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The Art of Public Speaking: Lessons from the Greatest Speeches in History

Course Guidebook

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Professor John R. Hale, Director of Liberal Studies at the University of Louisville, is an archaeologist with fieldwork experience in England, Scandinavia, Portugal, Greece, Turkey, and the Ohio River Valley. At the University of Louisville, Professor Hale teaches introductory courses on archaeology and specialized courses on the Bronze Age, the ancient Greeks, the Roman world, Celtic cultures, Vikings, and nautical and underwater archaeology.

Archaeology has been the focus of Professor Hale's career, from his undergraduate studies at Yale University to his research at the University of Cambridge, where he received his Ph.D. The subject of his dissertation was the Bronze Age ancestry of the Viking longship, a study that involved field surveys of ship designs in prehistoric rock art in southern Norway and Sweden. During more than 30 years of archaeological work, Professor Hale has excavated at a Romano-British town in Lincolnshire, England, as well as at a Roman villa in Portugal; has carried out interdisciplinary studies of ancient oracle sites in Greece and Turkey, including the famed Delphic oracle; and has participated in an undersea search in Greek waters for lost fleets from the Greek and Persian wars. In addition, Professor Hale is a member of a scientific team developing and refining a method for dating mortar, concrete, and plaster from ancient buildings—a method that employs radiocarbon analysis with an accelerator mass spectrometer.

Professor Hale published *Lords of the Sea: The Epic Story of the Athenian Navy and the Birth of Democracy* in 2009. In addition, he has published his work in *Antiquity*, *Journal of Roman Archaeology*, *The Classical Bulletin*, and *Scientific American*. Most of Professor Hale's work is interdisciplinary and involves collaborations with geologists, chemists, nuclear physicists, historians, zoologists, botanists, physical anthropologists, geographers, and art historians.

Professor Hale has deep experience as a public speaker, having given thousands of talks in his career. He has received numerous awards for his distinguished teaching, including the Panhellenic Teacher of the Year Award and the Delphi Center Award. He has toured the United States and Canada as a lecturer for the Archaeological Institute of America and has presented lecture series at museums and universities in Finland, South Africa, Australia, and New Zealand.

Professor Hale is the instructor of three other Great Courses: *Exploring the Roots of Religion*, *The Greek and Persian Wars*, and *Classical Archaeology of Ancient Greece and Rome*. ■

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The Art of Public Speaking: Lessons from the Greatest Speeches in History

Scope:

How should one go about learning how to write and present a speech, no matter the occasion? Why not study lessons from history's greatest speeches and speakers? This unique course explores the greatest speeches in history and sets out practical tips that we can use for any public speaking situation. Our historic speechmakers include Demosthenes, Saint Paul, Queen Elizabeth, Patrick Henry, Tecumseh, and Abraham Lincoln. The lectures use historical case studies to glean insight into every aspect of public speaking, from topic and style to opening and closing. The power of a call to action: Abraham Lincoln's oration at Gettysburg. The power of presentation: 55-year-old Queen Elizabeth delivering a stirring call to arms in the field—"to live or die amongst you all"—among soldiers on the eve of battle with the Spanish Armada. The power of sharing a vision: Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech. We unlock the secrets of history's greatest speeches in a course that is as practical as it is fascinating.

Each of the 12 lectures offers take-away points that are illustrated with a presentation of the featured speech, including background on the speaker and the context of the speech. Additional insights are provided by references to many other historic speakers. We will consider how their lessons apply to everyday modern situations—eulogies, reports, political addresses, legal arguments, business proposals, toasts, conferences, pregame speeches, sermons, classroom lectures, and "how-to" explanations—in which you may find yourself called upon to speak in public. ■

Overcome Obstacles—Demosthenes of Athens

Lecture 1

Rhetoric is as noble an art as exists on this planet; rhetoric is the art of clothing in words and in gestures and in presentation to a group the ideas that you have in the most effective way possible.

Winston Churchill once said, "There is nothing like oratory," and to paraphrase him, he said, "It is a skill that can turn a commoner into a king." I believe that's true; I believe that public speaking is a skill that everyone should try to acquire. We're going to have 12 guest lecturers in the course of our time together: I want to share this podium with the likes of Demosthenes of Athens, Queen Elizabeth I of England, Martin Luther King Jr., Mahatma Gandhi, Abraham Lincoln, and many others. They will each be featured in a speech or set of speeches that made a difference to the world and to them, but more important, speeches that make a point about public speaking. I hope that you will end this course with a greater understanding of what makes good public speaking, a greater appreciation of what an important part of your life public speaking can become, and greater incentive to tackle the challenge of getting over your obstacles and starting to speak in public yourself.

The genius of rhetoric that I would like to have lead us into this world of speechmaking is Demosthenes of Athens, who lived in the 5th century B.C. Demosthenes was a genius who, at a time when Athens's fortunes were sinking, tried to revive his city's power through his own speeches. But nobody would have guessed from looking at him as a boy that it could have happened. Demosthenes was born to a rich family, but his father died when he was very small. He was brought up by the womenfolk in the family, outside the public sphere. He did not go to the gymnasium with the other boys; he did not toughen himself up. He grew up alone with books. One of his books was *The History of the Peloponnesian War* by Thucydides, another Athenian. Demosthenes had a copy that he read eight times; he memorized lots of it, and what he was memorizing in many cases were speeches.

Demosthenes's first step was to try to become a good speaker by opening up scrolls, reading somebody else's speech, and committing it to memory; because in Athens, if you were speaking in a law court of the public Assembly, you had to speak from memory. Demosthenes soon learned that he had some serious problems to overcome: Physically, he was weak; he walked around stooped-shouldered with a frown all the time. He had a speech impediment; we don't know exactly what, but it may have been a lisp. People laughed at him when he spoke as a boy, and he knew he was going to have to get over that if he intended to have a career as a public speaker as a man.

When Demosthenes turned 18, he discovered that his guardians had embezzled all of his inheritance from his father. The only way that he would be able to get it back was to go to court, where he would have to speak for himself. So he went down to the seashore where he could be completely alone and began a course of self-improvement to make him a man that people would listen to in a court of law. He used a little prop, a little aid, that he invented himself as a method for improving elocution: a pebble. To get over his speech impediment, he would put a pebble in his mouth, and he would then speak, working to get his tongue and to get his palate and to get his lips around that pebble so that he could be understood even with that stone in his mouth. He would take those speeches by Thucydides and others and train his own speaking apparatus—tongue, palate, lips—so that even with the pebble, he could still be clearly understood. In this way, Demosthenes overcame the first of his obstacles: the speech impediment.

In polite conversation, it's supposed to be a bad thing to talk about yourself; in public speaking, most of the time it's essential.

Second, he was aware of his weakness of breath. He began to run up hills, declaiming speeches that he'd memorized until he got to the point that his wind was so good, he could run and speak the speech and not sound out of breath. Finally, he practiced speaking at the seashore, trying to outshout the waves themselves so that when he got up in front of that jury of 501 people or in front of the entire Assembly of Athens, everybody would be able to hear him. There has never been such a concentrated attack on the art

of rhetoric as young Demosthenes undertook while still a teenager. He went to the court and won his case. Then his vision grew wider: He wanted to speak in public; he wanted to share the idealism that he had acquired from reading Thucydides's history about the glorious days of Athens in his own time of decadence and decay.

By this time, Demosthenes had become a sea captain, in charge of a warship. This had a powerful effect on his credibility; he could speak from personal knowledge. I urge you to do that in every speech you make. If you're toasting a wedding couple, talk about your personal knowledge of them; if you're lecturing on a subject, talk about your own experiences with that subject. In polite conversation it's supposed to be a bad thing to talk about yourself; in public speaking, most of the time it's essential.

Demosthenes used his new experience as a sea captain in crafting metaphors and images, painting pictures with words. People remembered his words until their dying day; and that's another thing for you to consider as you plan your public speeches, be they short or long: Someone out there may find in what you say the words that crystallize a feeling, an event, a moment and remember them as the words of Demosthenes were remembered by his fellow countrymen. ■

Take-Away Points

1. Make up your mind that you can and will overcome fears and obstacles.
2. Practice, practice, practice every aspect of public speaking.
3. Use cross-training in acting, sports, and other fields to improve your skills.
4. Work on memorization.
5. Accept early failures, and persist with your efforts.

Practice Your Delivery—Patrick Henry

Lecture 2

Gentlemen may cry, Peace, Peace—but there is no peace. The war is actually begun! The next gale that sweeps from the north will bring to our ears the clash of resounding arms! Our brethren are already in the field! Why stand we here idle? What is it that gentlemen wish? What would they have? Is life so dear, or peace so sweet, as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God! I know not what course others may take; but as for me, give me liberty or give me death!

—Patrick Henry, "Give Me Liberty or Give Me Death" speech

It's a fascinating fact that more of your impression on the audience is going to be made by the voice and the body than by the words themselves. You can completely undercut a great speech by reciting it in a monotone or by being uncertain and monotonous in your gestures and your delivery with your body. Nothing should ever happen that is not motivated by something in the words, but you will infinitely reinforce the impact of your words with proper use of the voice and the body.

We're going to turn to one of the giants of the American Revolution—Patrick Henry, who was speaking in the Virginia House of Burgesses in 1775 trying to get his fellow members to vote to join the Revolution. Patrick Henry gave the famous "Give Me Liberty or Give Me Death" speech in order to get Virginia off the fence and clearly behind the revolutionaries. Here are the words of an eyewitness who was in the House of Burgesses when Patrick Henry spoke on that day in 1775:

> The tendons of his neck stood out white and rigid like whipcords. His voice rose louder and louder until the walls of the building and all within them seemed to shake and rock in its tremendous vibrations. Finally his pale face and glaring eyes became terrible to look upon.

At the words "or give me death" at the end of his speech, Patrick Henry plunged an imaginary dagger into his heart and collapsed back into his seat. You have to be careful on the gestures; there were things that must have seemed dramatic and exciting in 1775 that might seem to us over the top. Nonetheless, it's very clear that what got people so excited was the theatricality of his delivery. When he finished, there was cheering, yelling, applauding, and an almost unanimous vote that Virginia would join the Revolution. A lot of the power came not from the words but from what that anonymous observer told us: the passionate action that put the words across.

Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, LC-USZ62-102566.

Patrick Henry, whose impassioned speech inspired Virginia to join in the American Revolution.

The action of a speech has two parts: the voice and the body. Let's talk about the voice first. It may never have occurred to you how many elements make up your vocal production in terms of coloring the meaning and the emotion of every speech you make. There's volume, pitch, tone, pauses (that is, silence); there's also the pace at which you speak, the accents you put on individual words, and finally the inflection of a phrase. All of this is part of speech, and to some extent you need to be making conscious decisions about how you are going to inflect your words in order to give them the utmost meaning and force.

Volume is the easiest tool here: You have to use variety; you have to save the *forte* and the *piano*, the loud and the soft, for specific moments, or make your speech a crescendo, as Patrick Henry is said to have done with the "Give Me Liberty or Give Me Death" speech. Then there's pitch: You should vary the pitch from low to high, with most of the speech given in a comfortable middle range and high and low pitch used for dramatic value. The way to go after this, I believe, is cross-training through singing. I would recommend signing up for an amateur chorus or just singing in the shower. Singing will

also help you think about enunciation, breath control, supporting your voice, and projecting your voice to a large crowd or in a big space.

In addition to voice, of course, we have the body. The most important part of your body as you speak is your eye. You may remember that Patrick Henry was famous for this: That observer that saw him give the "Liberty or Death" speech said, "He fixed the audience with a glare." He was trying to hold them fast, hold their attention. If you are looking straight into a person's eyes, it's very hard for them to look away, and the intensity of your meaning and your emotion will come through to them very clearly.

Beyond the eye, it's really the body that we're talking about. First rule: Stand up straight; make the most of your height, whatever it is. Standing straight suggests assurance, conviction, and pride; all of that needs to come across when you are speaking. Then there are the gestures: Remember that you shouldn't move unless it is inspired by or reinforcing a phrase or a word. Use your hands as you would in ordinary speech; don't work up a separate set of oratorical poses; simply make it seem natural. Your gestures and the movements of your body should all convince the audience you're alive. Nobody wound you up and pressed the On button; you're a human being like them, and the gestures will help reinforce that impression. ■

Take-Away Points

1. Use your voice and body language to reinforce your message.

2. Always match your voice and movements to specific words and emotions.

3. When you first start out as a speaker, mark the tone and gestures into your text as reminders; they are as important as the words themselves.

4. Establish and maintain eye contact with your audience.

5. In cases where you are not inciting a revolution, smile.

Be Yourself—Elizabeth I to Her Army

Lecture 3

My own experience with talking about myself has been that it transformed my lectures, my pep talks as a coach, my explanations of how to do things in the field for students into something that they pay more attention to and that they see more clearly and that at the end we feel like more of a team.

In this lecture, we tackle one of the most important, but most neglected, aspects of public speaking: talking about yourself. There's a famous man in American history, Dale Carnegie, who trained hundreds, if not thousands, of people in the art of public speaking; and he always said that the single besetting sin of most beginners was to talk in abstractions and to talk in impersonal terms, ignoring his mantra that was, "Be yourself, and let your audience know who you are."

One great speaker who gives us an example of how you should bring yourself into your words is Queen Elizabeth I of England. We are going to follow her in her barge from her palace in London, down the River Thames, to Tilbury, where her army is assembling to try to fend off the most serious invasion threat her island has ever known, at least since the time of William the Conqueror half a millennium earlier: the threat of the Spanish Armada in 1588. It looked hopeless for England: Elizabeth's fleet was undermanned, underequipped, underfinanced. It was up to her to put some heart into those men, and she did it perhaps in the most surprising way possible: She did it by talking about herself.

Public speaking can make people better, because it gets them in touch with who they really are.

The key moment in her speech is when she confesses her sense of her own weakness: "I know I have the body of a weak and feeble woman." By taking that tack, Elizabeth has drawn them in, drawn their sympathies to her, opened herself up to them, admitted her weakness, and I'm sure created

feelings of courage and determination in that army that she could have gotten in no other way. She is a model for us of how you tackle a very difficult situation. Opening up to people in public speaking, as in private life, is the way to establish a true relationship.

Queen Elizabeth I of England motivated her outnumbered troops by opening up about her personal weakness.

Queen Elizabeth talks about laying her own honor and life down in the dust, dying with them if necessary. She has pledged to them she will not run away, that their danger is her danger. Because she opened up about something that they must have all been wondering about—the feeling of fighting for a woman, a weak woman, not a soldier-king as they were used to with her father and her grandfather—she tackled what was on everyone's mind, and she made it a strength. If you will open up about weaknesses, if you will open up about failures, you, too, can create the feeling that out of these past failures and out of these inherent weaknesses and your struggle to overcome them comes strength that you can share with your listeners. It's a great way to get a crowd on your side.

There are lots of ways in which you can talk to people about yourself. It doesn't have to be just weaknesses; it can be personal things to you that help people understand you. In fact, I think public speaking can make people better, because it gets them in touch with who they really are; it puts them in a forum where they can say anything about themselves and know that it will only add to the sense of authenticity, of communication, of revelation, and finally of communication with the audience. Nobody's perfect; we all feel closer to people who we know through and through and who have felt confident enough to share their weaknesses and failures with us. ■

Take-Away Points

1. Explain your personal connection to the subject of your speech.
2. Share your own emotions, beliefs, and ideas, and don't shy away from revealing your weaknesses and failures.
3. Establish a personal link with your listeners at the start of your speech.
4. Use plain, direct language, but never talk down to your audience.
5. Don't hesitate to read your speech from a script if necessary.
6. Make sure that your audience will be able to hear you.

Find Your Humorous Voice—Will Rogers

Lecture 4

The actress Meryl Streep pointed out one of the reasons why you need to be careful in deciding where you want to go in this realm of humor. Once when she was accepting an award or a tribute, she reflected back on a recent film that she had made where she had played for almost the first time a comic part and, laughing herself, ruefully she said, "Dying is easy. Comedy is hard."

One of the things to think about in preparing yourself to become a public speaker is humor, jokes. This is a very personal choice that you have to make, and in many societies it wouldn't arise, because many societies do not equate giving a public speech with telling jokes. Our obsession with the idea that if you're going to stand up you're probably going to need to be funny is a very old one in the English-speaking world. But you need to be careful with humor. You can't tell what effect your jokes will have on a given group; often you will offend people more than you please them with a joke or with a satirical story; it's like a minefield when you get out there on that humorous terrain. Yet many audiences expect it, and I will tell you this: There's nothing that unifies an audience more than laughter. If you feel it in you to use jokes and to use humor, this is one more element you can put in your arsenal of tools as you start to approach your work as a speaker.

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Will Rogers was a master at using comedy to focus attention on the substance of his speech.

American humorist Will Rogers started as a standup comedian. He had a very good career in films and was highly respected in America—so much so that, as we will see, he was invited by Columbia University to be an after-dinner speaker at a very important event.

The year was 1924; Columbia, with its president, Butler, had invited lots of their biggest donors, all of them alumni, to come to the college. Here is an excerpt:

> President Butler paid me a compliment in mentioning my name in his introductory remarks this evening. ... I am glad he did that, because I got the worst of it last week. The Prince of Wales, in speaking of the sights of America, mentioned the Woolworth Building, the subway, the slaughterhouse, Will Rogers, and the Ford factory. He could at least put me ahead of the hogs.

We can see in his complete speech all the different kinds of humor that he brings in without ever—as we might think he would put it—stooping to tell a simple joke. He starts, deadpan, with a long section about being thankful to President Butler for mentioning his name at the opening ceremony and his gratitude because he was badly treated, as he thought, by the Prince of Wales. We expect a joke coming but we're still not getting it, and then we start to sense it when we understand the charge that he's making against the Prince of Wales: that this visitor, in listing the sites of America, mentioned the Woolworth building, the subway, the slaughterhouse, Will Rogers, and the Ford factory. Pretty honorable mention to be in that company; but I'm sure there was a big pause there while he let the audience try to work out what was coming, and then he used the brand of humor that involves crudeness and low language in a setting where you expect everything to be prim and proper with his sentence, "He could at least put me ahead of the hogs." Especially mentioning hogs at a dinner is something that seems a little incongruous and that low language, that crudeness—very mild, certainly in our eyes, but stronger back in 1924—must have gotten his first big laugh of the evening.

Will Rogers is playing the part of a court jester.

I want to point out something about the nature of this humor: Will Rogers is playing the part of a court jester—something we're all familiar with from the Middle Ages—that privileged person who is allowed to entertain the company with jokes made at members of the company that would be

completely unacceptable in a normal social setting. The jester can get away with it because it's under the cloak of humor, and the laughter is felt to be in that same realm of laughter that we consider the special province of roasts, those ceremonial dinners where someone is toasted with jokes and barbs and witticisms at their expense. He's doing that same thing at these men who are, in fact, the guests of honor at the dinner because they are the men who've given all that money to Columbia.

We have here some techniques of comedy—the buildup, the surprise, the incongruity, the hyperbole—all of which are things that Will Rogers is a master of; but please notice, every single laugh that he evokes is making a point, every laugh is helping to focus attention on the real substance of his speech. Will Rogers was the right man for President Butler to invite if he wanted a memorable speech. Most after-dinner speeches are imminently forgettable; I'm sure the people who were there in Columbia University's dining hall in 1924 remembered this for the rest of their lives, even if the jokes were at their expense. ■

Take-Away Points

1. Laugh at yourself before you laugh at others.

2. Comedy helps relax your audience, especially at formal occasions.

3. Use humor to focus on your theme, not to distract from it.

4. Jokes can illuminate serious points, providing new thoughts and perspectives.

5. Your humor should reflect your own personality.

6. Nothing unifies an audience quicker than laughter.

Make It a Story—Marie Curie on Discovery

Lecture 5

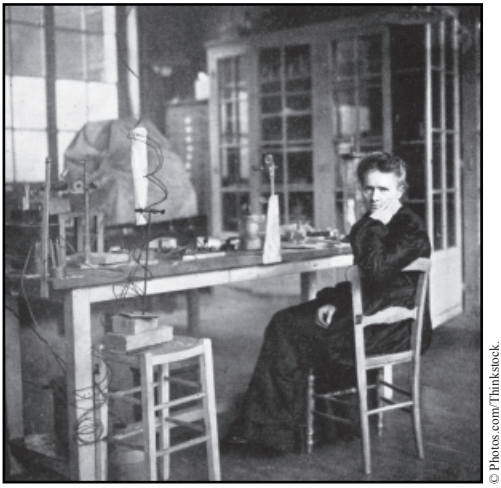
I like the word "compose" because it literally means "put together"; it's also something we use for music—that's how composers create their works—and we're going to do it in the same way. Just as they use blocks, tunes, movements, we're going to begin by thinking of ways to put your speech together on a large scale with large building blocks, and then get down to the smaller parts, the individual word choices and so on.

Now we embark on the second phase of our course: We are going to roll up our sleeves, settle down to work, and compose that speech. The speech has two components: It has the substance of the speech, and it has the organization or the manner of presenting it to your audience. The substance of the speech involves coming up with ideas, coming up with facts (you're not literally inventing the facts; that is never a good idea): using your powers of invention to create a mass of facts, of details, of impressions, of narratives, of all kinds of things that you want to convey to your audience. What is it that gives them form and organization? Deciding what comes one after another in the course of your speech. You can give the illusion of three dimensions in your speech; it doesn't have to be a linear story. If you have your opening and then your body of your speech and your conclusion, and in those you tuck in digressions or refer back to things you talked about earlier, you begin to create the sense of three dimensions.

I've always felt that something that is relegated to a minor part of most textbooks on public speaking and rhetoric is the most important thing: storytelling. I believe that the human brain was designed to remember stories; it was not designed to remember facts. But you can make facts memorable by attaching them to stories, to narratives—the same kinds of things that you had read to you as a child. Those stories held your attention because something was happening to a protagonist, and you wanted to know how it ended. If you want to write the most successful speeches, you will find the stories in your subject matter. Pull out those stories, arrange the details and the information that you're trying to get across into the story. Believe

me, if you do that, you will not only find it easier to remember your speech, but the audience will also stay with you more closely, pay more attention, understand it better, react with greater grief or laughter or interest, and remember it better.

Let's look at someone who I think is a remarkable example of this: Marie Curie, the famous discoverer of radium and two-time Nobel Prize winner. She was asked to give a graduation speech at Vassar College. She almost never gave public speeches; she was very modest and somewhat shy. How did she approach it? She decided to tell a story. What the people at Vassar were hoping she would do—being this eminent world-famous scientist and a great example of a woman who had broken through all kinds of barriers in terms of acceptance in the scientific community—was to inspire the graduating class of 1921.



By making it a story, Marie Curie made her journey of scientific discovery accessible to a lay audience.

She wanted to tell them all about radium. It's a complicated subject, and she knew that not many of the young women were scientists like herself—how did she go about making it memorable? Let's plunge right in and see:

> Radium is no more a baby, it is more than 20 years old, but the conditions of the discovery were somewhat peculiar, and so it is always of interest to remember them and to explain them.

Look at what she does right from the start: "Radium is no more a baby"; she's almost like a mother talking about her child. She also personifies

radium so you feel radium has adventures; radium comes of age, 20 years old. You won't stop of thinking of radium now as the protagonist of this little piece that she's going to tell, this story.

I've always felt that something that is relegated to a minor part of most textbooks on public speaking and rhetoric is the most important thing: storytelling.

She's going to tell the story of how radium was discovered. This will not be an encyclopedia-entry-style, reasoned presentation of what's most important about radium; she's going to tell it as a narrative: how she and her husband began, how they got into it. She is arranging this as a process of discovery: We may not be going with her in terms of knowing and understanding exactly each point, but we understand we're on a journey with her. Skipping ahead a bit:

> But then the activity was not what I would expect.

This is a great narrative device: surprise, wonderment, not what you thought was going to happen.

> And I wanted to find and to separate that element.

We obviously have two protagonists here: She is the questing intelligence, she is the hero in search of that lost treasure; and this unknown element that is out there—radium, although introduced at the beginning, is still not understood to exist by her at this point in the story—that's what she's going after.

This is a great speech; this is a speech that allows everybody in the audience to feel they went on a journey with that discoverer, and that at the end they're standing with her on the mountaintop that she has scaled, looking at the way that she came, and being urged by her to find their own mountains and to climb them in their turn. She has not used colorful language—she was obviously not a practiced public speaker or storyteller—but she had that instinct to take the important points, arrange them as they came up like

bubbles from the deep of an unknown thing, and then share the excitement of the discovery and the hard facts of the discovery. She is a scientist; she wants to teach her audience.

If you will do this, if you will seek out the narrative, you will find, first of all, that your speech stays in your mind more clearly; second, that your audience will be with you, and because you're telling a story you'll spend more time looking straight into their eyes and keeping them with you; and third, that when the event is over, years later, after you may have forgotten the occasion and the speech, you will be met by people who thank you for telling that story and let you know how much it's meant to them. ■

Take-Away Points

1. Use stories and narratives to make your speech easy to follow and the details easy to understand and remember.

2. Clearly identify your theme at the beginning of your speech.

3. Include vivid and memorable details that bring your subject to life.

4. Anticipate your audience's questions, and provide the answers in the body of your speech.

Use the Power of Three—Paul to His People

Lecture 6

If you were told that Winston Churchill once said during World War II that all that he could offer the British people was "blood, sweat, and tears," you would say, "I knew that"; you'd be wrong. What he actually said in that famous speech was "I have nothing to offer you but blood, toil, tears, and sweat"; a foursome. The popular mind could not hold onto that foursome; the "toil" had to go. ... Nothing shows me the power of three more strongly than this fact.

In our last lecture, we talked about my belief that it's very important to make your speech, wherever possible, a story; and it's a well-known fact that every story has three parts: a beginning, a middle, and an end. This lecture's continuation is about tripartite structures and presenting things in threes. Just as I believe the human brain was designed to remember stories but not masses of facts, I believe the human mind was also designed to find threes satisfying, and to feel that something presented in threes has made its case. Two of something seems in opposition; three of something seems a completion. There can be threes in terms of three modifiers for a noun, the tripartite story we just talked about, or three phrases or examples. All of these things are tremendously important things to consider as you lay out that speech and begin to organize your material within it.

To get into this world of threes, I want to plunge us all into the oratory of what I think is perhaps the single most inspired piece of prose ever conceived: The famous 13th chapter from the first letter that Paul wrote to the Corinthians. We have to talk first about the word, the subject, of this talk that Paul is giving to us. In Greek, the word is *agape*, just like "agape," or "open." *Agape* means "an open welcome"; it means tolerance, getting along with people, and treating everyone alike.

The Corinthians—this congregation that Paul had helped to start—were quarreling among themselves, and he's writing to them about getting along and what really matters in this world. Here is the conclusion as an example.

Notice how much of this incredible piece of writing is governed by this rule of threes:

> When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face; now I know in part; but then I shall know even as also I am known. And now abideth faith, hope, agape, these three: but the greatest of these is agape.

It's often said when people are talking to you about making your speech, your public talk, in a three-part form, that the introduction and the body of the speech and the conclusion play very simple roles. You will sometimes see this sort of mantra: First, tell them what you are going to tell them; second, in the body, tell them; and then, in the conclusion, tell them again what you told them. This seems to me a counsel of despair and desperation; who wants to really hear things three times? Paul doesn't give you things three times; you feel you know where you are at every point in this wonderful sermon, but there's not the kind of repetition that the model implies. I believe in the three-part structure, but I believe those are the wrong things to put in the parts.

Two of something seems in opposition; three of something seems a completion.

What do we have in the first part, the introduction? He has made you curious about *agape*. Instead of telling you what he's going to say about it, he has announced it as the subject of his sermon and he has filled you with wonder and questions and confusion about exactly what it is; how can this rather everyday kind of quality of an open, tolerant welcome be tied up with these men and angels and sounding brasses?

Now we go on to the body of the speech: The body of the speech carries your message. It should be easy to follow; the forms should be clear, the diction, the choice of words, the presentation should all help the person follow your meaning as you go along. Having begun to feel that he's gotten you on

board, he's willing to bring back some of the stuff from the introduction to unify the whole speech, thematically and in tone.

He finally comes to a conclusion. Please, follow Paul's example and make the conclusion open up, broaden, shed new light, bring in more ideas and more feeling. How does he do that? Suddenly, we're back to our Lecture 3: Be personal; make it about yourself. It has not been so far, but now he signals a change; he brings it home. We're getting a sense of chords being struck again and again, of the thing bounding, and finally that great surprise with things brought in that you haven't even been talking about in this final triad. In fact, I would recommend you never repeat yourself in your conclusion. I think there are few more deadening words than either "To sum up" or "As I said before"; people's minds switch off. The end of your speech should be a climax, not a sinking back to a summary or repetition of what came before. ■

Paul's use of tripartite structures heightened his extraordinary imagery.

Take-Away Points

1. Construct your speech in three parts: introduction, body, and conclusion.

2. Create a rhythm with clauses, examples, and parallel sentences in groups of three.

3. Use adjectives and other short sequences of words in threes.

Build a Logical Case—Susan B. Anthony

Lecture 7

I believe if you can learn from our great guest professors, if you can take to heart what they show you about the step-by-step progression of building a logical speech, your logic will be able to prevail in almost any argument that you choose to make.

In this lecture, we consider a kind of speech that you often have to deliver: a factual speech where you will be building a logical case. This is a speech in which you are stating some principles at the beginning and proving a point by the end. It's important if you're in situations involving law or political situations; it's important if you're giving a religious speech, a sermon, where you're making a point based on holy writ and carried through to something that applies to modern times; it's important in business, for sales or for promoting the idea of a new activity for your company. In any of these cases, you must build a logical case to be credible.

Susan B. Anthony was an American of the mid-19th century famous for her work trying to secure the vote for women in America. In 1872, she had walked into a barbershop—which was a voter registration place—and demanded the right to register; and when she cowed the people there into submission and did register, she was then accused of a crime and fined $100. She never paid that fine, but starting in the following year she gave the speech that would become her signature speech on the subject of voters' rights.

Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, LC-DIG-ggbain-30124.

Susan B. Anthony built a logical case to illustrate the necessity of women's suffrage.

I'll be reading parts of the speech and then breaking it down as we go so that we can follow the process of her logos, her use of logic, from beginning to end, creating a straight, arrow-like trajectory from the bow to the target.

> Friends and fellow citizens, I stand before you tonight under indictment for the alleged crime of having voted at the last presidential election, without having a lawful right to vote.

That's her introduction; that's as personal as she's going to get. But she needed to explain her relationship to this issue, this logical problem, for you to have belief in her, for her to be credible to you as someone that needs to speak on this point and that you want to listen to. Now she presents the axiom, the unassailable truth on which her argument will be based:

> The preamble of the federal Constitution says: "We the people of the United States."

What's she going to get into now? Definitions of terms; very important to anybody building a logical case:

> It was we, the people; not we, the white male citizens. ... And it is a downright mockery to talk to women of their enjoyment of the blessings of liberty while they are denied the use of the only means of securing them provided by this democratic-republican government—the ballot.

She's already gotten to that hardcore nub of that whole issue: the ballot, the right to vote.

> For any state to make sex a qualification that must ever result in the disfranchisement of one entire half of the people is to pass a bill of attainder, or an ex post facto law, and is therefore a violation of the supreme law of the land.

We continue:

> The only question left to be settled now is: Are women persons? And I hardly believe any of our opponents will have the hardihood to say they are not. Being persons, then, women are citizens; and no state has a right to make any law, or to enforce any old law, that shall abridge their privileges or immunities.

She needed to explain her relationship to this issue, this logical problem, for you to have belief in her.

That is the core of her speech. It is a logical case built step by step, starting with axioms, going on to definitions, going on to examinations and demonstrations of different points, and ending with a conclusion.

In my line of work, I am often called upon to make logical arguments. I have to present my results of my field work to my peers; I have to convince them that the interpretations that I am coming to with my evidence are things that they would agree with. I give a completely different kind of talk at our national meetings when I am with my peers in this science of archaeology than when I'm out on the road giving speeches to groups at museums or civic organizations: I emphasize the logic. When you are making a logical case, as you will be in so many situations in your life, you, too, are going to want to bring people along with you by emphasizing the right part of your argument—the solid, firm footing—and not the softer terrain. ■

Take-Away Points

1. Use clear, concise, but neutral reasoning. Avoid personal issues and emotional appeals.

2. Base your argument on axioms, laws, self-evident truths; present them near the beginning of your speech.

3. Define your terms, and make those definitions into stepping stones as you work toward proving your point.

4. Focus on proving a single point; rigorously avoid side issues and unnecessary digressions.

5. Be strong and forceful, but at the same time, always be courteous and positive and avoid statements that might alienate someone unnecessarily.

6. Check the accuracy of your facts.

7. Think carefully before including humor, anecdotes, vivid language, metaphors, or dramatic surprises in your speech.

8. Enliven your argument with rhetorical questions to create a sense of dramatic dialogue and to clarify opposing issues.

Paint Pictures in Words—Tecumseh on Unity

Lecture 8

Over the first three lectures of this part of our course, this middle part on crafting your speech, we've been considering big questions of structure and overall form. What I want to talk about today is something that we agreed wasn't very appropriate to those logical arguments that were the focus of our last lecture: painting pictures in words.

I think the best person to introduce us to the concept of painting pictures in words is Tecumseh. He was a great Indian leader of the Shawnee tribe, a war leader during their wars against the United States in the early 19th century. Tecumseh, more than any other speaker I know—and he was very much part of a longstanding oral tradition—shows us how powerful images, pictorial language, concrete examples, and even imagined dialogues can be.

In 1811, he was trying to rally the Indian tribes, and he's talking to them—the Osages, and later the Choctaws and the Chickasaws—about the importance of Indian unity. Observe the vividness and concreteness in his speech:

> Where today are the Pequot? Where are the Narragansett, the Mohican, the Pocanet, and other power tribes of our people? They have vanished before the avarice and oppression of the white man, as snow before the summer sun. ... Sleep no longer, O Choctaws and Chickasaws, in delusive hopes. ... Will not the bones of our dead be plowed up, and their graves turned into plowed fields?

With this kind of very pictorial language, Tecumseh is holding the interest of his listeners in two very specific ways: One is when he gives you a very concrete example that is a real-world example of something that he sees is going to happen. He doesn't just tell you, "We shall be defeated by our enemies and lose our land, and will we not then have this problem of our tribal lands and all of our revered tombs of our ancestors being desecrated?" He wants you to feel it: "Will not the bones of our dead be plowed up, and their graves turned into plowed fields?" This is powerful. A simple prediction that there would be trouble ahead or there would be desecration of land

doesn't carry this kind of power; and this is what ultimately rallied the tribes behind him to join in a unified effort to save Indian land east of the Mississippi River.

Tecumseh used pictorial language and metaphors to make his message powerful.

But what I really am impressed with in Tecumseh is his genius for picking metaphors. A metaphor is a figural piece of language, a figure of speech, where you use one image to represent another. He talks about how these peoples walk the same path, slake their thirst at the same spring, sit around the same council fire—they are actually sitting around that same council fire at the moment. He calls on a lifetime of experience; the walking the same path, the slaking the thirst at the same spring are metaphors for being all one people. Tecumseh is putting them in terms you can picture, images that you can easily remember and hold in your heart that seem to call on a commonality of experience and really enhance, really reinforce his meaning.

That's a metaphor; but there's also the simile where he's saying one thing is like another. In that beautiful roll call of the dead tribes—where are they? where are the Pocanet; where are the Mohican?—he ends with an extraordinary simile worthy to come out of the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey*, which are a pair of books full of similes: It's the moment where he says, "They have vanished … as snow before the summer sun." To make it a metaphor, he would have said, "They were the snow before the summer sun"; the simile is "as snow" or "like the snow." In either case, we are getting the richness, the power of that image to give new life, and a much longer life, to the thought that's imbedded in Tecumseh's words. To me, he ranks with Lincoln among the greatest American orators of the 19th century. ■

Take-Away Points

1. Focus the attention of your listeners with words that create images in the mind.

2. Use poetic language to make your words easy to recollect and more evocative of memories, of feelings, of shared experience with your audience.

3. In logical arguments or technical explanations, use metaphors to help your listeners "see" a problem or a situation more clearly than they would with an abstract, nonmetaphorical explanation.

4. Don't mix your metaphors, and make sure your metaphors are appropriate for the particular occasion and audience.

5. Make abstract observations and principles vivid to your listeners by adding concrete, easy-to-picture examples.

6. Energize your presentation by imagining dialogue and dramatic confrontations.

7. Apply images and vivid language when you are speaking from the heart.

Focus on Your Audience—Gandhi on Trial

Lecture 9

There are times when you are talking to people who you know are resistant to what you have to say. One often talks about speeches being meant to persuade. It's not my belief that they often change people's minds in the act of being spoken; they usually just move people from dead center to a position that they are ready to go to.

We are getting ready to get out in front of that audience and speak in public. What I have devised for our last four sessions together is a sequence of speakers who can focus for us on certain essential elements of giving the speech. The first one is the great Indian leader Mahatma Gandhi, with the speech that he gave when he was on trial for his life. This speech is one that illustrates focus on the audience, and it shows us a very difficult case—although not an uncommon one—where there may be more than one constituency that the speaker must bear in mind.

We're in Ahmadabad, India; the year is 1924. Gandhi has been publishing material for Indian youth about his idea of Satyagraha—nonviolent, passive resistance—and has been accused by the occupying British government of sedition, a capital crime. Gandhi was trained as a lawyer. He's used to courtrooms—so you'll see that in part he is focusing on the primary target of his speech, the judge. But Gandhi is aware there is another, and for him more important, audience: the Indian people; the millions who had been following his printed words and who would now follow the speech through the

Gandhi masterfully addressed two different audiences with a single speech.

newspapers. He is thinking about making statements of belief that not only make clear his legal position but make clear his mystical faith in the right of India to be free and in the future of India as a free country.

Gandhi is aware there is another, and for him more important, audience: the Indian people.

In the following excerpts, you can see that this is a speech with no introduction. We are moving into the heart of things with his very first words:

> Nonviolence is the first article of my faith. It is the last article of my faith. But I had to make a choice. I had either to submit to a system which I considered has done irreparable harm to my country, or incur the risk of the mad fury of my people bursting forth when they understood the truth from my lips.
>
> I have no personal ill-will against any single administrator, much less can I have any disaffection towards the King's person. But I hold it to be a virtue to be disaffected towards a government which in its totality has done more harm to India than any previous system.
>
> I am here, therefore, to invite and submit cheerfully to the highest penalty that can be inflicted upon me for what in law is a deliberate crime, and what appear to me to be the highest duty of a citizen.

That's a great speech. It suggests his own pride and self-respect; it suggests the pride in his country that he feels at heart; it encapsulates in its last two clauses the two different targets of his speech. Notice one is directed at the judge: I am here, cheerfully, to accept "the highest penalty that can be inflicted upon me for what in law [you, Mister Judge, will know] is a deliberate crime, and what appear to me [and obviously to his people] to be the highest duty of a citizen." The two audiences, the two tones as it were, are both there.

The tone is very reasoned: He is giving a fair assessment; he is not asking for mercy. He recognizes the role of the judge and what the judge must expect;

and that reasonable tone is, in fact, part of his defense. He, I believe, would have been happy to die—he knows that would have made him a martyr and that would have brought about the much more rapid liberation of India through horrendous wars—but he didn't particularly want to touch off those wars, and so he is, in a way, being conciliatory. He's making it easier for the judge to commute this sentence from death to some sort of penal servitude, and that is indeed what happened. It's a masterpiece of a speech, but it is, I think, one that better than most shows us a speech presented at two different audiences and very clearly satisfying both. ■

Take-Away Points

1. Ask yourself in advance, "Who is my audience?" and adapt your speech to address them particularly and directly.

2. Your tone, your language, and your examples should all be chosen with a specific audience in mind.

3. Always be courteous, respectful, sympathetic, and mindful of your audience's comfort.

Share a Vision—Martin Luther King's Dream

Lecture 10

We're going to do a sort of anatomical analysis to understand why this speech by this minister from a church in Atlanta, Georgia, was nominated by the journalists of the *Guardian* newspaper in London in the year 2000 as the most important and influential speech of the 20th century.

In this lecture, we study a very different kind of speech with a different emphasis: the famous "I Have a Dream" speech by Martin Luther King Jr. I think it's important to remember that a speech needs a principle tone, and the tone that pervades Martin Luther King's speech is the tone of ethos, the personal feeling. This is a speech that I think you should take as your model when you're thinking about speeches that are meant to be inspirational.

National Archives (306-SSM-4D-107-8).

Martin Luther King Jr. shared a vision that ultimately became a reality.

The year is 1963; we are standing with hundreds of thousands of people outside the Lincoln Memorial on the National Mall at Washington DC. Martin Luther King Jr. has his back to the Lincoln Memorial, which contains not only the great statue of Lincoln seated but also quotations from the Gettysburg Address and the Second Inaugural Address. Lincoln is the great emancipator; Martin Luther King wants to evoke his spirit immediately in his speech, and he does it without even naming Lincoln. How?

Here is the first sentence of Martin Luther King's speech: "Five score years ago, a great American, in whose symbolic shadow we stand today, signed the

Emancipation Proclamation." What a thought-provoking way to make the audience connect this present occasion with what happened in the Civil War 100 years before; that war that was fought over the issue of slavery, and that had not yet brought to a full resolution equal rights for all Americans.

He begins to work his way through other ideas, broadening the original application of the fact that an essential injustice and oppression has been done, touching on some of those actual oppressive acts, but in general staying away from that. If you're trying to inspire people, follow Martin Luther King's example: Do not use negatives to try to create a positive. He rigorously excludes from almost the entire speech any specific references to the outrages, the indignities, the criminal acts that have been done in the effort to deny African Americans their rights; instead, he is relentlessly positive. Relentless positivism makes people feel, no matter what your exact words, that they want to be with you as you work your way through to your conclusion.

It's at the end of the transition that we suddenly find him talking about dreams—the American Dream, his own dream—and now comes that second part of the speech, the one that is stuck in everybody's minds. This is where the dream begins to echo through the speech, resound like the ringing of a bell again and again.

> I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed [and now he stops his own words and quotes the Declaration of Independence]: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal."

He goes through a number of other dreams, but at the heart of this litany comes the heart of the ethos, the heart of the personal vision: He is actually going to describe for you his dream for his own family; you can't get more intimate than that:

> I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.

That is powerful, not only because it's so personal but because of a simple device: alliteration.

As he goes on, he begins to work away from the dream, and with another transition he moves toward the third part of his speech, the pathos, where we are going to be in the realm of emotion. He sees a mystical thing: a gigantic mountain, whittled down to a single small stone. The mountain was despair, but what has been carved down out of it is hope. That's a beautiful image. He also has another image—although this one is one that you would hear—discords, conflicting sounds gradually being transformed into brotherly harmony as the whole world learns to sing together.

He is actually going to describe for you his dream for his own family; you can't get more intimate than that.

That's his transition to the pathos, the emotional part of the speech, and this for him is as important clearly as the ethos where he's ringing the bell of "I have a dream"; now we are getting into the world of a different phrase, "let freedom ring." At the end, he has a short conclusion to wrap it all up; and in his conclusion, having brought together these opposites, reconciled all the conflicts, he sees all the people gathering together and singing, in the words of a traditional spiritual hymn:

> Free at last! Free at last! Thank God Almighty, we are free at last!

He gives that line from the spiritual, "Pride of Place," as the resounding conclusion of his speech; again, not his own words, just as he started not with his own words, but somehow resting on a higher authority. It's a wonderful speech. That man's vision ultimately did become a reality; it partly became a reality because of that speech. This is one of those speeches that we can say made a difference to history, to the way an entire country thought about the issue. When you're trying to inspire people, look at this speech. I do not know any better example of how to put together an extended speech that deals with stirring up positive feelings in a group of people and making them go forth renewed and thanking you for sharing your inspiration with them. ■

Take-Away Points

1. Integrate all three kinds of appeals—logic, personal concerns, and emotions—if you want to make your most satisfying and most compelling case.

2. If you want to create the feeling of visions, repeat words and phrases.

3. Weave familiar quotations and references to well-known texts into your speech.

4. Divide a long speech into three clear-cut sections; give each section its own particular tone and its own particular take on your theme.

5. Maintain eye contact with your audience, and maintain your energy while reading quotes. Use pauses and changes in vocal tone to set the quotes apart from your text.

Change Minds and Hearts—Mark Antony

Lecture 11

It is the province of knowledge to speak and it is the privilege of wisdom to listen.

—Oliver Wendell Holmes

Our main focus in this lecture is on pathos—appeals to emotion—in the great speech that Shakespeare wrote for the historical character Mark Antony in the play *Julius Caesar*. This very famous speech begins, "Friends, Romans, countrymen," and may be the most quoted speech in the history of theater. Mark Antony is ostensibly buying into the idea that the assassination of Caesar was necessary, that Caesar was ambitious to become a monarch or a tyrant, and that what the conspirators did was just. In his heart, he is wanting to work on the emotions of the crowd, who've been convinced by the previous speeches of Brutus and the others that what was done was just; he wants to bring them over to a sense of outrage, he wants to turn the crowd against Brutus and the other conspirators.

I consider this to be the hardest thing in public speaking. It's the rarest thing in the world to actually figure out how to change a crowd's opinion. These are Shakespeare's words, remember—we don't know exactly what the original Mark Antony said—but Shakespeare has given us a model on how to work on people's emotions to change their fundamental attitude to a situation. We start with the strongest beginning of any speech I know. It immediately grabs the attention; it identifies the speaker with the audience by calling them "friends"—and since this is many common people of Rome in the audience and the speaker is a great noble, this in itself is a reaching out.

Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears;

I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him.

The evil that men do lives after them;

The good is oft interred with their bones;

So let it be with Caesar.

I said earlier that when you are presenting your own case, you never want to be negative, even about the opposition. Mark Antony is employing that rule incredibly effectively here: He so over-praises Brutus, so monotonously calls him an honorable man throughout his speech, that the pure contrariness of human nature is beginning to go the other way. The speech is immensely long. It ends in chaos as the crowd so worked up by Mark Antony leaves the rostrum there in the Forum of Rome and goes off to chase down the conspirators to either kill them or drive them out of the city.

It's the rarest thing in the world to actually figure out how to change a crowd's opinion.

There are a number of things to talk about with regard to this speech. One is the use of props. What is Mark Antony using here? He has actually used one thing earlier, the will of Caesar; now he's gone on to the mantel and used the cloak, which Caesar was wearing when he was dying. But then we move on to something very different: He's going to consider not the mantle itself, but the holes that the daggers went through. Keep your focus on your props; keep your focus on showing and telling. Be explicit and clear and not too much on rhetorical tricks.

There is a popular kind of aid to rhetoric now, PowerPoint, in which it's possible to actually put up onto the board behind you your whole speech, or just the outline of it, or just key words. I urge you: Do not do any of these things. Use PowerPoint or slides only for the images to support and reinforce your words. As soon as you put up actual words, the audience's minds shift entirely over into the left part of the brain where all the reasoning is, and they can no longer hear your voice; they can't take in the actual words you're saying in preference to the words they're hypnotically seeing and reading up there on the screen. Don't give them words to read; give them images to see—that's what the props should be.

What kinds of speeches are you likely to make that we can draw out of this Mark Antony speech? One is the tribute—Mark Antony, in this speech, on the behalf of Julius Caesar, is praising Caesar. Certainly one of the areas in which I have been often asked to speak is praise. Sometimes that may be a eulogy at a funeral; sometimes it is a toast at someone's birthday or an anniversary party or an awards ceremony; often it is welcoming a distinguished visitor to Louisville.

We have a Kentucky Author Forum; one time the guest was Madeleine Albright. What would be appropriate for me to say about Madeleine Albright, to say to her, that would induce a sense of praise, link her to high and important things that we all know she was involved in? Our county is called Jefferson County, it was laid out by Thomas Jefferson himself; his statue stands on an imitation of the Liberty Bell down by the courthouse. I told her she was in Jefferson County and Jefferson had been the first secretary of state, the position that she held with such honor for so many years and that she had in a way inherited from Thomas Jefferson. She then had a cue for her speech in that link to Jefferson to talk about him, to talk about how she had read through all of his works, she'd gone back through documents that he had signed as secretary of state. It became very personal to all of us, and I was thankful that I was able to make it personal for her so it wasn't just a reading of her CV.

Whatever it takes whenever you are trying to praise somebody, try to make it personal; try to do what Mark Antony does; try to arouse in your hearers a sense of admiration, a sense of feeling that it is a person that you would like to meet, that you would like to know, and that you definitely admire. ■

Take-Away Points

1. Make a strong beginning.

2. Use props to illustrate and reinforce the points of your speech.

3. Avoid projecting or distributing printed matter while you are speaking.

4. In an argument, be relentless in speaking well of your opponents and courteously allowing for contrary opinions.

5. Pace yourself; move step-by-step in an argument to keep your audience with you.

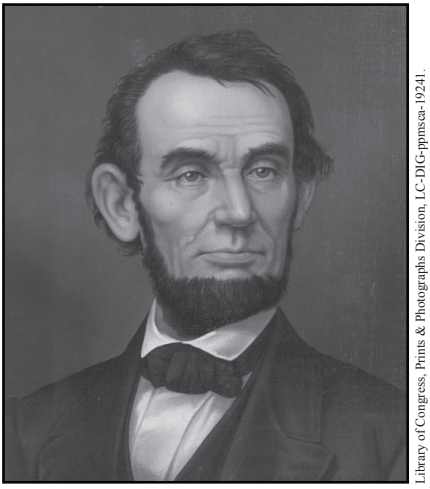
6. Focus always on concrete points, not on abstractions.

Call for Positive Action—Lincoln at Gettysburg

Lecture 12

We talked last time about Mark Antony and his surprising way of keeping his audience off balance; that's a good thing to do, you never want the audience to settle into complacency and feel they know exactly what's coming. If you've had a standard format for a speech or if you've been setting a pattern, break it now and then just to make sure they're still listening.

Our featured speech in this lecture is Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, certainly my candidate for the greatest speech ever written. Here are some lessons to keep in mind as we examine this and other great speeches: First, incorporate the element of surprise through unexpected elements in your speech, such as breaks in established patterns or conventional contents. Second, employ simple language and short words. Third, repeat important words, many times if necessary, to reinforce your message. Next, include a clear call for action in your speech near the end; let your audience know what you want them to do or think or feel. Finally, craft the strongest possible ending.



Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, LC-DIG-ppmsca-19241.

Abraham Lincoln ended the Gettysburg Address with the call to reunite the country.

I'd like to begin with that part of a speech that we have so far neglected, but which is one of the most important of all: the ending. No part of a speech can have a greater impact on the audience's overall impression than the last words they hear from you, and that's why you must be so careful in crafting the strongest possible ending for any public address that you make. Please, spend a lot of time knowing exactly

where you're going in the speech, and when you get there, drive that message home. Not only do the words need to be strong, you need to deliver them strongly. If you've been reading your speech up to that point, memorize the end so you can lift your head. When you get there, lift your head, fix the audience with a (we hope) engaging gaze, and deliver that peroration in a way that really connects with them. You will be rewarded, believe me, by a very healthy round of applause. What you must do then is be silent and give them time to applaud. Too many speakers come to the end of their speech and then ruin the entire effect with an offhand remark.

Spend a lot of time knowing exactly where you're going in the speech, and when you get there, drive that message home.

Abraham Lincoln was asked in 1863, a few days after the terrible battle at Gettysburg, to add to the occasion not the primary eulogy speech itself, but a few remarks. Lincoln obviously felt that this was going to be one of the important moments of his presidency. This was one of the greatest battles in American history in terms of the scale, it was a great turning point in the war; Lincoln felt he must be the equal of the occasion itself. The myth that he wrote it down, scribbling on the back of an envelope on the train from Washington out into the Pennsylvania countryside is just that: a myth. He did not; many sketches have been found of that speech, and it's known that he worked for at least two weeks to perfect it. To go on and on at great length, to have no limits to the diversions and digressions you can go into, any ready speaker can fill the hours of talk. But when you have to boil down your meaning to just a few minutes—and the Gettysburg Address is only 270 words and only takes about three minutes to deliver—that is the supreme challenge. Here is the speech in its entirety:

> Fellow countrymen. Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth, upon this continent, a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

> Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived, and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met here on a great battlefield of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of it as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.
>
> But in a larger sense we can not dedicate—we can not consecrate—we can not hallow this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled, here, have consecrated it far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember, what we say here, but can never forget what they did here.
>
> It is for us, the living, rather to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have, thus far, so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion—that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain; that this nation under God shall have a new birth of freedom; and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.

Note that he never mentions the enemy, he doesn't mention the situations of the war, it's on some higher plane; not an abstraction exactly, but we're up way high. How many times does he use the word "dedication" in here? Six times in this short speech. This is his focus, dedication. They came here to dedicate a cemetery. But it's because he asked the living to do something about it—not just to reflect on it, not just to bear witness to it—that this speech is the extraordinarily great speech that it is.

Let's look at just a few of the things that make it so remarkable. One is the simplicity of the language: Most of his words are one-syllable words. Note the biblical echoes: He's tying what happened here into the whole of world history and of religious history. "Four score and seven years ago"—he's after a certain tone, a certain power in the language. We get another final lesson from this, and it comes from the set of words he uses most often: "we," "us,"

"our"—14 times in this speech. He never says "I"; he never says "you"; it's always "we." That's an ideal for us all to follow as speakers; to establish a complete unity with our audience. If we can remember to do that, we will have taken one little step along the road that Lincoln wanted us to follow of being inspired by these men's lives. ■

Take-Away Points

1. Create empathy between yourself and your listeners with your words.

2. Combine ethos (the idea of personality) and pathos (the idea of healing), and shift the focus of your speech from "I" or "you" to "we."

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Credits

Steven K. Gragert and M. Jane Johansson, eds., *The Papers of Will Rogers: From the Broadway Stage to the National Stage*, Volume 3, September 1915–July 1928 (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2005), pp. 364–366. Permission granted by Will Rogers Memorial Museums.