

CREATIVE SPEAKING

ORATORY • ORAL INTERPRE-
TATION OF PROSE • ORAL
INTERPRETATION OF POETRY •
EXTEMPORANEOUS SPEAK-
ING • SERIOUS DRAMATIC
INTERPRETATION • HUMOR-
OUS DRAMATIC INTERPRE-
TATION • SPECIAL OCCASION
SPEECHES • GROUP READ-
ING: READER'S THEATRE •
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CREATIVE SPEAKING

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INTRODUCTION

Creative Speaking provides comprehensive guidance for students preparing for speech events. It can also be used as a textbook for advanced speech courses designed to give students practical experience in a variety of speech forms: Oratory, Oral Interpretation of Prose, Oral Interpretation of Poetry, Extemporaneous Speaking, Serious Dramatic Interpretation, Humorous Dramatic Interpretation, Special Occasion Speeches, Group Reading, and Radio Speaking.

The content and presentation of this book are based upon the belief that successful preparation and performance in any speech situation are best achieved through detailed, practical instruction based on sound theoretical principles and constant, thorough practice.

Each chapter of the book, especially prepared by an outstanding authority, contains information on (1) the nature of the particular speech event being covered, its history, and purpose; (2) how the event is conducted, and factors determining eligibility for participation; (3) the benefits to be derived from participation; (4) methods of preparation; (5) procedures for practicing; and (6) rules of conduct in the actual contest situation.

Throughout the book, emphasis is placed on the development of effective public speaking techniques through contest participation. From opening remarks on the educational value of each event, through the step-by-step guidance for preparation, practice and performance, to closing comments on contest behavior, each chapter provides explicit, effective instruction for the event it covers. (For the convenience of teachers who wish to emphasize only one activity, or for courses in only one of the speech events contained in *Creative Speaking*, each chapter is available in paperback as part of the Creative Speaking Series.)

Plato said that a good leader must be able to determine the right course of action and must also be able to persuade others that he knows this. *Creative Speaking* instructs students in one phase of becoming more able communicators and thus more vital, useful citizens.

Editors

CONTENTS

ORATORY	1
ORAL INTERPRETATION OF PROSE	33
ORAL INTERPRETATION OF POETRY	47
EXTEMPORANEOUS SPEAKING	65
SERIOUS DRAMATIC INTERPRETATION	97
HUMOROUS DRAMATIC INTERPRETATION	121
SPECIAL OCCASION SPEECHES	145
GROUP READING: READERS THEATRE	177
RADIO SPEAKING	201

ORATORY

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WHAT IS ORATORY?

Reactions to the word "oratory" are interesting. Often when we hear it, our first response is to think in terms of great orators of the past. We imagine Demosthenes, standing before marble columns, intoning melodious phrases to his fellow Athenians gathered on a hillside; we envision Webster, a glass of water on a walnut desk by his elbow, sternly warning his colleagues in the Senate against disunion. Our orator's subject matter is always weighty, his manner grave, if not bombastic. His left hand grips the lapel of his frock coat (or the front of his toga); his right hand sweeps forward, palm upward; his long hair flows easily over his shoulders, and long words flow easily from his lips.

Studying orators of the past can be very profitable, particularly if we examine actual speeches and analyze the contexts in which they were delivered. In so doing we may gain useful knowledge of speechmaking. But studying great speeches and speakers of the past is only one way of acquiring proper speech techniques. You will need to learn and to practice many more facets of the art if you are to achieve success in contests and become an effective speaker in general.

Prior to entering an oratory contest, you probably will have made speeches in your classroom, and perhaps you may have debated or participated in extemporaneous speaking contests. It

2 CREATIVE SPEAKING

is important to remember that oratory is public speaking, and, although the oratory contest has some unique features, orations are *persuasive speeches*.

The contest oration is a persuasive speech which *you* will write in the form of a complete manuscript.¹ Ordinarily you will be expected to memorize your manuscript and to deliver the speech from memory. You will be concerned primarily with attempting to bring listeners to understand clearly and to feel strongly the danger inherent in some problem; you may also inquire into the probable causes of the problem and recommend solutions or at least suggest steps which could be taken to alleviate it.

Since regulations governing oratory contests may vary, you and your teacher should check carefully the rules for each particular contest you plan to enter. Ordinarily you will be asked to submit a complete manuscript and to certify that it is your original work. The length of the speech may be limited by the maximum number of words allowed in the manuscript (1200 words is common) or by a specified time limit (eight to ten minutes usually). Often the amount of quoted material will be limited (ten percent of the manuscript, for example). Sometimes a group sponsoring a particular contest will indicate a general topic to which you must relate your oration.

THE PURPOSES OF ORATORY

Oratory shares with all other speech contests a general educational aim—to help you increase your personal effectiveness as a speaker and to help you understand the circumstances in which speech can benefit you and the society of which you are a part. Unless you understand that the right to speak freely entails responsibilities to other equally free men, the ability to speak effectively is without merit. The speaker who uses his ability to manipulate listeners selfishly, to deceive instead of to enlighten, to subvert instead of to encourage free choice is a public menace.

THE PARTICULAR EDUCATIONAL VALUES OF ORATORY

1. Original oratory requires careful and complete preparation before speaking. Debate, discussion, and extemporaneous speaking all stress the ability to make cogent verbal responses under

¹This discussion is concerned mainly with what is frequently called "original oratory." The contest in which the student memorizes and delivers a speech written by another person, often called "declamation" or "declaimed oratory," will be discussed briefly at the end of the essay.

what is often rather severe time pressure. Although the student in these contests must prepare thoroughly in general and in many specific details in advance, the final form and language of his communication are determined at the moment he speaks.

Oratory at its best is a leisurely activity. The student who writes his oration a few days before the contest and then hectically memorizes it will probably miss the chief satisfaction that oratory can give. The good orator lives with his ideas and materials for months, continually thinking, planning, and modifying in an effort to bring his speech as near to perfection as he can.

2. Original oratory stresses the choice of language which will express ideas with grace and precision. In writing your manuscript you can attend to the style of your communication with an intensity not possible in debate or extemporaneous speaking. Too often, however, instead of working for precision, the orator concentrates only on graceful expression, apparently with the delusion that good oratorical style means putting vague ideas into inflated prose. Like any other good speaker, the orator must build a series of carefully ordered and well supported ideas into a unified composition. But he has the special advantage of being able to choose and order his words at leisure.

3. Original oratory places definite responsibilities upon a speaker. Here, you have the opportunity to make careful statements about problems which concern you deeply. You have a responsibility to your ideas on these problems and to the audience to whom you express those ideas. If your commitment to ideas is to be meaningful, you must try to understand those ideas and their importance as fully as possible. Your audience will be disappointed if you merely mouth the biases of some particular interest group without making an effort to examine them critically or to evaluate the basis upon which they rest. And the audience that reacts negatively to such poor preparation will be quite right. The debater learns that it is practical to read widely on both sides of any proposition. The orator, likewise, needs wide and varied research to meet the practical demands of speech composition and to discharge his responsibility to both his subject and his audience.

When you speak, you are the audience's source of knowledge about ideas and occurrences.² You have the right to commit

²In his analysis of the responsibilities of a speaker, the author has drawn heavily upon the work of Karl R. Wallace. For a complete statement of Professor Wallace's position, see "An Ethical Basis of Communication," *Speech Teacher*, January, 1955.

4 CREATIVE SPEAKING

yourself freely to your point of view, but you must recognize that your listeners have similar rights to choose freely. It is your responsibility to state your opinions and the facts upon which they rest as clearly and openly as possible. To distort the facts is irresponsibility.

THE VALUE OF WINNING CONTESTS

Speech contests are, after all, competitive events, and it is certainly natural that you should want to win. Winning gives you a sense of accomplishment as well as recognition for your effort and ability. Anyone who has had much experience in speech contests, however, knows that one can develop pressures and attitudes which are anything but educationally valuable.

Obviously if winning is to be a satisfying experience, the competition must be good. If the competition is stiff, you may not win even if your oration is a fine one. Men will always disagree concerning the qualities of fine speaking. Judges, no matter how well-qualified by experience, intelligence, and fairness, will differ in their evaluations of orators and orations. Although you should strive to understand and weigh the attitudes of your listeners, you must form your own opinion about what makes a good speech and then attempt, in the light of your commitments, to compose and deliver an oration which will satisfy your own high standards. Speech students are told repeatedly that the purpose of any speech is to gain a favorable response from the audience. The wise speaker will ask himself these questions: What response do I want? How can I gain that response? But both of these questions will have to be asked in light of the speaker's commitment: his commitment to the ideas he seeks to communicate and to what he considers to be the proper basis of belief. In short the good speaker will want to win on the grounds he himself chooses.

STARTING THE ORATION

Usually the most difficult part of any task is getting started. One reason for this difficulty in composing orations is the fact that there is no easy answer to the question, "How do I start?" Any two speakers may approach the same task quite differently. As a matter of fact, an individual speaker may work differently at different times. Advice, then, on starting the oration, must be adapted by specific speakers to specific circumstances.

TOPICS: THE IDEAS FROM WHICH SPEECHES GROW

Any idea might become a subject for an oration, provided it "bothers" a speaker. For example, consider the high school student who recently moved to the suburb of a large city. His family, apparently, is well settled now, because they have purchased a larger, nicer house than any they had owned before. This is the fifth move he can remember clearly. He may have run across a book or magazine article which struck a familiar chord for him, and he says, "I have a topic for a speech—Our Rootless Generation." Another student may have spent his entire life in one house in a small, midwestern town. He notices that, although the nation's population and general economy are expanding, his home town has decreased in population. He has listened to farmers discuss the prices their crops bring and has seen the town's businessmen form a committee "to bring in industry." But he has seen the paint fade on the billboard proclaiming the area's great potential for industrial development. When he learns that his best friend's father is about to close his clothing store and move elsewhere, he says, "I have a topic for a speech—The Plight of the Small Town in Modern America."

As a student interested in oratory you should keep a notebook in which to jot down ideas for speeches. As you move through each day you will be doing, seeing, hearing, and reading continually. If you are perceptive, you will sense that some events are "out of tune"; at any rate, you will probably hear or read assertions that some matters are amiss. Make note of topics which interest you, especially those that puzzle or upset you.

You may have occasion to enter a contest for which a general topic has been assigned. Some organization may be giving a prize, for example, for the best oration bearing on the topic, "What America Means to Me." Too often students who enter such contests deal all too directly with the assigned topic, and their orations become a series of vague, truistic assertions, more or less gracefully stated. The best orations in such contests are often those which concern some immediate problem or situation which the student believes focuses light from a specific angle and meaningfully illuminates the general topic. It does not take a particularly agile mind to write, "The meaning of America lies in ideals, but ideals are easy to state and difficult to practice. I did not realize how we must struggle continually for justice or how I might help make my own citizenship meaningful until I visited

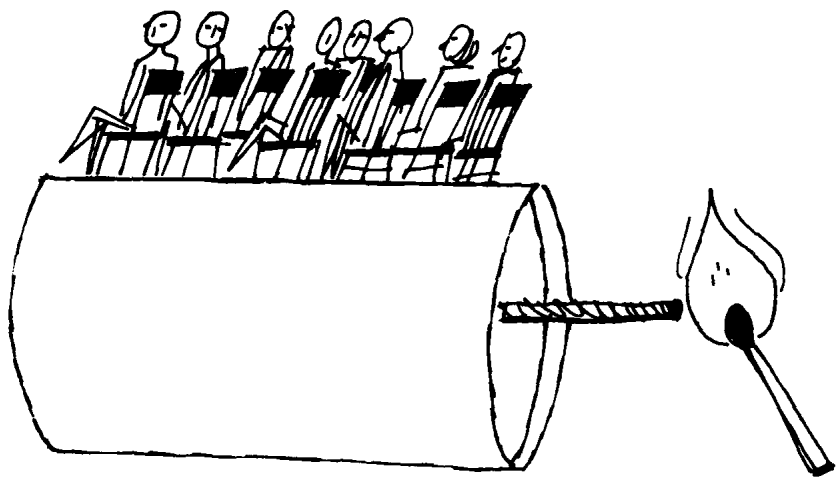
6 CREATIVE SPEAKING

an Indian reservation. . . .” Or to say, “Charity is one of the most beautiful qualities I find in Americans,” and to make a speech on supporting the work of CARE.

All too often orations not only begin with topics but they stay topical, which is to say that they remain vague and formless. A good speech must be unified around a clearly-stated, central idea. Your topic should provide a general grasp of the central idea, but you must also give your speech direction and scope. You give it direction by stating a purpose and scope by stating a thesis.

SPEAKING WITH A PURPOSE

The good speaker will plan the response he wants from an audience. Let us eavesdrop on the speaker who is interested in an oration about “Our Rootless Generation.” “One thing I’ve noticed about orations is that they are such somber speeches.



Plan the response you want.

It seems to me that everyone talks with the voice of impending doom. I doubt that all serious subjects need to be treated with deadly earnestness. I think I'd like to make my listeners enjoy my speech, perhaps even smile or laugh. I think the way we wander about these days is a bit absurd, which doesn't mean that we have no problems. Mainly, I want my listeners to see the problem in a great variety of ways, that is, to see that it affects all sorts of people and helps intensify all sorts of social tensions. I don't see any pat answer to this problem of rootlessness, but I would like to make a few suggestions about directions

to take in alleviating what seems to me to be a rather general malady."

Most speech textbooks will tell you to state your purpose as a concise infinitive phrase; since orations are speeches "to persuade," you might speak "to convince," "to actuate," or "to inspire." The orator we have just considered, then, might state his purpose in these words: "To convince my listeners that rootlessness is a serious problem of our generation, one which we must seek to alleviate."

You will probably not state your purpose in the oration itself, but you will want to keep it firmly in mind. It is your aim. You may want to talk it through several times, in the manner of the orator discussed above. In so doing, you will probably tend to modify it as you prepare and revise your speech. You may well want to write your purpose on a separate piece of paper and revise it as you revise your speech.

STATING A THESIS

Formulating a purpose helps give a speech direction; the speaker puts his mind's eye on his listeners and thinks in terms of their responses. Stating a thesis makes the central idea of the speech specific; it defines your limits. The orator concerned with "Our Rootless Generation" might say, "We must find constructive compensations for our rootlessness if we are to have a healthy social environment." For one of the other speakers mentioned, "Support CARE," may serve as a thesis.

The thesis of the speech should be stated as a declarative sentence, as concisely and as strikingly as possible. The first thesis stated above is long and could be shortened by omitting the dependent clause. Try to formulate your thesis early in your preparation, but be continually alert for possible revisions. Quite often you will be able to narrow your thesis to make it more specific.

You may state your thesis explicitly in your oration; you may even state and restate it several times. On the other hand, you might choose not to state the thesis, but rather to imply it so strongly that your listeners will supply the actual statement in their own minds. If you wish to suggest or imply your thesis, you must know very specifically what it is you intend to suggest, lest you lead the audience to the wrong conclusion. Because of this danger, beginning orators are usually urged to state the thesis explicitly.

8 CREATIVE SPEAKING

GATHERING MATERIAL FOR THE ORATION

Most students who undertake to write an oration probably know the importance of gathering material for classroom speeches, extemporaneous speaking contests, discussions, or debates. Do not fail, as many do, to make use of this knowledge in gathering material for an oration. Unfortunately, some orators often are under the mistaken impression that their speeches must be summoned up word by word from their unconscious as they sit "composing" late at night. Such orations sound vacuous when delivered because they are full of words but devoid of thoughts.

The good orator starts his work early. Make notes on your ideas for orations. Determine your purpose and state your thesis early and tentatively. Further, jot down materials that occur to you as you move through each day, and watch your notebook of ideas grow. Remember to settle on a central idea and set to work accumulating specific data which you can weave into substantial statements to develop it. You may find it helpful to make notes on cards for statistics, examples, and quotations, as debaters do.

A CHECK LIST FOR STARTING THE ORATION

1. Is my topic one that interests me? Will it be rewarding to work on? Will it be of value to my listeners?
2. Am I thinking in terms of the response of my audience?
3. Have I formulated a purpose specifically?
4. Have I stated a thesis specifically?
5. What kinds of materials would be interesting? Where might I locate materials?
6. Shall I revise my purpose?
7. Shall I revise my thesis?
8. Shall I gather more material to draw on as I write?

GIVING THE ORATION STRUCTURE

Webster's Collegiate Dictionary gives this definition, among others, for the word *structure*: "Figuratively, the interrelation of parts as dominated by the general character of the whole. . . ." It is this "figurative" sense of the word that should concern you. Your progress of thought from topic, through purpose, through thesis, should be continued into shaping your entire oration to develop your central idea. You must find the parts with which you should deal and articulate them into a sensible, patterned structure of ideas.

THE PROBLEM-SOLUTION PATTERN

Most authors who give students advice on participating in group discussion draw on John Dewey's analysis of reflective thinking as a description of the process of orderly discussion; therefore many students are acquainted with this pattern. As you approach the task of giving your oration structure you may well find it useful. Dewey has described reflective thinking as consisting typically of five stages:³

1. A difficulty (a problem) is experienced.
2. The nature of the problem is defined.
3. Possible solutions are suggested.
4. The solutions are examined and compared.
5. The best solution is chosen and verified.

Do not think of these five steps as a set pattern or outline which must be followed in the oration itself. Although our discussion of "starting the oration" reflects the early stages of Dewey's pattern, his five stages will be most useful as a guide for thoughtful analysis while working through your ideas and materials, rather than as a set formula into which you must shape your oration.

Most orations, as mentioned earlier, identify problems and suggest solutions to them. Almost every speech textbook discusses problem-solution patterns of organization. If you are seriously interested in oratory, you should study the chapters concerned with organization in several textbooks.⁴ A good speech textbook can deal with organization in far more detail than we have room for here.

Too often students, teachers, and judges require that each oration follow a complete problem-solution pattern. This is an artificial demand. If you are dealing with a fresh problem, one that is not well-known or widely accepted, gaining a vivid recognition and deep acceptance of the problem *as a problem only* may be a sensible undertaking. On the other hand, beware of overemphasizing the seriousness of a problem which your listeners will accept quickly. "Yes, yes," the audience might say, "everyone knows that juvenile delinquency in our city is serious. What do you sug-

³This is a paraphrase. See John Dewey, *How We Think*, Boston. D. C. Heath, 1910, p. 107.

⁴See, for example, "Organizing Ideas," in Otis M. Walter and Robert L. Scott, *Thinking and Speaking*, New York, The Macmillan Company, 1962, pp. 57-82.

10 CREATIVE SPEAKING

gest we do about it?" In short, some orations may deal with problems alone; others might almost take acceptance of problems for granted and concentrate heavily upon possible solutions. Most orations will fall somewhere between these two extremes.

You should recognize that problems worth talking about tend to be complex and are, therefore, incapable of quick, simple solution.

As a student orator you may make a sensible suggestion for alleviating a problem somewhat, without pretending to eradicate it completely. Most intelligent listeners will be grateful for "the step in the right direction." Some orators make themselves look a bit ludicrous by making claims which obviously go far beyond the capabilities of the plans they have to offer.

Some orations fall into that category of speaking called "inspirational," or speeches "to stimulate." In these you choose to speak about ideas, attitudes, or values which are shared by your listeners; your purpose is to *deepen* feelings that already exist, to make common values more immediate and clear. The "inspirational" oration is perfectly legitimate, but it is the most difficult type to do well. Inspirational oratory needs extraordinary freshness of approach and vividness of language. Most orations heard in contests in which the speakers are assigned a common subject, for example, "What America Means to Me," are "inspirational," and most of these speeches are poor.

OPENING THE ORATION

A speech that starts well and ends well is likely to be one that the audience will find satisfactory. Plan your introduction and conclusion with care. The key to starting and ending well is *purpose*; just as the entire speech should accomplish some purpose in terms of audience response, the introduction and conclusion should accomplish specific purposes.

The purpose of an introduction is twofold; to make the audience want to listen, and to give the audience at least a tentative idea of what the oration will be about. The purpose may be summarized in two words—*arrest* and *clarify*.

There are many ways in which the orator may fulfill the purpose of an introduction. The serious student will want to read several textbooks, and, even more important, he will analyze speeches to see how others fulfill the demands of a good introduction. Of course, not everything he reads will give him sound examples to

emulate. Consider the introduction to the following oration:⁵

Thebes was a city of ancient splendor. During the reign of Oedipus Rex, pestilence and famine ravaged its borders. The soil rotted; the herds perished; men, women and children lay starving in the streets. In the palace halls of Oedipus, a lowly priest implored his majesty:

*But rule over men, not over a dead city!
Ships are only hulls, high walls are nothing
When no life moves in the empty passageways.*

I want to talk with you today about a modern Thebes, the American city. Whether it suits us or not, the all-pervasive influence of urban culture is significant in every nook of our nation. And my small experience tells me that a pestilence and famine quite similar to that which struck Thebes five centuries before Christ is visiting itself upon unhappy victims today.

Although no one would argue that Miss Zielske's introduction is perfect, it is a highly interesting one. Whether or not one knows the Thebes of Sophocles' great tragic dramas, the situation, described economically by the speaker, should arrest attention. And, although the speaker has not stated a thesis formally, the general concern in which she wishes to engage the listeners should be clear.

Miss Zielske's introduction combined an example with a quotation. Consider the combination of materials in the following introduction:⁶

In its growth, Communism resembles an avalanche. Its beginnings were fragmentary but with amazing speed the isolated incidents have molded into a world-wide movement, cutting through age-old institutions and across national boundaries.

In 1848 Karl Marx wrote in the Manifesto, "There is a Spectre haunting Europe." "Workers of the World," he said, "unite."

In May of 1871 there was a tremor in France where a Marxist revolution seized Paris, fought stubbornly, and finally perished in the flames of that city.

⁵"Downtown Dilemma," by Myrna Zielske, Gustavus Adolphus College, St. Peter, Minnesota. Winning oration in the Women's Division of the 1962 Minnesota State Oratorical Association.

⁶"Sherrod McCall, Northwestern University, "The Vacuum of Leadership," *Winning Orations of the Northern Oratorical League, 1951-1956*, Iowa City, 1957, p. 10.

12 CREATIVE SPEAKING

In 1917 the Russian Revolution turned into a landslide. Despite western intervention the Soviets won their revolution and the rocks were sliding.

After World War II the Soviet world represented 200 million people and in 1945 we started a policy of containment to prevent Soviet control from spreading. Today there are 800 million people in that sphere. And wherever there is discontent, wherever there is tension—there are the forces of Communism. In the hills of Africa with the Mau-Mau, in the rice paddies of Indo-China, in the factories of the Ruhr, courting the Arab or taunting the Spanish peasant—they are there.

Within a century, Communism has grown from a pamphlet into a world conquest.

Why? After 45 years of failure can we answer, why? Do we yet know, even as we increase the draft call for May, why it has happened?

In this introduction, a quotation and examples are woven into the structure of an analogy. The rhetorical questions help clarify the speaker's purpose, preparing the audience for the analysis he intends to give.

CLOSING THE ORATION

The purpose of a conclusion is to give the audience a feeling of completion, to let it know that things are done. More formally stated, the conclusion should (1) restate briefly the substance of the oration, and (2) focus the attention of the audience on the response the speaker desires. Just as the purpose of an introduction can be fulfilled in a variety of ways, material that is useful for a conclusion may be nearly infinite. Often the conclusion will reflect the introduction; it may, for example, repeat a key quotation or return to an analogy the speaker has drawn in opening.

Whatever means the speaker selects, he should ask himself, "Does this fulfill the purpose of a conclusion?" Just as he may look for ways to sharpen the statements of his purpose and thesis, he may revise his introduction and conclusion again and again.

In closing her oration, Miss Zielske, having indicated the nature of the problem and made some strong suggestions for taking new directions in urban affairs, returns to the materials she used to open:

In order to rid Thebes of its pestilence, Oedipus was compelled to answer the riddle of the sphinx. His response was correct, and the plague lifted from the land. We are called today to the task of being a modern Oedipus. Our cities shall continue to be the citadels of American culture if we respond imaginatively to our downtown dilemma. A metropolis en-