

ORAL ENGLISH AND PUBLIC SPEAKING

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Oral English and public speaking by Edwin DuBois Shurter

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EDWIN DUBOIS SHURTER

**ORAL ENGLISH AND
PUBLIC SPEAKING**

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PREFACE

The need of training students in our schools in oral English has passed the stage of argument. Since in everyday life we speak hundreds of times as often as we write it is obvious, from the viewpoint of using language as a *tool*, that training in oral composition is quite as important as practice in the written form. To emphasize written composition more than oral English is, therefore, inconsistent with sound pedagogy.

With training for citizenship as the objective, this book deals with all phases of oral English that lend themselves to more or less formal class instruction, adapted in treatment to the needs of secondary schools. In common usage the term "Oral English" is somewhat elastic. It includes the most elementary forms of spoken language, while "Public Speaking" connotes the more formal relation of a speaker and an audience. Hence, the use of both terms in the title. Notwithstanding the agitation for the incorporation of oral expression in the regular class work in English, no standardization of the content of such work has as yet been effected, as shown by the wide variation of treatment in existing texts on this subject. The present text aims to fix some definite standards; the content and plan of the book, with the reasons therefor, are outlined in the Introduction.

While the needs of secondary schools have been kept primarily in mind, oral English should not, of course, be left for the high school alone, nor in the high school for the teacher of English alone. School training begins, in point

of fact, with the first lessons in the lower grades. Chapters I and II of this book—Oral Reading and Declamation—could profitably be used as a text in the junior high school or upper grammar grades, reserving Chapters III, IV, and V for one or more grades of the high school. Doubtless the ideal place for oral English in the high-school curriculum is to make it an organic part of the regular class work in English, using at least one period each week—or, better still, twenty minutes of the class period twice a week—for oral exercises. The teacher can readily correlate such exercises with the required regular work in rhetoric and composition. The plan here recommended need not and should not interfere with separate classes in the speech arts for more intensive study and practice, whenever the school curriculum will permit. But the point for insistence is, that the general need for at least some basic instruction in speech demands that it be given, first of all, to the students in a school as a whole.

As a suggestive guide for the teacher, I have attempted to block out the text into a total of one hundred and twenty-five lessons, but it is to be understood, of course, that the length and number of the scheduled lessons may be increased or diminished as needs and time demand.

After twenty years' experience as a teacher of oral English and public speaking, the author has learned to stress the practical rather than the merely theoretical aspects of this subject. This book does not deal with any pet theory or method, but aims at results. The mechanical and artificial methods of the traditional "eloquentist" very properly created a prejudice among educators against oral expression as a subject for the school curriculum; but, as in the case of many other pedagogical theories, there is danger of going to the other extreme and totally disregarding certain fundamental essentials in the mechanics or tech-

nique of speech. In this treatise the author has attempted a sane, midway course, including such theory and technique as are necessary for a foundation on which to build, but providing that far more time be devoted to practicing the illustrative exercises, in the belief that the main thing is systematic and continuous practice.

Aside from organization and adaptation of material, one would be rash to claim any appreciable originality in a book of this character. A large number of texts have been drawn upon for suggestions and illustrative material, particularly my other treatises that deal more exhaustively with the respective chapter-subjects in this book. Parts of these treatises have been adapted to the purposes of the present text by the kind permission of the respective publishers, as follows: Allyn and Bacon, *Public Speaking*; The Macmillan Company, *The Rhetoric of Oratory*; Ginn and Company, *Extempore Speaking*; Harper and Brothers, *How to Debate*; and Lloyd Adams Noble, *Winning Declamations and How to Speak Them*.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

	PAGE
Definitions	9
Value of Oral English.....	10
Course of Study Outlined.....	12

CHAPTER I

ORAL READING	14
Getting the Thought—Exercises.....	14-19
Giving the Thought—The Voice—Exercises.....	19-21
Articulation—Exercises.....	22-24
Pronunciation—Exercises	26-27
Pitch—Exercises	27-29
Inflection—Exercises	29-31
Emphasis—Exercises	32-33
Rate—Exercises	34-35
Phrasing—Exercises	36-38
Force—Exercises	38-39
Volume—Exercises	40-41
Quality—Exercises	41-42
Selections for Practice in Oral Reading.....	43

CHAPTER II

DECLAMATION	63
The Nature and Value of Effective Declamation—Review.....	63-68
Fundamental Principles of Delivery—Review.....	69-78
Expression by Action—Exercises.....	79-89
Declamations for Class Drill.....	91

CHAPTER III

SPEECH COMPOSITION	113
General Preparation for Public Speaking.....	113
Collecting Speech Material.....	114

	PAGE
Acquiring a Vocabulary.....	115
Developing a Spirit of Social Service—Review.....	116-117
Special Preparation for a Particular Occasion.....	119
Choosing a Subject.....	119
Gathering Material.....	121
Organizing the Material.....	122
Writing the Speech.....	124
Qualities of Style for Speech Composition—Exercises.....	124-132
Types of Speeches for Various Occasions—Exercises.....	142-147

CHAPTER IV

EXTEMPORE SPEAKING (ORAL COMPOSITION).....	156
Advantages of the Extempore Method.....	157
Topics for Review and Discussion.....	160
The Preparation and Delivery of an Extempore Speech.....	161
Topics and Suggestions for Extempore Speaking Exercises.....	168

CHAPTER V

DEBATING.....	187
Selecting and Stating a Question for Debate.....	188
Collecting Material.....	190
Analyzing the Proposition—Exercises.....	191-194
Briefing the Question—Exercises.....	196-201
Proof.....	199
Constructive Arguments—Exercises.....	202-206
Refutation—Fallacies—Exercises.....	208-212
Ethics of Debating.....	212
Delivery—Exercises.....	215-216

APPENDIX

PART I. Subjects for Speeches and Orations.....	218
PART II. Questions for Debate.....	220
PART III. Rules for Interscholastic Debates.....	225
PART IV. Model Constitution and By-laws for a Literary or Debating Society.....	228
PART V. Parliamentary Procedure.....	235
PART VI. Bibliography.....	242