An Introduction to Evaluating Original Oratory (OO)

NATIONAL SPEECH & DEBATE ASSOCIATION
NATIONAL FORENSIC LEAGUE

Basic Understanding

Original Oratory is a ten-minute oration written and performed by the student. Oratory requires students to balance that content with delivery and style. Orators must be articulate, engaging, and smooth with their delivery at both a vocal and physical level. The purpose of the event is to inform and persuade the audience on a topic of significance.

Structure

While orations are all different, the arguments made within them are comprised of three important components. First, a student must clearly establish a claim. This is a declarative statement that establishes the point the student sets out to justify in the speech. Next, the student must clearly establish why the argument is valid. This is known as the warrant for an argument. This means that orators go beyond asserting their claims to explaining why their claims should be accepted by the audience. Finally, the student must provide an impact for the argument, explaining why his or her argument matters.

Evaluating the Round

There are three key areas to consider when evaluating an Original Oratory.

First, *importance:* the speaker's topic should be important to the human condition. This appears in the beginning of the speech through a well-developed thesis. Throughout the oration, the student should use ethos to build credibility and offer examples supporting the significance of the topic. The delivery can also indicate importance. Pathos is created through a personable, invested delivery that speaks to the audience emotionally. The speaker should be clearly passionate about the topic in order to establish pathos. Throughout the round, judges are instructed to ask themselves if the supporting examples establish the critical need to evaluate the topic now.

Second, *relatability:* relatability is how the speaker connects the audience to the topic. The speaker should use inclusive rhetoric, giving the audience the sensation that they are affected by the topic. Logical evidence supporting this sentiment should be given throughout the speech. Judges should consider whether they are personally impacted by the issue being discussed and examine whether they feel motivated to care about the topic.

Third, *originality:* when evaluating originality, it is important to note that there are few truly original topics. Instead, consider how inventively the speaker addresses the topic. Judges ought to consider whether the rhetoric is unique and how new and exciting the examples are.

Notes

Gestures and delivery should be employed to further these three objectives. Through effective intonation and physical imagery, the speaker should illustrate the importance, relatability, and originality of the topic. The speaker should build credibility through a confident demeanor.

Filling out the Ballot

The judge ranks each contestant, with "one" being the best, and assigns speaker points. Points are generally in a range between 90 and 100 points, with 100 being outstanding. The judge writes on the ballot how the speaker can improve—e.g., eye contact, clarity, emotion, etc., and what the student did well. This is an educational activity and all feedback is welcome.