

Mars Hill Overview

This is not an extension of the event rules, but rather it is information for competitors to consider.

Mars Hill is a speech event that trains students to connect culture and Christianity. Students learn how to identify the universal themes contained in various classic and contemporary artistic genres (books, movies, art, songs, etc.) and discuss the relationship of those themes to the Biblical truths of Christianity and God's work in the world. The name of this event is taken from the Apostle Paul's speech in Athens in Acts 17 where he uses Greek cultural ideas to find common ground to make a connection to Christ. As this name implies, the goal of this event is to use cultural references to draw the listener to the truths of Christianity. The competitor will prepare a six-minute speech that takes a cultural topic and correlates the themes brought to light through the topic and the truths of Christianity found in the Bible. The speaker identifies one or more theme(s) within the topic and the appeal to the culture and transitions from the topic to Biblical truth. The speech should be delivered in a conversational style and in a manner that would leave someone who did not embrace the true claims of Christianity open to hearing more.

Explanation:

The competition – The student will go to their competition room, draw three topics, and have four (4) minutes to prepare their speech.

The categories of topics – Topics will be divided into several categories – for example: classic movies, current movies, classic books, current books, song lyrics, etc. Each round must provide topics from only one category.

Topic/titles – There will be a preliminary list of topics/titles on the Stoa website which may be used for coaching and initial preparation. Each individual tournament may use other topics as they desire and as the season progresses with new movies coming out, etc. If they choose to use topics/titles other than the ones on the Stoa site, they must publish those topics on the tournament registration page. This will allow students who are competing to research the topics before the tournament. If the tournament decides to add new topics, all topics in a given round (e.g. 1, 2, 3, Semis, Finals) must be either a topic published on the Stoa web page or one provided by the tournament, not a combination of the two. This allows each competitor to enter the room with an equal preparation opportunity.

The Binder – Since there are many prompts and topics, we understand that the student will not have seen every movie or read every book. That is why we are allowing students to bring a binder into the room with them. This binder may include summaries of the topic, historical notes, character descriptions, etc. No pre-written outlines may be brought in with the binder. Each speech should be a fresh, original presentation based on the selected topic, and prepared on the spot.

Preparation – Approaching this event, either at home or in club, may consist of as much preparation as the coach and parent deem necessary. Students should work through the process based on what they believe is acceptable. The simple use of synopsis or thorough reviews of individual topics and titles will be left to the discretion of each family. The students, however, should be able to discuss themes and truths common to humanity. Once these common truths are established, students, with guidance from their parents and/or coaches, can work on finding common ground with the culture leading to a discussion of Biblical truth. The goal is first to have students recognize that God's truth is not divorced from culture, but rather God's truth undergirds all of culture because God is the maker and sustainer of all things. Second, it is hoped that students will begin to see shared cultural experiences as a way to draw unbelievers into a conversation about Christ in a natural and understandable way. As this process is discussed and practiced outside of tournaments, the student will become more confident and competent in analyzing culture in the light of Biblical truth.