

Discussion

Prepare an answer to one of the below questions and prepare a 60-second speech for auditions. Be sure to have evidence to support your claim.

- 1) Did the FBI and DOJ act appropriately in their document seizure at Mar-a-Lago?
- 2) How worried should the United States be about monkeypox?
- 3) Is President Biden's student debt forgiveness plan too much, too little, or just right?
- 4) Is the new 15% minimum corporate tax a good policy?
- 5) Is Nicolás Maduro's power growing in Venezuela?
- 6) Was Nancy Pelosi's trip to Taiwan a mistake?
- 7) How is inflation impacting people experiencing food insecurity globally?
- 8) Should NATO expand beyond Finland and Sweden?

Drama/Prose - Any Gender
Excerpt from “Every Brilliant Thing” by Dunan Macmillan

My Mom...she would do this. Get carried away. Up and downs.

I'd felt my whole life that I would one day feel as low as my Mom had and take the same action. Because alongside the anger and incomprehension is an absolute crystal clear understanding of why someone would no longer want to continue living.

With Sam's encouragement, the list grew: 777,777. The prospect of dressing up as a Mexican wrestler. Not the action of dressing up as a Mexican wrestler, but the prospect of it.

Sam and I got married. A year after college. Sam proposed. Got down on one knee. The whole thing. We got jobs. A joint bank account. A cat who peed on everything then ran away. We called her Margaret Scratcher. We settled into a routine. We saw less and less of each other. We argued.

We had one argument in particular. Sam suggested that I talk to someone. Professionally. That made me so angry. I knew what depression was and I knew I was fine. Sam told me I was becoming morose. That I was isolating myself. Wallowing. He encouraged me to carry on with the list, but I found it hard to notice new things.

The list ended, just one hundred and seventy three thousand and twenty two short of a million. It was finished.

If you live a long life and get to the end of it without ever once having felt crushingly depressed, then you probably haven't been paying attention.

I wasn't around for the last time. Dad wasn't around either. A neighbor complained about the exhaust fumes and eventually, the police cut through the garage door. Hosepipe through the driver-side window.

I drove Dad to the funeral. We sat in silence. The list hadn't stopped her. Hadn't saved her. Of course, it hadn't

Drama/Prose - Male

Excerpt from "Master of Ceremonies" by Joel Grey

The fight to become an actor wasn't the only persistent battle in my life. Throughout my twenties, I continued to wage a sexual war with myself. No matter how many women I was with, my conflict with men was never not there. However, being gay was simply not an option.

Trying so hard to be what society insisted I should be was exhausting. Particularly because when I did have relationships, I had to be extremely secretive.

I was at Bloomingdales shopping for my new apartment and while I was feeling the thread count of some sheets, Robby, an up-and-coming interior designer, offered me some advice. I knew instantly that he couldn't care less about linens. When secrecy is part of your life, you develop a heightened awareness to the look.

The look, a certain minuscule brightening, widening of the eyes. It can be nonsexual - a perfect hey-I-get-it acknowledgment. Or it can be angry, as in "How dare you know a secret about me."

Drama/Prose - Female
Excerpt from “Good People” by David Lindsay-Abaire

What choices did I have?

I didn't have someone checking my homework like you did, Mikey. I dropped out of school because my mother was too busy killing herself. Was that a choice? I got a job. I got a bunch of jobs in fact. And every one of them sucked, because what other job could I get? Not much of a choice there either, I'm afraid. I didn't choose to be late. Stuff happened, that made me late! I got my car taken. Why'd I lose the car? Because I missed a payment. Why'd I miss a payment? Because I had to pay for a dentist instead. Why'd I have to pay the dentist? Because I didn't have insurance, and I cracked a tooth and ignored it for six months, until an abscess formed. Why'd I crack a tooth? Because one night I thought I'd save a little money and skip dinner! But I got hungry and decided to snack on a piece of candy brittle. And that's all it took – a piece of candy brittle, and I was out of a job again. And that's how it always is. And if it's not the candy brittle then it's Joyce's medication, or my phone getting cut off, or Russell Gillis breaking in and stealing my microwave! And you wanna tell me about choices? While you sit up here practically breaking your arm patting yourself on the back for all you accomplished. Lucky you. You made some wise choices. But you're wrong if you think everyone has 'em.

Extemporaneous Speaking Questions

Domestic / International

Prepare an answer to one of the below questions and prepare a 60-second speech for auditions. Be sure to have evidence to support your claim.

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Great Speeches

“We meet in an hour of change and challenge, in a decade of hope and fear, in an age of both knowledge and ignorance. The greater our knowledge increases, the greater our ignorance unfolds.”

Generally, when Americans think of space exploration, we tend to think of it kind of like ice hockey: it's dangerous, and really, the only reason we do it is to spite the Russians. In reality, however, space exploration has played a much more significant role than one might initially expect. On September 12, 1962, President John F. Kennedy delivered an address emphasizing the necessity of space exploration, titled “We choose to go the moon”, which can be accessed at the Kennedy Presidential Library. At the time, American public confidence had been severely damaged by major Cold War defeats such as Cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin's first spaceflight and the failed Bay of Pigs invasion. As a result, Kennedy recognized that a moon landing was imperative for the restoration of American technological pride. Using his dramatic speech, Kennedy effectively affirmed his commitment to put a man on the moon as well as defend the massive cost expenditures required.

Humorous Piece #1 - Any Gender

Excerpt from "Application Pending" by Greg Edwards and Andy Sandberg

NOTE: Students should perform all characters with unique voices for each.

CHRISTINE. Edgely Pre-Primary Admissions, this is Christine, can you hold please?

MRS. BEVERLY. Sure thing.

CHRISTINE. Pre-primary admissions, this is Christine.

VAL. What happened to Debbie?

CHRISTINE. She's pursuing other opportunities. Hold please.

VAL. Wait, I just have a... *(Gets cut off.)*

CHRISTINE. Edgely pre-primary admissions, this is Christine.

BRUCE. Christine?! Well, SING FOR ME, MY ANGEL OF MUSIC!!!

CHRISTINE. What?

BRUCE. *(Singing)* AH AH AH AH AHHHHHHHHHHH!

CHRISTINE. Do you have the right number?

CHAD. Bruce. Don't torment the nice lady.

BRUCE. I'm so sorry. So sorry! I'm Bruce, and this is Chad. Say hi, Chad!

CHAD. I already did.

CHRISTINE. How can I help you?

BRUCE. Our daughter Sutton Garcia LuPone is applying this year, and we had a question about your dress code. What to wear, what to wear?

CHRISTINE. Well, we simply ask that girls wear pants or skirts below the knee, with no jeans or sneakers, and no printed logos.

BRUCE. Thank Jesus! Printed logos are so NASCAR.

CHRISTINE. Is there anything else I can help you gentlemen with?

BRUCE. Nope, Christine. *(Covers face with "Phantom" mask.)* THAT'S ALL WE ASK OF YOU!

CHAD. Bruce, she doesn't get it. And she can't even see what you're doing.

BRUCE. Okay, okay! But when decision time rolls around, think of us...

CHAD. Don't you dare.

BRUCE. ...THINK OF US FONDLY WHEN WE SAY...

CHAD. Goodbye!

CHRISTINE. Uh...goodbye?

Humorous Piece #2 - Any Gender

Excerpt from “The Girl Who Would Be King” by Jen O’Connor

NOTE: Students should perform all characters with unique voices for each

STORYTELLER: Once upon a time in the great Kingdom of Flugelhorn there was a strong, confident, and manly Duke.

DUKE: (strong and confident) Ah ha!

STORYTELLER: It had been a law in Flugelhorn, for as long as anyone could remember, that only a son of the King could rule. And if the King had no son—

DUKE: Then the Kingdom must be ruled by a son of the Duke.

STORYTELLER: But what if the Duke had no son?

DUKE: Ha! Inconceivable.

STORYTELLER: And therein lies the dark secret of this tale.

(Transition.)

DUKE: (pacing) I must father the next King of Flugelhorn. I must have a son!

DUCHESS: (giving birth) AAAAGGGHHH!

MIDWIFE: Congratulations, my lord. You have a daughter!

DUKE: What!? Check again, you silly Midwife!

MIDWIFE: (Checks) Yep.

DUKE: Was anyone else in the birthing chamber?

MIDWIFE: No.

DUKE: So you are the only one who knows this is a girl?

MIDWIFE: Yep!

DUKE: Perfect. Come with me.

*(Exits. *Scream* Thud. Re-enters.)*

DUKE: Sound the trumpets and let the people rejoice, for the heir to the throne of Flugelhorn has come— my son, Basil!

Informative

When I was in 8th grade, my social studies teacher stood in front of the class and told us we were watching a documentary we might find **scary**. And my 13-year-old brain got excited! I envisioned something crazy like alien invasions or an insurrection at the US Capitol...wait. Imagine my disappointment when the film started and displayed the title: A World Without Oil. However, the film conveyed a future much scarier than aliens yet similarly destructive. The Washington Post elaborates that “our enslavement to black gold is widespread. The list of essentials that we’d soon be doing without is prodigious: plastics, paints, medicines, hospital machines, soap, and even vehicles would cease to exist or become nearly impossible to manufacture or maintain.”

While this might sound like something that could be the plot of Mission Impossible 7, I fear it could become reality. According to Stanford University’s Millennium Alliance for Humanity & the Biosphere, although coal and natural gas will have a relatively longevous existence, the same can’t be said for oil. In fact, the world’s oil sources will end by 2052 granting us just over 30 years of potential oil usage. From this dilemma grows an interesting paradox. Clearly, we can’t live without oil, but we can’t afford to live with it either. The importance of oil to our everyday lives and to the future of society cannot be understated. So today, we will better our grasp on the oil industry by, first, digging up the history of oil, second through the refining of some implications before, finally, striking it rich with some groundbreaking innovations.

Original Oratory

I've always been a proactive student. That's why I started my senior slide last February. On the first day of school this year, my teacher assigned a one-and-a-half page reading. I was furious. Who did she think she was, to give me homework when I clearly had a date with three seasons of *Criminal Minds*? My day only got worse from there - T-Mobile dropped my signal...five times...a hee-lee-wearing student squashed my foot, and a Toyota Corolla cut me off on my way home. I still remember that license plate. 457-PCT. I was convinced that the world was out to get me.

While I eventually resigned myself to my homework-ridden fate, I still feel victimized by pop quizzes and papers. Misery loves company, and I have plenty. Professor Manfred Kets de Vries of the French university INSEAD characterizes people with a victim mentality as those who blame others for negative events in their lives, and display passive-aggressive traits for sympathy. As children, we avoid those of the opposite gender by blaming cooties. As adults, we avoid those of the opposite gender by saying "it's not you, it's me" while knowing full well it is definitely all you. We repeat the cliches like "Murphy's Law" or "Thanks Obama". Those were the days. There's nothing wrong with being a real victim, but clarity gets lost when we act like victims and we really are not. Any newspaper reveals real humanitarian and social crises, from police brutality on our streets to genocides in Aleppo and South Sudan, but our victim mentality blinds us from feeling empathy for others, leaving us with only self-pity.

Just like my homework load, this culture of false victimization must end. So today, let's lose a point on our vocabulary quiz and argue a definition; second, get into a fender-bender to feel an impact; before finally, saying "Yes We Can" to some solutions.

Poetry - Female

Excerpt from "Unknown Girl in the Maternity Ward" by Anne Sexton

Child, the current of your breath is six days long.
You lie, a small knuckle on my white bed;
lie, fisted like a snail, so small and strong
at my breast. Your lips are animals; you are fed
with love. At first hunger is not wrong.
The nurses nod their caps; you are shepherded
down starch halls with the other unnested throng
in wheeling baskets. You tip like a cup; your head
moving to my touch. You sense the way we belong.
But this is an institution bed.
You will not know me very long.
Yours is the only face I recognize.

Bone at my bone, you drink my answers in.
Six times a day I prize
your need, the animals of your lips, your skin
growing warm and plump. I see your eyes
lifting their tents. They are blue stones, they begin
to outgrow their moss. You blink in surprise
and I wonder what you can see, my funny kin,
as you trouble my silence. I am a shelter of lies.

Should I learn to speak again, or hopeless in
such sanity will I touch some face I recognize?
Down the hall the baskets start back. My arms
fit you like a sleeve, they hold
catkins of your willows, the wild bee farms
of your nerves, each muscle and fold
of your first days. Your old man's face disarms
the nurses. But the doctors return to scold
me. I speak. It is you my silence harms.
I should have known; I should have told
them something to write down. My voice alarms
my throat. "Name of father—none." I hold
you and name you bastard in my arms.

Poetry - Any Gender

Excerpt from "OCD" by Neil Hilborn

The first time I saw her...
Everything in my head went quiet.
All the tics, all the constantly refreshing images just disappeared.
When you have Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, you don't really get quiet moments.

Even in bed, I'm thinking:
Did I lock the doors? Yes.
Did I wash my hands? Yes.
Did I lock the doors? Yes.
Did I wash my hands? Yes.

But when I saw her, the only thing I could think about was the hairpin curve of her lips..
Or the eyelash on her cheek—
the eyelash on her cheek—
the eyelash on her cheek.
I knew I had to talk to her.
I asked her out six times in thirty seconds
She said yes after the third one, but none of them felt right, so I had to keep going.

On our first date, I spent more time organizing my meal by color than I did eating it, or
talking to her...
But she loved it.
She loved that I had to kiss her goodbye sixteen times or twenty-four times if it was
Wednesday.
She loved that it took me forever to walk home because there are lots of cracks on our
sidewalk.

When we moved in together, she said she felt safe, like no one would ever rob us
because I definitely locked the door eighteen times.

I'd always watch her mouth when
she talked—
when she talked—
when she talked—
when she talked
when she talked.
when she said she loved me, her mouth would curl up at the edges.