

Original Oratory!

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So, what is Original Oratory?

Original Oratory, or OO, is an event where participants showcase their writing and speaking talents by delivering a speech they had previously written . . . from memory. Speeches in this category tend to be inspirational, motivational, or sentimental. This event is very delivery intensive, and is meant for people who think they can "work a crowd." Competition tends to be heavy in this event, as there is often not a particularly large number of participants. But this should not discourage new members from trying it out: many people were born to make inroads with an audience.

The Official Definition:

The National Forensics League Handbook offers the following explanation of the event of oratory:

"Oratory is an event in which the student writes, memorizes, and then delivers a persuasive speech arising from his/her personal feelings and convictions, or a source of irritation about some problem. No specific restriction as to the type of speech governs oratory. Although most orations are persuasive speeches, they may also be eulogies or inspirational speeches. Topics for the oration are selected by each contestant with the aid of a coach or teacher. Not more than 10% or 150 words of the oration may be direct quotation. Extensive paraphrasing is also discouraged. The

oration must be presented from memory. The oration must be between seven and 10 minutes in length. Original Oratory offers the student an opportunity to develop skills in research and writing, to analyze his or her own values and to take a stand on important issues. It also teaches the speaker to develop logical proof, to memorize, to polish delivery and presentation abilities, and to rework and revise for excellence."

"The composition should be considered carefully for its rhetoric and diction. Use of appropriate figures of speech, similes, metaphors, balanced sentences, allusions, parallel phrasing and other rhetorical devices to make the oration more effective is encouraged. Use of English should be more than correct; it should reveal a discriminating choice of words and altogether fine literary qualities. It should be especially adapted to oral presentation. Examples used in the oration should have some factual basis."

"Delivery should be judged for mastery of the usual mechanics of speech (poise, quality, voice, and body language) and for the qualities of directness and sincerity that impress the oration upon the minds of the audience. No particular style of delivery is to be set up as the one correct style to which all contestants must conform. Rather, each contestant is judged upon the effectiveness of delivery. The orator should be free to choose and develop his/her own effective style."

"While oratory is perhaps the most elevated form of public speaking, it is nevertheless public speech and not interpretative drama and must be viewed accordingly. The attitude that oratory is purely an exhibition, merely an opportunity for bombast with little regard for content, is erroneous. It is not insincere, noisy speaking. Sincere expression of feeling is essential. Freedom and naturalness are to be encouraged. Participants are forbidden to use notes or manuscripts and are not to be prompted."

What to Expect

At the tournament, the orator is placed in a panel that may include as many as seven speakers. After all the speakers have presented their speeches, the judge evaluates them on content and delivery and then rates them one through seven. Those speakers receiving consistently strong rankings may then be selected for inclusion in elimination rounds. At the conclusion of elimination rounds, final rankings will be given and trophies and awards presented to those with the most outstanding performances throughout the tournament.

Getting Started

The process of producing an oratory can be reduced to several steps:

- 1) Learning the basic rules of the event (you just did that one!)

- 2) Selecting the topic
- 3) Researching
- 4) Writing an outline
- 5) Writing a first draft,
- 6) Redrafting the Speech,
- 7) Memorization
- 8) Competition presentation.

Selecting the Topic

There are four methods of selecting the topic. The first is to ***pick from a list***. Your coach can provide you with a list of hundreds of topic possibilities. You should skim this list and note the topics that interest you. Then discuss the topics with your coach to isolate those that have real possibilities.

You can also ***compile your own list*** of possibilities. Start by looking at the ***problems faced by other nations*** and by people in general. For example, you might examine the newly emerging freedoms of the Commonwealth of Independent States (Russia) and Eastern Europe. You might choose to examine racism in South Africa. You might choose to examine international human rights violations and the practice of torture.

Next, look at ***national problems***. Here you might wish to examine the difficulties posed by campaign finance problems, apathy, or special interest groups.

Next, examine ***social problems*** as a source of topics. For example, abortion is always a hot issue (although it is usually a poor oratory topic). Other social problems might include drug abuse, racism and crime in the streets.

Consider personal problems. These are the kinds of issues that touch us on an individual level. They may be universal in that they affect each individual, but they are not the kinds of problems that lend themselves to governmental solution. Instead, each individual must provide the needed change within him/herself to eliminate the problem.

Next, ***consider your pet peeves***—those things which people do which really irritate you and make you angry. These can often be good topics since you are already emotionally involved with them, and thus can generate the enthusiasm needed during presentation for an effective speech.

Use browsing as a tool to help you locate topics. For example, go to a bookstore and look through the current bestsellers. Also, look in the human interest, psychology and philosophy sections. These stores will often have books that raise new and interesting questions, which might become the source of or the inspiration for new speech ideas. Also, browse through current magazines. Many will contain controversial and timely articles on a variety of topics, which might prove to be effective oratory topics.

Brainstorming can also be an effective method to generate topic ideas. Get others together who also have to come up with oratory topics. Then talk about topic possibilities and add all suggestions to your list. Someone might suggest a topic that doesn't strike them as a great idea for a topic, but it might be just what you were looking for. Or it might make you think of a different approach or a spinoff idea that could be a very strong topic.

Finally, ***pick up an anthology of quotations***. Browse through it and find quotations which state positions about topics that are particularly entertaining or inspirational to you. Again, these might offer some ideas for effective topics.

As you explore each of these areas, don't evaluate the ideas you encounter--simply write them down. When you finish, you will have an extensive list of possibilities from which to pick a topic. Consider that the topic list could be the source of the inspiration you are seeking on a topic. Consider also that the topic list might be a source of potential topics that you can 'grow into'. You might not start out with a compelling emotional reaction to a topic, but while researching and writing about your topic, you often develop the kind of depth of understanding which leads to strong emotional commitment to the issue.

The ***second method of topic selection is more inductive*** in nature. It asks the speaker to start collecting materials without a clear idea of a topic in mind. The materials are collected based on student interest and may have no apparent common theme. After several days/weeks/months of collecting materials, the student then reads all the materials collected and tries to discover common threads that tie several articles together and make the materials of interest. This common thread then becomes the topic for the speech. It also offers the advantage of connecting diverse source material in a new and innovative way. It will be unlikely that a previous orator has spoken on this connection, since the associations between the materials may be uniquely dependent on the experiences of the individual.

The ***third method of selecting a topic is to use something that has been on your mind anyway***. A topic that has been a longstanding subject of interest and emotion to you could be an excellent choice for a speech topic. Check its competition worthiness with your coach. If it passes that test, you could be on your way to a very successful speech which allows you to say what you have always wanted to say.

A fourth possible method of selecting topics might be called ***'the Blinding Flash' method***. Occasionally, during your daily life, an idea will literally jump out at you--from a newspaper, from a novel, from the television--and beg to be developed into a speech. The assumption here is that the reason the topic strikes you so strongly is that it causes a strong emotional reaction in you. This reaction may be anger, joy, laughter or any number of other emotions. But the very fact that the topic made such a strong impression on you means that it is likely to be an effective topic for you. For, if you can create the same sort of emotional response in your listeners, that reaction can serve as the basis for a very effective competitive speech.

Occasionally, the blinding flash happens on a common topic. Explore the possibility that your reaction was not caused by the topic itself, but something abstract within the area of the topic to which this specific example relates. Also, explore the possibility that the blinding flash has happened to thousands of others before you. And while the idea may strike you as exciting and new, it may not strike judges that way at all. Try sharing the idea with your speech coach, your parents, other orators, or an English teacher to see if they find your idea novel.

When selecting a topic, be sure to ***phrase it as a thesis or topic statement***. Don't simply express it as a single word or phrase which suggests an area of concern, but does not give specific intent or direction. For example, 'abortion' is a topic area. A topic statement about abortion might be 'We should make abortion on demand available to women everywhere.' Note that a topic area is not a complete sentence and is so general that it offers few clues as to the speaker's intent. By contrast, topic statements are much more specific and give the exact position the speaker will defend.

Original Oratory is a process. It begins with selecting a topic, then research, followed by writing a speech, then interpretation and practice, and ending with performance. Topic selection is arguably the most important step as it starts the Original Oratory chain of events. Thus, when selecting a topic you need to be mindful of a few considerations.

- **Choose a strong topic.** Your Original Oratory topic is what your thesis statement (sentence that explains what your speech is about and your stance/opinion) is derived from. That thesis is what will motivate and influence all research done for the speech. The thesis is also what your writing will develop from. In short, a weak topic selection can lead to a weak thesis which can doom an Original Oratory into mediocrity.
- **Risk and originality.** Sticking to a topic that has been done over and over again is grating to those who have to listen to those ideas year in and year out. That is, of course, if you are not adding a personal spin to the thesis. Original Oratory is...well...original. Making a topic personal and adding yourself can turn even the

most done topic into something fresh; do not imitate another OO! New research to cite helps too! If you wish to avoid the unoriginal factor then try to think of a new, risky topic. Boundaries exist, but choosing a controversial/taboo topic to write an OO about can instantly draw in your audience.

- **Holds universality.** Universality is just a fancy way to say that the topic can captivate the interest of a majority of the audience. You should never select a topic to humor audiences, but try to choose a subject that others can find interesting. Holding an audience captive and raising their curiosity in an issue are goals any Oratorical speaker should work towards.
- **Can be researched.** Original Oratory is the Forensics world's version of the research paper. It is difficult to cite anything when sources are near non-existence. This can either come from the selected topic not having much resources written on the topic OR because the information is not accessible. Either way, this leaves you in a limited position of what you can learn and cite regarding the issue.
- **Be concise.** Select a topic that can be turned into a concise thesis. It is hard to write a paper when the thesis is so broad that it seems as if the topic changes mid-research. Be narrow. The larger a thesis/topic is, the easier it is for the paper to enter inflation as you try to touch upon every idea or tangent you can find. Find the main idea of a subject and write about that.
- **Love it.** If you do not love your topic then that will be reflected in your Original Oratory. Your analysis will be rushed, your delivery flat, and your research thin. Love what you do. That too reflects into your performance.

These are just a few of the basic queries to ponder as you decide upon an Original Oratory **topic**. In the end, the decision is yours. Do what feels best for you and your piece and prosperity should ensue.

Finally, ***think before you change topics***. Most speakers tend to change topics too quickly. They do some basic research and when they can't find a ton of material with a minimum of effort, they decide that the material is just not available. So they change topics too quickly. Give yourself a chance to do some serious research before deciding to change topics. And ask the advice of someone who knows how to use a library before you decide that the material is not available. It's possible that you just aren't skilled enough in research to find the materials on your topic.

How To Write An Original Oratory

Original Oratory is unique among the forensics events. It offers the speaker the

opportunity to 'soapbox' or express a very strong personal concern on an issue of the speaker's choosing. Every other forensic event, dictates the topic to you. Only in original oratory do you finally get the opportunity to pick the topic that you feel is important and discuss it for the duration of your speaking time, and for the duration of the speech season. If the plight of the environment is your most important concern, you can choose a topic that allows you to discuss environmental problems. If you feel that making friends is very difficult and you wish to discuss how it can be done effectively, you have that option. In fact, you can discuss anything you wish to discuss. There are some constraints provided by good taste and competition-worthiness, but you are the final arbiter of what is a very worthwhile topic for oratory. Couple this with the opportunity oratory offers to perform, and original oratory offers the forensic speaker some unique opportunities.

Basically, an oratory is an original speech written by the student on a topic of his/her choice. S/he may write and rewrite until the written material is of very high quality. The speech may be presented in a first-draft kind of format early in the season. However, it should continue to evolve and improve as the speaker's level of experience and devotion to continued research bear fruit. The speech can include illustrations, stories, and other kinds of support material. After the completion of the writing process, the author memorizes the speech, polishes it and then presents the same speech repeatedly in competitive rounds. The speech will change from time to time as the author finds new material to include. It will also change as s/he thinks of better ways to say the things s/he has been trying to say in the speech.

Topic Ideas???

High Seas Piracy
 "To Thine Own Self Be True"
 (or other quotations)
 Hurried Childhood
 Blood Diamonds
 Fitness
 Celebrity Drug Abuse
 California & Marijuana
 Media Abuse
 Changing Attitudes
 The Simple Lifestyle

"Time in a Bottle" (or other
 song titles)
 Volunteerism
 Community Service
 Teen Suicide
 Fair Weather Trading
 Sports Commentary
 Benchmarks in Education
 Mandatory National Service
 Arts in Public Education,
 Clean Air/Water

Throwaway Children
 Surfing the Net
 Power of Laughter
 Drug Use Effects on the
 Family
 Visiting Day
 Overly Cautious or Fearful
 Home Alone
 Siblings
 How to Raise Your Parents
 What I Learned . . .

Songs Read the lyrics for some ideas!

Tears of a Clown
 No One Mourns the Wicked
 Tapestry
 Both Sides Now
 Memories

Portrait of a Lonely Woman
 Hands
 I Hope You Dance
 It's in Every One of Us
 Iris

What a Wonderful World
 Father and Son
 Cat's Cradle
 Minority
 U Still Got It

How to Start: Outline

I. Introduction

- A. set-up thesis
- B. Methods to use:
 - 1. Quotation
 - 2. Story
 - 3. Analogy
 - 4. Startling
- C. is is catchy?
- D. attention getting?
- E. Leads to your thesis

II. Problems (What evidence is there that you really have something to persuade us?) Use facts/examples/stories

- A. What is being harmed?
 - 1. Society
 - 2. Environment
- B. Who is being harmed?
 - 1. everyone
 - 2. special groups
 - 3. society as a whole?
- C. Is there a significant number of people being harmed?

III. Why does this problem exist? Such as...

- A. Facts
- B. examples
- C. opinions

IV. Solutions

- A. Your own
- B. experts
- C. Will they work?

V. Conclusion

- A. Ties back to the purpose/thesis
- B. Concludes your speech

Outlining Motivational Speeches The Monroe's Motivated Sequence Speech

Topics:

This pattern is very useful to elaborate on motivational speech topics.

STEP #1 ATTENTION

Get the attention of your public. State the importance of your specific angle of approach. List the main benefits to arouse interest.

STEP #2 NEED

State the need for change. Show why it should concern them. Relate the issue or problem to the values, attitudes, interests and needs of the listeners.

STEP #3 SATISFACTION

Satisfy their needs. Provide the details and interesting facts of your plan. Show how your solution works.

STEP #4 VISUALIZATION

Visualize the benefits. That is the heart of your motivational speech topic. Illustrate them with examples, anecdotes, comparisons, statistics, definitions and visual aids. Show successful implementation in other organizations. Tell your public what's in it for them.

STEP #5 CALL TO ACTION

Call to action. Show them what to do to implement your plan.

From NFL Online: Wilson's example original oratory put in detailed outline form

Underlined – Quotes

Italics - Paraphrasing

I. Introduction

- A. **Attention Getter:** Acted out – I walked up to the front of the room with my note cards. I was extremely nervous and shaking. When I started to give my speech (very poorly), I dropped the note cards, and rushed to start picking them up. I then apologized. Once I took a deep breath, I put the note cards down, 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 Oklahoma, Kansas, 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:**

Oklahoma 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.

About Your Content

Illustrating For Emphasis

The "don't tell me, Show me" approach

Show your audience or the judge what you are getting at. The following techniques may be of help to you:

- ...>Historical/Biographical Example
- ...>Personal Example
- ...>Anecdotal Story
- ...>Literary Example

--->Statement Followed by Descriptive Quotation

--->Statistical/Factual Support

Use of Humor

Humor is arguably necessary for a successful OO, but too much can ruin a speech.

- **This is not HI.** As nice as a few clever jokes can be throughout the speech, too many does not fit with the serious tone of the event. Throw a copious amount in and your Original Oratory will become more like a stand-up routine. If you want to do comedy than forgo Original Oratory and find an HI or Duo.
- **Lose credibility.** When people are told factual information, and analysis to match, they want to receive it from a source that is credible. Part of what determines credibility is the manner in which something is delivered. Image matters. Goofing around excessively when you are talking about an issue of concern can take the audience away from the topic and leave them wanting laughs. Your image can turn from an OO competitor into a comedian. This is not *The Daily Show* and you are not Jon Stewart--do not try to capture the trust, credibility, and charm he exudes because most likely you will not. He's been mastering for over a decade.
- **Lose focus.** If peppering in humor becomes your sole objective than your OO will fail. The backbone of the event is the speech. What makes a great speech in Original Oratory include a good thesis, research, analysis, and structure. Focus on those, not the laugh. Sacrificing content to squeeze a chuckle into the writing is a poor choice. Your OO should revolve around a thesis not a joke. As you write your piece remember that.
- **Awkward situation.** With comedy comes a slew of complications. Have you considered how the judge will compare you to the others in your round? Never should you blend in, but far too many jokes instantly separate you from the rest of your competitors. And this might not be a good separation. A judge might think you are not handling a fragile topic with enough maturity. They just might not know what to make of your Original Oratory's comedic spin. Also, what if what is funny to you is not to others? Comedy also requires timing and an active audience; two things you might not have. Telling a joke and receiving zero laughs is awkward. Now multiply that if you have numerous jokes laced within your piece.

Humor is an amazing tool. Original Oratories with some jokes tend to do better in competition. It might be because laughter loosens the audience up, which in turn loosens the speaker, which ultimately can lead to a more confident delivery. It could be because moderate humor shows another side of the competitor the judge may never have seen. Whatever the reason, laughter draws people in. However, this is Original Oratory. Standards of decorum exist and that includes maintaining some level of

integrity through a serious message. Keep the audience hooked but leave the rolling on the floor business to Humorous Interpretation, Duo, and the Marx Brothers.

Some Notes on Delivery

1. Once the oratory is in a form to be memorized for presentation, memorize it word for word.
2. When you speak, be sincere and natural. Believe what you say. Care about the words and ideas. Don't talk at the audience. Speak with/to each person in as personal a way as possible. Be conversational.
3. Don't rush. Use pauses. Allow time for key points/ideas to sink in. (A pause and shift of eye focus at the end of major sections of the speech can assist in making crisp transistions.)
4. Don't allow false pauses to creep into your speech.
5. Don't pace aimlessly or over walk as you walk. All movement should grow out of the speech. Movement should serve a purpose. It's a good idea to plan places you might move to during the presentation or oration. It is generally better to be as sponataneous as posible while you speak. Let the situation in each round direct when and where you walk.
6. Be facially animated!
7. Don't force your gestures. Work on variety. Use your hands and arms to help you express your ideas and emphasize your points without allowing the gesturing to become obtrusive.
8. Look at each member of the audience. Don't let you eyes be moving cameras.
9. Be professional from the time you walk into the room until the moment you leave.
10. Don't overplay the emotion or humor of the speech. Don't push. Sincerity is important in connecting with your audience.
11. At the end, hold your moment. Don't rush back to your seat or out the door as you say the last word.