



Common Core Language Standards: Reading Informational Speeches Focus: Written vs. Spoken Oration - Brief Research Project Day 3

Overview

This lesson, a final element of a three-part unit on examining informational speeches, compares the spoken with the written word in an examination of Elie Wiesel's Nobel Prize acceptance speech. Students then explore the impact of the author's rhetorical choices.

Standards

- 9-10.RI.1. Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
- 9-10.RI.2. Determine a central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.
- 9-10.RI.3. Analyze how the author unfolds an analysis or series of ideas or events, including the order in which the points are made, how they are introduced and developed, and the connections that are drawn between them.
- 9-10.RI.4. Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language of a court opinion differs from that of a newspaper).
- 9-10.RI.5. Analyze in detail how an author's ideas or claims are developed and refined by particular sentences, paragraphs, or larger portions of a text (e.g., a section or chapter).
- 9-10.RI.6. Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text and analyze how an author uses rhetoric to advance that point of view or purpose.
- 9-10.RI.7. Analyze various accounts of a subject told in different mediums (e.g., a person's life story in both print and multimedia), determining which details are emphasized in each account.



- 9-10.RI.8. Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, assessing whether the reasoning is valid and the evidence is relevant and sufficient; identify false statements and fallacious reasoning.
- 9-10.RI.9. Analyze seminal U.S. documents of historical and literary significance (e.g., Washington’s Farewell Address, the Gettysburg Address, Roosevelt’s Four Freedoms speech, King’s “Letter from Birmingham Jail”), including how they address related themes and concepts.

Objectives

- To consider the informational texts in their intended form - the spoken word.
- To see how the orator’s skills add to or detract from the purpose of the speech.
- To begin to see how the visual - the use of presentation/audio/video - can enhance understanding of a work for students.

Materials

- Computers
- Projector
- Folder that all students can access for saving documents
- Fresh copies of [“Hope, Despair and Memory” by Elie Wiesel](#) for students who forget theirs

Activity 1

Presentation Reflection

At this juncture, students should be through with their brief research on the *zeitgeist* of the speeches they have chosen and should also be mostly through with presentation of the information they gleaned during their research.

End with the group assigned to discuss Elie Wiesel’s speech, [“Hope, Despair and Memory.”](#)

Whole-Group Discussion

Discuss the information gained about the various works. The following may be helpful questions to focus on or return to in class discussion:

Optional Discussion Questions

- In what way did this speech reflect some of the questions or concerns of the era?



- In what way did this speech alter or change people’s attitudes toward its subject?
- Which of the speeches was the most effective for you as an audience?
- What element (s) contributed most to that speech’s effectiveness? Why did you think so?
- Which element(s) were less effective? Why did you think so?

Activity 2

Printed Word/Spoken Word

Discuss with students the fact that often the power of a speech is only partly contained in the words it uses. Another – and sometimes greater – part of its power lies in the manner of delivery, in the physical expressions, gestures, intonations, and voice of the speaker who delivers that speech.

Instruct students to pull out their copies of Wiesel’s speech, [“Hope, Despair and Memory,”](#) and to take a few minutes to look over the material before jotting down a few notes on their emotional and intellectual reaction to the speech as it is written on the page.

Optional Annotation Questions

- What questions do Wiesel’s statements raise for you? Think, “Why did Wiesel say [xyz]?” “Why did he say [xyz] in this way?”
- What element (s) contributed most to that speech’s effectiveness? Why did you think so?
- Which element(s) were less effective? Why did you think so?

Then instruct students to watch Wiesel’s delivery of the speech, noting their reaction to this format. Tell students to pay close attention to those physical and nonverbal aspects of Wiesel’s delivery – his intonation, his volume, the rate of his speech, his body language, his eye contact, his gestures.

Resource: Watch [Video of Elie Wiesel](#) delivering “Hope, Despair and Memory” at the Nobel institute.



Small-Group Work

T-Chart

Have students set up their papers divided in half lengthwise with a top crossbar, like a T. Label one half of the chart “Wiesel in Print” and the other “Wiesel Oration.” In small groups, students can discuss and the differences that students noted in the two mediums - emphasis, mood, tone, and effect on them at specific parts of the speech.

Understanding Rhetorical Impact

Sometimes, students need to take something apart before they can understand why it’s put together the way it is. This exercise essentially allows them to understand the impact Wiesel’s rhetorical choices of diction, figurative language, and parallel structure made on their understanding of and emotional connection to the text.

Procedure

- Assign the most poignant bit of Wiesel’s speech as determined by the class (around one hundred words) to the students and instruct them to rewrite the section as follows:

Altering the Speech

- First, alter the **diction**. Select the most important and powerful words and choose less-effective synonyms for the same concept.
- Remove all **figurative language** and replace it with literal language instead.
- Deconstruct all parallel structure by eliminating it and replacing it with non-parallel construction.

IMPORTANT: You must keep as much of the literal meaning as possible. Wiesel’s core message must remain in your alterations.

Whole-Group Discussion

Have several students read their alterations for the class. After each one, discuss student reaction to the alteration and see which version they prefer – the original or the remake. Following this point, you can look at the effect the stylistic choices Wiesel uses has on his message.



Closing

Review what has been learned in the unit. Remind students that they have the seminal works and at least a cursory look at the nuances of the original.

Extension/Homework Suggestion

Have students go home and rewrite a bit of a few other texts to begin looking at how the original structure and language aids in creating a powerful rhetorical piece.

Resources Specific to this Lesson:

- Zeitgeist Definition from [Wikipedia](#)
- The Jung Page - [Zeitgeist in terms of Jung](#)
- [Jung on the Psyche](#) - Youtube video
- [The Jung Center of Houston](#)
- [Carl Jung](#) - a brief biography and summary of Jungian theories by Dr. C. George Boeree
- [Literary Archetypes](#) - a list
- [The Declaration of Independence](#)
- ["Speech to the Second Virginia Convention"](#) by Patrick Henry
- ["Second Inaugural Address"](#) by Abraham Lincoln
- ["State of the Union Address"](#) by Franklin Delano Roosevelt
- ["I Am an American Day Address"](#) by Learned Hand
- ["Remarks to the Senate in Support of a Declaration of Conscience"](#) by Margaret Chase Smith
- ["Hope, Despair and Memory"](#) by Elie Wiesel
- ["Address to Students at Moscow State University"](#) by Ronald Reagan

Google Docs

- [Demo](#)
- [Getting started](#)

General for these seminal texts:

- American History Sites
- [National Endowment for the Humanities](#)
- [Teaching American History](#)
- [Lessons on Abraham Lincoln's first election](#)
- [Our Documents](#) - a resource for American Documents
- [American Rhetoric](#) - a resource for American speeches



- [The Charters of Freedom](#) - original documents
- [JSTOR Judge Hand](#) information
- [Brief biography of Learned Hand](#)
- [Senate Art & History Home](#)
- Classic Senate Speeches: [Margaret Chase Smith's](#)
- [Senate Biography Margaret Chase Smith](#)
- [Official Site of the Nobel Prize](#)
- [Video of Elie Wiesel](#) giving his Nobel speech
- [Ronald Reagan Library](#)
- [Video of Reagan](#) delivering his "Address to Students at Moscow State University"