Making Your Interpretive Readings Come Alive

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Purpose

- The purpose is to develop skill in conveying the meaning and emotions of a prose or poetry selection.

Description

- Interpretive reading is the effective communication of thoughts and or feelings of an author to the listener.

- The reader should draw meaning from the selection to share with the audience.

- All the skills of reading aloud, including vocal flexibility, clear articulation, correct pronunciation, as well as the use of pause and rate variation, can be used in interpretive reading.

Select Literature to Read

- The selection can be from any published source, including poetry, fiction, children’s literature, news articles, speeches, letters and journals.

- Always make sure you pick literature that you like and that will be appreciated by your audience.

Analyze Your Material

- Understand what the author was intending for you to know or feel when the reading is done.

- Understand the characters and decide what you will or will not include in your reading.

- You must prepare an introduction to put the audience in the proper frame of mind for hearing your presentation.
Parts to an Effective Introduction

- Introduce the broad, general subject area of your literature.
- Provide the name of the selection and author.
- Include the reason for selecting this piece.
- Offer any additional, specific information needed by the listeners to make sense of your literature.

Edit Your Selection

- Often there is a lot of description and narration that could be edited out. Find the parts that are most important for the listeners in order for them to understand the author’s intent and keep them. Edit out the rest.
- Side-plots that can be eliminated without destroying the overall meaning of the story or novel.
- Keep the dialogues clean from unnecessary tag lines, such as “he said” or “she remarked.”
- Usually, poems tend to be shorter than stories or novels. Because poetry is often written in stanzas, it is often possible to eliminate an entire stanza, or several lines, without damaging the impact of the piece on the listeners.
- If you put two poems together into one programmed reading, it is necessary for you to have some kind of transition between them to help the listeners to know when one poem is stopping and the next one is beginning.
Mark Your Manuscript

By marking your material, you will remember what you planned to do or say while performing your interpretive reading. There are many different ways to mark your script – and there is no right or wrong way to do it – so here are a few suggestions you can use.

- To remind you about pausing and speaking at an appropriate rate, use a single slash (/) for a short pause; an inverted v (^) for a medium pause; and a double slash (//) for a long pause. Note this example:
  - Alone / and afraid / the girl walked slowly to the farmhouse. ^ Upon her arrival / she looked at the dark house / and waited. //

- For emphasis, use the single underline or double underline to remind you about words that are important. Here is an example:
  - He was worried and confused. Why didn’t she open the door?

- To remind you about what attitude you want to convey, write a word or phrase in the margin. For example:
  - [Smile here] or [Build your anger] or [Get quieter]

- You can use hi-lites to color certain passages or draw faces to remind you about how you want to use facial expressions.

Present Your Interpretive Reading with Confidence

To develop your confidence, you must practice using your voice and body to convey the author’s message to your listeners. Here are a few suggestions for improving your vocal delivery:

- Speak at an appropriate rate. Don’t speak too quickly, particularly if you have or use an accent.

- Remember to speak at the right volume for the room in which you are reading. Showing variety will help demonstrate your ability.

- Use emphasis and variety when expressing yourself. Some words need more punch than others. Be sure you know which words should have emphasis and mark them so you don’t forget.

- Crisp articulation and correct pronunciation are key ingredients to being understood.

- Make your voice believable when you are trying to convey different characters.
**Rules of Interpretive Reading**

- All presentations must include an introduction which includes:
  - General subject area of your literature.
  - States the title and author of the selection.
  - Reason for selection of this piece or any additional information needed by the listeners to make sense of your piece.

- The selection is to be read from the printed page by using a typed manuscript. Mount your script on black construction paper or put your reading into a small black binder to make you look more professional.

- The selection is not to be presented as a memorized piece.

- The participant should not walk (taking more than one consecutive step) during the presentation. Taking one step for emphasis is acceptable throughout the presentation.

- Costumes, makeup or props may not be used.

**Practical Enhancements**

- Walk to the center of the speaking area. Smile and make eye contact with the people in the audience. Do your introduction.

- Hold your script at your side when you deliver your introduction. While not always a rule, your introduction will appear better prepared if you deliver it from memory.

- Take one step forward then begin reading the selection.

- Read your selection, using various techniques.

- When finished with the selection, nod your head and take a step back. This signals that you have completed your presentation.

**Practice Makes Perfect**

Credit for Material: Making Literature Come Alive, NDSU Extension, April, 2000

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