

# What to Expect Competing in Dramatic Interpretation

*In Dramatic Interpretation, students use a play, short story, or other published work, to perform a selection of one or more portions of a piece up to ten minutes in length. With a spotlight on character development and depth, Dramatic Interpretation focuses on a student's ability to convey emotion through the use of a dramatic text. Competitors may portray one or multiple characters. The interview below with Dramatic Interpreter **Rachel Rothschild** gives you a preview of what it's like to compete in this speech event.*

## *Why did you choose your event?*

I chose Dramatic Interpretation so that I could be someone else when being me gets too tough to handle. This event offers the opportunity to dissolve into someone else entirely; speakers in this category become completely attached to their character. After every round of DI, speakers face a fervent desire to better themselves. This ambition drives students to practice determinedly. Personally, I have often found myself watching national final rounds until 2:00 AM on Saturday nights, trying to learn from the best. I feel as though my own character is someone I've known for years, and that simple truth is the reason why I chose Dramatic Interpretation.

## *What skills are important in DI?*

Not only does DI require impeccable vocal variety, clear confidence, and perfected gestures, but also a dedication unlike any other. Participants in this event, myself included, must be willing to dedicate themselves fully to their character in order to portray their scenes wholly. Speakers in this category must then be able to channel raw, honest emotion into every moment of their piece. This emotion needs to span a wide range, including both light-hearted moments and devastating ones. Students can only achieve this feat with copious amounts of practice; however, there is nothing more rewarding than reading a ballot that exclaims, "you brought your character to life!"

## *What challenges do you face in a round?*

The challenge of DI will always lie in the struggle to morph into a new persona. Speakers must separate themselves from their character, distinguish all the little details about the role

they are going to take on, and finally, blend themselves into this new personality. These tasks prove difficult because we are so accustomed to our everyday lives as high schoolers. Our characters have faced difficulties that most of us students will never come close to in our lifetimes. As a result, we must experiment with different ways to approach our roles.

## *What does a typical tournament look like for an Dramatic Interpreter?*

A DI room has palpable tension within it, no matter the size of a tournament. Each speaker tries their hardest to evoke emotion from their audience, including laughter at some parts, and sympathy at others. Watching other students speak is one of the best ways to better your Dramatic Interpretation skills. Furthermore, trying to read the judge is a common occurrence; it is often very difficult to tell whether or not they enjoyed it. And while awards are oftentimes tedious to sit through, that tiresomeness is washed away when the DI results are announced. Hearing the outcome produces one of three emotions: excitement, annoyance, or respect. Everyone loves to hear their own number called out, and it still fills me with elation to this day. On the other hand, not hearing your number announced frequently produces frustration. But more important than either of these feelings is respect. The majority of Dramatic Interpreters that I have met experience an overwhelming respect for their competitors at the end of a tournament, whether or not they themselves have placed. And that is what I cherish most about my event.



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— Rachel Rothschild, student,  
Solon High School, OH