

IMPROMPTU PRACTICE #3 — PRACTICE WITH CONTRASTING!

For this next exercise, give an impromptu about a topic and stick to the basic outline format. So, rather than making storytelling your impromptu structure, go back to the basics for this one.

Basic Impromptu Structure

M–Main Idea
E–Example/Explanation
E–Example/Explanation
E–Example/Explanation
T–Takeaway

IMPROMPTU PRACTICE #3 – LESSON

For this speech, challenge yourself to come up with an antithesis. Antithesis is a rhetorical device that, when used skillfully, can be employed to make your speaking strong.

Antithesis Defined

Antithesis is a figure of speech in which opposing things are placed next to each other. It can be seen with the use of opposites by comparison such as with black + white or day + night. This common figure of speech is based on the principle of contrast. However, it is not necessary that the things you are contrasting must stand in total opposition to one another. Think of it this way: one might reverse the other. It is helpful to look at some examples of this device to better understand how it is used to create strong imagery.

Antithesis in Speeches

“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.
(Martin Luther King, Jr. “I Have a Dream”)

Rather than being judged by the color of their skin, they are being judged by the content of their character. These concepts are being set next to one another, and it creates contrast.

“Some men see things as they are and say why. I dream things that never were and say why not.”
(Edward Kennedy quoting Robert F. Kennedy–Eulogy)

The vision of men is compared. Some men “see things as they are” compared to “dreaming of things that never were.”

The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here.” (Abraham Lincoln “The Gettysburg Address”)

Abraham Lincoln states that, while men will likely not remember his speech, they will never forget what the speech meant to commemorate. However, we do remember the speech as it was simple and powerful and moved a nation.

In Proverbial Sayings

Hope for the best; prepare for the worst.

In this, what a person hopes for is compared to what they ought to prepare for.

One man’s junk is another man’s treasure.

In this example, one item is shown to be both junk and treasure—depending on the viewer.

In Poetry

Fire and Ice by Robert Frost
Some say the world will end in fire,
Some say in ice.
From what I’ve tasted of desire
I hold with those who favor fire.
But if it had to perish twice,
I think I know enough of hate
To say that for destruction ice
Is also great
And would suffice.

In this poem by Robert Frost, we see the contrasting of total opposite means of destruction, fire and ice, to show that he views coldness (or lack of feeling) as the less desirable fate .

IMPROMPTU PRACTICE #3 – ASSIGNMENT

For this practice, throw out the regular prep time allotment and give this impromptu some thought. Take as much time as needed to prepare.

TOPIC

Is the internet bad for society?

1. Answer the question.
2. Create an outline that follows...
M–Main Idea
E–Example/Explanation
E–Example/Explanation
E–Example/Explanation
T–Takeaway
3. Spend some time thinking of a way to work in an antithesis into the main idea. Don't try for perfection but rather for a simple contrast that makes sense and will increase the impact of the main idea statement.
4. Deliver your speech!
5. As you go about life this week, watch for antithesis in the things you are reading and in the way people speak. It really is everywhere!

JUNIOR IMPROMPTU PRACTICE #3

Prompts often ask a student to speak on a favorite thing. These types of topics can be tricky for young competitors. The prompt is asking a competitor to first select a topic, then to narrow that topic even more.

Examples

What is your favorite book?

What is your favorite food?

What is your favorite movie?

The Dilemma

After selecting a topic (like “What is your favorite book?”), the student will often spend the first 30 seconds and even up to a minute pondering and deciding which book is in fact their favorite book. A large chunk of valuable prep time is spent narrowing the topic!

The Assignment

This week I want you to practice deciding on a topic quickly and then narrowing the topic quickly as well. It is ok to pick **one of your favorites**. We all have multiple books we love. It is ok to pick one over another.

TOPIC

This time I have picked your topic for you. You will need to quickly narrow your topic and begin preparing your speech.

Tell me about your favorite book.

1. Pick a book you like.
2. Plan your speech. You might start with a statement about what you love about your book selection. Example: “One of my favorite books is *The Hobbit* by JRR Tolkien because I love reading about adventure.”
3. Deliver your speech for a parent or older sibling.
4. Receive feedback about your speech.

EXTRA TOPIC IDEAS

What is your favorite ice cream?

Do you prefer to paint or draw?

What is your favorite city?