creatures now tormented in hell, who there feel and bear the fierceness of his wrath. Yea, God is a great deal more angry with great numbers that are now on earth; yea, doubtless, with many that are now in this congregation, who it may be are at ease, than he is with many of those who are now in the flames of hell.

1. They: Earlier in the sermon, Edwards refers to all “unconverted men,” whom he considers God's enemies. Unconverted men are people who have not been "born again," meaning that they have not accepted Jesus Christ.
Analyze Visuals

Possible answer  The painting conveys the dehumanizing quality of fire and firepower.

About the Art  The fire is typical of the imaginative style of Giuseppe Arcimboldo (c. 1527–1593), who created portraits composed of flowers, fruit, animals, and other objects. The portraits often were mocking, satirical, or allegorical, conveying meaning about human nature rather than portraying a likeness. The image of fire is powerful in this painting—as it is in Jonathan Edwards’s sermon, laced with descriptions of fiery torment in hell.

BACKGROUND

The Great Awakening  The religious movement known as the Great Awakening was characterized by an enthusiasm that often evidenced itself in dynamic revival meetings—“revival” referring to the goal of renewing the spiritual passion that had marked the lives of many listeners’ ancestors. Although Edwards was a major force in the movement in New England, other preachers spread the movement to all of the colonies. The movement sparked several social movements, including some early antislavery activities and missionary work among Native Americans. It also led to the founding of such prestigious colleges as Princeton, Dartmouth, and Rutgers.

FOR STRUGGLING READERS

In combination with the Audio Anthology CD, use one or more Targeted Passages (pp. 124, 126, 129) to ensure that students focus on key concepts in the selection. Targeted Passages are also good for English learners.

1 Targeted Passage  [Lines 2–6]
This introductory passage sets up the idea that God can and will judge sinners.

- According to Edwards, how hard is it for a person to crush a worm or burn the thread from which something may hang? (lines 1–3)
- Whom does God cast down to hell? Is it hard for God to take this action? (lines 2–3)
- What emotion from God do God’s enemies feel most strongly? (line 4)
READING SKILL

**ANALYZE EMOTIONAL APPEALS**

Possible answer: Edwards uses vivid images of the fires of hell, such as these: “the flames do now rage and glow” (lines 16–17); and “the pit hath opened its mouth under them” (line 18).

**Model the Skill: ANALYZE EMOTIONAL APPEALS**

Write flame and inferno on the board. Elicit that inferno is a synonym for flame but that it has negative connotations. Possible answer: These loaded terms have negative connotations: “the fiery pit” and “sentenced” (line 28); “dreadfully provoked” (line 29); and “suffering,” “executions,” and “the fierceness of his wrath in hell” (line 30).

TEXT ANALYSIS

**PERSUASION**

Possible answer: The bow and arrow imagery may frighten the Colonialists by reminding them of Native American weapons.

VOCABULARY

**OWN THE WORD**

- **whet**: Tell students that whet can also mean “to stimulate.”
- **discern**: Have students create a semantic web for discern. Have students add synonyms. Possible answers: observe, detect, notice, ascertain
- **appease**: Tell students that antonyms for appease include aggravate and provoke.
- **abhorr**: Ask students to complete the analogy. abhorr : dislike :: idolize: Possible answer: fancy

DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION

**FOR STRUGGLING READERS**

**Targeted Passage** [lines 38–49]

In this passage, Edwards declares that nothing but conversion will allow people to escape God’s wrath.

- Why does God have a bow and arrows? Why hasn’t he used them yet? (lines 39–41)
- Name two things that Edwards says will happen to people who are born again. (lines 44–45)

**FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS**

**Vocabulary: Prefixes** As you point out the word **unconverted** in line 19, explain that the prefix un-, meaning “not,” gives a clue to the meaning of the word. Have students find **unsearchable** (line 22) and **unexperienced** (line 45) on the page. Point out that the prefix helps the reader determine the meaning. Ask students for additional examples of words with this prefix.
wrath towards you burns like fire; he looks upon you as worthy of nothing else, but to be cast into the fire; he is of purer eyes than to bear to have you in his sight; you are ten thousand times more abominable in his eyes, than the most hateful venomous serpent is in ours. You have offended him infinitely more than ever a stubborn rebel did his prince; and yet it is nothing but his hand that holds you from falling into the fire every moment. It is to be ascribed to nothing else, that you did not go to hell the last night; that you was suffered to awake again in this world, after you closed your eyes to sleep. And there is no other reason to be given, why you have not dropped into hell since you arose in the morning, but that God's hand has held you up. There is no other reason to be given why you have not gone to hell, since you have sat here in the house of God, provoking his pure eyes by your sinful wicked manner of attending his solemn worship.

6. you was suffered: you were permitted.

**VOCABULARY**

**OWN THE WORD**

- **abominable**: Have students complete this sentence, The restaurant patron said the meal was abominable because Possible answer: he found a fly crawling in his salad.
- **ascribe**: Ask students to write about times they have ascribed a cause or origin for a specific thing or event. Possible answer: I ascribed the bad smell to food burning on the stove.
Yea, there is nothing else that is to be given as a reason why you do not this very moment drop down into hell.

O sinner! Consider the fearful danger you are in: it is a great furnace of wrath, a wide and bottomless pit, full of the fire of wrath, that you are held over in the hand of that God, whose wrath is provoked and incensed as much against you, as against many of the damned in hell. You hang by a slender thread, with the flames of divine wrath flashing about it, and ready every moment to singe it, and burn it asunder; and you have no interest in any Mediator, and nothing to lay hold of to save yourself, nothing to keep off the flames of wrath, nothing of your own, nothing that you ever have done, nothing that you can do, to induce God to spare you one moment. . . .

It is everlasting wrath. It would be dreadful to suffer this fierceness and wrath of Almighty God one moment; but you must suffer it to all eternity. There will be no end to this exquisite horrible misery. When you look forward, you shall see a long forever, a boundless duration before you, which will swallow up your . . .

7 burn it asunder (a-sun′dar): burn it into separate parts or pieces.
8 exquisite (ik-su-zikt): intensely felt.

EMOTIONAL APPEALS
Notice the use of the simile, or comparison, in lines 50–65. In what way does comparing the audience to a spider appeal to fear?

incense (ink-səns′) v. to cause to be extremely angry
induce (in-düs′) v. to succeed in persuading someone to do something

DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION
FOR STRUGGLING READERS
Develop Reading Fluency Read aloud lines 66–74, modeling the dramatic delivery that Edwards’s sermon indicates. Tell students that the punctuation helps readers know when to pause and which words or phrases to emphasize. Then engage the class in an echo reading of the lines.

OWN THE WORD
incense: Point out to students that incense is often used in a context indicating a specific cause of extreme anger, but in the context of Edwards’s sermon, incensed is used in a general sense, with humanity’s general wickedness as the cause.
induce: Tell students that induce comes from the Latin word inducere, meaning “to lead.” Ask students if they have ever induced someone to do something. How did the situation turn out?

ANALYZE EMOTIONAL APPEALS
Possible answer: by making the audience aware of the spider’s vulnerability at the same time that it feels superior to the spider

TIERED DISCUSSION PROMPTS
Direct students to lines 66–74. Use these prompts to help students explore Edwards’s use of suspense:

Analyze Who does Edwards allude to as a Mediator (line 71)? Why doesn’t he explain here that the Mediator can save them?
Possible answer: Edwards refers to Jesus Christ. He does not explain here how sinners can be saved because he is building suspense.

Evaluate Do you think that this description achieves its purpose? Why or why not?
Possible answer: Yes. The description makes the listener feel the need for an escape.

Analyze Visuals
Activity How is the hell in the painting similar to the hell that Edwards describes? Possible answer: Both are fiery infernos.
About the Art Flemish painter Hendrik met de Bles (c. 1510–1550) frequently explored religious themes. This image vividly suggests hell’s “exquisite horrible misery” (line 77).
thoughts, and amaze your soul; and you will absolutely despair of ever having any deliverance, any end, any mitigation, any rest at all. You will know certainly that you must wear out long ages, millions of millions of ages, in wrestling and conflict with this almighty merciless vengeance; and then when you have so done, when so many ages have actually been spent by you in this manner, you will know that all is but a point to what remains. So that your punishment will indeed be infinite. Oh, who can express what the state of a soul in such circumstances is! All that we can possibly say about it, gives but a very feeble, faint representation of it; it is inexpressible and inconceivable: For “who knows the power of God’s anger?”

How dreadful is the state of those that are daily and hourly in the danger of this great wrath and infinite misery! But this is the dismal case of every soul in this congregation that has not been born again, however moral and strict, sober and religious, they may otherwise be. . . .

And now you have an extraordinary opportunity, a day wherein Christ has thrown the door of mercy wide open, and stands in the door calling and crying with a loud voice to poor sinners; a day wherein many are flocking to him, and thrown the door of mercy wide open, and stands in the door calling and crying in hope of the glory of God. How awful is it to be left behind at such a day! To see so many others feasting, while you are pining and perishing! To see so many rejoicing and singing for joy of heart, while you have cause to mourn for sorrow of heart, and howl for vexation of spirit! How can you rest one moment in such a condition? . . . Therefore, let every one that is out of Christ, now awake and fly from the wrath to come. . . .

deliverance (dî-lîr-ən′s) n. rescue from danger
mitigation (mî-ti′ga-shən) n. lessening of something that causes suffering

9. “who knoweth . . . anger?”: an allusion to Psalm 90:11 in the Bible—“Who knoweth the power of thine anger?”
10. Many . . . coming: a reference to the hundreds of people who were being converted during the Great Awakening.

FOR STRUGGLING READERS

Targeted Passage [Lines 93–106]
In this passage, Edwards explains how his listeners can avoid the fires of hell.

• What is the “extraordinary opportunity” that Edwards refers to in the last paragraph of the selection? (lines 93–96)
• What two types of people does Edwards describe? What creates the difference between them? (lines 101–104)
• What call to action does Edwards make at the end of his sermon? (lines 105–106)

OWN THE WORD

• deliverance: Read aloud the sentence containing deliverance. Ask students to write sentences describing situations in which they would need deliverance and ways in which they might create their own deliverance.
• mitigation: Tell students that mitigate is the verb from which mitigation is derived. To mitigate is often used to mean “to relieve” or “to resolve.” The word mitigation is often used in legal contexts.
Comprehension

1. **Recall** According to Jonathan Edwards’s sermon, what is a constant threat to all human beings?

2. **Clarify** In Edwards’s view, what must sinners do to be spared God’s wrath?

3. **Summarize** What key image does Edwards use to persuade his audience?

Text Analysis

4. **Analyze Emotional Appeals** Review the examples of words, phrases, and images you recorded as you read. How does this language effectively appeal to the audience’s emotions and get Edwards’s message across?

5. **Analyze Persuasion** What role does the appeal to fear or terror play in Edwards’s sermon? How do biblical allusions support the writer’s appeal to fear? Cite evidence from the sermon to support your response.

6. **Draw Conclusions** How would you describe Jonathan Edwards’s view of the following? Cite specific examples for each.
   - God
   - Christ
   - humanity

7. **Compare Literary Works** Use a chart like the one shown to compare some of Jonathan Edwards’s and Anne Bradstreet’s attitudes and beliefs. Cite specific details from their writings to support your ideas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Eternal Life</th>
<th>Edwards</th>
<th>Bradstreet</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>God’s Relation to People</td>
<td>Edwards</td>
<td>Bradstreet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Beliefs</td>
<td>Edwards</td>
<td>Bradstreet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Frailty</td>
<td>Edwards</td>
<td>Bradstreet</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Text Criticism

8. **Historical Context** In the 18th century, many people died at a much younger age than they do today. How might awareness of the fragility of life have affected people’s receptiveness to Edwards’s sermon?

**What keeps you IN LINE?**

In this well-known sermon, Edwards acknowledges that his listeners may already be moral and religious. If he isn’t trying to “scare” listeners into moral behavior, what is his true purpose?

**Human Frailty: Edwards** Humans are at God’s mercy and cannot save themselves (lines 42–49); **Bradstreet**: Every human possession belongs to God, who gives or takes according to divine purposes (“House,” lines 13–18)

8. Edwards’s imagery of immediate danger and impending doom probably would have found fertile ground among people for whom death was a common occurrence.

**What keeps you IN LINE?** **Possible answer:** Students might mention the value of encouragement from a preacher or other spiritual leader.
Vocabulary in Context

**VOCABULARY PRACTICE**

Decide whether the boldface words make the statements true or false.

1. If a movie is said to be **abominable**, you should expect to hate it.
2. A good way to **appease** a friend is to criticize him.
3. Feeding the hungry would result in the **mitigation** of their suffering.
4. If you **discern** a difference between two documents, you notice that they are not alike.
5. A person who **abhors** you is probably a close friend.
6. When you **ascibe** a motive to a crime, you explain why someone did it.
7. One way to **incense** someone is to say something complimentary.
8. If you have trouble cutting a steak, it might help to **whet** your knife.
9. An example of **deliverance** is the rescue of passengers from a sinking ship.
10. If I **induce** you to help me do a hard job, I have managed to persuade you.

**ACADEMIC VOCABULARY IN WRITING**

- **document** - **illustrate** - **interpret** - **promote** - **reveal**

What does Edwards’s sermon **reveal** about Puritan thought on the human condition? Do you think the Puritans believed that they had full control over their own lives? Write a paragraph explaining how Puritans saw themselves in relation to God, and use at least one Academic Vocabulary word in your response.

**VOCABULARY STRATEGY: CONNOTATION**

Though some words may have the same definition, their **connotations**, or shades of meaning, can vary. In Edwards’s sermon, for example, the word **incensed** suggests a stronger feeling than **angered**. As you read large sections of text, you can use context clues to determine a word’s exact shade of meaning.

**PRACTICE** Based on context clues, select a more intense word from the following list to replace each boldface word in the paragraph.

- **antipathy** - **disconsolate** - **contrive** - **momentous** - **negligible**

Our debate team has placed second in state competition for the past three years. Next year, we have to **figure out** a way to take first place. The difference in our score and those of the teams that beat us has been **minor**, so we haven’t been too **unhappy** about placing second. In fact, we have no **dislike** of the other teams. Nevertheless, bringing the trophy home next year will be a **very important** occasion.

**DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION**

**FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS**

**Task Support: Vocabulary Strategy** Help students find and define the base word for these vocabulary words with suffixes: **abominable**, **deliverance**, **mitigation**, **momentous**, and **disconsolate**. Then have them use a dictionary to combine the base word’s definition with the definition of the suffix to define the vocabulary word.

**FOR ADVANCED LEARNERS/AP**

**Vocabulary in Writing** Have students use at least four vocabulary words as they write a one-paragraph summary of “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God.”

**ANSWERS**

**VOCABULARY PRACTICE**

1. true 5. false 8. true
2. false 6. true 9. true
3. true 7. false 10. true
4. true

**RESOURCES**

- **Resouce Manager—Copy Master**
  *Vocabulary Practice p. 182*

**ACADEMIC VOCABULARY IN WRITING**

Answers will vary but should include an Academic Vocabulary word and discuss how Puritans viewed themselves in relation to God: they’re sinners deserving of punishment, God is righteous. Discuss Puritan views on God’s sovereignty—God is in control, the Puritans aren’t in control.

**VOCABULARY STRATEGY: CONNOTATION**

- **dislike:** **antipathy**
- **unhappy:** **disconsolate**
- **figure out:** **contrive**
- **very important:** **momentous**
- **minor:** **negligible**

**RESOURCES**

- **Resource Manager—Copy Master**
  *Vocabulary Strategy p. 183*

**Assess and Reteach**

**Assess**

**DIAGNOSTIC AND SELECTION TESTS**

- Selection Test A pp. 57–58
- Selection Test B/C pp. 59–60

**Interactive Selection Test on thinkcentral.com**

**Reteach**

- **Level Up Online Tutorials on thinkcentral.com**
- **Reteaching Worksheets on thinkcentral.com**

Reading Lesson 3, Vocabulary Lesson 17

... Angry God

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