

# Vocabulary Workshop® Tools for Excellence

**Differentiated Passages**

**Grade 12+**

## PASSAGE 1

## UNIT 4

Read the following passage, taking note of the **boldface** words and their contexts. These words are among those you will be studying in Unit 4. As you complete the exercises in this unit, it may help to refer to the way the words are used below.

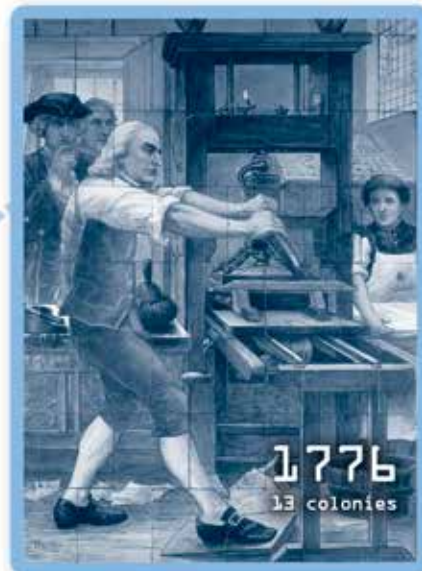
## Putting Social Media in Perspective

&lt;Speech&gt;

Rhiannon Marsh, Washington, DC,  
November 1, 2012

**D**istinguished guests and fellow media enthusiasts, I am honored to speak with you today at this first-ever Modern Media Forum.

When the Philippine Congress voted to ignore evidence that threatened to secure the impeachment of the Philippine president in 2001, angry Filipinos poured into the streets to protest. That protest was arranged, in part, by text messages exchanged among ordinary citizens, perhaps a million of whom gathered in the capital. In response to the demonstration, the Congress immediately performed a **volte-face**, deciding to put the crucial evidence in play, and the president was forced to resign.



When Ukrainian elections were tainted by suspicions of fraud in 2004, pro-democracy activists in that country went online. The **obloquies** they posted on internet forums publicized their leaders' **bilious** corruption, helping to spread the word and rouse the **hoi polloi**. With the movement gathering steam, activists and angry citizens used internet forums and text messages to coordinate mass protests. As a result of these protests, a revote was called and a new president was elected.



Above: Filipinos celebrate their new president after street protests led to the ouster of Joseph Estrada.

Left: Benjamin Franklin operates a printing press.

Increasingly, protesters around the world employ the whole **gamut** of social media tools, including microblogging, social networking, and video-sharing sites, to spread news and organize action. Political **pundits**, excited by the trend, have rushed to declare that social media tools are ushering in a new era of revolution against

## PASSAGE 1



Above: Ukrainians celebrate the first anniversary of the Orange Revolution street protests that led to a change of president.

Below: A protest in Tahrir Square, Cairo

oppressive regimes. What should we make of these pundits' **divinations**? Do social media really give the world's masses an unprecedented potential to effect political change, or is the excitement about social media's role in twenty-first century protests merely a **corollary** of the pundits' **affinity** for exaggeration?

No great **lucubration** is required to answer the question. While the technology employed by protesters today is **symptomatic** of our times, the basic **parameters** that cause mass protests, and that determine their success or failure, remain unchanged. The printing press was employed by activists of the American Revolution. Fax machines helped direct the revolutions in Eastern Europe in 1989. Where there's a will, there's a way. When corruption, oppression, and a dearth of economic opportunity combine to wake the **ineffable** spirit of protest in a nation, the people use whatever means are available to express their discontent. When a people rise up to demand democracy, it is the fact of their courage in the face of oppression that deserves our attention, their feats of **derring-do** both great and small, the purpose of their movement, its causes and its course. What tools they use is an inessential matter, an accident of

history. Political commentators' obsession with the role of social media in the popular movements of our new century would be **risible**, were it not for the fact that the noise they make distracts our public discourse from more important themes. In recent months, as millions throughout the Arab world have taken to the streets to shout down their oppressors and demand democracy, too much American ink has been spilled commenting on the protesters' use of cell phones and social networking utilities.

To be fair, not every remark on the subject deserves to be treated as **folderol**. Social media's greatest impact is that they enable ordinary citizens to reach wide audiences instantly. These tools are democratizing communication, putting the power of publication in the hands of the many. But while this welcome trend is noteworthy, we should not let it distract us from the subject that most deserves our attention: the spread of democracy itself.





## PASSAGE 2

## UNIT 4

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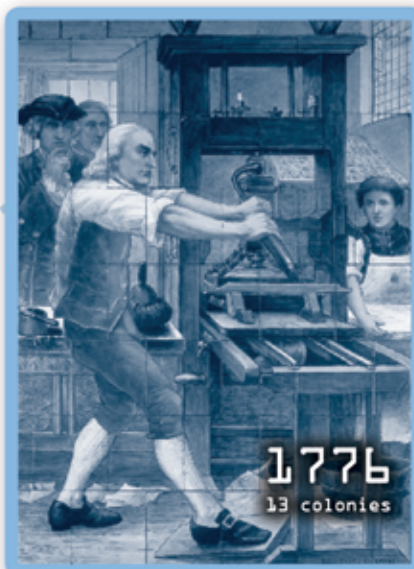
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In 2001, the Philippine Congress voted to ignore evidence that threatened to secure the impeachment of the Philippine president. As a result, angry Filipinos poured into the streets to protest. That protest was arranged, in part, by text messages exchanged among ordinary citizens. In response, the Congress immediately performed a **volte-face**. They decided to put the crucial evidence in play. The president was forced to resign.

In 2004, Ukrainian elections were tainted by suspicions of fraud.

Prodemocracy activists in that country went online. The **obloquies** they posted on internet forums publicized their leaders' **bilious** corruption. They helped spread the word and rouse the **hoi polloi**. Activists and angry citizens used internet forums and text messages to coordinate mass protests. As a result, a revote was called and a new president was elected.

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Unit 4



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Left: Benjamin Franklin operates a printing press.

rushed to declare that social media tools are ushering in a new era of revolution against oppressive regimes. What should we make of these pundits' **divinations**? Do social media really give the world's masses an unprecedented potential to effect political change? Or is the excitement about social media's role in

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protests merely a **corollary** of the pundits' **affinity** for exaggeration?

No great **lucubration** is required to answer the question. The technology employed by protesters today is **symptomatic** of our times. But, the basic **parameters** that cause mass protests remain unchanged. The printing press was employed by activists of the American Revolution. Fax machines helped direct the revolutions in Eastern Europe in 1989. Where there's a will, there's a way. When corruption and oppression wake the **ineffable** spirit of protest in a nation, the people use whatever means are available to express their discontent. When a people rise up to demand democracy, it is their courage in the face of oppression that deserves our attention, their feats of **derring-do** both great and small. What tools they use are inessential. Political commentators' obsession with the role of social media in political movements is almost **risible**. However, the noise they make distracts us from more important themes.

To be fair, not every remark on the subject deserves to be treated as **folderol**. Social media's greatest impact is that they enable ordinary citizens to reach wide audiences instantly. These tools are democratizing communication. This welcome trend is noteworthy. But we should not let it distract us from the subject that most deserves our attention: the spread of democracy itself.

Unit 4