

Cold Reading

Description: The competitor is given written material and, after a brief examination, reads it “cold” to the audience with no other preparation.

Goals: To quickly identify the context and intent of a text and present the selection as to an appropriately specific audience with the focus on voice presentation. (e.g. a news story to a television audience; a children’s story to a kindergarten classroom, etc.)

Cold Reading Administration Rules:

1. Prior to the tournament, the tournament staff will choose and edit written selections to be used for each round.
2. The selections should be between 250 and 550 words. Each piece should be approximately the same number of words as the other pieces in the room.
3. Selections may come from a wide variety of genres including but not limited to the following: novels, short stories, poetry, children’s books, Scripture passages, newspaper articles, periodicals, textbooks, fables, magazines, and obituaries. Written pieces may all come from the same source if desired (e.g. book, play, etc.).
4. To ensure a level playing field, all the pieces chosen for a particular round should be from the same genre, and as much as they are able, the tournament should try to equalize the type of content. Each round must have a unique selection for each competitor in the room.
5. Students may present in any order; selections need not be distributed by speaker order. However, tournaments may instruct that the selections **are** distributed in a specific order.
6. The written selections should be placed in a manila envelope for each competition room before the round begins. The envelopes will be distributed to one judge in each room at ballot administration.
7. If needed, the judges may refer to the returned scripts after the round but will not be provided their own copies.

Cold Reading Preparation Rules:

1. In the room, one script will be handed to the competitor.
2. The competitor will be given a maximum of three (3) minutes of preparation time. Preparation time begins as soon as the competitor receives his or her piece. During this time, the student may write notations that will not be spoken in the round.
3. Timepiece must be **facing toward the competitor** and **counting down**. Local tournaments may still choose to give verbal countdown signals every thirty (30) seconds until three (3) minutes have elapsed.
4. When the three minute preparation time is complete, the competitor will begin his/her reading of the selection.

Cold Reading Presentation Rules

1. The competitor may only read what is in the selection as it is written; they may not improvise by adding or deleting words in the script or changing the order in which it is written. Exceptions may be designated by tournaments (e.g.: play format; speaker need not read the character’s name before reading dialogue, page numbers, or other notes given to speaker)
2. Presentation should be appropriate to the context of the piece.
3. The competitor may use whatever vocal and physical techniques are appropriate to present the selection, including but not limited to, gestures, voices, facial expressions, and movement. If visuals (e.g. pictures in a children's book) are provided in the piece, students may incorporate them into the presentation.
4. Use of additional props, costumes, and audio or visual aids is prohibited.
5. Only feet may touch the floor at any time.
6. Once presentation is over, the student must return the selection before leaving the room and the selection may not be reused. In addition, the student may not tell other competitors what genre or category of writing is being used.
7. The competitor may not listen to other Cold Reading competitors speaking before him. Competitors may stay after giving their presentation to listen to subsequent speeches.
8. Since the scripts are pre-selected, there is no time limit; however, the timekeeper will still start the digital timepiece when the competitor begins and will stop the digital timepiece when the competitor finishes. There is no need to face the timepiece towards the competitor.