

## QUALIFICATIONS FOR A GOOD TEACHER

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(During his undergraduate days Glenn Frank won first place in the Annual Contest of the Northern Oratorical League.)

The other day I spoke of three things we will have to do before we can expect to have an adequate supply of great teachers.

Today, I want to speak of three things that mark a great teacher.

First, the great teacher never stops studying his subject.

He does not lecture year after year from the same dog-eared and yellow notes.

He is in the best sense of the word a research man, which does not mean, by the way, that he is forever publishing monographs and books in his field. Frankly, when I have an appointment to make I am not at all impressed by a long list of research publications by the candidate. I want to see the man and get the feel of his mind, for some of the liveliest minds in the world of scholarship are not forever rushing into print. I am convinced that infinite harm has been done to our universities by the over-emphasis we have put on publication by the teachers we appoint. We need men of wide and deep knowledge, and many teachers would be broader and wiser men if they studied and thought more and wrote less.

Second, the great teacher keeps his mind fresh and free.

He must be given the chance every so often to get away from the routine schedule of his work so that he can have time to examine himself, his mind and his methods. He must have time for travel, for leisurely reading. He must have time to peer into all the corners of his field so that he will not become a too narrow specialist. He must have time to dip into some related but different activities. He must have the chance to become wise as well as learned.

Third, the great teacher establishes a personal as well as professional relation with his students.

I confess that I lose interest in a teacher when I discover that he never sees his students save in his class-rooms and in his

**QUOTING MAYOR WALKER—  
“SPEECH PREPARATION IS UNNECESSARY”**

**W**ITHIN the last year we have heard, in and out of speech classes, references to the advice of “Jimmie” Walker, mayor of New York City. Such references dated back to a magazine article which appeared a year ago this month, in which Mr. Walker was quoted as having stated that preparation for public address not only does not help, but actually hinders a speaker.

The interviewer who gives us the story states that Mr. Walker advises: “No matter how inadequate you may feel, no matter how uneasy it may make you, never prepare a speech. When the time comes, simply get on your feet, say whatever is in your head. . . You’ll be a better speaker in the long run if you’ll force yourself at whatever cost to speak extemporaneously. . . Begin thinking about your speech while the preceding speakers are talking—not before. . . Some word of a previous speaker usually gives me a cue for an opening.”

We presume, of course, that Mr. Walker is here talking about after-dinner speaking. On an occasion of this kind, of course, it is often true that there are a number of speakers. One wonders what would happen to Mr. Walker if he were the only one on the program. Or supposing there were others on the program, but that he were called on first. In such instances there would be no “cues.”

But “Jimmie” is different. He is quite generally, we presume, placed at a more dramatic position on the program. In such a case he may well follow his own advice, at least in some respects. We seriously doubt, however, that even he goes as unprepared as he here suggests. As a matter of fact the reporter of the interview adds the amendment that what Mr. Walker really means by his advice, “Don’t prepare your speech” is, “Know your subject.” But how can one know his subject without preparation? This writer further explains that “although Mr. Walker’s talk is not prepared, his mind is.” By which we suppose he means that Mr. Walker has a fund of information on which he can draw for a great variety of occasions. How did he get that way? Whence this fund of information? How did his mind be-

come prepared? We are sorry that we do not have available the information as to Mr. Walker's early efforts in public address. In the absence of such evidence we are going to believe that somewhere along the way, through his study in or out of books, of facts and folks, he has constantly accumulated usable material. He has prepared.

If we may be privileged to have an opinion on the matter we would guess that Mr. Walker either did not mean what he said or that before saying it he did not stop to analyze his thought. We believe that he did not consider several matters. Among them he forgets or ignores the fact that few speakers have had or will ever have the varied opportunity for speech experience before public audiences that he has had. Without such opportunity one can not develop such effective oral expressions; cannot build up an adequate vocabulary; would not have the desire to speak. Also, of course, most of us do not have the prestige that Mr. Walker has in his official position. That must help a lot. Most of us do not even have the clothes, and we believe in spite of Abraham Lincoln and his success, that clothes, particularly when connected with officialdom, as in the case of Mr. Walker, help on first impressions and serve to lend confidence to the speaker.

Is Mayor Walker's advice safe for the beginning speaker even assuming that Mr. Walker's ability as a speaker has been entirely developed under the system which he advocates? What do other successful speakers say? There is not space here to attempt to answer this question. One reference to which there might be added many, by way of refutation to Mr. Walker's advice, is that of the great "God-like" Webster, who stated on one occasion "There is no such thing as extemporaneous acquisition."

## HOW TO BECOME A POLITICAL ORATOR FORMULA OF TWO BOSTON MAYORS

(Reprinted from the Emerson Quarterly.)

TWO of Boston's outstanding public speakers, Mayor James M. Curley and former Mayor John F. Fitzgerald, prescribed a formula for those who may wish to become great political orators in this day and age. They present somewhat varying opinions.

Mayor Curley says he owes his accomplishment to hard work and lifelong preparation, while ex-Mayor Fitzgerald gives all the credit to "the Irish in him."

Says Mayor Curley: "The ability to address an audience is not a natural endowment but an acquisition that requires conscientious and strenuous self-training. To be an orator necessitates fortifying the mind with an inexhaustible fund of information, cultivating a retentive memory; it requires constant reading as well as the proper voice training. It is extremely difficult. Cardinal O'Connell, Dr. Cadman and Dr. James J. Walsh, three of the most renowned public speakers in this country today, are veritable store-houses of information, and owe it all to hard work."

According to the Mayor, addressing an audience is comparable to acting behind the foot-lights, and requires an equal amount of training and preparation. Create the right atmosphere and you get the right reaction, is his belief.

"From observations," he adds, "it has been coming to my attention that the day of face-to-face public speaking is quickly passing, and the medium of the radio is taking its place. During the past campaign, it was only with the most outstanding roster of speakers that a comfortable-sized audience could be assembled. About 80 percent of the people prefer to remain by their firesides and listen in on rallies and addresses. Soon there will be only radio orators."

Another new development that he emphasized is the demand for shorter, more concise and less detailed discourses.

"A Webster would have a great deal of difficulty in holding an audience today for more than an hour," he asserts. "Lin-

coln's Gettysburg address is a perfect example of the 1931 public speech."

"Speakers, too," he concludes, "will be required to make more careful preparation, watch diction and enunciation. Gone are the days of impromptu and extemporaneous speeches. The introduction of the radio has revolutionized all public speaking."

The two mayors agreed that the old-fashioned oratorical displays with prepared gesticulations and histrionics would never return, but the ex-Mayor, prominent for ability to vocalize, especially where a particular song is concerned, says he owes his individual ability to inheritance.

"It's the Irish in me," he says. "Italians, French, Jews and Poles are all wonderful orators, especially the Irish. Englishmen and Scotchmen are too repressed and self-centered to feel the call of a great question, and lack the fire and pep that gives a speaker his charm.

"No, I never studied for public speaking, but just respond with the whole of me when the urge comes to arouse the people, and let them see what is going on around them.

"With women doubling the number of votes, and their desire to see the candidates in action, there is going to be a lot more local public speaking, and better speakers, too. The introduction of the radio has given a start to many men who otherwise would not have the courage to face the public.

"Oratory is the salvation of society, and can have more effect than any other medium, including the newspaper. The human voice is the most powerful thing in the world, and can bring the right things into life, help humanity and act as a savior to society."



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office at stated office hours. The great teacher is willing to have his private life broken into by eager students who come into his home at odd hours for informal and unofficial intellectual wrestling bouts. All this is taxing enterprise. But whoever said that the life of the great teacher is an easy life?

## THE ELEMENTS OF GOOD STRATEGY

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THE word *strategy* should probably not appear in the title of this article because of its doubtful associations. We sometimes use it, when we have been defeated, to explain our opponent's tactics to ourselves and to anyone else who may care to listen. Then, usually, the inference is that we are surprised that the gentlemen of the opposition would "stoop to such methods." Thus it comes about that the word *strategy* often carries some notion of taking an unfair advantage, of intentional misquotation, of deliberate misrepresentation, of doing the things that one admits to be wrong for the sake of winning a point.

So, since we have persisted in using the word, in spite of its doubtful connotation, a definition seems clearly indicated. And, because any one-sentence definition that comes to mind is about as unsatisfactory as such definitions usually are, we will explain what we mean in the light of a typical situation, a debate on prohibition, between two distinguished men who hold almost opposite points of view.

This public debate is not, from the point of view of the debaters at the moment of the meeting, a search for truth. Each speaker, we can assume, has made a study of the evidence and believes that he has already found the truth. To each it seems unthinkable that an intelligent person should read the same evidence and arrive at the opposite point of view. Yet what seemed incredible has come to pass, and an audience has gathered to hear the two distinguished men defend opposite sides of the highly controversial question. On the platform are the two speakers, each confident that he is right and that the other is *ipso facto* wrong, each fearful lest he be discredited in the eyes of the audience, each anxious to win converts to his cause and ready to use all legitimate means to accomplish that end.

Society has outlawed certain means of discrediting an opponent on the public platform. Violations of the codes of courtesy and common honesty are just as reprehensible in debate as

anywhere else and, of course, are not included in our definition of strategy.

But to be effective each speaker must do more than state what he conceives to be the facts. Much depends on his skill in relating his arguments to the experiences of his hearers, in appealing to attitudes and antagonisms already existing in their minds, and on his success in directing their attention toward the strong points in his own arguments and the weaknesses in those of his opponent. It is to this skill in presentation, this "learning to put one's best foot foremost," that we apply the term "strategy."

### GENERAL PRINCIPLES

A debate speech is not a thing to be judged by fixed rules, regardless of the effect it has produced on the audience. The debater is using voice and action as stimuli in the hope that he can get his hearers to respond as he wishes them to respond. The members of the audience react to the speaker's words in terms of their own past experiences. In real life situations, then, the effectiveness of the argumentative speech is judged in terms of the reactions which it provokes. A speech may observe all rules of grammar and fulfill the general requirements of unity, coherence, and emphasis, and rank low on the basis of this test.

The first principle of effective strategy is to make a careful analysis of the audience that will hear you speak. The two most important points to be considered for our purposes are (a) the amount of information about the question which your hearers already possess, and (b) their general attitude towards the proposition.

(a) If your hearers know little or nothing about the question, your speeches must supply the information essential to an understanding of the controversy. It is often necessary to inform before beginning the process of persuasion. But if the history of the question is a matter of common knowledge, the same explanation that was so desirable in the other case would be a waste of time.

(b) On the basis of their general attitude towards the question audiences may be classified as *favorable*, *hostile*, or *indifferent*. Oftentimes, representatives of all three groups will be found in the same audience.

How can such an analysis be made? Here are two plans that have been worked successfully: (a) Have as many students

as possible write down their reactions to the question, why they favor or oppose the proposition, what questions they would have to have answered before they would change their opinions, etc.

(b) After the debaters have studied the question for some time and are about to prepare their final speeches, have them talk with as many townspeople as possible about their attitude on the proposition.

**II. Construct your Outline on this Basis of this Analysis.**

Have the debaters study the answers given by both students and townspeople. If a great many mention some argument, it must be dealt with, no matter how trivial it may seem to the debaters who have studied

the question for some time. If the results show the audience will have little information of any sort about the question it must be supplied. If a general favorite attitude towards the affirmative proposal is revealed the affirmative should capitalize on this advantage in the first speech, and the first negative speaker must deal with this before his hearers will be willing to pay attention to his other arguments. If, on the other hand, one finds the audience hostile to the affirmative proposal, the reasons for this hostility must be dealt with in some manner before much progress can be made.

An outline that would suit one audience might be quite ineffective with another. Study your audience as thoroughly as possible and build your case to fit it. Custom-built cases are much better than the ready-made ones.

**III. Use "Loaded Words" in Presenting your Evidence.**

Many words are more than names of qualities or attributes, or things; they arouse in us feelings of approval or disapproval; they are "yes-response" or "no-response" words. We learn about new things, and tend to accept or reject them, as they are compared with things that we already approve, or likened to others that we learned to disapprove. The attitude of approval or disapproval does not even depend on a knowledge of what the words mean; it may come from the manner in which the words are uttered. Thus, we may approve of *justice*, or *liberalism*, and disapprove of *radicals* and *traitors*, without being able to give a satisfactory definition of the terms.

The wise debater uses "yes-response" words in connection with his proposal and "no-response" words to describe the position taken by his opponent. The following introductory sen-

tences from Henry Van Dyke's speech "For Freedom of Conscience" are filled with loaded words.

This is not a political speech. I am no politician—nothing but a private citizen with progressive principles and conservative tastes, an old Presbyterian parson, an independent writer, and a son of liberty in the eighth generation of native-born Americans. I welcome the opportunity of speaking by radio to many thousands of unseen friends and neighbors, Protestants, Jews, Catholics, and member of no visible church, about a subject which is very dear to my heart: Freedom of Conscience in these United States.

For an excellent example of the application of "no-response" words to the opposition, read Claude G. Bowers keynote speech at the Democratic national convention in 1928. The following sentences are taken from his introduction as printed in the daily papers on June 27 of that year.

The American Democracy has mobilized today to wage a war of extermination against privilege and pillage. We prime our guns against autocracy and bureaucracy. We march against the centralization which threatens the liberties of the people. We fight for the republic of the fathers and for the recovery of the covenant from the keeping of a caste and class. We battle for the honor of the nation, besmirched and bedraggled by the most brazen and shameless carnival of corruption that ever blackened the reputation of a decent and self-respecting people.

The advice to use loaded words is not to be construed as advice against the use of evidence. But unless the evidence is connected with the experiences of the audience by means of these words the speech will tend to be "dry" and the skillful choice of these words and phrases constitutes one of the most subtle forms of strategy.

### A FEW SPECIFIC TECHNIQUES

Of the many devices that may be used, we have space to mention only a few.

(a) Ask questions to be answered by your opponents. Choose the question that, more than any other, is troublesome for your opponents to answer. Ask it early in the debate after showing the audience why they need to know the answer in order to understand the position of the opposing team. Each member of your team must be ready to follow up the question by being prepared to deal with any answer that may be made, or by showing the significance of the failure of the opposition to attempt an answer.

A few don'ts to be observed in connection with this device:

Don't ask a question unless you are sure that it will be difficult for your opponent to answer it.

Don't ask a question without showing your hearers why you are asking it and why it is important that they should know the answer.

Don't ask a question at the end of your speech and demand that the next speaker answer it, without time for reflection.

Don't ask more than one or two questions of this sort.

(b) Ask questions to be answered silently by the audience. This type of question usually suggests the answer that is expected but, if it is skillfully done, the listener feels that he has thought of the proper reply himself. This method has all the advantages of the "putting-it-up-to-you" technique. Consult almost any classic debate for examples of this device.

(c) Use a few pieces of the most significant evidence and take time to explain their significance. You will have much more evidence than you can present. Instead of trying to say as much of it as possible, select a limited number of pieces of evidence which will appeal, especially to your hearers and make the most of them.

(d) Attempt to prove only what is necessary to establish your side of the case. A reform need not be perfect in order to make its adoption worth while. Do not claim too much for your proposal. You will find it easier to present evidence in support of a moderate position, and the opposition will, in consequence, find the attack more difficult.

(e) Show that the affirmative proposal should be opposed because of what it will lead to. Thus the opponent of the child labor amendment argued that the amendment should be defeated because it was a step towards state socialism. The administrator refuses a request on the grounds that if it were granted many more would come in which would be much more difficult to refuse.