

SCOTT MORRISON'S MOST INSPIRATIONAL QUOTES

A LITERARY ANALYSIS
BY THE SHOVEL

There is something uniquely powerful about the spoken word. A great speech can rise above the everyday to convey hope, inspire change or bring optimism for a better future. In times of hardship, a well-crafted address can lift the spirits of a nation. History is filled with examples of exceptional leaders; only some were exceptional orators. Scott Morrison, without question, deserves to join their ranks. Here we examine the greatest quotes of Australia's 30th Prime Minister.

“It’s like that movie *The Croods*”

In the midst of a crisis, a commanding speech can unite a nation. In his rousing ‘We shall fight on the beaches’ speech (1940), Churchill evoked the struggle of war and the never-say-die spirit of the British people. In his ‘The Croods’ speech (2021) Morrison evoked the ordeals of a fictional prehistoric family from a 2013 DreamWorks animated adventure comedy. At once stirring and haunting, Morrison’s speech was a galvanising force for the 3% of the population who had heard of the movie.

“We can’t just go around and make everything free”

Here we see Morrison pivot effortlessly to an entirely different oratory technique – humour. As the listener, we know full well that plenty of things are free: car parks in marginal electorates, business

class travel for politicians, Barnaby Joyce when asked by a young female staffer if he's busy tonight. But of course, we're in on the joke, with Morrison, like the very best stand-up comedians, delivering the line with exquisite timing.

“The sooner we get there, the sooner we get there”

This is Morrison's Gettysburg address. In just 10 words (five if you discount the ones repeated) he captures the emotion of a nervous nation and describes the pathway to a better future. Like so many great quotes, it is what is not said (in this case that the Government forgot to buy enough vaccines and thus entirely botched the rollout) that is most powerful of all.

“If you have a go, you get a go”

Often, the power of a great quote is in its ambiguity. It urges the listener to probe further; to think more deeply; to ask the big questions. Like, “How can I have a go if I haven't got one yet?”, ‘Can I get more than one go if I live in a marginal Liberal electorate?’ and ‘Are goes tax exempt, or is that only if they're delivered as a franking credit?’

“Rules are rules”

One of the arts of speechmaking is to connect with people from all walks of life, so that everyone can find something in the words that is relevant and meaningful to them. Here, we see that principle in action. For many of us ‘rules are rules’ describes



Oratory genius Scott Morrison pictured not accepted the premise of the question. (Image: Shutterstock)

the adherence to laws and processes. For a Liberal politician, a retail billionaire or a member of the Pentecostal Church, the phrase is to be taken quite differently - a metaphor about how other people live, and a reassurance that the working masses are being kept in line.

“It's not a race”

‘Yes we can!’, ‘It's time!’, ‘It's morning again in America!’ Throughout history, the most famous political slogans have been infused with optimism and a sense of positive urgency. Not so this one. In flipping accepted rhetorical conventions on their head, Morrison shows himself to be an orator of rare skill. Here, he defines the vaccination rollout not by what it is, but by what it is not. Inspiring us not to action, but inaction. Truly a master at work.

"Not far from here, such marches, even now are being met with bullets"

Throughout the ages, great speakers have won over their audiences by reminding them that they haven't had them murdered. Evocative, cadenced, poignant, this quote shows Morrison reaching new oratory heights. If we're being finicky, he could have dropped the word 'even' to create the perfect iambic rhythm. But even Shakespeare bent the rules from time to time.

"I don't accept the premise of your question"

It's not often that Australian Prime Ministers are mentioned in the same breath as the great Greek philosophers. But here, in this celebrated Morrison quote, the parallels with Socrates are undeniable. Socrates famously answered one question with another question. Morrison famously doesn't answer questions at all.

"Jenny has a way of clarifying things"

It's the simplicity of the language, the domesticity of the setting, that's so powerful here. Is Jenny talking about which school to send the kids to? Is she explaining how to disconnect the PS5 from the TV so Scott can watch the news? No! She's talking about sexual assault! It's disarming, it's surprising, it's actually quite alarming. But that's the power of great rhetoric.

"I did not soil my pants at the Engadine McDonald's"

Too often, citizens are asked to simply accept that their head of government has not done a shit in his pants at a suburban fast food restaurant, without ever having the fact confirmed by the leader themselves. Too obsessed with 'bigger issues', Kennedy, Thatcher, Roosevelt and others never once set the record straight on this matter. That Morrison found time to deny a question he was never asked, shows his unrelenting attention to the small details.

"I don't hold a hose, mate"

In this stirring speech, one cannot help but be reminded of Keating at Redfern. The sense of history, the quiver of emotion, the seizing of the moment – the similarities are undeniable. But there are differences too. While Keating spoke of taking responsibility, Morrison's pitch here is to eschew it. The hose, a metaphor for responsibility itself, 'mate' signifying the Australia electorate. It's redolent, it's moving, it leaves the listener asking, 'what else don't you do?'

"Go Sharkies!"

A line that works equally as well for the question 'What league team do you support?' as 'Do you have a plan to address climate change?' this simple two-word statement is an oratory tour de force.

"It's just the way the light bounced off the skin of the chicken"

Only a master wordsmith could turn the description of an otherwise unremarkable photograph of undercooked chicken into something altogether more ethereal. While most of us would reach for words like 'raw' or 'gastroenteritis', Morrison instead chooses to paint a picture, conveying the way the light diffracts when it encounters the thick outer layer of the soon-to-be-eaten dish. It's like a Cezanne still life, but with words.

"Jenny and I have been blessed. We have two children who haven't had to go through that"


As a speaker, the quickest way to win over your audience is to say, 'Thank god I'm not like you'. Morrison instinctively gets this. He understands that someone else's life – or as he calls it 'that' – may be different from his own. But that doesn't mean he can't remind you that his is better.

"That is an issue for the states"

Ghandi said, 'Be the change you want to see in the world'; Kennedy, 'Ask not what your country can do for you'; Morrison, 'That is an issue for the states'.

Great leaders are never inwardly focused. They inspire others to reach their full potential by empowering them with responsibility, in this case, the constitutional responsibilities of the Federal Government. Never one to take on a job that someone else could do instead, Morrison demonstrates with this quote the trust he places in others.

"BREAKING: Australian Border Force has intercepted an illegal boat trying to reach Australia. Keep our borders secure by voting Liberal today" [Delivered by SMS]

Morrison is that rare artist who can simultaneously ignore all boundaries while also keeping them secure. In the twilight of his career, here we see Morrison boldly rejecting his earlier 'on-water' period, to find a new tone that is at once decisive, informative and almost certainly in contravention of caretaker government conventions. There's a deeper layer too – one that's provocative or, as it's sometimes called, 'racist' – once again proving that Morrison's work, as ever, operates on more than one level. 

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