

NATIONAL CATHOLIC FORENSIC LEAGUE

Oratorical Declamation



Time Limit:

- Maximum - 10 minutes, including at most a 60 second introduction to the selection.
- If the speaker goes over a 30 second grace period, that contestant must not be awarded first place.
- No minimum time.

Rules of Procedure:

- A selection used in Oratorical Declamation must have been originally delivered in the form a speech by its author, a person other than the present speaker. The speaker should have an introduction which is at most one minute and names the work, author, and describes the circumstances under which the speech was originally presented. The original speaker's words must not be altered for the presentation with the exception that cutting is permitted. Selections may include professional speeches, public orations, eulogies, and sermons.
- The selection must be memorized. If the speaker refers to prepared notes of any kind or a script during the presentation, the speaker will be disqualified.
- No particular style should be demanded of the speaker; rather, the contestant should be free to select and to develop a personal style and be judged according to the degree of perfection attained and the effectiveness in influencing the listeners. While the specifics of the speech and any style of delivery which the speaker adopts should be judged in light of the purpose of the speech, artificiality is to be discredited. This event is an interpretation, not an impersonation.
- This event is limited to freshman and sophomore students.
- No properties or costumes of any kind may be used. Using "properties" means manipulating articles of clothing or objects to enhance the performance. Speakers using properties and/or wearing costumes will be disqualified.

Time Limit

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Judging Criteria

- Introduction: The introduction should name the work and author, provide necessary background information and establish the mood. If using a teaser or if lines from the selection are used in the introduction, the speaker must adhere to the rules of the event.
- Presentation Style: The speaker should convey the message in a sincere, honest, and realistic attempt to recreate the spirit of the original presentation. Although the style of delivery chosen by the speaker should be judged in light of the purpose of the speech, artificiality is to be discredited. The message should be conveyed credibly and convincingly as if the words were the speaker's own. This event is an interpretation, not an impersonation.
- Vocal Delivery: The speaker should be articulate and fluent. The speaker should make use of contrast, making use of the elements of vocal variety: pitch, volume, rate, pausing, phrasing, stress, and tone. The speaker should be conversational and concerned, passionate and pleasing. The speaker should be in control of the words and the emotions. The speaker should sound confident and self-assured, and seem eager to enlighten the audience. The speaker should convey the message in a sincere, honest, and realistic style in an attempt to recreate the spirit of the original presentation.
- Physical Delivery: The speaker should be physically open to the audience and use body language that invites the audience into the world of the declaimer. The speaker should vary facial expression to accentuate the natural flow of thoughts and feelings. The speaker should make eye contact with the audience. The speaker's stance should be erect and controlled without distracting movements. Movement, if used, should be motivated by transitions in thought or mood. Gestures should be visible, effectively used for emphasis, and varied.
- Overall Effect: The speaker should project an understanding of the speech's message. The speaker should instill in the audience a concern for the speech's content. The original speaker's message should not be overshadowed by the delivery. Consideration should be given to the oratorical merit of the selection.

Additional Judging Criteria (from the Bylaws)

- Any non-speaking expressions such as singing or dancing should not be excessive or dominate the performance. Judges ranks may reflect if non-speaking expressions have dominated the performance.
- The speaker should develop the ability to convey the message in a sincere, honest, and realistic style. The mechanics of speech should be observed faithfully: poise, quality of voice, effectiveness and ease of gesture, emphasis, variety, and enunciation. In addition, the speaker should be able to interpret the meaning of the speech and be able to carry the interpretation over to the minds of the listeners. The speaker should be able to interest the listeners and to hold their attention.