



SPEAK.

NOW MORE THAN EVER.



VIEWING GUIDE

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OVERVIEW

ABOUT THE FILM

Run-time: 103 minutes

Five top-ranked high school oratory students spend a year crafting spellbinding spoken word performances with the dream of winning one of the world's largest and most intense public speaking competitions.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Screenings of the film can be a great way to bring a community together and inspire meaningful dialogue. This guide includes conversation-sparking questions that prompt further exploration of the film's themes, which include:

- Education
- Mental health and bullying
- Disability rights
- LGBTQIA+ rights
- Immigration

This guide also provides suggestions for hosting screening events using the materials provided, as well as information on starting and running local speech and debate programs.

FILM MATERIALS

- [Screening toolkit folder](#)
- [Film website](#)
- [Official film trailer](#)

Socials:

- [Instagram](#)
- [Facebook](#)



BACKGROUND INFO

Sparked by the exploding popularity of speech and debate in middle and high schools, “Speak.” focuses on the most coveted speech event, Original Oratory, where young raconteurs deliver soaring ten-minute speeches that forces audiences to question their beliefs and perspectives, written in the student’s own words. The pressure’s relentless.

Each school year, more than 100,000 students compete in local, regional, and national tournaments, where they face steep opposition and subjective judges. “Speak.” follows five of the most competitive, visionary students during the 2023-2024 school year as they dream of winning it all. It all comes to a head in early June at the 2024 National Speech & Debate Tournament.

Yet competitive speech is a mystery to many people. Few know it exists unless they’ve participated in it or know someone who has (some think of it as “Debate Club”). Even then, they might not realize that a growing number of teens, teachers, and parents from every ethnic and socio-economic demographic are responding to the crisis in public school education by sacrificing everything for this “sport,” which puts a prize on communication and critical thinking skills and allows students to unleash powers of persuasion and eloquence they didn’t know they possessed.

FILMMAKERS

JENNIFER TIEXIERA | DIRECTOR, PRODUCER, EDITOR

Jennifer is an award winning documentary director, producer, and editor who most recently helmed the Emmy-nominated series, *Unveiled: Surviving La Luz del Mundo* for HBO and the feature length documentary, *Subject*, which made its debut at the 2022 TriBeCa Film Festival. In 2020, she completed *P.S. Burn this Letter Please*, which debuted at the 2021 TriBeCa Film Festival and won the Audience Award for Documentary Feature at the 2020 OutFest Film Festival.

Previously, she edited *17 Blocks*, which was awarded Best Editing in a Documentary Feature Film at the 2019 TriBeCa Film Festival, and other highlights include editing and producing the documentaries, *A Suitable Girl*, winner of the Albert Maysles Award at the TriBeCa Film Festival, and *Waiting for Hassana*, official selection of the Sundance, SXSW, and Toronto Film Festivals.

Other career highlights include editing the documentary *Salam Neighbor* and the 2011 SXSW Documentary Grand Jury Winner, *Dragonslayer*.

GUY MOSSMAN | CO-DIRECTOR, CINEMATOGRAPHER, PRODUCER

Guy is an American cinematographer and director who made his first short film in 2000 in Paraguay. In 2002, he was awarded a prestigious Park Fellowship at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill to pursue an M.A. in Journalism and Documentary Filmmaking. Since then, Guy has dedicated himself to lensing documentary films, non-fiction television, and commercials. His love of character and vérité storytelling, and an eye for light and composition, has been acknowledged by critics and directors alike.

Guy is best known for his dramatic photography on the Oscar short-listed documentary film, *Buck*, which also won the Audience Award at the 2011 Sundance Film Festival; *Mariachi High*; *Bending The Arc*; the 2020 Sundance Film Festival Special Jury Award-winning *Feels Good Man*; and Discovery Channel's *The Lost Lincoln* documentary, executive-produced by Mark Wahlberg.

In 2022, Guy co-directed the critically acclaimed documentary *The Human Trial* with his wife, Lisa Hepner. His camera work on *Buck* was singled out in the Los Angeles Times for being "both beautiful and evocative." And Los Angeles Times TV critic Robert Lloyd in his review of *4 Los Jets* said, "[Guy] gives every element its due; the clamor, the quiet, the details of décor and decoration, the richness of the landscape, the look of air under floodlights."

FILMMAKERS

PAMELA GRINER | PRODUCER

Pamela has produced features and documentary films, both studio and independent, as well as short films, commercials, and music videos. Recent endeavors include several short documentaries for global non-profits in Malawi, India, Uganda, and Japan. She has a particular interest in projects, both narrative and non-fiction, that take on issues impacting our collective human experience.

Her previous work also includes producing at Experimental Design, a world-building company that creates speculative futures across media platforms. One notable project was a video game and virtual reality experience designed for the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE). *Entitled Future World Vision* is a deeply researched educational exploration tool that envisions future cities. The program is now being used in university classrooms to train the next generation of civil engineers and urban planners.

Along with her husband and brother-in-law, Pamela developed and directed a film festival in Baja Sur, Mexico, that focused solely on Mexican films. This one-time passion project, *Cinéxico*, was hosted in the village of Loreto (where there are no movie theaters!) and was a resounding success for the town and its residents.

Pamela holds a Journalism degree from the University of Colorado at Boulder and an M.A. in Media Studies, where her thesis focused on politics and representation in the media.



HOW TO HOST A SCREENING

Screenings are a powerful way to encourage engagement with the film's themes and topics, as well as to raise awareness for the issues explored by the students' Original Oratory speeches. Here are some tips to make your screening event impactful.

REQUEST A SCREENING

Fill out the **Request a Screening** form at the "Speak." documentary website. This will send a message directly to our impact team, who will then help you set up a screening event. We are happy to hear about your ideas and goals as well as guide you through the process. Additionally, below are some tips to think about to help you plan as well.

PRICING

The following licensing fees give the host public performance rights for the film as well as access to the film's supplemental material and artwork. These funds go directly back into the "Speak." impact campaign so we can continue to bring this film to more places.

- Base screening fee for schools: \$350/screening
- NSDA members: \$250/screening
- Additional speaker fees if you are interested in someone from the film team attend

We are dedicated to making the film accessible to diverse groups of all sizes. Please let us know if you have any budgetary restrictions and we are happy to discuss a sliding scale.

CHOOSE THE RIGHT FORMAT

We offer three types of screenings:

- **Virtual:** The film is available online for a set date and time, and your audience all watches at the same time.
- **On-demand:** The film is available online for a set time frame, and your audience can watch on their own time within that window.
- **In-person:** The film is delivered through a downloadable link, and the audience watches in person. We can also provide a DCP for theatrical experiences for additional costs.

When selecting a format, consider what your audience would likely engage with and enjoy the most. For example, on-demand screening may be a good option for audiences who are spread out geographically and have drastically different schedules.

SECURE A VENUE

Choose a venue that works well with your chosen format and what places are most accessible to your audience. Each place is different, so be sure to check with venues to see if they will charge additional pricing to rent the spaces.

Usually have a rental fee:

- Local libraries
- Community centers
- Conference centers
- Movie theaters

Generally low cost or free:

- Classrooms
- School auditoriums

DETERMINE TICKETING PROCESS

Carefully consider how you would like to track who will attend. Even if your event is free, we highly recommend having a registration form so you can collect email addresses and get a general sense of who will attend. You can use any platform you like, but we have often seen groups use tools such as Google Forms or Eventbrite to track attendance.

If your event is paid, determine how much you will charge for tickets. You may choose any price you would like, but most groups charge between \$15-\$25/ticket.

If you can accept donations, you can also share ways for people to donate on all your promotional materials and at the event itself.

PROMOTE YOUR EVENT

Allow your audience enough time to plan to attend your event. We recommend promoting your event at least one month in advance and following up with reminders in the weeks and days approaching the event date.

Sample promotion schedule:

- **1 month away** — Announce the event. You may not have every detail solidified such as the guest speakers, but you should have a sense of your time, date and place. Make an announcement so people can save the date.
- **2 weeks away** — Give more details. Use this time to remind people about the event and use this as a chance to give more details such as special presentations or guest speakers.
- **1 week away** — This is a great time to send a one-week reminder to your network.
- **Week of** — Countdowns for 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1 days away.
- **Day of** — Last big announcement about the event!
- **Follow up** — Collect any pictures, video or audio from your event and create a recap post of the event.

Please feel free to use the assets and information provided in the Screening Toolkit Folder to create graphics and promote your event.

HOST YOUR EVENT

You are ready for the big day! We suggest that organizers arrive at your venue about 30 minutes before the doors open to your audience. This gives you time to get organized and do a tech check to make sure the film will play correctly. If you are playing the film from a streaming link, we recommend playing the film continuously for at least 10 minutes to check for any buffering issues.

FOLLOW UP

After your event concludes, be sure to follow up with your audience. You can send a thank you note and/or make social media posts. This is also a great time to send any donation links or information about other upcoming news you may have.

SPEAK. SCREENING EVENT CHECKLIST

PLANNING PHASE

- ☐ Fill out the Request a Screening form on the "Speak." website
- ☐ Determine your core audience
- ☐ Determine your format (in-person, virtual, hybrid)
- ☐ Secure your screening venue
- ☐ Create promotional materials

MONTH IN ADVANCE

- ☐ Receive the film exhibition files
- ☐ Create registration or ticketing process
- ☐ Post your first event announcement
- ☐ Finalize guest speakers, activities, programming, etc.

WEEK OF

- ☐ Post reminders for your event
- ☐ Create a run of show and share with everyone involved in executing your event

DAY OF

- ☐ Arrive to venue 30 minutes before doors open to public
- ☐ Tech check the film playback in exactly the setup for the actual event
- ☐ Open the doors 30 minutes before event start
- ☐ Start your program!

FOLLOW UP

- ☐ Send a follow-up email
- ☐ Post recap videos and/or photos



SPEECH & DEBATE PROGRAMS

HOW TO START A SPEECH & DEBATE PROGRAM

Visit the NSDA [Getting Started](#) page for information about creating a speech and debate program at your school.

Consider scheduling an [Onboarding Call](#) with an NSDA staff member. One of our Membership Coordinators will explain the process of joining the NSDA, advocating for a program, and some of the common pitfalls around starting a speech and debate program. We can also discuss the different events, student Honor Society, NSDA resources, team administration, and competing at your first tournament.

RUNNING A SPEECH & DEBATE PROGRAM

The NSDA has resources available to coaches and students. There are resources for team management, coach training, judge training, topic analysis, competition resources, tournament hosting guides, and much more. These resources can be found on the [NSDA website](#).

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

STUDENTS IN SPEECH & DEBATE

- How do you think speech and debate played a role in the portrayed students' personal growth and development throughout the film's events?
- Did any of the students' Oratory speeches evolve over the course of the film's events? If so, what did you notice about the developments?
- What role can speech and debate play in student empowerment and/or self-discovery?
- Were there any moments in the film that made you reflect on your own journey with speech and debate?

COACHES & EDUCATORS

- Were there any steps that the coaches portrayed in the film took to nurture student growth that stood out to you? If so, what were they?
- What responsibilities do coaches and educators have when working with students' self-discovery and personal stories?
- Were there any moments in the film that made you reflect on your own journey in education?

GENERAL REFLECTION

- Did you learn anything about speech and debate from the film? What was it and how did it affect you?
- What were your preconceptions about speech and debate programs before watching the film, if any?
- How does speech and debate act as a platform for students to speak on topics that are important to them?
- In what ways are students challenged to interrogate their own perspectives and identities when crafting an Original Oratory piece?
- What are some ways that you practice sharing your own voice?