

Spoken Literacy and Rhetoric in the classroom:

A short guide for teachers.

This guide is designed to provide teachers with both a set of 'handy hints' for encouraging the development of spoken literacy within their classroom and to provide assistance when seeking to create more substantial speaking events in lessons.

As part of the whole school T&L agenda we are trying to ensure that effective spoken literacy and rhetoric play a significant part of our SoW, not simply as add-ons, but a key aspect of everyday practice.

When asking students to speak in lessons remember:

- There is no reason not to have the same high expectations of speech that we do of any other work they do – if it is not good enough, have them do it again! Whether this means repeating a whole presentation, or simply resaying the same answer but grammatically correctly, or louder, demand excellence.
- Praise and feedback are just as important when responding to a piece of spoken work as they are to written or any other type of work.
- Creating a culture of speech in your classroom means having everyone doing it, not simply those that are willing; do not let students 'hide'.
- Give students warning about when you will ask them to speak – let them think of what to say; this both increases willingness and the quality of what is said.
- Try to avoid giving them anything to hide behind, whether it is a book, PPT or 'I don't want to speak'.
- Give students room to rehearse, or practise before they present.

Introducing spoken literacy and rhetoric: small activity ideas:

- Make your plenary a small presentation (tell them in advance they'll be doing it), about what they have done that lesson.
- Have a rota of who will have to explain to the class what you did last lesson (tell them in advance to prepare for their turn) – a simple but effective starter.
- Have students answer standing up, explaining not just what the answer is, but HOW they came to it.
- Give students a 'stance' to take in a discussion before you start and have them defend that position, rather than just giving their opinion.
- Have students 'track' their pair or group discussions in note form as they go, then present the discussion that was had as feedback.
- Give students extracts that will be read in advance so they can become familiar with them and present them from memory, or at least with a clear idea of what is to come (this can be within or across lessons depending on the size of the extract, and how well you want them to know it).
- Make students present what they have done to the class, explaining the choices they made (e.g. why did they use that simile, or that artistic technique on that part of the piece).

When planning for extended speaking activities:

- Give clear success criteria, as you would for any other activity: just because students talk naturally, doesn't mean that they will naturally know how to speak effectively. For example:
 - Look at your audience when you are speaking
 - Know in advance what you are going to say so you do not read
 - Only put notes on a PPT (if at all), not the whole presentation
 - Speak loudly and clearly
 - Use Standard English
 - Give you speech structure (the rule of three: have three points/ideas; have an introduction, main body and conclusion – say what you are going to say, say it, say what you have said!)
 - Stand up straight, with hands out of pockets – adopt an open stance
- Give students time to both prepare their presentation and, crucially, to practise it (whether as explicit homework, or with each other in class).
- Set the expectation that insufficiently prepared/performed presentations will have to be re-done until satisfactorily completed.
- Either spread out your presentations over a longer period of time:
 - Give out the 'task' at a set point then have a rota of who will present/perform their bit week by week (perhaps something around, but not directly part of, the SoW they are working on)
 - Give out the same task but on different material across a unit as the unit develops (tailored to the specific area of the SoW you are working on)
- And/or: have a set role for others in the group while presentations are going on:
 - Give students the success criteria and have them assess each other (perhaps providing WWW and EBI feedback, or choosing a 'winner')
 - Give students specific areas (such as body language or tone) to focus on and give feedback on
 - Have students prepare questions related to the presentation that they will deliver at the end of the presentation
 - Have the student presenting set a quiz or questions that must be answered using the information in the presentation (or simply set a few questions relating to the task before they speak).
- Try to experiment with different types of presentation: debate, pair discussion or interview (chat show style), recital, monologue, public reading of work etc.
- Rather than have the students wedded to a PPT, make them learn a speech, or piece to perform – students will use any 'crutch' they can to make themselves feel secure, and PPTs are a sure way to stop any audience interaction or learning of a speech!

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