



A Celebration of Speech & Drama
oratoryfestival.com

The 5th International **ORATORY FESTIVAL**



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oratoryfestival.com

to enter



Affiliated to the British & International Federation of
Festivals for Music, Dance & Speech



INTERNATIONAL
ORATORY FESTIVAL



Welcome!

We're really excited to welcome you to the fifth year of the International Oratory Festival, an online celebration of speech and drama.

Do you love words?

Do you like to meet new people from around the world?

Do you like to think differently?

If you do, you've come to the right place!

We'll be holding Zoom events in a range of time zones throughout the year between May and December 2026.

If you're between the ages of 6 and 18, you can enter our friendly competition in the following categories:

- **Poetry**
Poetry recital from memory, Your original poetry, Shakespeare sonnet
- **Prose reading**
- **Solo acting**
- **Public speaking**
Presenting an argument, Speaking to inform & Impromptu
- **News**
Contemporary or historical reports



Everyone who takes part will be sent a beautiful digital certificate, and receive useful feedback to help you to develop as a speaker and performer.

We'll also be recognising the best performances in every category and age group and an overall 'Best in Festival' award.

We can't wait to meet you!

Debbie Wilson

Chief Judges

Enter at
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Entries subject to our rules (see pages 19-22)

Our categories



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Poetry recital

Enjoy performing the wonderful words from one of our great poems **page 9**

Your original poetry

Perform poetry that you have composed yourself in our very own poetry slam **page 10**

Shakespeare sonnet

Explore multitudes of language and expression in 14 lines by the Bard of Avon **ages 12-18 page 11**

Prose reading

Read an excerpt from a novel or short story by a writer of your choice **page 12**

Your original prose

Read aloud prose that you have written yourself **page 13**

Solo acting

Choose a section from your favourite play and wow us with your performance! **page 14**

Public speaking

Presenting an argument

Give a persuasive speech presenting one side of a topical issue **page 15**

Speaking to inform

Deliver an interesting and informative speech about one of our topics **page 16**

Impromptu

Speak on a topical subject given to you 10 minutes before you speak! **ages 12-18 page 17**

News

Live news report

"Going live in 5, 4, 3 ..."
Report on a contemporary story relevant in today's world
ages 9-18 page 18

Historical news report

Past events were news once!
Cover a story that took place before you were born
ages 9-18 page 19



Enter at
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£15 per entry (discounts for 3+ entries)

See page 5 for details of discounts for schools and group entries







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Age groups

	6-8 Years	9-11 Years	12-14 Years	15-18 Years
 Poetry recital	✓	✓	✓	✓
 Your original poetry	✓	✓	✓	✓
 Shakespeare sonnet			✓ ¹	✓
 Prose reading	✓	✓	✓	✓
 Your original prose	✓	✓	✓	✓
 Solo acting	✓	✓	✓	✓
 Public speaking Presenting an argument	✓	✓	✓	✓
 Public speaking Speaking to inform	✓	✓	✓	✓
 Public speaking Impromptu			✓	✓
 Live news report		✓	✓	✓
 Historical news report		✓	✓	✓

Equal opportunities

Oratory can be great whatever your background, accent or nationality. **We welcome participants from around the globe on equal terms!** The International Oratory Festival is committed to an Equal Opportunities Policy:

-  Apart from age-linked categories, there are no restrictions in entry.
-  We also welcome candidates who are **neurodiverse or have additional needs**; special considerations will be made where appropriate. Individual bookers can let us know more about this (including potential adjustments we might need to make) when you fill in the details form on our website entry system. Group bookers can discuss this with us by email when tailoring your session. All participants can email us at entries@oratoryfestival.com to ensure we get everything right for you.
-  We are always happy to discuss, learn and adapt our practices to enable all children and young people to be able to participate.
-  Participation is open to anyone with a sincere interest in oratory.

Enter at
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Entries subject to our
rules (see pages 19-22)



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Enter a group

Enter by emailing

entries@oratoryfestival.com

Schools and clubs are encouraged to book a group session where entries cost £10. If you like, we can try to pair you with another group from a different country, for the full International Oratory Festival experience!

 **£10** per entry

with a minimum cost per session of £100

For institutions wanting to make over 20 entries, email

entries@oratoryfestival.com to work out an additional discount.

In previous years, we've had everything from a small club of 6 students, to institutions with over 150 entries, maximising participation in oratory from across their school.

In any one session, you can enter both different age groups and any mix of categories across **either** Poetry/Prose/Acting **or** Public Speaking/News.

We'll liaise with you on convenient times for your sessions. Any sessions longer than an hour can be broken up so each student doesn't have to be on the Zoom call for too long.

Closer to the time, we'll also ask you to provide your students' details. This will include names, dates of birth, and any special educational needs or disabilities which we might need to know about to help every student thrive as part of our inclusive and enjoyable festival.

Don't delay! Email us at **entries@oratoryfestival.com** today to start the discussion about how your students can be part of the International Oratory Festival 2026!

Your own Oratory Festival at any time of year

Using our experience from the first four years of the International Oratory Festival, we can design a bespoke syllabus for your Festival. You can take your pick of our poetry, prose, acting, public speaking and news options. And we can deliver teacher training and pupil workshops to help you excel as orators.

Our expert adjudicators can help judge your Festival in person (subject to travel costs) or by Zoom. Depending on when you want to hold your Festival, we can also explore options for linking you up with another school's Festival elsewhere in the world.

All your students will receive a full adjudicator's report and special certificate to celebrate their achievement.



Enter at
oratoryfestival.com

Entries subject to our rules (see pages 19-22)

Individual entries

Enter online at oratoryfestival.com

As an individual, you can enter just one category or as many as you want. Booking is through eventbrite and you'll be able to sign up to scheduled sessions from May to November. You are welcome to enter more than one session or to take part in multiple categories in the same session.

May 16	09.00-13.00 18.00-20.00 (British Summer Time)	October 1	18.00-20.00 (British Summer Time)
May 30	09.00-13.00 (British Summer Time)	October 4	09.00-13.00 18.00-20.00 (British Summer Time)
June 28	09.00-13.00 (British Summer Time)	October 6	09.00-13.00 (British Summer Time)
June 29	18.00-20.00 (British Summer Time)	November 28	09.00-13.00 (British Summer Time)
		December 1	18.00-20.00 (British Summer Time)

You won't have to be there for the full four hours - once entries close for that session, we'll assign you a shorter session slot for you to attend. Most of these sessions will last 45-75 minutes.

You'll need to keep yourself available for the whole advertised time slot until we let you know the final times. Enter online at oratoryfestival.com all year round! And if you have any questions, just get in touch with us at entries@oratoryfestival.com.

 **£15** per entry

discounts for 3+ entries (see website for full details)

Enter at
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Entries subject to our
rules (see pages 19-22)



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Get ready!



All oratory benefits from reading widely and from thorough research using various media. If you're reading a poem, read all the options in your category to find the one you like best. You could also read other works by the author you've chosen, or other works in a similar genre, to help develop your imagination and feel for words. Public speeches and news reports should also be well-informed. Use books, libraries, conversations, and the internet to generate ideas and make sure your speech includes accurate facts and reasoned opinions. If you're speaking in the Impromptu category, following the news and being widely read increases your all-important general knowledge.

You may already have a teacher or coach to help you prepare. You can also visit our website for some handy videos that will help you understand what our judges are looking for, and how to wow your online audience with your oratory.

If you'd like some extra help, you can book Zoom coaching sessions by emailing entries@oratoryfestival.com. One of our fun and engaging expert coaches¹ will help you practise for your category in a 1-on-1 session, or with a few of your friends. You'll build your skills, and gain confidence for your Festival performance.



On the day, you'll be welcomed to our Zoom by your friendly judge. You can be joined by up to two audience members². During the session, you'll deliver your oratory, and hear other participants speak. The judges will give you all useful and positive spoken feedback.

After your round, you'll also receive individualised written feedback, and a stunning digital certificate to provide you with a record of your oratorical achievement.

Each session will have its own winner. At the end of the festival we will also announce awards to recognise excellence within and across disciplines including Gold, Silver and Bronze awards for each category and age group. However, in the International Oratory Festival, it's really true that everyone's a winner!

Enter at
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Entries subject to our
rules (see pages 19-22)

¹ Our coaching team overlaps with our judging team. However, we ensure the Festival is fair by making sure that no one is judged by someone who's helped coach them. ² Audience members must use a different device, using headphones or in another room (see page 20)

Our chief judges

At the International Festival of Oratory, we celebrate the power of the spoken word. Sure, we'll pick some winners, but the most important thing for us is giving you great feedback that will help you improve. We know that great oratory has the power to change the world, and our judges will help you do that even better.



Debbie Newman

Public Speaking

Debbie is the founder and lead trainer of the Noisy Classroom, experts in teaching public speaking, debating and oratory in schools. Debbie has experience of coaching speech and debate around the world at all levels. She is a previous English national debating champion, president of the Cambridge Union Society and world champion schools debate coach.

She has been on the faculty of the World Debate Institute, the International Debate Academy and the UK Debate Academy and is a former Head of the Centre for Speech and Debate at the English-Speaking Union in London.

Debbie is a qualified secondary teacher, and her focus is on speaking and listening in schools: both working with children, from 8-18, and also working with teachers to help build their skills and confidence.

She has been a trustee of the English Speaking Board, a tutor at City Lit college, a primary school governor and a Speech and Debate committee member at the English-Speaking Union.

Alison Coates

Performance

Alison is passionate about oracy and communication, in all its forms, and has worked in this area for over 25 years. A graduate of the University of Lancaster, with Joint Honours in English and Drama, she ran her own Speech and Drama business for 17 years, preparing students for examinations, festivals, and drama school. Alison has worked in several schools teaching Speech and Drama and spent ten years as the Business Development Advisor for Speech with the English Speaking Board, also writing their three accredited debating qualifications during her time with the awarding organisation.

As well as the above, Alison has been lucky enough to travel across the UK and internationally as a trainer, assessor, and adjudicator for the English Speaking Board, the PiXL Club's *Up for Debate* programme, the Business and Professional Women's Public Speaking Competition, and others. Highlights have included time spent working in The Channel Islands, Belgium, Malta, Poland, Singapore, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Shanghai and Trinidad and Tobago.



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The chief judges bring together an expert team of adjudicators, from our wide range of international contacts including champion debaters and top theatrical talent.





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Poetry recital

from memory

Perform words written by some of the greatest wordsmiths ever, from the 18th to the 21st centuries.

This year you can choose one of these suggested poems or choose your own.

See p24 for tips on choosing your own.

6-8 Years

Perform either:

- a:** 'A Smile' by Jez Alborough or
- b:** 'Cats' by Eleanor Farjeon or
- c:** 'The Bogeyman' by Jack Prelutsky or
- d:** 'Picnic' by Judith Nicholls

9-11 Years Old

Perform either:

- a:** 'The Mafia Cats' by Roger McGough or
- b:** 'Conversation Piece' by Gareth Owen or
- c:** 'Miller's End' by Charles Causley or
- d:** 'Sick' by Shel Silverstein

12-14 Years Old

Perform either:

- a:** 'If I Could Tell You' by W. H. Auden or
- b:** 'Ozymandias' by Percy Bysshe Shelley or
- c:** 'Sea Fever' by John Masefield or
- d:** 'The Swan Princess Speaks' by Sujata Bhatt

15-18 Years Old

Perform either:

- a:** 'Caged Bird' by Maya Angelou or
- b:** 'Dover Beach' by Matthew Arnold or
- c:** 'Full Fathom Five' by Sylvia Plath or
- d:** 'The Right Word' by Imtiaz Dharker

What we reward

- ✓ Secure, well-memorised words
- ✓ Clarity and audibility
- ✓ Sensitivity to, and capturing of, mood and meaning
- ✓ Vocal variety which engages the audience and adds power to the words
- ✓ Thoughtful and appropriate use of pause
- ✓ Facial expressions which support the successful communication of the words



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Your original poetry from memory

Sometimes performing other people's words just isn't enough. What do *you* want to say through the spoken word?

This category is very much about quality, rather than quantity! Make sure that every word is carefully chosen and expresses something unique and powerful.

You will need to **provide written copy by one week before your performance.**



What we reward

- ✓ Effective and original use of language and form, which leaves an impression on the audience
- ✓ Secure, well-memorised words
- ✓ Clarity and audibility
- ✓ Vocal variety which engages the audience and adds power to the words
- ✓ Thoughtful and appropriate use of pause
- ✓ Facial expressions which support the successful communication of the words

6-8 Years

Perform your own composition lasting **no more than 2 minutes**, but long enough to show variation and skillful use of language

9-11 Years

Perform your own composition lasting **no more than 2 minutes**, but long enough to show variation and skillful use of language

12-14 Years

Perform your own composition lasting **no more than 3 minutes**, but long enough to show variation and skillful use of language

15-18 Years

Perform your own composition lasting **no more than 4 minutes**, but long enough to show variation and skillful use of language

Enter at
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com**

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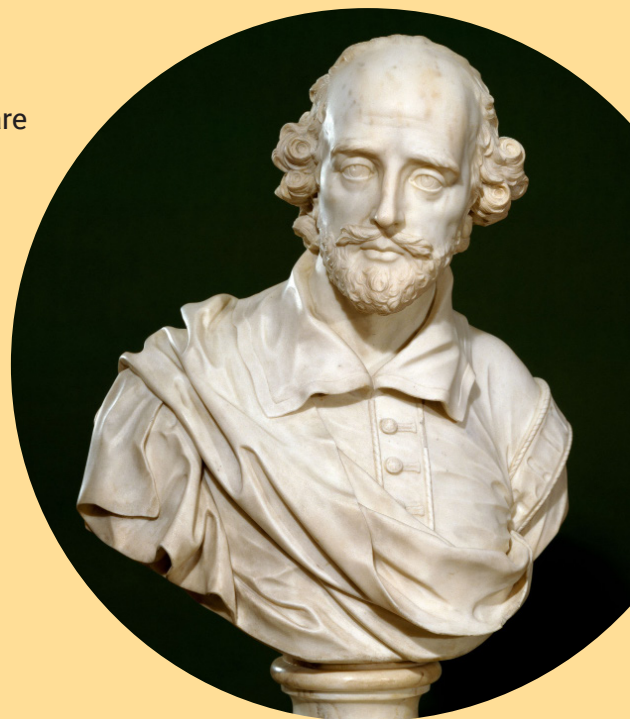
INTERNATIONAL
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Shakespeare sonnet from memory

"Thou dost speak masterly!" Shakespeare's sonnets are revered for a reason: infinities are explored in just fourteen lines ...

You're free to choose any of Shakespeare's complete sonnets. Your choice could be any one from his quarto of 154 sonnets, or any complete sonnet (of 14 lines) from his plays.

You will need to **provide further information by one week before your performance.**



What we reward

- ✓ Secure, well-memorised words
- ✓ Clarity and audibility
- ✓ Sensitivity to, and capturing of, mood and meaning
- ✓ Vocal variety which engages the audience and adds power to the words
- ✓ Thoughtful and appropriate use of pause
- ✓ Skilful handling of the volta (where the feeling of the sonnet 'turns') when appropriate
- ✓ Facial expressions which support the successful communication of the words

12-14 Years

Perform any of Shakespeare's sonnets from memory

15-18 Years

Perform any of Shakespeare's sonnets from memory

Enter at
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INTERNATIONAL
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Prose reading

Roam through the entirety of prose fiction, to choose an excerpt from any non-dramatic work of prose fiction. Novels, short stories or (for our 6-8 Years group) picture books are all possibilities. You can choose either a work originally written in English, or read a work from another language in an officially published English translation.

Your selection should include both narrative and dialogue. Choose a story that you have read in full, and that you really enjoy.

At the start of your time, you need to **give a brief introduction** to your excerpt, lasting no more than 30 seconds. This should help set the scene for members of the audience who aren't familiar with the story, and don't know what's already happened. Finally, **you should read your excerpt from a copy of the book** (either on paper or an electronic device), which you should be holding in front of you. **Please do not read from the same screen or device you are using Zoom on.** This category rewards the important skill of reading engagingly from a book, rather than the different skill of memorising a text (which you can demonstrate in our Poetry and Solo Acting categories).

You will need to **provide further information by one week before your performance.**



What we reward

- ✓ An engaging and helpful introduction
- ✓ Familiarity with the text (to be read from a book, *not* memorised)
- ✓ Clarity, audibility and eye contact
- ✓ Sensitivity to, and capturing of, the mood
- ✓ Clear differentiation between narrative and dialogue
- ✓ Vocal variety which engages the audience and adds power to the words
- ✓ Thoughtful and appropriate use of pause
- ✓ Facial expressions which support the successful communication of the words

6-8 Years

Perform an excerpt from a novel, short story or picture book, lasting **1 to 2 minutes** (including your introduction)

9-11 Years

Perform an excerpt from a novel or short story, lasting **2 minutes** (including your introduction)

12-14 Years

Perform an excerpt from a novel or short story, lasting **3 minutes** (including your introduction)

15-18 Years

Perform an excerpt from a novel or short story, lasting **3 minutes** (including your introduction)

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Your original prose

From memory or read from your own script

Sometimes the story you most want to tell is one only you can write. This is your chance to perform your own original prose – something you have crafted, shaped, and made entirely your own. This category rewards quality over quantity. Every word should earn its place. Choose your genre, find your voice, and make the audience feel something.



What we reward

- ✓ Original, carefully crafted writing that leaves an impression
- ✓ A clear sense of voice, character, or atmosphere
- ✓ Language choices that do real work – nothing wasted
- ✓ Vocal variety that brings the writing to life
- ✓ Thoughtful use of pace and pause
- ✓ Facial expression and physical presence that support the words

Your piece may be:

- A short story or piece of narrative fiction
- A diary entry or personal journal piece (fictional or autobiographical)
- A letter (to a real or imagined recipient)
- A piece of descriptive or atmospheric writing
- Flash fiction (a very short, complete story)

Please note: speeches and persuasive writing are not eligible for this category – those belong in our Public Speaking classes, where they'll get the audience they deserve. You may perform from memory or read from your own written script – but whichever you choose, your connection to the material should always feel alive and present. You will need to **provide further information by one week before your performance.**

6-8 Years

Perform your own composition lasting no more than 2 minutes, but substantial enough to show a clear sense of character, story, or atmosphere.

9-11 Years

Perform your own composition lasting no more than 2 minutes, with some variety of mood, character, or scene.

12-14 Years

Perform your own composition lasting no more than 3 minutes, showing range in language, character, or situation.

15-18 Years

Perform your own composition lasting no more than 4 minutes, demonstrating confident handling of voice, style, and form.

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Solo acting

Choose a **dramatic monologue** which you feel excited to perform **from memory**. The section you choose should have been written as a monologue, by a writer other than yourself. You're not allowed to alter your selection from the words originally written by the playwright or author.

At the start of your time, you'll also need to **give a brief introduction** to your excerpt, lasting no more than 30 seconds. This should help set the scene for members of the audience who aren't familiar with your choice.

You will need to **provide copy one week before your performance**.

At the International Oratory Festival, our focus is on the words. Please don't wear any special costumes, just dress as you would for any other category.



6-8 Years

Perform a dramatic monologue lasting **up to 2 minutes** (including your introduction)

9-11 Years

Perform a dramatic monologue lasting **up to 3 minutes** (including your introduction)

12-14 Years

Perform a dramatic monologue lasting **up to 3 minutes** (including your introduction)

15-18 Years

Perform a dramatic monologue lasting **up to 4 minutes** (including your introduction)

What we reward

- ✓ An engaging and helpful introduction
- ✓ Secure, well-memorised words
- ✓ Clarity and audibility
- ✓ A demonstrable understanding of character and situation
- ✓ Vocal variety which engages the audience and adds power to the words
- ✓ Use of appropriate movement, stance, facial expressions and gesture

Enter at
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Entries subject to our
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Public speaking

Presenting an argument

Give a persuasive speech clearly presenting one side of one of the exciting and topical issues (for or against)¹.

You can use notes while speaking. Avoid writing out every word as a script and try to maintain as much eye contact as possible with your audience throughout your speech.



6-8 Years

Argue for or against the statement "Everyone should have a pet" or your own choice of topic in a in a speech lasting **2 minutes**.

9-11 Years

Argue for or against the statement "Children should not have mobile phones" or your own choice of topic in a in a speech lasting **3 minutes**.

12-14 Years

Put forward your own argument on your choice of a contemporary moral or ethical issue, lasting **4 minutes**.

15-18 Years

Put forward your own argument on your choice of a contemporary moral or ethical issue, lasting **5 minutes**.

What we reward

- ✓ A clear and reasonable stance for or against your issue
- ✓ Well chosen points which are clearly explained and supported by relevant evidence
- ✓ Language choices which engage the audience and add power to the speech
- ✓ Facial expressions and body language which support the successful communication of the words
- ✓ A well-thought out structure with a clear beginning, middle and end

Enter at
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Entries subject to our rules (see pages 19-22)

¹ Entrants from previous years should note that we no longer accept a balanced argument presenting both sides of the argument in this category. Those of you who debate can think of this as being like a really good standalone First Proposition / Opening Government speech. Balance is still very important to us, though, and you can be rewarded for this skill in our 'Speaking to Inform' and 'News Report' categories.

All entries are subject to our rules on page 19 to 22 • Entrants must be within the age bands on the day they perform in the festival.

Public speaking

Speaking to inform

What the world needs more now than ever is information we can all trust! But we are also always grateful when that information is presented in an interesting and engaging way. Engage the audience with an interesting and informative speech about one of our topics.

You can use notes while speaking. Avoid writing out every word as a script and try to maintain as much eye contact as possible with your audience throughout your speech.



6-8 Years

Talk about "how to keep healthy" in an informative speech lasting **2 minutes**.

9-11 Years

Talk about "someone I admire" in an informative speech lasting **3 minutes**.

12-14 Years

Talk about a historical event in an informative speech lasting **4 minutes**.

15-18 Years

Talk about a person you think we should know more about in an informative speech lasting **5 minutes**.

What we reward

- ✓ Clearly explained content which shares relevant information with the audience
- ✓ Language choices which engage the audience and add power to the speech
- ✓ Facial expressions and body language which support the successful communication of the words
- ✓ A well-thought out structure with a clear beginning, middle and end

Enter at
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Public speaking

Impromptu

You'll speak on an exciting general interest topic which will be given to you by the festival organisers 10 minutes before you speak¹. This is the perfect category for everyone who likes debating or thinking on your feet.

You can use notes while speaking. Avoid writing out every word as a script and try to maintain as much eye contact as possible with your audience throughout your speech.

12-14 Years

Talk for **3 minutes**

15-18 Years

Talk for **4 minutes**

What we reward

- ✓ Content which explores ideas that are relevant to the topic in an interesting way
- ✓ Language choices which engage the audience and add power to the speech
- ✓ Facial expressions and body language which support the successful communication of the words
- ✓ A well-thought out structure with a clear beginning, middle and end



Enter at
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Entries subject to our rules (see pages 19-22)

¹ You'll be asked before you receive your topic to state that you will not receive any help during your preparation period from other people or from computers (including AI or chatbots).

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Live news report

Reporting on a **contemporary news story** is a thrilling challenge. It's also the gateway to a career as a journalist, one of the world's most interesting and important jobs. In a world of "fake news" we all need reporters we can trust!

From local problems like litter on your street or problems with your public transport links, through national issues like education and healthcare, and on to worldwide problems like the climate emergency or global peace: whatever your choice of news, if it's **taking place in today's world** we look forward to your live report!

You can choose where you report from. News reports can be delivered to your Zoom camera like an 'anchorperson' would, from a news desk in a TV studio. Or they can have a sense of being 'on location', delivered by a roving reporter. Whichever approach you take, the content and your ability to connect with your audience through the camera is what's important, not a 'dramatic' performance. You can use notes while reporting. Avoid writing out every word as a script and try to maintain as much eye contact as possible with your audience throughout your report.



What we reward

- ✓ A clear explanation of the key facts about your chosen story: who, what, where, when, why (and so on)
- ✓ Interesting details which further engage your audience
- ✓ Some use of appropriate sources
- ✓ Language, facial expressions and body language which are suited to your story, and to your genre of news report
- ✓ A well-thought out structure with a clear beginning, middle and end

9-11 Years

Report on a **contemporary** local, national or global news story for **2 minutes**¹

12-14 Years

Report on a **contemporary** local, national or global news story for **3 minutes**¹

15-18 Years

Report on a **contemporary** local, national or global news story for **4 minutes**¹

Enter at
oratoryfestival.com

Entries subject to our rules (see pages 19-22)

¹ Please note that News Report times are a minute shorter this year. Very few TV or radio news reports are longer than 2-4 minutes. These times are now shorter than their respective Public Speaking categories to reflect the importance of a journalist being able to get to the point quickly, interestingly, accurately and compellingly.

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Historical news report

We love history, and it's been a key part of many Poetry, Solo Acting and Speaking to Inform options since the Oratory Festival began.

Now, we're giving you the chance to travel back in time to **report on a historical story** of your choice. History's a big place, and you can report on **any story that happened before you were born!**

What we reward

- ✓ A clear explanation of the key facts about your chosen story: who, what, where, when, why (and so on)
- ✓ Interesting details which further engage your audience
- ✓ Some use of appropriate sources
- ✓ Language, facial expressions and body language which are suited to your story, and to your genre of news report
- ✓ A well-thought out structure with a clear beginning, middle and end

Perhaps you'd like to report on the death of a famous figure, the 'discovery' of a new part of the world, or one of history's many battles. Or you could cover a lesser-known person, event or issue from history, too, as long as they actually existed or occurred.



Start your report by telling us what the date or year is, and where you're reporting from. Then, just report to your Zoom camera as if you were in that place at that time, even though computers might not have existed then!

News reports can be delivered to your Zoom camera like an 'anchorman' would, from a news desk in a TV studio. Or they can have a sense of being 'on location', delivered by a roving reporter. Whichever approach you take, the content and your ability to connect with your audience through the camera is what's important, not a 'dramatic' performance.

You can use notes while reporting. Avoid writing out every word as a script and try to maintain as much eye contact as possible with your audience throughout your report.

9-11 Years

Report on a **historical** news story for **2 minutes**

12-14 Years

Report on a **historical** news story for **3 minutes**

15-18 Years

Report on a **historical** news story for **4 minutes**

Enter at
oratoryfestival.com

Entries subject to our
rules (see pages 19-22)

All entries are subject to our rules on page 19 to 22 • Entrants must be within the age bands on the day they perform in the festival.



INTERNATIONAL
ORATORY FESTIVAL

Good to know!

The International Oratory Festival is fun! Our judges are really friendly, and will give you really useful feedback to ensure that you grow in confidence and can return to our next Festival as an even better orator.

That said, we do have some rules. Everyone who enters is required to abide by the full set of rules on our website at noisyclassroom.com/oratory-festival-2024-rules-and-conditions. The key ones are included below, along with some other helpful points:

Language



The International Oratory Festival takes place using the English language. **We celebrate the range of accents and dialects used to speak English around the world.** We encourage you to speak with your own voice, while ensuring that your pace and diction enable your performance to be understood.

Entering online or by email



- Individual entrants should enter online at oratoryfestival.com, where you can choose to pay by credit/debit card, PayPal or money transfer
- Small groups can choose to enter online or by email
- Schools and larger groups should enter by email at entries@oratoryfestival.com, so we can discuss your needs with you fully and to enable you to provide us with detailed information about your own scheduling and pedagogical needs.



Getting entrants' names right

Whether you're making an individual entry on the website, or sending us a spreadsheet of a group's names by email, the names that you provide us with are the ones that will appear on that entrant's certificates. Please make sure you get them right! So that we address your participants in the right way, we also ask you to provide their preferred pronouns.

Before the Festival



Preparation and nerves

If you are feeling any nerves, we can reassure you that we are the friendliest bunch of judges in the world and we are only interested in celebrating your successes and supporting you in confidently presenting or performing online. If you want any last-minute tips, watch the videos and read our top tips on the festival website: noisyclassroom.com/oratory-festival-tips.

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Providing further details

For some categories, you will need to provide us further information **one week before your performance date**. You will be sent full details of how to do this after the entry deadline has passed. **If you do not send us your texts in advance, you will not be able to take part in your session. But don't worry, we'll remind you closer to the time!**

- **Your Original Poetry:** the text of your poem, exactly as it will be performed
- **Your Original Prose:** your text, exactly as it will be performed
- **Shakespeare Sonnet:** the number of your sonnet, or its location (act, scene and line) in one of Shakespeare's plays
- **Prose Reading and Solo Acting:** a copy of the full text of the excerpt you will be reading or performing. If you found your excerpt in a book, please also provide the title of the book, and the ISBN number of that book (normally found just above the barcode on the back cover).

On the day of your session



No photography or recordings!

Screen capturing, audio recording, taking photographs, or otherwise recording any part of any performance or part of the festival is not permitted.



Your Zoom link, and testing beforehand

Individual bookers will receive your links to join the Zoom sessions when we inform you of your precise session times within your chosen time slots. **Please note that, if you booked on behalf of someone else, the Zoom information will only be sent to the single email provided at the time you booked.** It is that person's responsibility to make sure that the Zoom link is passed on in good time to the individuals entering, and to any audience members. If you have not received your Zoom link one week before your scheduled class please contact us at entries@oratoryfestival.com.

Group bookers will receive your link at least 48 hours in advance so if you haven't heard anything, please get in touch at entries@oratoryfestival.com.

Please test out your camera and microphone in advance and be ready to arrive in the Zoom room in good time in case there are any technical problems. Make sure you are in a quiet space or wear headphones if you need to. We have all seen babies and cats invade video calls over the last few years: try your best to be somewhere you won't be interrupted. But, whatever happens, the show will go on!



Joining your Zoom

On the day you'll be in the Zoom room with other people from your category (and perhaps other similar categories and ages) alongside guests who the entrants have invited (each entrant can have two devices join to watch).

Please try to enter the waiting room at least 10 minutes in advance of your session. Make sure you're using the full name given on your entry form.

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Technical problems

If you cannot join the call or have technical problems on the day, please email entries@oratoryfestival.com. Don't despair if the tech goes wrong on the day - we'll do our best to see you at another time.



Making sure you can be seen

Please orientate your camera in landscape format. You can stand or sit when you perform, but make sure that all of your head, and your hands and upper body, can be seen at all times. The participant should be the only person in view.



Audience members

You can have up to two additional devices join to watch you perform. They should either be in another room, or use headphones so that they can't be heard on your microphone. The audience members should join the Zoom using the entrant's name and their relationship, for example "Christina Rossetti's mum and dad" or "Chinua Achebe's teacher".



When other people are performing

When other people are performing, we ask that other people:

- Keep themselves on mute when it is not their turn
- Keep their cameras on if they can, so that the person speaking has a sense of their audience (obviously it is crucial to have your camera on when it is your turn!)

If you've booked as part of a group, we'll liaise with the teacher or group leader about the logistics of your session.



Age-appropriate? Triggering?

A lot of our Zoom events mix participants from different age groups. Some topics that older participants might choose to speak on might involve violence or more mature subject matter that might be inappropriate for younger viewers. Mentions of violence or traumatic situations can be triggering for other audience members of any age. If this is the case with your oratory, please remember to inform everyone before you start that it might not be suitable for everyone in the room, so they can choose to mute their speakers during your contribution.



Copyright and changes to your text

Through our membership of the British & International Federation of Festivals for Music, Dance and Speech, we have an agreement with the Authors' Licensing and Collecting Society. This means that entrants do not have to seek copyright permission for any poetry, prose or solo dramatic items performed to a time limit of 10 minutes.

- Please announce the title and author before you perform
- For any works in copyright, you may not change the wording, or the gender of the character.

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Performers and teachers will be delighted to know that their participation in the Festival means that the author of any works which are still in copyright will be directly reimbursed as a consequence of their work being performed at the Festival.

Feedback, marks and awards

Of course, taking part is the main thing at the International Oratory Festival. The greatest thrill is in sharing your oratory with other speakers from around the world.

Everyone who enters gets a beautiful certificate, and a copy of their adjudication sheet with personalised feedback.

But marks and prizes are also fun, and we have special prizes and certificates for participants who do particularly well!



Mark scheme

All entries are marked according to the descriptor bands used by all festivals in the British & International Federation of Festivals (BIFF), of which we are a member.

- Developing (65 - 69)
- Progressing (70 - 74)
- Merit (75 - 79)
- Commended (80 - 84)
- Honours (85 - 89)
- Outstanding (90 - 94)
- Exceptional (95+)

Prizes & certificates

We also award the following special certificates:

- Bronze, Silver and Gold
- International Champions for each category
- International Champions for each age group
- International Best in Festival, and a runner-up

Other important information



Child Protection and Safeguarding

We take the safety and wellbeing of all our participants very seriously. For more information, see our Child Protection and Safer Festivals Statements at noisyclassroom.com/oratory-festival-2024-rules-and-conditions.



Data Protection

The International Oratory Festival is committed to protecting your privacy and maintaining the security of all personal information received from you. All data requested is necessary for the general administration of the festival or for processing entries. Personal data is not disclosed or shared with third parties. For more details, see our privacy policy at noisyclassroom.com/oratory-festival-2024-rules-and-conditions.



We're here to help

If you have any questions about the Festival, do get straight in touch with us at entries@oratoryfestival.com.

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noisy
classroom

Helping young people become persuasive and creative speakers, critical listeners, analytical thinkers and engaged citizens

The International Oratory Festival is founded and run by the Noisy Classroom. Based in the UK, we are a training organisation dedicated to promoting and supporting the use of speaking and listening in schools. We also offer online coaching for families and individual young people around the world. Visit noisyclassroom.com or email info@noisyclassroom.com to book!



Schools

We help teachers use a range of techniques including debate, discussion, dialogue, role play and enquiry as part of the Noisy Learning experience. A noisy classroom can be both inspirational and rigorous; we love all of the vibrant, active work going on inside it and campaign against the idea that only a silent classroom is an effective one. All students should leave school as confident and articulate adults and our team of experts is dedicated to fostering those skills.

Training Noisy Classroom offers popular training sessions (in person and online) for schools and teachers who want to use debate and critical oracy in the classroom.

Student Workshops We work with all ages, abilities and group sizes. Schools bring us in for a range of debate and oracy workshops with a whole cohort or targeted group. Popular choices include our debating Shakespeare Days for able 14-18 year olds, debating football sessions for reluctant writers, interview skills training for senior school or university entrants, public speaking workshops for new prefects and Model United Nations days. We regularly come up with bespoke workshops to meet a school's particular needs around the world and we can deliver in person or online.

Website

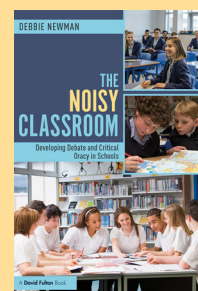
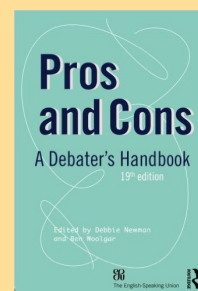
Visit noisyclassroom.com to explore our wide range of useful videos, worksheets and ideas, used by teachers and young people around the world.

Online coaching

We work daily with families and individual young people around the world, providing individualised coaching and support in speaking, listening, conversation and debate. Whatever your location or background, we help you develop key skills that lead to success in the modern world.

Books

Our director, Debbie Newman, has two books published by leading international publishers Routledge: *Pros & Cons – A Debater's Handbook* and *The Noisy Classroom – Developing Debate and Critical Oracy in Schools*.





INTERNATIONAL
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Poetry & Prose

What kind of piece should I choose?

Ages 6–8

Your poem or prose extract should be:

- Short enough that you can really concentrate and enjoy performing it from start to finish
- About something familiar – real life, animals, nature, feelings, or a favourite imaginary world
- Easy to understand, with clear, straightforward language
- Fun or interesting to say out loud – think about how the words sound!
- Something you genuinely love – if you enjoy it, your audience will too

Not sure where to start? Try poems by Michael Rosen, Julia Donaldson, Judith Nicholls, or Allan Ahlberg. For prose, pick a favourite picture book or the opening of a story you love. Some good options include Beatrix Potter, Oliver Jeffers or Grace Lin.

Ages 9–11

Your poem or prose extract should be:

- Long enough to show some variety – it shouldn't be over too quickly, but it shouldn't drag either
- About more than just everyday events – maybe it explores a feeling, a place, or a person that sparks your imagination
- Written in language that gives you something to work with – a range of words and sentences that let you vary your voice
- Something that lets you make choices about how to perform it – where to speed up, slow down, or change your tone
- A piece you've read carefully and thought about, not just one that looks short!

Good starting points: For poetry try Brian Bilston, Joseph Coelho, Christina Rossetti, or Robert Louis Stevenson. For prose, choose a novel or story you've read in full and genuinely care about. You could consider Lewis Carroll, Michael Morpurgo, Benjamin Zephaniah or Katherine Rundell.

Enter at

**oratoryfestival.
com**

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Ages 12–14

Your poem or prose extract should be:

- Substantial enough to show a journey – a shift in mood, tone, character, or idea
- Offer some contrast or complexity – perhaps different emotions, more than one voice, or a theme that develops
- Written with enough variety in language and style that you can demonstrate real interpretive choices
- Give you the opportunity to explore something beyond the obvious – a universal theme, an interesting character, an unexpected perspective
- Be by a writer whose work is worth knowing – published, respected, and worth spending real time with

Think about poets like Imtiaz Dharker, Carol Ann Duffy, Langston Hughes, or Seamus Heaney. For prose, look for a passage that contains both narrative and dialogue, and that rewards close reading. Good options include Charles Dickens, Philip Pullman, Malorie Blackman or Arthur Conan Doyle.

Ages 15–18

Your poem or prose extract should be:

- Demand something of you – technically, emotionally, and vocally
- Be by a significant writer, past or present, whose work has real literary weight
- Explore complex emotions, universal themes, or ideas that genuinely challenge you
- Contain subtleties of language – metaphor, irony, ambiguity – that reward careful interpretation
- Require you to make bold, considered choices about meaning, not just delivery
- Leave your audience with something to think about after you've finished

Consider poets such as Seamus Heaney, Wilfred Owen, Mary Jean Chan, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, or Emily Dickinson. For prose, choose a passage from a writer of real stature – one whose language demands, and rewards, full commitment. How about Zadie Smith, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Kazuo Ishiguro or George Eliot?

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Solo Acting

What kind of monologue should I choose?

The section you choose should be a monologue spoken by a single character, either stand alone or taken from a published play or screenplay, and written by someone other than yourself.

Ages 6–8

Your monologue should be:

- Short enough that you can concentrate fully on the character from beginning to end
- About something you understand - a feeling, a situation, or a moment you could experience (real or imagined)
- Clear in language so you know exactly what the character is trying to say
- Fun or interesting to perform - perhaps the character is surprised, worried, excited, or trying to solve a problem
- A character you enjoy becoming for a few minutes

Ages 9–11

Your monologue should be:

- Long enough to show a clear idea or situation - something happens or changes during the speech
- Written in language that gives you something to interpret - moments to speed up, slow down, or change tone
- About a character who wants something - to persuade, explain, complain, confess, or celebrate
- A speech that lets you explore character, not just tell a story
- Something you have read and understood carefully

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Ages 12-14

Your monologue should be:

- Substantial enough to show a journey - perhaps a change in emotion, understanding, or decision
- About a character with a clear point of view or dilemma
- Written in language that offers contrast - humour, tension, reflection, or conflict
- A speech that allows you to explore thought as well as feeling
- From a playwright or writer whose work rewards careful interpretation

Ages 15-18

Your monologue should be:

- Demanding - technically, emotionally, and intellectually
- From a writer of genuine dramatic or literary significance
- About a character facing a real conflict, dilemma, or moment of revelation
- Rich in language and meaning - something that rewards deep interpretation
- A speech that allows you to make bold, considered choices
- A piece that leaves the audience thinking after you finish

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