Learning Objectives

After completing this chapter, you will be able to do the following.

• Define the specific purposes of several special-occasion speeches.
• Discuss the characteristics of these speeches.
• Describe popular kinds of contest speeches.

Chapter Outline

Following are the main sections in this chapter.

1. Courtesy Speeches
2. Ceremonial Speeches
3. Contest Speeches

Speech Vocabulary

In this chapter, you will learn the meanings of the speech terms listed below.

speech of presentation
speech of acceptance
after-dinner speech
commencement address
commemorative speech
testimonial speech
eulogy
original oratory
dramatic interpretation
humorous interpretation

Academic Vocabulary

Expanding your academic vocabulary will help you become a more effective communicator. Listed below are some words appearing in this chapter that you should make part of your vocabulary.

reiterate
eloquent
procession
miffed
transformation
hoke
dignitary
converse
evoking
suffice
combustion
refrain
Introduction

When Sesame Street’s Kermit the Frog won an honorary degree from Southampton College, Samantha Chie, a marine biology major, said, “Now we have a sock talking at our commencement. It’s kind of upsetting.” Clearly, Chie was not impressed by Kermit’s “doctorate of amphibious letters.”

Although you may never upset people as a commencement speaker, you will be called upon someday to speak at a public or business gathering. Special-occasion speeches are part of our everyday lives. These speeches are special because they focus on particular situations: an address given at a school assembly, a testimonial speech offered at an awards banquet, a eulogy spoken by a friend at a funeral. What follows will help you learn how not to upset people.
You present a courtesy speech to fulfill certain social customs. If you need to say thank you, for example, you may find yourself preparing a speech of acceptance. Typical courtesy speeches include introduction, presentation, acceptance, and after-dinner speeches.

**Introductions**

If you have had the uncomfortable experience of being the new kid in school, then you know the need for successful introductions. Waiting to make friends can be one of the loneliest periods in a person’s life. You find yourself wondering if you will be accepted. You worry about what people think of you, what they might be saying.

Although more formal than making friends in a new school, speeches of introduction matter in the same way, because they break down the barriers between people. Introductory speeches serve two functions: to make the audience want to hear the speaker and to make the speaker want to address the audience. You need to achieve these goals in only a minute or two.

Because most speeches of introduction are brief, they must be well planned. You should plan to do some or all of the following in your speech:

- Refer to the occasion that has brought the audience together.
- Name the speaker (mention the name again at the end of the introduction).
- Build enthusiasm by relating information about the qualifications of the speaker.
- Share information about the subject to heighten interest, if the speaker wishes you to.
- Explain why this speaker is to give this talk to this audience at this time.
- Conclude by welcoming the speaker to the microphone or the podium.

Successful writers of introductions are usually fans of Mark Twain. Why? Twain understood one factor that contributes to a memorable speech: humor. If you can combine humor with a meaningful message, then your chances for writing an effective introduction are greatly increased. Consider the following excerpt from one of Twain’s many humorous speeches of introduction.

I see I am advertised to introduce the speaker of the evening. . . . As a pure citizen, I respect him; as a personal friend for years, I have the warmest regard for him; as a neighbor whose vegetable garden adjoins mine, why—why, I watch him. That’s nothing; we all do that with any neighbor.

General Hawley keeps his promises not only in private but in public. . . . He is broad-souled, generous, noble, liberal, alive to his moral and religious responsibilities. Whenever the contribution box was passed, I never knew him to take out a cent. He is a square, true, honest man in politics, and I must say he occupies a mighty lonesome position. . . . He is an American of Americans. Would we had more such men! So broad, so bountiful is his character that he never turned a tramp empty handed from his door, but always gave him a letter of introduction to me. . . .
Pure, honest, incorruptible, that is Joe Hawley. Such a man in politics is like a bottle of perfumery in a glue factory—it may modify the stench if it doesn’t destroy it. And now, in speaking thus highly of the speaker of the evening, I haven’t said any more of him than I would say of myself. Ladies and Gentlemen, this is General Hawley.

Twain’s introduction takes a few satirical swipes at General Hawley, which is fine, but you must be careful not to embarrass the person you are introducing. Hawley was a public figure and a personal friend; therefore, Twain could take certain liberties in this particular case. Good judgment is always a must.

Here are a few reminders for making a successful introductory speech: Check the pronunciation of all words, including the speaker’s name; verify the accuracy of all biographical and other information; analyze the audience’s expectations.

Speeches of Presentation

When a person is publicly presented with a gift or an award, a speech of presentation is needed. The presentation speech is usually brief. Of course, the length depends on the formality of the occasion. Typically, when you give a speech of presentation,
you are speaking on behalf of some group, and you should reflect the shared feelings of that group. You can focus those feelings by choosing words that give deeper meaning to the circumstances that surround this special occasion. For example, the audience’s expectations at a retirement party vary significantly from those at the annual Motion Picture Academy Awards (Oscar) ceremony. Certain guidelines, however, generally apply.

1. State the person’s name early in the presentation (unless building suspense is appropriate).
2. Explain the award’s significance as a symbol of the group’s esteem.
3. Explain how the person was selected for the award.
4. Highlight what makes this person unique. Use anecdotal information and a brief list of achievements.
5. Hand the award to the recipient.

Here is an example of a typical speech of presentation. The speech was given by a student to honor her teammate who was about to receive the most valuable player award on their high school golf team.

No one is more deserving of most valuable player recognition than Alysen. True, she is only a sophomore, but she led the team as if she were our most experienced golfer. If you’ve ever played a round of golf with her, you know what I mean by “led.” In any foursome, she always seemed to be ten paces in front of everyone else, and you felt like you had to run to keep up.

And this year, no one was able to keep up with her or with her success. As a district medalist and a top ten finisher in the state championship, Alysen capped what was a remarkable year in competition. But speaking on behalf of her teammates, we are most proud of Alysen for the character she demonstrated both in victory and defeat. We voted her this honor because of that character. If she made a birdie or if she missed a three-foot putt, there was always a smile for everyone, a joy in the simple playing of the game.

As Will Rogers once observed, “It is great to be great, but it is greater to be human.” So this Most Valuable Player award is presented to Alysen—a great human being.
Speeches of Acceptance

Jack Benny was a comedian and an actor in radio, television, and movies. Once, when accepting an award, he ad-libbed, “I don’t deserve this, but then, I have arthritis and I don’t deserve that either.” Even though recipients of awards or gifts usually have some advance notice, a speech of acceptance is most often, at least in part, impromptu (impromptu speaking was discussed in Chapters 12 and 15). Even if you are able to prepare your acceptance speech, part of it will need to be impromptu because you will need to tailor your remarks to what was said by the presenter. The remarks that you make serve a double purpose: to thank the people who are presenting the award or gift and to give credit to people who helped you earn this recognition. The formality of the situation should guide you in preparation, but generally you should consider the following:

1. Be brief, sincere, and direct.
2. Thank the group for the award.
3. Discuss the importance of the award to you.
4. Thank others who helped you win the award.
5. Minimize your worth, and praise the contributions of your supporters.
6. Reiterate your appreciation.

If you have ever been a member of a team that lost the big game, then you can appreciate politician Adlai Stevenson’s famous concession speech—a speech in which he accepts not an award but defeat. In that speech, he compares himself to a boy who has stubbed his toe in the dark—“too old to cry, but it hurts too much to laugh.”

Stevenson was one of the most eloquent politicians of the twentieth century. Consider this excerpt from his speech accepting the nomination as Democratic candidate for president on July 26, 1952.

I accept your nomination—and your program. I should have preferred to hear those words uttered by a stronger, a wiser, a better man than myself. But after listening to the president’s [Harry Truman’s] speech, I feel even better about myself. . . .

None of you, my friends, can wholly appreciate what is in my heart. I can only hope that you understand my words. They will be few. . . .

And, my friends, even more important than winning the election is governing the nation. That is the test of a political party—the acid, final test. When the tumult and the shouting die, when the bands are gone and the lights are dimmed, there is the stark reality of responsibility in an hour of history haunted with those gaunt, grim specters of strife, dissension, and ruthless, inscrutable, and hostile power abroad. . . .

Let’s face it. Let’s talk sense to the American people. Let’s tell them the truth, that there are no gains without pains, that we are on the eve of great decisions, not easy decisions, like resistance when you’re attacked, but a long, patient, costly struggle which alone can assure triumph over the great enemies of man—war, poverty, and tyranny—and the assaults upon human dignity which are the most grievous consequences of each.

An analysis of an exceptional impromptu speech given by pro golfer Justin Leonard following his 1998 British Open win follows on the next page.
How Pro Golfer Justin Leonard Said All the Right Things

Following is Justin Leonard’s acceptance speech following his win in a major golf tournament, the 1998 British Open. Before giving it, Leonard had the foresight to ask for the names of the most important people to thank. He then delivered his speech with humor, gratitude, and emotion.

Accepting the award, Leonard stepped up to the microphone and began:

I made a few notes. [Laughter]

It’s been a great week. It hasn’t hit me yet, so if it hits me during the speech, I’ll go ahead and apologize.

There are a few people I’d like to thank from the championship committee; . . . I thought the course was just fabulous this week. I think all of the players would agree with that. I don’t know if you have control of the weather, but if you do, nice job. [Laughter]

Mr. Bonallack, thank you for all your preparations and for allowing me to come over here and get a chance to play. I came over the last two years to qualify, was fortunate enough to qualify for the championship. Hopefully I won’t have to again, but if I do, I’ll come. [Laughter]

I’d also like to thank my playing partners all week long, especially the last two days. Darren Clarke on Saturday. Darren and I actually met during the qualifying for the championship at St. Andrews. He’s a great guy. He’s a great player, and he had a great week. It was nice. We had a nice, relaxing round.

Today I felt real fortunate to be paired with Fred Couples. You know, I call him a friend of mine. He’s just great. We laughed our way around. He’s always very relaxed. And he’s really one of my favorite players. So, it was a real honor to play with him and to be able to play well. [Applause]

I’d like to congratulate [low amateur] Barclay Howard. I had opposite tee times with you Thursday and Friday, so I got to watch quite a bit of your play. Outstanding. I think the American side in the upcoming Walker Cup Matches is going to have a tough time with you. [Applause] I’d also like to congratulate Jesper [Parvenik] and Darren. They’re both wonderful players. They both deserve to win this tournament. I think it just happened to be my week. But I’m sure that both these players will win many more tournaments and many more majors. I just feel fortunate to be able to do what I did against two great players. [Applause]

I just want you to know that I’m here alone this week. Just myself and my caddie, Bob Reifke. [Applause as Leonard sniffs and holds back tears]

Moment, please. [Applause/cheers]

I think it just hit me. [Laughter]

But to everybody: my family, all my friends in Dallas, Randy Smith my instructor, I know they’re kicking themselves, but this isn’t some place you can just, you know, catch a 5 o’clock flight.

I’m looking forward to getting home. I know they’re having a really fun time right now. [Laughter] So, I’ll make sure I get some Advil on the way through the airport for them. It’s a shame they couldn’t be here, but at the same time, maybe that helped me focus a little bit. So, anyway, I know they’re here with me in spirit, and that’s really all that matters. Thank you.” [Applause]
After-Dinner Speeches

As hard as it may be to swallow at the time, many banquets or meals are followed by someone presenting what is known as an **after-dinner speech**. The traditional after-dinner speech is expected to be entertaining. Remember, though, that you can be entertaining without being funny.

The key is to enjoy yourself, and then the audience is more likely to enjoy your presentation. On these occasions, most audiences want a message of some sort presented in a lighter, if not humorous, way. Be likable. Share your message in a relaxed and uncritical manner, and adapt to the mood of the audience. If the audience is not responding to your humorous stories, then you should shift the focus of your speech away from jokes to avoid bombing.

The casual style that you need requires careful preparation. You should organize your presentation around a theme. All of your supporting material—illustrations, statistics, examples, narrations, anecdotes—should relate to that theme. The following excerpts are from a Nebraska student’s state championship after-dinner speech. Note how all of the supporting material reinforces his theme of “too many intellectuals.”

A dim chamber.
Velvety dust creeping across the floor.
The scent of dead books.

Blue haze falls from the pipes as a dreary voice flows from a shadow in the corner. Seven enchanted bibliophiles cluster around a worn, scarred table, performing the ancient rites. These members of the Duluth Directory on Deductive Discussion carry the illness

Another scene. The depths of a dirty, empty library hold the bodiless mind of one Aristotle P.

**A Robotic Listener**

Boring! You’ve probably heard plenty of speeches in which speakers utter a **procession** of statements in a flat tone of voice. There is a term for such speakers: robotic. But that term has always **miffed** Dr. Cynthia Breazeal. It gives her robot a bad name.

Dr. Breazeal directs the Robotic Life Group at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. She is most well-known for Kismet, a robot she developed in the late 1990s. Kismet is a humanoid robot with ears, eyes, eyebrows, and lips. The fifteen computers that operate Kismet’s “brain” allow the robot to hear different tones of voice such as greeting, praise, warning, and comfort. When Kismet hears a certain tone, its face undergoes a **transformation**: eyebrows move, eyes widen, ears wiggle, lips wrinkle. Then Kismet responds in a voice that sounds like a small child. It can only make sounds, but its tone of voice expresses surprise, anger, fear, and joy. That’s more than you can say for many human speakers.

Breazeal is now working to create actual speaking robots. She points out that the talking robots most people are familiar with are **hoked-up** inventions of science fiction. But she believes that someday Kismet will actually make a speech.

“I want to build a creature, not a robot,” she says.
Chaucer, Jr. Pen choked by hand, it struggles across the paper, attempting to write that crucial document for which so many wait. The Fred Friendly Fan Club Constitution is in the hand of one afflicted by that same disease.

Still another scene. A hand attached to some distant brain guides a stub of chalk on an enormous gray slate. Chalk dust settles to the floor as the long-sought formula for the chemical composition of armadillo saliva is revealed. The same malaise affects this being.

Yes, a plague creeps through our society. While some euphemistically refer to the illness as knowledge, we now recognize it for what it really is: the cancerous growth of intellectualism.

While the illness receives very little attention—the telethon never made it on the air—millions of Americans are afflicted with this awful disease. It is entirely possible that someone in this room is an intellectual.

I perceive your sudden nervousness as you wonder if the person next to you is a carrier. Don’t worry. While it is true that “a little knowledge is a dangerous thing,” small doses encountered by most people present an insignificant health hazard—our lack of logical thinking provides natural immunity. . .

When we realize, however, how firmly entrenched in our society intellectualism is, we begin asking ourselves more and more: “Gee whiz, what can we do?” Well, the first step in halting the spread of intellectualism is the realization that you—yes, you—may suffer from some latent form of this syndrome.

**SECTION 1 REVIEW**

**Recalling the Facts**

1. What are the guidelines for a speech of presentation?
2. How should you organize an after-dinner speech?

**Thinking Critically**

Imagine that you are creating Kismet’s first public speech. Make a list of five sentences that are frequently used in speeches. Then describe the tone of voice and facial expressions that Kismet should use when speaking the lines.

**Taking Charge**

Now try your hand at preparing a courtesy speech. Write and deliver a brief speech of introduction for one of the following:

1. a friend running for the student council
2. a teacher recognized for excellence in the classroom
3. a college financial officer addressing the senior class about scholarship opportunities
The addresses known as ceremonial speeches are usually part of a formal activity. They often help the audience tie the past, present, and future together. The most common types of ceremonial speeches are commencement addresses and commemorative speeches, which include testimonials and eulogies.

**Commencement Addresses**

Some high schools select a member or members of each graduating class to present a valedictory, or farewell, speech. Another common practice is to invite a *dignitary* to address the graduating class. In either case, the speaker is giving a *commencement address*, or graduation speech. A commencement address should both acknowledge the importance of the ceremony and honor the graduates. The challenge for the speaker is to keep the attention of restless students and relatives who are already looking past the ceremony and toward the future. Therefore, most commencement addresses pay respect to the past but focus on the future of the graduates. If you are chosen to speak at a graduation ceremony, you should choose examples and illustrations that celebrate the collective experiences of the audience members. Humor, if appropriate, can ease the tension and make the ceremony more enjoyable for everyone. Successful commencement speakers are positive and uplifting.

The graduation speech excerpts that follow come from a speech written by Sara Martin for her graduation from Columbine High School in 1999. Earlier that year, two Columbine students had embarked on a shooting rampage, killing 12 students and a teacher and wounding 23 others before committing suicide.

During World War II the people of Cambridge, England, set out to preserve the exquisite stained glass windows of Kings College Chapel. The people took apart the windows and numbered each piece. Then, families took the fragments and hid them in sugar bowls and sock drawers.

The chapel made it through the war unharmed and the people brought back the pieces and reconstructed the windows. The lines where the pieces were broken are still visible. Maybe the beauty now revealed is that an entire community came together and restored the vision. Though flawed, it was made stronger than ever.

In a way, each of us is a piece of a Columbine community stained glass through which the sun shines bright and against which the wind blows cold. The piece we carry is made up of elements given to us by the literature that we read, the teachers we learn from, and the models we observe. It is a vision within us of which the totality is unknown until we die.

... Our piece of the greater window is a stained window made of pieces from our own experiences. . . made of pieces of glass given to us. It is our responsibility to accept those pieces. If we cherish them, we begin to recreate the pictures of our own window and determine the colors and their hue.

**Bill Cosby delivers a commencement address at Temple University.**
Our own window can be vibrant in color and spirit—a collection of the gifts given to us by the people who surround us. Or, our window can be blurred and colorless. We must recognize the pieces and create the window within us.

Because of what occurred on April 20, I am beginning to see what my window must reflect in order to fit into the larger window. I must live life with a concentrated purpose and a dedication to each moment. I must remember our friends who lost their lives. . . . I must recognize what I have learned: to love deeply and to appreciate every word and every gesture of every person I love or will love.

So, now, we are being called upon to take our pieces and rebuild the window of our community. And though we have faced disasters of our own and our window may appear to have been shattered, we can achieve a greater beauty as we put the pieces back together again. Let the light shine through the stained glass, colored by these last four years, these last four weeks. Let us recognize what is worthy to be saved, to be restored, and in unity rebuild the Columbine window from which others may draw their inspiration.

Commemorative Speeches

You have heard the expression, “a picture is worth a thousand words.” Some commemorative speakers in our country’s history demonstrate that the converse is true: the right words are worth a thousand pictures. A commemorative speech is an inspiring address that recalls heroic events or people. John F. Kennedy’s inaugural address, Douglas MacArthur’s “Old Soldiers Never Die,” and Ronald Reagan’s speech following the Challenger space shuttle disaster are commemorative speeches that succeeded in capturing the collective imagination, in inspiring people to reaffirm ideals, in taking snapshots of history.

Another example is President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s first inaugural address, delivered on March 4, 1933. That address contains one of the most memorable lines in speechmaking history: “The only thing we have to fear is fear itself.” According to speechwriter and columnist William Safire, that phrase was added at the last moment to avoid the negativity in an earlier draft: “This is no occasion for soft speaking or for the raising of false hopes.” The lesson for you is that careful revision can strengthen not only a commemorative speech but any writing that you do. Let’s look more closely at Roosevelt’s revised draft in the following excerpt:

This is preeminently the time to speak the truth, the whole truth, frankly and boldly. Nor need we shrink from honestly facing conditions in our country today. This great nation will endure as it has endured, will revive and will prosper.

General Douglas MacArthur’s “Old Soldiers Never Die” is a classic commemorative speech.
Just Say Yes

On Comedy Central’s Colbert Report, the cynical approach of host Stephen Colbert to fake news is at the heart of the show’s success. But when Colbert addressed the graduating seniors at Knox College, his commencement message was far more positive and life-affirming. Colbert’s advice:

When I was starting out in Chicago, doing improvisational theater with Second City and other places, there was really only one rule I was taught about improv. That was, “yes-and.” In this case, “yes-and” is a verb. To “yes-and,” I yes-and, you yes-and, he, she or it yes-ands. And yes-anding means that when you go onstage to improvise a scene with no script, you have no idea what’s going to happen, maybe with someone you’ve never met before. To build a scene, you have to accept. To build anything onstage, you have to accept what the other improviser initiates onstage. They say you’re doctors—you’re doctors. And then, you add to that: We’re doctors and we’re trapped in an ice cave. That’s the “-and.” And then hopefully they “yes-and” you back. You have to keep your eyes open when you do this. You have to be aware of what the other performer is offering you, so that you can agree and add to it. And through these agreements, you can improvise a scene or a one-act play. And because, by following each other’s lead, neither of you is really in control. It’s more of a mutual discovery than a solo adventure. What happens in a scene is often as much a surprise to you as it is to the audience.

Well, you are about to start the greatest improvisation of all. With no script. No idea what’s going to happen, often with people and places you have never seen before. And you are not in control. So say “yes.” And if you’re lucky, you’ll find people who will say “yes” back.

Now will saying “yes” get you in trouble at times? Will saying “yes” lead you to doing some foolish things? Yes it will. But don’t be afraid to be a fool. Remember, you cannot be both young and wise. Young people who pretend to be wise to the ways of the world are mostly just cynics. Cynicism masquerades as wisdom, but it is the farthest thing from it. Because cynics don’t learn anything. Because cynicism is a self-imposed blindness, a rejection of the world because we are afraid it will hurt us or disappoint us. Cynics always say no. But saying “yes” begins things. Saying “yes” is how things grow. Saying “yes” leads to knowledge. “Yes” is for young people. So for as long as you have the strength to, say “yes.”

And that’s The Word.

So, first of all, let me assert my firm belief, that the only thing we have to fear is fear itself—nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyzed needed efforts to convert retreat into advance.

Roosevelt’s inaugural address recalls a special event. Other commemorative speeches are given to honor individuals: the testimonial speech and the eulogy.

Testimonials You have witnessed countless testimonials by simply watching television ads. When a well-known and respected athlete hawks a particular brand of athletic shoes or you are told that “nine out of ten doctors agree,” the advertisers are hoping that the prestige of their spokespersons will persuade you to purchase their product.
Cashing in on the name and prestige of someone else, though, is not the only form of testimonial. A testimonial speech is an address of praise or celebration honoring a living person. The purpose of these presentations is to pay tribute to a special person—to generate appreciation, admiration, or respect. These speeches are often given at celebrity roasts or as toasts at retirement dinners or wedding celebrations. You may hear a testimonial speech at a farewell banquet for a favorite teacher. The length of these speeches varies, but generally they last no more than a few minutes.

How can you make your testimonial speech successful? First, research carefully the person honored. If you can offer insights into what makes the person so deserving, your speech will be more successful. Language choice is crucial; the level of formality should fit the occasion. The tone of your speech should be warm and caring. A creative approach with appropriate humor that makes this special event memorable is desirable. Remember, audience members are there to pay tribute as well. Honor their feelings by evoking a strong sense of celebration.

During a heartfelt tribute delivered to him on February 16, 1992, at the Forum in Los Angeles, Earvin “Magic” Johnson watched and listened as basketball player Kareem Abdul-Jabbar expressed what must have been in the mind of everyone who loves the game of basketball. The special occasion was the retiring of Johnson’s number, 32.

Ladies and gentlemen, here we are again, and it’s a whole lot of emotion in this moment. You know it’s gonna be awful hard for me to do this, but I’m gonna do the best I can. It was a long time ago when we first welcomed this young man out here on this court. And in the interim, he’s taught us a whole lot. He’s taught us a lot about him. He’s taught us about ourselves. He’s taught us about the game of basketball. He’s taught us about winning. He’s taught us about perseverance. And all of our lives are enriched by him.

I think the most important thing for me was that Earvin made me realize that I was having a
good time. It's difficult sometimes, you know? You get caught up in the difficult part of your job, and you don't realize what it is you're doing, and what it is you're sharing with everybody, the whole basketball-loving public in America, and all the great Laker fans we have here.

And I want to say personally . . . I just got back from Boston last week and you wouldn't believe it, I know you wouldn't believe it, but the people there, they miss us. And that came as a big shock to me. But walking down the streets of Boston and hearing people saying how much they wish we were still out there going at it again, so they could have some enjoyment.

Thank you, Earvin. Thank you very much. I just want to say in those times when we'd be driving through the outskirts of Detroit on a cold winter's night, and you'd have me smilin', thank you, Earvin. We love you. I love you. Good luck.

Eulogies A eulogy is generally thought of as a speech given to praise or honor someone who has died. The speaker, therefore, should try to relate to the audience the significant meaning in that person's life. Because eulogies are usually delivered at funerals or memorial services, the speaker must respect the religious beliefs of members of the family as well as the deceased.

In preparing a eulogy, you should decide whether you want to choose a biographical or a topical approach. As you attempt to chronicle a person's entire life, you will discover that the biographical speech often contains so many details that you lose the significance of the moment. In the topical approach, however, you can focus on personal qualities or specific achievements from which the audience can gain inspiration or understanding.

Although the tone of a eulogy is almost always solemn and the language sincere, you can be creative in your choices. You must, however, select details with great sensitivity and care. The following two examples pay tribute to the deceased in different and unusual ways.

One ninth-grade student eulogized her grandmother in a speech that reminds us that we all have “unfinished business”:

Dear Grandma,

I'm not quite sure why I'm writing this letter. I know you don't have a P.O. box up there. I just want a chance to tell you how much I miss, need, love, and thank you.

Unfinished business. We each have our own unfinished business. My math homework was due Tuesday, and I'm only on problem 3; I can't spend the night at Jenny's because I haven't finished vacuuming the den; and I won't receive my allowance until all the leaves are raked and bagged. Oh, we all have our own incomplete chores, but I'm referring to another kind of unfinished business—the kind between my grandmother and me.

So often, loved ones are taken away, and inevitably we grieve, but too many times our lasting sorrow overwhelms us because we fail to tell others how much we love them in the living years. I deeply regret not telling my grandmother her importance in my life. If only, if only I'd said goodbye, eye to eye, heart to heart. If only we all told our loved ones how much we need, love, and thank them before it's too late. If only we finished our business.

Grandma, I need you. I need the crumpled Kleenex always waiting in your pocket to wipe away my tears, and I need your bedtime fairy tales that taught me morals and made me smile. But most of all I need your good advice.

Today, in our independent society, we seldom feel the need to verbally accept others' spiritual gifts. Psychiatrist and author Gerald G. Jampolsky writes, “Giving means that all of one's love is extended with no expectations.” If only we would accept that gift of extended love and then express our appreciation.

I love your comforting arms that swallow my troubles with every hug. I love your shiny white
locks. With every curl lies a bit of wisdom. I love your presence.

Playwright Thornton Wilder states, “There is a land of the living and a land of the dead, and the bridge is love, the only survival, the only meaning.” If only we could communicate our love in the land of the living, it could form the bridge to the land of the dead.

Grandma, I thank you for your lessons in life: you taught me to plant pansies and make apple pies, but you also taught me through love that all things are possible.

Thanks that are so often felt but so seldom expressed. It doesn’t go without saying. In the book of Job, chapter 1, verse 21, we learn, “The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away.” So before he takes what he’s given, let us tell those special individuals what they’ve given to us. Let us finish our business.

Following the death of the broadcast journalist Harry Reasoner, his longtime friend Andy Rooney eulogized him on the television program 60 Minutes.

His friends here at 60 Minutes have lived with Harry’s death for five days now. It’s not a good thing to have to do. People keep asking how we feel. How does anyone feel when one of their best friends dies? Reporters ask a lot of dumb questions. “How do you think he’d like to be remembered?” “What one thing do you remember most about Harry Reasoner?” After 25 years of working with him, traveling with him, eating and drinking with him, what one thing do I remember most? Ridiculous.

Harry was an infinitely complex person. It’s hard to believe that great brain with everything that was in it is gone. He wasn’t like anyone I ever knew. If you think you know what he was like because you saw him so often here on 60 Minutes, you’re wrong. No matter what you thought he was like, I can promise he wasn’t like that. [Highlights from Reasoner’s illustrious career followed, with voice-overs by Rooney.]

I talked with Harry about death . . . as recently as six weeks ago and I know he had no intention of dying. Harry was the smartest correspondent there has ever been on television, but he did more dumb things than most of them, too. He would not have died at age 68 if this were not true. How does the smartest man I have ever known lose a lung to cancer and continue smoking two packs of cigarettes a day? I’m sad but I’m angry, too, because Harry was so careless with our affection for him.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recalling the Facts</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. What is the purpose of a testimonial speech?</td>
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<td>2. What two things should a commencement address do?</td>
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<th>Taking Charge</th>
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<tr>
<td>Now it’s your turn. Prepare a brief eulogy to honor someone who recently died. You might choose to write about someone you knew, a celebrity, or another public figure. For inspiration and ideas, refer to the examples that you just read.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Thinking Critically</th>
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<td>Should eulogies be given only for persons who are praiseworthy? Does every human being have some essential worth? Explain your answer.</td>
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</table>
Each year, thousands of students participate in interscholastic speech competitions. A tournament hosted by a high school or college takes place somewhere in the United States almost every weekend of the school year. If you would like to benefit from this valuable activity, you should discuss the opportunities available at your school with your speech teacher.

The rules that govern speech contests vary from state to state and from one national speech organization (such as the Catholic Forensic League and the National Forensic League) to another. With a few exceptions, speech events all into two categories: public speaking and interpretation. Popular events include original oratory, extemporaneous speaking, and dramatic and humorous interpretation.

**Original Oratory**

The speech contest event in which you write on a topic of your own choosing is known as original oratory. Most states require that you memorize your speech and limit it to ten minutes in length. The key to oratory is to remember that it is a persuasive speech. To be convincing, therefore, you should pick a topic you feel strongly about. Typical topics include everything from the importance of community to neglect of senior citizens.

Oratory demands careful and complete preparation. Successful orators live with their speeches for weeks or months. Painstaking revision and updating of the material are therefore necessary to keep it fresh.

In preparing a speech, use the organizational principles outlined in Chapter 9, and choose language for grace and precision. Keep in mind that the rules often limit the number of quoted words you can have in your speech. The National Forensic League, for example, allows no more than 150. You have the responsibility to cite the sources from which you obtained ideas. A rehash of a *Time* or *Sierra* magazine article is insufficient and, if extensively paraphrased, unethical. Furthermore, do not expect your speech coach to write your oration for you. The event is called original oratory for a reason.

**Extemporaneous Speaking**

As you will recall from your study of Chapter 15, in competitive extemporaneous speaking, participants pick one topic from a choice of three and then prepare a five- to seven-minute speech on that topic. The topic choices are based on current issues and are usually presented in question form. Usually the topic choices come in two divisions: national and international. For example, a contestant might be asked to choose from the following national topics:

- Do politicians have a right to privacy?
- How can we win the war on drugs?
- How can we better provide for senior citizens in our nation?

Contestants are allowed 30 minutes to prepare their speeches. They are allowed access only to the...
documents or background information that they have brought to the contest. In some tournaments—especially those that are held early in the competing schedule—extemporaneous speakers may bring a single note card to guide them through the speech. The judge’s evaluation of your speech is based on several factors—the most important being how well you answer the question or discuss the topic.

**Dramatic and Humorous Interpretation**

Competitive interpretation events allow you to choose the material you want to perform. Do you have a favorite role in a play that your theater department is not going to produce? Have you ever wanted to be more than one of the characters in a play? **Dramatic interpretation** and **humorous interpretation**—sometimes separate categories and sometimes combined—give you the opportunity to share your acting talents. To paraphrase Whoopi Goldberg, you are the show.

The fine line between acting and interpretation is discussed in Chapter 16. **Suffice** it to say that in the memorized interpretation events, competitors are generally “acting from the waist up,” while in the scripted events, competitors are expected to suggest rather than become a character. If you like performing scenes with a partner, then duo interpretation may be the event for you. This event allows for the support of a teammate plus—depending on the rules in your state—the fun of using many of the concepts, such as advanced blocking techniques, you may have learned in theater class.

The rules for interpretation events vary greatly from state to state. For example, some states permit extensive movement, and some do not; some permit singing, and some do not. In addition, each judge seems to have a different philosophy about what is preferable and what is acceptable.

How, then, do you know what to do? The skills you need to become an “interper” are treated at length in Chapter 16. In general, study the rules for each tournament carefully, and try to make artistic decisions that honor the integrity of your selection. Do not rewrite Shakespeare because you can’t understand *whence* and *whilst* and *woo*. If you perform “The Belle of Amherst,” do not give Emily Dickinson a southern accent. Do not scream or cry as a way to win favor from the judge when it is clear that the character you are playing would not.

Give much thought to the kind of material that is suitable for you. Try to choose a selection that fits your personality and stretches you as a performer but is not beyond your grasp. For example, a male who cannot play female characters should avoid portraying Joan of Arc. Some selections require a number of characters; see that you can make them all unique and believable. Character differentiation that is mechanical or distracting is undesirable. In tournament competition, your goal is to make your performance so affecting, so real, that the judge forgets it is a contest entry.
Other Contests

If you are seeking scholarships for higher education, some clubs and organizations sponsor speech contests for cash prizes—in many cases, for thousands of dollars. The contests offered vary from community to community but include the following:

1. The American Legion Oratorical Contest. You must write, memorize, and deliver an eight- to ten-minute oration on some aspect of the United States Constitution. The contest also requires that you speak extemporaneously for three to five minutes on one of four of the Constitution's articles or amendments.

2. The Veterans of Foreign Wars Voice of Democracy Contest. You must write and record a three- to five-minute speech on a theme that changes yearly. You enter the recording in the competition, and it is evaluated for content and delivery.

3. The Optimist Club Oratorical Contest. You write and deliver a four- to five-minute speech on a yearly theme. The competition is for students under age 16, giving younger students an excellent opportunity to compete. The text of a winning oration is included in this chapter.

But What If You Don’t Win?

Most students who compete in speech soon tire of hearing this familiar refrain at every award ceremony: “There are no losers today. You are all winners simply by participating.” Since speech contests are competitive, it is only natural that you will want to win. Unfortunately, the ranking of contestants is a subjective undertaking. Judges will disagree. One judge may compliment you on your creative approach to a topic; another may say that same approach is overused.

If you are to find satisfaction in speech competition, then you should set your own standards. Strive for excellence as you define it, and settle for no less. Certainly, you need to adapt to the audience—your judges—but not if that means compromising your integrity. Ultimately, your success in any competitive activity depends on the goals you have for yourself. Satisfy your own high standards of performance, and the reward will always be there. If the only goal you have is to win, you have already lost.

The Speech Collector

“Curse of a Malignant Tongue,” “Not Just a Farmer,” and “Before the Diet of Worms” are just a few of the many world-famous orations and speeches included in Roberta Sutton’s Speech Index, an index to collections of speeches. Other speech indexes provide more recent works. These references include responses to toasts, responses to speeches of blame, speeches concerning commencement, and speeches concerning combustion—usually not at the same time. The original date and place of presentations are given, along with the title of the anthology in which the presentations appear.
Recalling the Facts
1. What is the key to writing an original oratory?
2. What is the difference between original oratory and extemporaneous speaking?
3. What is dramatic interpretation?
4. In which category of popular contest speech events do you have to memorize the speech you give?
5. Name three speech contests that give monetary awards to the winners.

Thinking Critically
1. Most students write original oratories on topics of their choosing, because they feel strongly about the topic. Some students are given topics by their coaches. Do you think speakers should try to persuade an audience about topics they themselves don’t care about? Explain your answer.
2. If you were a judge at a dramatic interpretation competition, what would you look for in a winning interpretation? Make a list of four things you would look for in a winner.

Taking Charge
1. A popular speech event at some tournaments is original prose and poetry. In this event, student competitors write and perform their own literary efforts. Now it’s your turn. Write a poem or a short piece of prose (two to three minutes long) and perform it for the class. Include a brief introduction to help the audience understand and enjoy your performance.
2. Choose one character from TV, movies, or another source that you would like to interpret. Locate a clip or a script that features the character. Prepare a list of what you would do to present an interpretation of that character. Would you change your voice? What clothes would you wear? What props would you use?
3. Choose one of the speaking competitions listed in the section to research. Decide whether you would enter the competition and list the reasons why.
When you see me, I know what you’re probably thinking . . . you’re probably thinking of one of those dumb blonde jokes. I understand. It is, after all, a burden to be tall and leggy with long, flaxen hair. OK—I am not really that tall and I’m not really that blonde, but, in my defense, I am pretty darn dumb. It all started in my childhood . . . when we were putting up the wallpaper in my bedroom. My father, the do-it-yourselfer, asked me to go get a yardstick. I marched out to the backyard and picked up, you guessed it, the nearest stick. My school experience hasn’t been a whole lot better. In math and science, the slowest child in Luxembourg can kick my butt.

Is it any wonder that it is difficult to have optimism in my life? After all, ladies and gentlemen, we have moved beyond the dumbing down of America to the numbing down of America. Quite simply, America has stopped caring.

To understand the effects of numbing on our optimism, we must recognize first that we are living in an age of distraction, and second, that all of this new information moves us toward compassion fatigue.

So what does it mean to live in the age of distraction? Let me explain.

When I was ten years old, my best friend Nina and I were inseparable. She lived at my house on the weekends and we both lived in her pool during the summer. But, after a while, she stopped coming over. The Simpsons, and Days of Our Lives were more important to her. Meanwhile, the days of our lives were passing us by, and we rarely saw each other. Award-winning journalist Linda Ellerbee explains this phenomenon. When she was eight years old, she and her best friend Lucy spent the majority of their time trying to fly from the swings in Linda’s backyard. However, when Lucy’s parents bought a television, Linda no longer had someone to fly with. The flickering box in her living room had become Lucy’s entertainment, her friend. Linda Ellerbee remembers, “I never had another first best friend. I never learned to fly either. What’s more, I was right all along: television [ate my best friend].”

And so I am a little bit numb and a little less optimistic because we are being led inexorably toward compassion fatigue. Boston Phoenix writer Mark Leibovich explains that when we are constantly bombarded with tragic information like AIDS, homelessness, and drug addiction, we become immune to their horror. We don’t want to lose our optimism, so we become numb to it. Day after day, we listen to the news informing us of the latest murders, kidnappings, and accidental deaths. We begin to live by the words of Russian dictator Joseph Stalin, who said, “One death is a tragedy; a million, just statistics.”

In a way, compassion fatigue all started with an optimistic advertising campaign. Remember the ad “Save the Children”? With just 26 cents a day, you can save this child. The first time you see the ad, you are struck with guilt. The second time you see it, you linger over the photograph, and then turn the page. The third time you see it, you turn the page without hesitation. And the fourth time you see it you acknowledge with cynicism how the ad is crafted to manipulate us with guilt. In short, we have given up on optimism, we have given up on hope.

But what can we do? Well, most importantly, we must continue to humanize our challenge. For when we think about our problems as people—as men, as women, and especially as children—the answer is not compassion fatigue. It is compassion.

Now, I admit, selflessness is a hard sell. Self-sacrifice is never easy, and having optimism in my life is sometimes a challenge. But, hey, I’m . . . dumb enough to believe we ought to try.
Looking Back

Listed below are the major ideas discussed in this chapter.

- Introductory speeches serve two functions: to make the audience want to hear the speaker and to make the speaker want to address the audience.
- Introductory speeches refer to the occasion, name the speaker, build enthusiasm, share information, and explain why this speaker is giving this talk to this audience at this time.
- Presentation speeches should reflect the feelings of the group. These speeches usually state the name of the person receiving the award, explain the award's significance, describe how the recipient was selected, and highlight what makes this person unique.
- Speeches of acceptance are usually brief and impromptu but generally thank the group for the recognition, discuss the importance of the award, and thank supporters.
- The traditional after-dinner speech is entertaining; any humor used in it relates to a specific theme.
- Commencement speeches should both acknowledge the importance of the ceremony and honor the graduates.
- Commemorative speeches recall special events or pay tribute to individuals.
- A testimonial speech honors a living person; an eulogy honors the dead.
- An original oratory is a persuasive speech the contestant writes on a topic of his or her own choosing.
- In competitive extemporaneous speaking, the speaker draws a topic on a current event and prepares a speech within 30 minutes.
- Dramatic and humorous interpretation are contest events for students who want to perform works of literature.

Speech Vocabulary

In each of the following sentences, fill in the blank with the missing term.

speech of presentation
speech of acceptance
after-dinner speech
commencement address
commemorative speech
testimonial speech
eulogy
original oratory
dramatic interpretation
humorous interpretation

1. Audiences expect an _______________ to present a message in a light, if not humorous, way.
2. A _______________ acknowledges the importance of the ceremony and honors the graduates.
3. Testimonials and eulogies are two types of _______________.
4. When a star athlete hawks a particular brand of tennis shoe, that is a form of _______________.
5. A _______________ is generally thought of as a speech given to praise or honor someone who has died.
6. An _______________ is a speech you write on a topic of your own choosing.

Speech Online

Chapter Review For additional practice and assessment, go to glencoe.com and enter QuickPass code GS7800c17.
7. In the memorized ____________ event, the competitors are usually “acting from the waist up.”

8. If a classmate was to be publicly presented with a gift, you would prepare a ____________ for the occasion.

Academic Vocabulary

Choose two pairs from the following word list and describe how the words are alike or different.

reiterate dignitary miffed hoke
eloquent procession transformation converse

To Remember

Answer the following based on your reading of the chapter.

1. List five guidelines to follow in a speech of introduction.
2. Speeches of acceptance serve a double purpose: to ____________ and to ____________.
3. In his concession speech, ____________ compared himself to a boy who has stubbed his toe in the dark: “too old to cry, but it hurts too much to laugh.”
4. Ronald Reagan’s speech following the Challenger space shuttle disaster in 1986 is considered an inspiring example of a ____________ speech.
5. Kareem Abdul-Jabbar’s tribute to Earvin Johnson is a form of the ____________ speech.

To Do

1. Question your parents about their past. Choose one incident from the discussion and prepare a short speech on the topic “A Turning Point.”
2. Attend a speech tournament. After watching a few rounds of competition, be prepared to discuss the differences between what the speech competitors did and what you do in class.
3. Experienced speakers know that libraries contain reference works that are collections of humorous anecdotes. These anecdotes can be used to spice up an occasional speech. To learn how to use these valuable resources, find three humorous anecdotes on a general topic of your choosing—fashion, sports, education, health, or the like.
To Talk About

1. Some schools—perhaps yours—select students to speak at the graduation ceremony. How should these speakers be chosen? Based on their grades? Talent? Popularity? Who should select these speakers? Administrators? Teachers? Committees of teachers and students?

2. Most audiences expect after-dinner speeches to be entertaining. What are some topics you would find worthwhile and enjoyable? Why?

3. Lanny Naegelin, former coordinator for five high school speech and theater programs in San Antonio, Texas, believed that students involved in competitive sports received more public recognition than students involved in speech activities. If that was the case, was it fair? What can be done to educate the community about the value of speech?

4. Judging speech tournaments involves subjective evaluation. For example, a judge must choose one humorous interpretation over another. This process is analogous to deciding who is the funnier of two popular comedians. How can we judge artistic endeavors more fairly?

5. Your best friend has been invited to be the after-dinner speaker at a banquet honoring a basketball coach whose team had a losing record. What advice might you give your friend?

To Write About

1. You are invited to be a guest speaker at a banquet honoring students who have volunteered their time for community service. Write a speech of introduction for yourself.

2. Imagine that you have been asked to speak at your twenty-year high school class reunion. Write a brief speech in which you look back on how the world has changed.

3. Write an introduction for one of your classmates that could be used during the next series of assigned speeches in your class.

Related Speech Topics

Pay tribute to a personal hero.
Present an award or a gift.
Accept an award or a gift.
Introduce someone famous to the class.
Speak at a celebrity roast.
Give a toast that butters up.

The special-occasion speeches of one of the following:
Ronald Reagan
John F. Kennedy
Martin Luther King Jr.
Mark Twain
Madeleine Albright
Cesar Chávez
Sally Ride