

Original Oratory

OVERVIEW, by Katie Dempsey, Wellington 2003

For four years of my life, I have been involved in the most amazing event imaginable, that of Original Oratory. This event has enabled me to pour out my soul through my writing, where I can speak openly about a social injustice or problem I believe exists. It has allowed me to be heard, where before I wasn't. But this 7- to 10-minute outpouring of the soul is not as easy as many believe it to be. It takes long hours of back breaking research, hundreds of rough drafts, agonizing hours of rewriting, and (eventually) long, sleepless nights memorizing the final draft.

The first thing you must do when constructing an Original Oratory is to brainstorm. After you have a couple hundred social problems on your paper, the next thing you must do is narrow down this large list of problems into three or four potential topics for your oratory. From this short list, you choose the social problem you believe to be the worst or that you feel the strongest about.

Following this, you write your thesis, making your broad problem smaller and easier to write about. For example, let's say my social problem is "judging a book by its cover." This topic is very broad, and therefore your oratory can go in many different directions. So you narrow your problem to, "judging a book by its cover harms society because it causes stereotypes and discrimination." By stating this, you are making the oratory more narrow, and therefore easier to write about.

After you have your thesis statement, you have to go and find research that validates your oratory. You collect this data by looking on the Internet, in magazines, in books, in the newspaper, even on TV.

The next step in the oratory process is to begin your writing. You start by making an outline of the main points you wish to cover, such as why this is a problem today, how it affects a large number of people, and solutions on how to fix this problem. Following this is the actual draft-writing process – but remember, your first draft will not necessarily be amazing. Just write; you can always edit your paper later.

Begin your oratory with a short introduction, such as a story, quote or personal experience, but make sure your introduction is interesting, because the introduction is what first grabs the audience's attention. A bad introduction equals a bad oratory and a poor judge score.

After your intro, list what your problem is, and give two or three points and examples as to why this is a major problem. Then, explain ways to solve this problem. Finally, finish your oratory with a conclusion where you relate back to your introduction, bringing your oratory "full circle." For example, let's say I state that "looks can be deceiving" and begin my oratory by telling a story of a young girl who has everything a person wants – looks, grades and personality – but committed suicide because she didn't think she was good enough. In my conclusion, I would relate back to this story, explaining why "looks can be deceiving," then explaining that by following my solutions I can stop another "perfect" girl from making the same choice.

Once your rough draft is done, go back and read over what you have written, taking out unimportant information. Also, get someone else to read your rough draft, such as a friend, teacher, coach or parent. This will allow you to get a different opinion of your writing, and will help make your speech better. Finally, after this long process, you can finish your writing by constructing your final draft.

But ... you're not done yet. Now you must memorize your oratory, in order to be able to perform it out loud in front of an audience. The spoken oratory is 7-to 10-minutes long, or 3-4 pages long when typed in 12-point Times New Roman font, double-spaced, with 1" margins. There are many different ways to memorize an oratory, and each way works. You can first recite it out loud and memorize each line sentence by sentence, or you can record it and play it back, reciting it along with the tape. Either method will allow you to remember your oratory better.

After you have memorized it, you must then begin to practice "performing" it out loud for an audience. You can do this in front of a mirror or in front of a friend; either way, you must be able to "sell" it to the public. You can do this by using hand gestures and different tones in your speech. But do not act it out as if it were a duo or DI. This is a speech, not an interpretive performance.

The original oration is a speech that may be written on any subject the student chooses. The speech MUST be written by you! You may not use note cards or visual aids.

No more than 150 words may be quoted directly. Extensive paraphrasing violates the spirit of the speech. Plagiarism is defined as claiming, indicating, or implying that the ideas, sentences, or words of another writer are your own. It includes copying the work of another presenting it as your own, failing to get away from the language

of the original text when paraphrasing, failing to identify the source of a quotation or paraphrase, and following the work of another as a guide to ideas and expression that are then presented as your own.

The maximum time is not to exceed 10 minutes. In order to earn a good grade, your speech must be at least 7 minutes.

All performances must be void of profanity, vulgarity, nudity and obscenity. Use of these will cause you to earn a failing grade.

Prompting from the audience will not be allowed.

A copy of your oration must be typed, double-spaced. The quoted words must be highlighted and counted; paraphrases must also be highlighted. The copy of your oration will be handed in the day you present your speech.

Types of Speeches

1. Informative – designed to explain, instruct, define, clarify, or teach.
2. Persuasive – influence, convince, motivate, “preach”, or stimulate and action.
3. Evocative – entertains, inspires, or helps listeners to celebrate, bond, or commemorate.

Speech Topics

1. Determine the purpose of your speech and decide what type of speech you are giving.
2. Consider the occasion, audience, judge, or person giving you your grade.
 - a. Determine the age, gender, ethnicity, and status.
 - b. Anticipate that your audience will agree, remain neutral, or disagree with your message.
 - c. Think about the reaction to your speech.
3. Develop a list of possible topics and design a map of where those topics lead you.
4. Next, a **Thesis** statement should be distilled and stated in one, single, declarative sentence.
5. RESEARCH YOUR TOPIC!!!!

Basic Outline of a Speech

- I. Introduction**
 - A. Attention Getter
 - B. Significance
 - C. Credibility
 - D. Thesis Statement
 - E. Preview
 - F. Transition into your first main point
- II. The Main Body**
 - A. First main point
 1. First sub-point and supporting material
 2. Transition closing off main point one and opening main point two
 - B. Second main point
 1. First sub-point of this section and supporting material
 2. Second sub-point and supporting material
 3. Transition closing off main point two and opening main point three
 - C. Third main point
 1. First sub-point of this section and supporting material
 2. Transition into closing
- III. Conclusion**
 - A. Review of main points
 - B. Final statement – should also link back to Intro

Helpful Hints

- Make sure your attention getter relates to the speech and really grabs your audience.
- Why are you credible in giving this speech?
- What is the significance of this speech? Why should we be listening to you about this topic?

- Make sure your transitions link nicely together.
- Make sure your conclusion leaves the audience thinking or makes a call to action.
- EYE CONTACT!!!
- MEMORIZE!!! – An easy way to memorize is to break your speech up on note cards and memorize it in sections. **Practice. Practice. Practice. Practice. Practice. Practice.**
- DELIVERY!!! – Think about keeping the audiences attention the entire time,
 - ✓ Volume – Can we hear and understand you?
 - ✓ Rate – Are you talking too slow/fast?
 - ✓ Pitch – Are you talking too high/low?
 - ✓ Rhythm – What is your pace and do you punctuate new ideas?
 - ✓ Pauses – Are you using your pauses effectively/boring?
 - ✓ Word Emphasis – Are you emphasizing key words or phrases
 - ✓ Are you passionate enough to make your audience passionate?
 - ✓ BE A DYNAMIC SPEAKER!!!

Example of an Original Oratory in detailed outline form

I. Introduction

- A. **Attention Getter:** (Acted out) I walked up to the front of the room looking extremely nervous and shaking. I took a deep breath and went into my speech.
- B. **Significance:** According to Roy Berko, former associate director for the National Communication Association, “Ninety-five percent of the American population reports some degree of anxiety about communicating in front of a person or group.”
- C. **Thesis:** Since communication skills are so important, why isn’t a speech class required for graduation in Florida and other surrounding state high schools?
- D. **Preview:** First, I will identify the problem, and second, I will propose a possible solution.
- E. **Transition into Main Point:** First, the problem.

II. Main Body

A. First Main Point:

□ Florida high schools, for example, do not require a communication speech course to be taken before graduation; therefore students are graduating high school without the crucial communication skills needed for a successful future.

This is problematic because these same high school students are not being adequately trained or prepared for today’s job market. According to the 1995 issue of Journal of Psychology Interdisciplinary & Applied, the author states that *research has indicated that individuals are less aggressive, are less willing to talk, avoid social interaction, and are more constrained compared to people that have had a communication course.*

These findings are very likely related to communication apprehension. Communication apprehension as defined by the 1999 book, Communication for the Classroom Teacher, is “when an individual is fearful of communication and will go to great lengths to avoid communication situations, and when by chance they are placed in them, the students feel uncomfortable, tense, embarrassed and shy.”

According to the 1999 book Voice and Articulation, every spring, many companies send representatives to college campuses to interview prospective employees. These colleges recently asked various firms to state their reasons for not hiring the students they had rejected. In approximately two-thirds of the cases, the reason given was because the job seeker did not speak effectively during the interview. The U.S. Department of Labor, Washington D.C. states bluntly that for 8 out of 10 jobs, you have to be able to speak effectively.

According to the 1999 book Communication Theories, communication apprehension can occur because the student has never been trained or taught on how to be an effective communicator.

Communication plays a key role in our society. Students are cheated out of job opportunities because of their lack in proper communication skills, and businesses are not receiving applicants that fully qualified for the job demands. When a person cannot communicate properly/correctly in their surroundings/environments, then this not only has a negative effect on the community but on themselves as well.

B. □ Transition: Now you be asking yourself, “Is this problem really serious enough for us to take action?”

C. Second Main Point:

According to Roy Berko, who I mentioned earlier, “63 percent of the nation’s young people cannot give clear oral directions; 95 percent of the population communicate without anxiety in front of a group; and nearly 20 percent of the nation’s young people cannot accomplish any of the simplest of communication tasks, including relaying specific information, giving instructions, recounting details, defending personal opinions, and developing a persuasive argument.”

Without appropriate communication skills a person will have trouble presenting themselves professionally in a job interview, as well as standing up in front of a small group of people.

When former President Clinton signed the *Goal 2000: Educate America Act in 1994*, it signaled an unprecedented federal commitment to America education. The act had particular significance for communication education: the legislation included the arts as one of the eight core subjects, suggesting they were no longer a curricular extra, but an area of study as important as math, science, or any other subject. In the years since the act was past, some progress has certainly been made. Most states have adopted the National Standards for Arts Education. So while there is some reason for optimism, it is just as certain that there is work to be done.

D. Transition: Now, what can we do? I would like to propose the following solution.

E. □ Third Main Point:

To solve this problem, all of us need to have our voices heard to our state governor, state legislators, and the state board of educators. We must get our state legislators to pass a bill requiring high school students to complete at least one half credit of communication before graduating.

According to the 1995 issue of Communication Reports, a study was conducted to determine what could help students with their communication apprehension. The findings of the study suggested that a basic course in oral interpretation (a type of communication class) could serve to reduce student’s level of communication apprehension.

We would be modeling this bill after Texas and their 1998 communication requirements for high school graduates.

F. □ Transition: Now you might be asking yourself, “Would we have the teachers, or the funding to make this possible?”

G. Fourth Main Point:

However, as more job positions are created, the demand for communication teachers will increase and more people will be attracted to the field. And as to the funding, as of now most schools have a communication class as an elective, the only difference is that the class would be mandatory.

Having a communication class required, will greatly affect the society and the way it communicates in a positive way. High school students will graduate better equipped to communicate in today’s job market.

With improved communication skills, students will not only portray a higher level of self-confidence, but they will have the ability to be more creative in their thinking.

With this higher level of self-confidence, knowledge, and creativeness students will be more successful in their school, work, home, and community.

H. Transition into Closing: Today we have discussed a problem and have been offered a solution.

III. Conclusion

A. Review of Main Points: Students are graduating high school lacking the crucial communication skills needed to be successful. It would be very beneficial to our students to take at least one half credit in a communication course before graduating.

B. □ Refer to Attention Getter: The very first time I ever gave a speech I can remember feeling so much anxiety that I thought I would never want to give a speech again. However, thanks to a wonderful speech coach and my mother, I am able to do what I am doing today.

C. Closing Statement: I urge all of you to leave here today and contact not only your state governor and the state legislators, but to also contact your state board of education. Let them know how crucial it is to our future leaders of America to be required to take a communication course.