



IMPROMPTU

STARTER KIT



An Impromptu Resource that explores:

- What is Impromptu?/About Impromptu
- Practice Techniques
- Resources
- Rules
- Activities
- Tips and Tricks from the Experts



IMPROMPTU

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WHAT IS IMPROMPTU?

Impromptu means “to be done without being planned, organized, or rehearsed” in any way, shape, or form. In speech and debate this word represents one of the most popular and rigorous middle school events. In Impromptu, you are given a choice among three prompts and have seven minutes to prepare and deliver a speech about anything related to the prompt.

At its core, an Impromptu speech is your statement about life, society, history, pop culture, the human condition, or whatever else pops into your head. You may wish to take a side and either agree or disagree with the author’s point of view, or you may simply choose to inform or entertain your audience.

The unique thing about Impromptu is you have to create the meaning of the speech on your own. This becomes tricky, because the best Impromptu speech isn’t about the

quotation itself. The prompt should make you think of something. Your job is to take that spark of an idea and turn it into a coherent speech with a clear, overarching thesis. Let’s practice with an example.

Prompt:

“I’ve learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.” — Maya Angelou

The author is clearly trying to explain that we need to be more aware of each other’s emotions. However, when I read that quotation, I think that the actions we take and the things we say are inextricably linked to the way we make people feel, which makes the quotation essentially a contradiction in terms. This would lead me to the thesis: *People would be better off if everyone paid more attention*



to how we talk to and treat each other. This is an original thought of mine, but it is derived from the prompt I was given.

As with any argument, you have to have evidence to support the point you're trying to make. The evidence can be in the form of real world examples or personal experiences—basically anything that helps to prove your point. This choice, however, comes with risk. You want to make sure your evidence comes from a variety of sources and viewpoints. For example, avoid talking only about characters from your favorite TV shows. Part of the skill of Impromptu is being able to choose examples that are both relevant and well thought out despite having extremely limited prep time.

For my response to Ms. Angelou, I might choose to talk about the famous words of Presidents Franklin Roosevelt (“*The only thing we have to fear is fear itself*”) and John F. Kennedy (“*Ask*

not what your country can do for you...”), my own experience with cyberbullying, and finally how it seems that with the ability to say anything we want to anyone anywhere, more and more people are forgetting the power their words have. All three of those examples come from very different places— history, personal anecdote, and philosophy—but they all relate back to my thesis by showing how words are important. Obviously, every person will come up with their own unique spin, and many would disagree with my interpretation, but that’s okay! Putting voice to your own thoughts and opinions is perhaps the most exciting and empowering part of doing Impromptu.

This document outlines the basics of what Impromptu is and guides you through the process of crafting, practicing, and delivering an Impromptu speech. With a little (*okay, a lot*) of practice, these tips and tricks will have you winging it with the best of them! Good luck!



ABOUT IMPROMPTU

Impromptu is unique in its time constraints. In other limited preparation events, students have far more time to think, outline, and practice their speech than the seven minutes allotted in Impromptu to choose a topic **and** deliver a speech. The event is also different in its high level of autonomy. The speech can be light-hearted or serious, and subjects range from nursery rhymes, objects, current events, and celebrities to quotations, historical events, politics, and artwork. Impromptu tests your ability to analyze a prompt, process your thoughts, organize the points of the speech, and deliver them in a clear, coherent manner.

With a little patience and a lot of practice, anyone can excel in Impromptu. This event might be a good fit for you if:

- You're an orator who enjoys making an argument with examples about real world

issues but doesn't like how long the speech typically is or that it is memorized.

- You're an extemper who likes Extemp because of the limited preparedness of the event but doesn't want to just talk about political questions.
- You do Interp events because you like the philosophical and human nature elements you get to explore.

RULES

Impromptu has a time limit of seven minutes. There is a 30-second grace period. During these seven minutes and 30 seconds, you will have time to read the prompt, "prepare" your speech, and perform. If you exceed the seven minutes and 30 seconds, you cannot receive first in the round.

STRUCTURE

Round

In an Impromptu round, the speaker draws three prompts from an envelope. After drawing the three prompts, the student must select one and begin brainstorming their ideas for the speech. In total, a student has seven minutes. These seven minutes may be divided up by the student however they see fit. For instance, they could brainstorm and outline their ideas for three minutes and then deliver a four-minute speech; or they could brainstorm and outline for one minute and speak for six minutes. There is no minimum amount of time required for brainstorming and no minimum amount of time for speaking. Therefore, the student should work to develop the best possible structure and reasoning in as short an amount of time as possible.

Sometimes students think it's more impressive to speak longer, but if the ideas aren't clear or well developed, it can detract from the overall performance. However, a well thought out but short speech restricts a student's ability to spend adequate time analyzing and developing the prompt. So the challenge the student is faced with is developing their prompt enough to make a compelling argument without using so much prep time they are not left with enough time at the end to speak. It's a fine line that takes time and patience to master, but with practice can become easier over time.

Start to Finish

When students go to a tournament, you'll be provided a code of some kind, either your name or a number. This code will help you determine where you go to speak and what order you speak in, which is very important in Impromptu.



When you get to your room, you will need to wait for your turn to speak. In Impromptu, only one student is allowed in the room at a time to prep and speak because each student is given the same prompts to choose from.

Once you enter the room, you will be given an envelope with three prompts in it to read and choose from. Once you have chosen one, your time will begin. Do not stall in choosing a prompt because some judges will begin time as soon as students remove the three prompts from the envelope.

After you have chosen your prompt, it is time to begin prepping the speech. First, you need to determine the meaning you derive from the quote. There is no right or wrong answer when it comes to this as long as you can justify it. After you have determined their meaning, you now have to come up with two or three anecdotal or empirical examples that prove or disprove that meaning.

Once you feel you have thought out all the ideas of the speech, it is time to speak. Because this is Impromptu, you don't have time to plan transitions, opening and closing lines, or even jokes. You just have to say whatever comes to mind as naturally as possible.

After you've finished speaking, depending on the expectations of the judges, team, the tournament, or even the district, you may be asked to stay in the room to watch the other competitors or leave to allow the next speaker to come in the room to give their speech.

SPEECH

An Impromptu speech follows a basic structure in which a student presents an introduction, body, and conclusion. Similar to other public speaking events, the introduction should provide adequate context for the trajectory of the speech. During the introduction, you should introduce your chosen prompt, provide context/meaning for the prompt, and then give the thesis and roadmap for the speech.

Each Impromptu speech is centered around an overall meaning that is supported by two or three evidence examples to prove or disprove the meaning. These two or three examples make up the body points. The body should have a transition and then an explanation of what the point is. Once the point is explained in general, you then must explain how the example is connected to the meaning.

Impromptu is like all other speeches. The ending is the part that sticks with the judge and can often make or break a performance. In an Impromptu speech, the conclusion is often the shortest part of the speech. At this point, you have already given the prompt and the meaning.

You've provided evidence and how it is related. All that's left is to reiterate what you've already said. To do this, restate the prompt one last time so it's fresh in the judge's mind, give the connections of the evidence, and then reword your thesis and present it at the very end.

Like all events, this is just one of infinite ways to present the prompt. If you find this way feels uncomfortable, play around with the order of things. If it's not about the order, maybe try the style of organization. This may be too formulaic for some students, or it may be too choppy. Regardless, this is one practice method you can use to learn how to run an Impromptu speech until you are comfortable enough to experiment with your own style. As you become a more seasoned speaker, you will develop your own way of speaking, and it will seep into every speech you give. The only way to get there is to start somewhere.

RULES PILOT

The 2025 Middle School National Tournament will pilot a rule that allows Impromptu competitors to use a notecard while speaking. Notes may not be prepared in advance. However, contestants may make notes during preparation time and use the front and back of a 4" x 6" or smaller notecard during their speech.



PRACTICE TECHNIQUES AND DELIVERY

PRACTICE

Run Speeches Every Day

The key to getting better is to practice—and practice consistently. You should be preparing and delivering a speech every day if not more than once a day. Impromptu speeches are so short, ideally speakers run three full speeches in actual timed conditions start to finish. You should also run partial speeches in your head as much as possible. Pull quotations off the internet and do the prep for them, then move on to the next. This will make prep time shorter and example development faster.

Constantly Write Down Examples

Anytime you read, watch, hear, listen to, or see anything new, you should write it down in your notebook* as a possible example. This is especially true with movies, books, school work, and politics. When you read a new book, you've just gained an arsenal of new experiences, characters, events, etc., that can be used in speeches. The same goes for every other piece of information you absorb. It's all usable, so categorize it in a notebook for future use.

**Refer to the activities section for how to put together an Impromptu notebook.*



ADVICE FROM THE FINAL ROUND STAGE

Though this event may be an Impromptu performance, it is your job to convince the judges you have researched this topic sufficiently prior to getting on that stage or in the round. Due to the unorthodox nature of this event, it is imperative the competitor be up-to-date on current events and world news stories encompassing narratives about diverse populations. Trust news sources that are completely factual and take a more objective standpoint on the issue: Foreign Policy Magazine, Ars Technica, Smithsonian Magazine, and Naked Capitalism. Find themes that can bridge different prompts to common subpoints in your speech. For example, speeches often incorporate some sort of political/societal/social component. Identify what types of points you usually lean toward when creating your speech. Then, research more nuanced information before the competition, and the judges will be impressed with your depth of knowledge on a subpoint of a speech, even if you didn't exactly know much about the prompt.

— Sarah George, 2021 Prepared Prompt Speaking national champion



ADVICE FROM THE FINAL ROUND STAGE

Practice just doing introductions! The intro is such a key part of the speech, and it can be difficult to time it just right so you don't waste too much of your time on the intro but also don't jump in too quickly. Practicing giving a clean 20-30 second intro before saying the quotation and thesis helped me get comfortable with the event and learn how to build a strong structure for my speeches.

— Laurie Frederickson, 2021 Prepared Prompt Speaking finalist



ADVICE FROM THE FINAL ROUND STAGE

- Just start talking about something: a story that happened to you, a concept you learned in class, a current event. Try to make a polished delivery with accurate details, and always show, don't tell.
- Tell a 30-second story. This will help you manage your time in the round, as each story you tell/example you give should take about 30 seconds. The rest of the time on your point will be for connecting your evidence to your thesis/theme.
- Find any piece of content you can use as an example in a speech and practice tying it to different theses. For example, make the American Revolution prove that we should find the courage to try anything, or that education is important for every citizen. Once you're able to connect content with various theses, you'll find you have a lot more options for content.
- Have someone give you a word, and immediately start talking about the word until you come around to a thesis. (i.e. birds: "Birds are animals that can fly, and they find out if they can fly by jumping out of their nests. This means that we truly don't know what we can accomplish until we step out of our comfort zones as well.")
- Prep speeches, but don't give them. This will help practice creating coherent speeches, and you can always give them at the end if you feel like it. Time yourself when you prep, and shoot for 1-2 minutes.
- Watch nightly news to keep up on current events.
- Create a last resort toolbox of people that can work really well with a lot of topics. Stay away from content you think is overused as evidence.

— Meghan Chen, 2021 Prepared Prompt Speaking finalist



DELIVERY

Like all speaking events, delivery is just as important as content. When practicing delivery there are several factors to keep in mind.

FLOW

When it comes to flow, Impromptu will feel less formulaic than some of the other public address events because there are very rarely statistics and facts used in a speech. Instead, speakers rely on anecdotal and empirical evidence. For that reason, the flow of an Impromptu speech should sound much more natural.

An Impromptu speech should sound like a conversation where you are convincing a friend of your argument. You can practice flow by having a back and forth conversation with a teammate. One person starts by talking, and any time they stop, the other has to pick up the conversation without any lag. It doesn't necessarily have to make sense, although the

more you do it, the more it should. This will help you practice transitioning from one point to another without pre-planning what to say.

ENUNCIATION

In Impromptu, enunciation is key because you are trying to provide clear arguments in limited time. Every word you deliver should come across loud and clear to the audience. The enunciation is what makes a speech sound clean and crisp. It could mean the difference between a speech sounding well prepared or sounding as improvised and underdeveloped as it is.

Enunciation is often overlooked because very few people realize when they're not enunciating. We start to talk so fast that our words slur or jumble together and our entire sentence becomes incoherent. There are several ways to practice. There are of course the generic tongue twisters—"Sally sells seashells down by

the seashore.” But you can also practice your speeches while over-enunciating. This can be done two ways: either by over-extending each letter/word so that each syllable is very clearly said or using pen drills, where you hold a pen or pencil in your mouth so that the back teeth are biting down on it and it is running horizontally through your mouth. The front teeth should have a pencil sized gap between the top and bottom and the pen should be far enough back in your mouth to interrupt normal speech patterns. With the pen in your mouth, you should deliver your speech, taking extra care to enunciate each and every word so the audience can understand you despite the pen.

EXPRESSIONS AND GESTURES

Expressions in Impromptu are just as important as they are in any Interp event. You have to use facial expressions to show you are interested and sometimes passionate about the topic to convince the audience to care. Faces do just as much convincing as words do, and like all other parts of your body, faces sometimes need training by repeating expressions in front of a mirror. When in doubt, a confident smile can go a long way in convincing a judge.

As in other events, students use gestures to emphasize points, but because Impromptu is a little more natural than the other speaking events, the gestures can feel more natural and often come more easily, which can lead to over-gesturing. Your job is to determine when it is necessary to gesture and when it's okay to leave it be. Gestures should all happen organically and help emphasize the points of the argument.

Here are a few tips for gesturing:

- Gestures should be an extension of your body. Always gesture in the center of your



body, or the “gesture zone.” Gesturing above your head or below your waist is distracting because it requires the audience to look away from your face. This actually creates a disconnection between you and your words. You can find your gesture zone by first placing your hands at your sides. Next, turn your wrists up and lift your arms until the elbow and arm create a 90-degree angle, or an “L” at your elbow. With palms down, move your hands back and forth to get a feel for where the low end of your gestures should be located. Most likely, judges and audience members won't see movements below this level. Next, turn your wrists so that both palms face inward. Lift and lower your hands to feel the sides of the gesture zone. To determine the width of each gesture, move your arms back and forth while holding your forearms parallel to the ground. Pay particular attention to how far your arms extend.

This is where your longest gesture should reach during a performance. Finally, place your arms at chest level; this is the top of the gesture zone. Gestures above this area have a tendency to appear over the top or exaggerated.

- To find natural movement, use the string test. Students take a piece of string, hold the ends out, bring them together, tie it, and put it around their neck. Next, they will slip an arm through the hanging end. Now practice gesturing to the side. Notice that when the hand moves, the head moves with it. This is the way we naturally gesture and the way we should move in performances.
- Record a performance and critique the gestures. Students should analyze if they are over-gesturing and, if so, they should practice giving speeches while sitting on their hands, then using only one hand, then eventually working their way back to using both hands while speaking.

EYE CONTACT

Eye contact in Impromptu is just as important as it is in any other event. Your goal is to convince an audience of something, and eye contact is an excellent tool in your toolbox. A good tip is to always move your line of sight with your line of thinking. When you conclude one thought, you conclude your time with whichever person you've been maintaining eye contact. If there is only one person in your audience, then you would maintain eye contact with them throughout the speech. In theory, that sounds like staring, but there is a difference. You don't want to lock eyes with your audience member. Remember, this is a conversation. Their eyes just

happen to be where yours are settled for the speech. Earlier we talked about how practicing in front of a mirror can help with facial expressions. The same applies to eye contact. If you can maintain eye contact with yourself in the mirror throughout an entire speech, you can maintain eye contact with anyone.

If eye contact makes you nervous or you default to looking away, practice delivering speeches in the mirror or with parents or friends and restart every time you look away.

PACING AND INTONATION

Perhaps one of the most important aspects of Impromptu is the pacing and intonation of the speech. Why? Impromptu walks a fine line between being a casual conversation or a heated argument, a fast paced rant or a monotonous lecture. You have to take great care to make sure your performance stays comfortably in the middle. If it's a casual conversation, your points won't sink in as deeply and your speech won't be taken as seriously. If it's a heated argument, the audience is more likely to be uncomfortable and put off by the speech rather than convinced and compelled to your side. If your speech is too fast paced, they won't catch a word you say, and if it's monotonous, they won't recall a word you said, even if they were listening.

The best way to practice pacing and intonation is through listening. Record yourself and listen. If you can hear yourself after the fact, you can attempt to pinpoint the areas for improvement. Are you too fast in some places or too slow in others? Are you too forceful or too casual? Record your speeches and play them back. Try to decide how you would rank just the pace and tone of the speech, leaving all other aspects alone.



ADVICE FROM THE FINAL ROUND STAGE

Delivery and content are everything in this event. When performing, believe in what you are saying and show conviction. Don't show the judges that you are confused, rattled, or unprepared. Notice how I said, "don't show." You are bound to be rattled or unprepared throughout the competition, because that is the nature of Impromptu. Not knowing the prompt ahead can be difficult at times. The key to handling that nervousness is to discard it when you perform. Fake it till you make it. Understand that you are in the same boat as every other competitor in the round. You aren't supposed to know every detail of your prompt. The beauty of Impromptu is taking advantage of not knowing what you will be performing. The beauty of Impromptu is interpreting the prompt however you see fit. The beauty of Impromptu is testing your ability to be resilient and flexible.

— Sarah George, 2021 Prepared Prompt Speaking national champion

ACTIVITIES

NOTEBOOK DATABASE

A great way to keep track of everything in Impromptu is to keep a notebook. This notebook is for Impromptu only, and it is your lifeline. This notebook unfortunately cannot be used during rounds; however, the more you practice with it, the more familiar you'll become with its contents and the less you'll need the physical book. The book itself is about the organizational aspect of Impromptu and less about having a physical copy of information. The notebook has three sections and can be made out of an actual notebook, online notebook on a tablet, or even a binder with dividers. The physical book doesn't matter—what you put in it does, and how often you reference it really does.

The notebook should include three sections:

Practice Speeches Prompt and Examples

This section includes every speech or half speech you prep and give. Every prompt you draw, attach examples to, or speak about should go into this section of the book. Anytime you practice drawing meaning from a prompt, write the prompt and the meaning down. Write down the prompt and as many meanings as you can think of. Capture as many examples as you can think of that relate to that prompt. This will help you draw connections among the prompt and the examples but also one example to another.

Examples

In this section, keep a running list of everything that you could use as evidence in your speeches. Below is a very basic list of things that could be on the list of examples. This list should be

your reference during practice times or down times. Add to it whenever you think of or learn something new. Keep this list organized by genre so you can see where your strengths are. If you have an abundance of examples in one category, you know you may need to do a little more digging in another category.

A few sources for evidence in your Impromptu speech may include:

- Books
- Characters
- Historical events
- Movies/TV Shows
- Plays
- Cartoons
- Politicians/politics
- Athletes/sports
- Personal events

Past Tournament Speeches

In this section, you should log every prompt and the examples you used for those prompts. This will help you see trends in your speech patterns. Do you lean toward a particular type of speech? Do you lean toward one type of example in your speeches? Is there a particular style of prompt that is very popular at a given time? Learning from past performances can help you become a better competitor.

ONLINE “NOTEBOOK”

There are two ways to layout your notebook. (*Tip: If you choose an online option, spreadsheets are easiest to organize.*)

By Genre

This method uses separate tabs of a sheet for each genre (*or type*) of prompt to keep quotations and examples organized. Name each tab accordingly (*Movies, Book Titles, Athletes, Historical Events, etc.*).

Quotes/Prompts	Meaning	Movie Examples That Fit Quote & How
"If you want to find out what a man is to the bottom, give him power." - Abraham Lincoln.	Opportunity reveals our character	-Harry Potter snapping the "unbeatable" elder wand to prevent future power struggles over it or finding the Sorcerer's Stone in his pocket because of his intent to keep it out of evil hands. -Spiderman's "With great power comes great responsibility" line, which expresses the importance of using our abilities and status to the benefit of others.

Suggested Formatting

- Each tab of the sheet should contain quotes/prompts, their meaning(s), and examples that fit the tab's topic.
- Formatting: Freeze the first row, make all boxes text wrapping instead of flowing, highlight the first row of cells in light gray, and bold the text to keep the header row stand out from the other text.
- Add sheets at the bottom and rename for whatever genre is needed (*Books, Sports, Politics, Historical Events, etc.*) and format the columns in the same manner as Sheet 1.
- *Optional:* Visual learners may also benefit from color coding their sheets. Try making each sheet a different color and then highlight one of the columns on that sheet (*usually the meaning column*) so that each sheet has a different color associated with it.
- *Sample:* <https://bit.ly/2WJCa2>

By Use

This method requires fewer sheets but more information to filter through on each sheet. Make three separate sheets for Examples, Prompts, and Master List.

Example	Genre	Why it Works

Suggested Formatting

- Name Sheet 1 “Examples.” Column 1 is “Examples,” Column 2 is “Genre,” Column 3 is “Why it Works,” Column 4 is “Date Last Used.”
- Name Sheet 2 “Prompts.” Column 1 is “Prompt,” Column 2 is “Type,” and Column 3 is “Genre.”
- Name Sheet 3 “Master List.” Column 1 is “Genre,” Column 2 is “Prompt,” Column 3 is “Meaning,” and Column 4 is “Example.”
- *Formatting:* Freeze the first row, make all boxes text wrapping instead of flowing, highlight the first row of cells in light gray, and bold the text to keep the header row stand out from the other text.
- *Optional:* Visual learners may also benefit from color coding their sheets. Try making each genre a different color and **fill** the text box with the color that corresponds with the genre.
- *Sample:* <https://bit.ly/3kL7YfN>



ADVICE FROM THE FINAL ROUND STAGE

I keep a running list of evidence. Every time I come across a book, TEDtalk, historical event, news story, anecdote, or story that could be good evidence for a speech, I write it down. That way, I never forget a good piece of evidence I find. It also helps me keep the facts straight about each piece of evidence and make sure that when I go into a round, I can talk about it accurately.

— Laurie Frederickson, 2021 Prepared Prompt Speaking finalist

IMPROMPTU

ACTIVITY 1: WHAT'S THE MEANING OF THIS?

This activity assists students in thinking about the bigger picture when it comes to Impromptu. Students will move outside of their comfort zone and consider the deeper meaning rather than the literal meaning of words.

OBJECTIVE

Students will be able to extrapolate meaning from a given prompt.

PROCEDURES

- Give students a prompt (quotations work very very well for beginners).
- Ask students to determine the meaning of the prompt (for quotations, what is the author of the quote trying to say? Think about the emotion behind what the author is saying, not just the literal words being used.)
 - » A great example of this undertone is Gloria Macapagal Arroyo's quotation, "***The power of one, if fearless and focused, is formidable, but the power of many working together is better.***"
 - » Her literal words may be misconstrued as saying one person isn't good or that one person can't accomplish something. But if you dig deeper into the emotion and meaning, you understand she's stating that many people working together can do unimaginable things. She uses language like "formidable," "fearless," and "focused" to describe one person, but then uses the word "better" to describe "many"—meaning, she is impressed by the power of many.
- After students have determined the meaning, have them condense it into a single thesis statement.

HINT: There are infinite meanings for prompts and no right or wrong answer for a given prompt or quotation. Every person has lived different experiences and will have a different take on the meaning of someone's words and actions.

IMPROMPTU

ACTIVITY 1: WHAT'S THE MEANING OF THIS?

Below are five quotations with possible thesis statements. These are not the only thesis statements or the right ones by any means, just possible ones. Your goal is to come up with other possible meanings and theses.

1. ***“Life is what happens while you are busy making other plans.”*** – John Lennon
 - » Potential Thesis – Our lived experience is often out of our control.

2. ***“If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his language, that goes to his heart.”*** – Nelson Mandela
 - » Potential Thesis – We need to focus on deeper connections with people.

3. ***“Problems are not stop signs, they are guidelines.”*** – Robert H. Schuller
 - » Potential Thesis – We should recognize pitfalls as opportunities.

4. ***“Greatness is not measured by what a man or woman accomplishes, but by the opposition he or she has overcome to reach his goals.”*** – Dorothy Height
 - » Potential Thesis – The personal growth we achieve in pursuit of our dreams is more important than the end result.

5. ***“The whole purpose of education is to turn mirrors into windows.”*** – Sydney J. Harris
 - » Potential Thesis – Education allows us to broaden our perspectives and understand the world from other points of view.

IMPROMPTU

ACTIVITY 2: ONE OF THESE THINGS IS NOT LIKE THE OTHERS

This activity is designed to help students build skills that not only draw connections between the pieces of the puzzle that make up our world but analyze why those connections exist between some pieces and not others. Plus, all these pieces that can later be identified and used as examples in future speeches. This activity requires students to go beyond identifying differences and explain their reasoning behind the connection, skills that will make them better prepared for the analysis required in Impromptu speeches.

OBJECTIVE

Students should be able to differentiate between likeness of meaning in common evidence examples and discern which two evidence examples do not fit the pattern while justifying their answer.

PROCEDURES

- Give students five examples that could be used as evidence in a speech, three of which support a common meaning and two that do not.
- Have students pick the three that they believe fit together as the three examples of the speech without giving them the meaning or a prompt.
- Have students explain either verbally (or in their notebooks for later reference in bullet points) why those three examples are connected.
- Have students explain why the other two could not be used as examples in conjunction with the other three.

HINT: There are no wrong answers as long as the arguments are logical. Even if examples seem like they may contradict one another, if the student can make them work together to make a sound argument, they are the right answer. It's all about developing logical reasoning and critical thinking skills.

After students complete the activity, they should have a grasp on determining the meaning of the prompt and connecting points that could be used in a speech. After students have completed this activity and feel comfortable moving on, have them work on giving the body of the Impromptu speech. The three examples they chose out of the five would make up the body of a speech if they were given a prompt. In this case, they have the examples already and no prompt. Check if they can give just the body of the speech with analysis between each point. As time goes on, have them try to expand into delivering the introduction and conclusion even without an original prompt.

IMPROMPTU

ACTIVITY 2: ONE OF THESE THINGS IS NOT LIKE THE OTHERS

1. Jackie Robinson, 9/11, Bombing of Pearl Harbor, Katherine Johnson, Vice President Kamala Harris

- » The three that I believe fit together are Jackie Robinson, Katherine Johnson, and Vice President Kamala Harris.
- » Those three fit together because they all represent moments in history when a major race barrier was broken, and in two cases, when a female race barrier was broken.
- » The other two don't fit because, while they do represent shifts in the way people view people of color, they represent a negative shift in the way people view people of color rather than a positive one.

2. Aladdin and Prince Ali, Police Station Two-Way Mirror, Master of Disguises, Sleight of Hand, Ouija Board

3. Macbeth, Retirement, Anakin Skywalker, Voldemort, Hallmark Christmas Movies

4. Black Widow in Endgame, The 300 Spartans at Thermopylae, Martin Luther King Jr., Dobby, The Alamo

5. Narcissus, Yertle the Turtle, Gaston from Beauty and the Beast, Mount Rushmore, Emperor's New Groove

IMPROMPTU

ACTIVITY 3: HOW ARE THESE THINGS CONNECTED?

This activity is designed to help students begin thinking about how different pieces of our world are connected. Students will practice critical thinking skills and learn building blocks of Impromptu by looking beyond the surface to uncover deeper meaning through connection.

OBJECTIVE

Students will be able to draw a connection between examples given as evidence for a speech.

PROCEDURES

- Give students three examples that are all connected by a common thesis or theme without giving them the meaning of the connection.
- Ask the students to identify how the three examples are connected.
- Have the students find a prompt for which the three examples could serve as evidence.
- After they've found a prompt, have the students write a thesis for that prompt.

HINT: A thesis should be concise—a single sentence that gets the speaker's point across.

Once students have practiced this and feel comfortable with these skills, it's time to put them to the test in real world practice. Have them start by giving shortened speeches and working up to longer performances. The goal is to put all the components from this activity together into one speech with an introduction, body, and conclusion. Once students can give the speech, they can move on to prepping the speech within the time limits all at once instead of piece by piece.

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1. Nelson Mandela, Maya Angelou, Rita Peirson

- » *Connection* – They are all influential people who dedicated their lives to the service and betterment of other people’s lives.
- » *Potential Prompt* – “Service to others is the rent you pay for your room here on earth.” – Muhammad Ali
- » *Potential Thesis* – It is our purpose on this earth to serve all people for the betterment of humankind.

2. The President’s cabinet, the importance of Google, tutorials in video games

- » *Connection* – They are all examples of times when you ask for help in solving problems or seek out knowledge you do not already know.
- » *Potential Prompt* – “The only true wisdom is in knowing you know nothing.” – Socrates
- » *Potential Thesis* – We shouldn’t let arrogance cloud our understanding.

3. 9/11, Gettysburg, Pearl Harbor

- » *Connection* – They are major historical events that turned the tides of the wars happening at the given time periods (War on Terror, Civil War, WWII).
- » *Potential Prompt* – “Nothing in life is to be feared, it is only to be understood. Now is the time to understand more, so that we may fear less.” – Marie Curie
- » *Potential Thesis* – Our perception is shaped by significant events.

4. Hamilton the Musical, Dead Poets Society, The King’s Speech

- » *Connection* – Each story is about someone who forged their own path and made their own destiny.
- » *Potential Prompt* – “Even when you think you have your life all mapped out, things happen that shape your destiny in ways you might never have imagined.” – Deepak Chopra
- » *Potential Thesis* – Our destinies are ours to make and strive toward, not something for which to hope and dream.

5. Regina George, Snow White’s evil stepmother, Dorian Gray

- » *Connection* – They are all examples of when characters were obsessed with their vanity.
- » *Potential Prompt* – “When dealing with people, remember you are not dealing with creatures of logic, but with creatures bristling with prejudice and motivated by pride and vanity.” – Dale Carnegie
- » *Potential Thesis* – Obsession with physical looks and oneself will only lead to downfall.

RESOURCES

Where to Find Practice Prompts/Quotations

COLLEGE LEVEL QUOTATIONS

- <http://www.collegiateforensicassociation.org/pastimpromptuquotations>

EASY, LESS REVIEWED SOURCES

- <https://www.brainyquote.com>
- <https://quizlet.com/31924517/impromptu-topics-quotes-flash-cards/> (must have a quizlet account; it's free!)

NON-NSDA PROMPTS (BUT STILL REPUTABLE)

- <https://tkmiller97.wordpress.com/2007/07/03/sample-quotations-for-impromptu-practice/>
- <https://www.instituteofpublicspeaking.com/top-20-public-speaking-quotes/>
- <https://speakerhub.com/blog/101-quotes>
- <https://bigfishpresentations.com/2012/05/03/25-awesome-public-speaking-quotes/>

NSDA PROMPTS AND RESOURCES

Free:

- https://www.speechanddebate.org/wp-content/uploads/Resource-DiversityandInclusion-ImpromptuPrompts_Fin.pdf (Inclusivity)
- https://www.speechanddebate.org/wp-content/uploads/2018_HispanicHeritageMonth_Impromptu-Prompts.pdf (Hispanic Heritage Month)

Members:

- <https://www.speechanddebate.org/wp-content/uploads/Impromptu-Prompts-Resource-2019-08-29.pdf>
- *2019 Middle School Nationals final round performance by Forhani*
- *2015 Middle School Nationals final round performances by Matiapalli and Lee*

SAMPLE BALLOTS

- Sample Ballot Filled: <https://www.speechanddebate.org/wp-content/uploads/Sample-Ballot-Impromptu-Comments.pdf>
- Sample Ballot Unfilled: <https://www.speechanddebate.org/wp-content/uploads/Sample-Ballot-Impromptu-Blank.pdf>



ABOUT THE NATIONAL SPEECH & DEBATE ASSOCIATION:

The National Speech & Debate Association was created in 1925 to provide recognition and support for students participating in speech and debate activities. While our organization has evolved over the decades, our mission is more relevant today than ever before. We connect, support, and inspire a diverse community committed to empowering students through competitive speech and debate.

As the national authority on public speaking and debate, the National Speech & Debate Association provides the infrastructure for speech and debate competitions around the world. We create a platform for youth voices to be heard and celebrated, which culminates with an annual National Tournament, the pinnacle of public speaking.

Speech and debate changes lives. NSDA membership builds confidence, boosts classroom performance, improves communication, and increases critical thinking skills to prepare students for college. Our activity provides life skills vital to a young person's success in the future.

MISSION:

The National Speech & Debate Association connects, supports, and inspires a diverse community committed to empowering students through speech and debate.

VISION:

We envision a world in which every school provides speech and debate programs to foster each student's communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creative skills.

Learn more at www.speechanddebate.org