CHAPTER CONTENT OUTLINE

CHAPTER INTRODUCTION

- As noted by Aristotle during the fourth century B.C.E, people have always used speeches to celebrate special occasions. These *epideictic* speeches praise, celebrate, memorialize, or otherwise commemorate special joyous or sad events.
- At some time in their lives, most people will be asked to deliver special-occasion remarks about a happy or sorrowful event. They might do one of the following:
  - Introduce another speaker or performer
  - Present or accept an award or honor
  - Celebrate the life and accomplishments of a deceased person
  - Toast an important event
  - Give an entertaining talk after a formal dinner
- The various types of special-occasion speeches serve unique purposes, create different moods, and evoke different emotional responses from audiences.

I. Types of special-occasion speeches

A. A speech of introduction, the brief “speech before the speech,” prepares an audience for the “main event” to follow by giving some context for the upcoming speaker, performer, or event.
B. A speech of presentation explains the background and significance of an award or honor before it is given.
C. A speech of acceptance is a speech of thanks and gratitude for an award by a recipient who acknowledges the award’s significance and the support of others.
D. A speech to memorialize or eulogize honors the sacrifices and heroism of a group of people, often on a specific day (memorial), or celebrates the life of a deceased person and reflects on events in that person’s life (*eulogy*). It also offers an appropriate method for recovering from grief, and helps people feel consolation while also paying tribute to their sense of loss.
E. A speech to celebrate is a toast or observance that helps mark an important event or a ritual such as a wedding, graduation, child’s birth, retirement, or birthday.
F. An after-dinner speech is an entertaining, often humorous, speech that lightens the mood before or after a formal dinner.
G. Note that some special occasions include more than one type of speech.

II. **General guidelines for special occasions**

A. Appealing to your audience’s emotions
   1. Your audience will probably already be primed with a specific emotional reaction to the special event.
   2. Your task is often to signal when that specific emotion should surface.

B. Matching your delivery to the mood of the occasion
   1. Match your demeanor and words to the mood of the special occasion.
   2. Ensure that what you say and how you say it is appropriate for the occasion.

C. Adapting to your audience’s expectations
   1. Listeners’ backgrounds, cultural values, ages, and beliefs affect how they perceive a special occasion and what they expect from a special-occasion speech.
   2. Ensure that you are familiar with your audience’s characteristics and expectations.

D. Evoking shared values
   1. Your speech should appeal to values that both you and the audience share.
   2. Remind speakers that you and they are connected.

E. Respecting time constraints
   1. Find out when you are supposed to speak and the amount of time you have.
   2. Adhere to these logistics when delivering your speech, as most special occasions are carefully planned events.

III. **Strategies for each type of special-occasion speech**

A. Strategies for speeches of introduction
   1. Shift your listeners’ focus from interacting with one another to paying attention to the upcoming event.
   2. Build anticipation for the upcoming speaker, performance, or event.
   3. Introduce the upcoming speaker, performance, or event.
   4. Specific tips on delivering speeches of introduction
      a. Be patient, as audience members need time to shift focus away from their conversations or meals.
      b. Use attention-getters (see Chapter 10).
      c. Modulate your volume by beginning loudly at first, but lowering your voice as the room becomes quieter.
      d. Be focused and brief, ensuring that your comments highlight the next event.
B. Strategies for speeches of presentation
   1. Adopt the persona of a presenter by speaking respectfully and knowledgeable about the subject.
   2. Explain the significance and background of the award or honor.
   3. Connect the recipient’s background to the award’s criteria.
   4. Use appropriate presentation aids.

C. Strategies for speeches of acceptance
   1. Use appropriate volume and articulation.
      a. The intense emotions of accepting an award can cause your voice to drop or break.
      b. Take a moment or two to gather yourself before speaking, if necessary.
   2. Show genuine humility.
      a. Don’t act surprised if you knew you would be receiving the award.
      b. Express genuine gratitude for the honor and for the people who helped you achieve it.
   3. Aim for a brief acceptance speech.

D. Strategies for speeches to memorialize or eulogize
   1. Review and celebrate the deceased person’s life while consoling listeners and facilitating their public grieving.
   2. Specific tips for delivering eulogies
      a. Focus on celebrating the person’s life.
         i. Highlight the deceased person’s accomplishments, relationships, and unique qualities.
         ii. Tell stories familiar to the listeners to establish common ground.
      b. Use humor judiciously to relieve the sorrow that listeners are experiencing.
      c. Show your own emotions, if they surface while you are speaking.

E. Strategies for speeches to celebrate
   1. Explain the significance of the occasion, acknowledging the joy that everyone is feeling.
   2. Inspire the audience to participate in the celebration.
   3. Tips for delivering speeches to celebrate
      a. Aim for brevity.
      b. Use humor appropriately, based on your audience analysis.

F. Strategies for after-dinner speeches
   1. Focus on humorous anecdotes or witty stories wrapped around the larger theme of the occasion, rather than jokes or one-liners.
   2. Practice your storytelling and narrative delivery.
   3. Link your speech to the occasion’s theme so that your presentation feels natural and appropriate.
   4. Adapt your delivery to the audience and occasion by being prepared to make spontaneous adjustments to highlight your wit and goodwill.
IV. Sample special-occasion speech
   A. In Viola Davis’s “2012 Providence College Commencement Address,” she uses narrative, metaphor, and humor to encourage students to go out and live their lives.

KEY TERMS

epideictic speaking that praises or blames
eulogy a speech to memorialize a person by celebrating and reflecting on his or her life

LECTURE SUGGESTIONS

GENERAL CHAPTER 19

1. Present this chapter when you first assign a special-occasion speech. Instructors tend to assign special-occasion speeches either early in the term, to ease students into public speaking, or later in the term, to end the course on a celebratory note. You should decide which option works best for your class.

2. If you are comfortable, delivering a short special-occasion speech of your own to the class can be a useful example of best practices. If this chapter is taught toward the end of the class, a speech to celebrate would be appropriate.

TYPES OF SPECIAL-OCCASION SPEECHES AND GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR SPECIAL OCCASIONS

1. Define the six types of special-occasion speaking: introduction, presentation, acceptance, eulogy, celebration, and after-dinner.

2. Discuss famous or ideal examples of each type of special-occasion speech, and if possible, play audio or video clips of each. Consider such speeches as Sigfrid Siwertz’s presentation address to Sir Winston Churchill for the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1953; Hattie McDaniel’s Academy Award acceptance speech for her performance in *Gone with the Wind*; Ronald Reagan’s eulogy for the *Challenger* astronauts; Douglas MacArthur’s farewell address in 1951; and Will Rogers’s after-dinner speech to a group of bankers in New York in 1923.

3. Describe the five basic guidelines for special-occasion speaking: appeal to emotions, suit the mood of the occasion, adapt to audience expectations, evoke shared values, and respect time constraints. You may want to provide examples of how these guidelines apply to the different types of special-occasion speeches.

4. Analyze the sample speech (pp. 612–16) by Viola Davis and describe how it follows all five guidelines. You may also want to point out other strengths of the sample, such as organization and use of language.
STRATEGIES FOR EACH TYPE OF SPECIAL-OCCASION SPEECH

1. As you explain the strategies for each type of speaking, it can be helpful to review the goals of each special-occasion speech type and then discuss specific strategies. Lining up speech goals and speaking strategies can clarify the connections between them and aid retention of this material.

2. Use the illustration titled “The Art of Introduction” on page 599 to exemplify the four tips for a speech of introduction: be patient, get attention, modulate volume, and be brief and focused.

3. Direct the class toward the illustration titled “The Art of Presenting” on page 602, as you discuss the four tips for a speech of presentation: adopt the persona of a presenter, explain the significance of the award, connect the recipient to the award, and use appropriate presentation aids.

4. Many Academy Award acceptance speeches can be viewed at YouTube.com. You may want to show a few clips in class and then facilitate a discussion of the three tips for speeches of acceptance: use appropriate volume and articulation, show genuine humility, and remember that less is more.

5. Several illustrations can be used to demonstrate the three tips for a eulogy: celebrate the person’s life, use humor judiciously, and do not be afraid to show emotion. Refer the class to “The Right Way and the Wrong Way to Celebrate a Person’s Life” illustrations on page 605, and the “It’s OK to Help Listeners Laugh through Their Tears” illustration on page 606, and analyze the way the tips are deployed in each panel.

6. You may want to use “The Wrong Way and the Right Way to Give a Speech of Celebration” illustrations on page 607 to demonstrate the two tips for a speech of celebration: aim for brevity and use humor appropriately.

7. To encourage students to learn the four tips for after-dinner speaking, assign the “Mark Twain” Ready-To-Print Activity, which requires students to identify cases in which Twain focuses on humorous anecdotes, not jokes; practices storytelling and delivery; links his speech to the occasion’s theme; and adapts his delivery to the audience and occasion.

DISCUSSION ITEMS FOR STUDENTS

GENERAL CHAPTER 19

1. Let’s move through the chapter looking at the illustrations. If you can identify the speaker and the occasion of an image, raise your hand and share it with the class.

2. Why can we identify so many of these speakers and occasions? What does this say about the importance of special-occasion speaking?

3. Can someone tell me about the worst special-occasion speech they have ever heard? What were its weaknesses? How could it have been improved?
4. Can someone describe the best special-occasion speech they have ever heard? What made it great?

**TYPES OF SPECIAL-OCCASION SPEECHES**

1. What was the most recent of the six types of special-occasion speeches that you attended? How would you evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of that speech?

2. If you had the opportunity to be in the audience of a speech by anyone from the illustrations in this chapter, which of these special-occasion speeches would you rather listen to and why?

**GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR SPECIAL OCCASIONS**

1. Are there any times when it is preferable for a speaker to violate the mood of the occasion?

2. Is it ever a good idea to shock the audience instead of adapting to their expectations?

**STRATEGIES FOR EACH TYPE OF SPECIAL-OCCASION SPEECH**

1. Let’s turn to page 599 and look at the drawing titled “The Art of Introduction.” What does the speaker do to get the audience’s attention? Is this good practice, or are there alternative options that we could suggest to this speaker? What can a speaker do to get the audience’s attention at loud or hectic events?

2. How do you decide how many and what kind of jokes to tell about the person you are introducing?

3. At various times during the history of the Oscars, people have been angered by acceptance speeches that were political in nature. How much, if any, political content is appropriate in an acceptance speech?

4. How many of you have seen humor bomb at a wedding or a funeral? Can I have some examples? How about successful humor? Do the successful examples seem to have anything in common?

5. Assuming it is funny and well delivered, what is the maximum length an after-dinner speech should be to keep an audience interested?

**SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES**

1. Break the class into groups of two. Assign one student in each group to give a speech of introduction. Assign one to give a speech of celebration. The first student will introduce the second. The second will give a speech celebrating something happening in class or at the school. Limit the speeches to ninety seconds in length so there is room for all in a class period.
2. If you are working on special-occasion speeches toward the end of the semester, emcee a public speaking celebration event in class. Award each member of the class an authentic award (e.g., Best Delivery), an improvement award (Best Job Banishing “the Ums”), or a gag honor (Most Likely to Drop Their Note Cards). Present the awards one at a time and have students come forward and give a short speech of acceptance.

3. If you are working on special-occasion speeches toward the beginning of the semester, allocate five minutes at the end of every nonspeaking class period for a student to give an after-dinner speech.

4. This activity is fun and silly, but also packs quite a bit of serious practice into one class period. At the end of the semester, break students up into six small groups. Give each group ten minutes to write a special-occasion speech that they will deliver to the class. These are the speeches to assign:

- Introduce their public speaking instructor as the main event at the Thirty-fourth Annual Communicapalooza Celebration.
- Present an award, “Less Boring than We Feared,” to their public speaking instructor.
- Accept the “Less Boring than We Feared” on behalf of their public speaking teacher at the Communicapalooza. (Sadly, he or she was off filming on location with Spielberg and was unable to attend the ceremony.)
- Memorialize the dearly departed semester of public speaking, now drawing to a close.
- Celebrate the achievements of the public speaking class.
- Deliver an after-dinner speech to wrap up the “Communicapalooza banquet.”
READY-TO-PRINT ACTIVITIES

Mark Twain

Mark Twain delivered this speech on October 28, 1908, at the Redding Library Association. Write a short reflection on how his speech follows the guidelines for special-occasion speeches in general (appeal to emotions, suit the mood of the occasion, adapt to audience expectations, evoke shared values, and respect time constraints) and after-dinner speeches specifically (focus on humorous anecdotes, not jokes; practice your storytelling and delivery; link your speech to the occasion’s theme; and adapt your delivery to the audience and occasion).

SUPPOSE this library had been in operation a few weeks ago, and the burglars who happened along and broke into my house — taking a lot of things they didn’t need, and for that matter which I didn’t need — had first made entry into this institution.

Picture them seated here on the floor, poring by the light of their dark-lanterns over some of the books they found, and thus absorbing moral truths and getting a moral uplift. The whole course of their lives would have been changed. As it was, they kept straight on in their immoral way and were sent to jail.

For all we know, they may next be sent to Congress.

And, speaking of burglars, let us not speak of them too harshly. Now, I have known so many burglars — not exactly known, but so many of them have come near me in my various dwelling-places, that I am disposed to allow them credit for whatever good qualities they possess.

Chief among these, and, indeed, the only one I just now think of, is their great care while doing business to avoid disturbing people’s sleep.

Noiseless as they may be while at work, however, the effect of their visitation is to murder sleep later on.

Now we are prepared for these visitors. All sorts of alarm devices have been put in the house, and the ground for half a mile around it has been electrified. The burglar who steps within this danger zone will set loose a bedlam of sounds, and spring into readiness for action our elaborate system of defenses. As for the fate of the trespasser, do not seek to know that. He will never be heard of more.
Viola Davis

Read Viola Davis’s “2012 Providence College Commencement Address” on pages 612–16 of Speak Up. Identify instances in which she follows tips from this chapter, and instances in which she does not. What, if anything, about the speech would you have her change, and why? Do you feel her inclusion of a monologue from The Colored Museum was appropriate for this audience and this occasion? Why or why not?
Acres of Diamonds

In the early part of the twentieth century, speakers traveled the country on the Chautauqua circuit, a tour of cities across the United States, where they gave various educational and entertaining lectures and performances. One of this circuit’s most famous speakers was Russell Conwell. Here is his “Acres of Diamonds” speech. On the back of this paper, reflect on why this was one of the most popular special-occasion speeches of the time. Would this speech be something you would expect to hear today? Why or why not?

In 1870 when making a circuit of the earth as the correspondent of the New York Tribune, I visited Baghdad and there we hired a guide to show us down the Euphrates and the Tigris Rivers. He was full of ancient traditions and on the first day down the river, he told me their tradition concerning acres of diamonds, which I have used in my lecture six thousand times.

He said that there once lived, in, near the river Indus an ancient Persian by the name of Al Haphid. He said that Al Haphid owned a large farm, that he had orchards and grain fields and gardens — money at interest — and was counted as a wealthy and a happy man. Happy because he was wealthy and wealthy because he was contented. One day there visited him one of the ancient Buddhist priests — a wise man of the East — who told him about the discovery of diamonds in Europe. He said that the diamonds are so very valuable that if Al Haphid had a handful he could purchase the whole country, and with a mine of diamonds, he could place his children upon thrones, through the influence of their great wealth. Al Haphid heard all about diamonds, and determined to seek for them.

He sold his farm the next day and with the money departed, traveling up and down the whole of Europe. He sought in every place where he had heard of any indication of such gems but finding none, he spent all his money and became very poor, in rags, in poverty, and in hunger. And at last, in despair, he flung himself into the sea — on the shore of the Thames — and sank from sight, never to rise in this life again.

When the old guide had told me this half of his story, he left me to go back and fix the baggage. I had an opportunity to meditate upon that story, and wonder what the wise point of it could be, for the old guide never told a story but to illustrate some great principle or to fasten upon the mind some especial tradition. Therefore, when he was gone, I said to myself, “That story must mean that it is foolish for a man to move away from his own home.”

And very soon afterwards, the guide returned and took up the halter of my camel again and went into the second chapter of his story. When the old guide returned to my camel and took up the halter again he went right on with the same story as though there had been no break. He entered into the second chapter by saying that Al Haphid’s successor — the man who bought his farm in India — one day led his camel out into the garden to drink. And as that animal put his nose down into the shallow water of that garden brook, Al Haphid’s successor noticed a curious flash of light from the white sands of the stream, and reaching in, he pulled out a black stone having an eye of light which reflected all the hues of the rainbow.
And he took that pebble into the house, and put it on the mantle — which covers the central fires in an Eastern house — and then went his way, and forgot all about it. A few days after that, this same old priest came in to visit Al Haphid's successor and the moment he entered the drawing room door he saw that flash of light from the mantle and he rushed up to it and shouted, "Here's a diamond! Here's a diamond! Has Al Haphid returned?" The old farmer said that Al Haphid had not returned and also said, "That is not a diamond. It is nothing but a stone. We found it right out here in our garden." Said the old priest, "I know a diamond when I see it. That is a diamond."

Then together they rushed out into that garden and they stirred up the white sands with their fingers, and 'lo there came up other more beautiful, more valuable gems than the first. "And, thus," said the guide to me, "was discovered the great diamond mines of Galconda, the most magnificent diamond mine in all the history of the world. The Kohinor of England, and the Orlov of Russia, the greatest crown jewels on earth came from Galconda's diamond mines."

When the old guide had finished his second chapter, he then took his precious cap off his head and swung it around in the air to get my attention to his moral. Those Arab guides have morals to their stories though they're not always moral! And as he swung his hat over his head, he shouted to me: "Had Al Haphid remained at home and dug in his own cellar, or underneath his own wheat fields, or in his own garden, instead of wretchedness, starvation, poverty, and suicide in a strange land, he would have had acres of diamonds!"

Source: http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/5768/