

What to Expect Competing in Original Oratory

*In **Original Oratory**, students deliver a self-written, ten-minute speech on a topic of their choosing. Competitors craft an argument using evidence, logic, and emotional appeals. Topics range widely, and can be informative or persuasive in nature. The speech is delivered from memory. **Lia Thayer** walks us through what it means to do Original Oratory.*

Why did you choose your event?

I chose Oratory because it seemed like the event through which I could express myself the most. The words that I say during the 10 minutes that I get in front of a judge are entirely my own, and I get to speak directly from my heart. The topic I chose for my oration is something I'm very passionate about, and I am so grateful to be able to talk about it with so many judges and competitors. Oratory has inspired me to do more with my life. It has made me realize that there are so many things to change in the world, and I can be someone who sparks that change.

What skills are important in OO?

It's very important to have good writing skills. The words need to come from you, and you need to be able to craft sentences and paragraphs to prove your point to your judge. Having a good posture and presence when you enter the room won't hurt either, and will make you a better competitor. Confidence is huge!

What kind of challenges did you face in round?

During round I face a lot of insecurity; worries that the other competitors are better than me, or that the judge is enjoying their speech more, or that they're going to beat me. Sometimes I have to read through my speech a time or two, just to make sure I remember it. But as soon as I stand at the front of the room and start speaking, all of those worries go away and I throw myself into my speech.

What does a typical tournament look like for an Orator?

I ride the bus with my teammates, look over my speech as many times as I can before first round, and take pictures of the schematics to make sure I know where I'll be competing. The first and final rounds are always the scariest. The first, because you don't know how good everyone is, and you have to scope out the competition. Especially at small tournaments, the people in your first round may be the people you watch in every round, and this is your first chance to hear their speech. The final round, is nerve wracking, of course, because you know you're good enough to be there, but everyone else is also good enough to be there. After the judge dismisses us from our round, I often chat with my competitors and when we see each other in the hall later that day we smile at each other and wish each other luck in the next round.

Everyone in it is motivated, intelligent, and wants to generate change. We are in this event because it gives us a unique opportunity: adults and students are forced to listen to us talk for 10 minutes several times a day about something we want to fix in the world. Every Orator I've met is encouraging, excited about their topic and their speech, and wants to change the world some day. I look forward to tournaments, because it means I get to spend time in the community that I love and am grateful to be a part of.



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— Lia Thayer, student,
Valparaiso HS, IN