

Trig's Quick Guide to Original Prose & Poetry

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What is OPP?

Original Prose & Poetry is an incredibly unique event that fosters your interpretive skills as well as your creative writing abilities. This event, in my opinion, is one of the best ways to start Speech & Debate. You have all of the fun of interp, but you get to write your own script! It's WONDERFUL!

Don't confuse the title. Yes, you may do poetry! But be wary of this, it's very very difficult to get someone to listen to poetry for ten minutes, so most people just stay away from it. If poetry is your thing, why not write poetry in your story? Find a way to incorporate it, but I wouldn't base my script off of poetry.

Where do I start? / What do I write about?

Start with a topic, or an idea, or perhaps even some characters. Find something to start off with, and it could be random. When I did OPP a few years back my senior year, I talked to someone on the team and had them help me brainstorm random OPP ideas. We came up with funny plots, random characters, etc. Eventually, I took all these ideas we created and wrote my script. You're ultimately writing a STORY. DO NOT FORGET THIS. It's a STORY.

Don't limit yourself, don't be too picky at first. First, don't write a story about three pigs who lived in a forest. Unless those pigs go through some life-changing mishaps, don't go for typical fairytale. Come up with something genuine! This is your chance to tell a good story that highlights an amazing PLOTLINE. That's what this is about, a PLOTLINE. It's PROSE!

There are plenty of different styles you can write. You can write it like a novel if you so wish, or a monologue. It can be based off of one person! You can mix it up and perform a monologue, but every once in a while, you transition to the actual scene you're speaking of and start involving characters. You can do 'flashbacks' and whatnot. It's all up to you!

IMPORTANT- Perform a story that you feel personally attached to. It doesn't need to be a true story or anything, as it usually never is, but it should have something that touches you as well. Perhaps the message of your piece is a philosophy that you follow/agree with. Maybe there's a character in your piece that you modeled someone you know off of.

Your plotline

Every story needs a beginning, middle, and end. You need this too. Write out your story! Let me try to help out with a basic checklist.

BEGINNING

How are your characters introduced?

Are they introduced properly, is it easy to understand who they are?

Does your story have a place to go? Did you introduce a problem?

MIDDLE

Does your problem come up again? Does it trouble your characters?

Can we still identify where we are in your story?

END

Do your characters/audience learn anything? Did they change?

How did your conflict resolve itself? Did it resolve itself at all?

What is the overall impression that you want to leave at the very end?

What's the MORAL of the story?

Morals / Themes

With any great OPP, you need a moral. A message. A theme. Whatever you want to call it. This moral or message will be mentioned in your intro of course, and exemplified through your performance. For example, let's say the moral of your story is to "Never give up your dreams". Hopefully your OPP is a story about a person who never gave up their dreams. Or a story about a person who did give up their dreams and we learn by example, I don't know. As long as the theme fits the performance, you're golden. PLEASE do not forget this, this is just as important to have as the piece itself. It is the reason why we are watching your performance.

Characters

Characters are important as always. Your main character shouldn't be too odd (unless that's the point of your OPP). He/She needs to be normal to some degree, but the characters around them can be a little more annoying, quirky, funny, weird, etc. The reason for this is because we see too much from the main character, any quirk is going to get annoying after a while. So make them as normal as you can.

It doesn't matter HOW MANY character you have, as long as you don't have a bunch. If you can perform 10 different characters perfectly and we can understand what's going on, then do it! Most of the time, this isn't the case. Stick with 2-4 big characters at most. Keep it simple! Especially if you want your characters to shine/develop, you shouldn't focus on more than a couple.

When you're creating a character, write it all out! Write out their FULL NAME (even though you may not ever introduce this), age, location, what they're wearing, etc. These things will help YOU visualize your character, and you'll be able to perform them a whole lot easier. For example:

Name: Max Greenfield

Age: 11

Lives in: California

Wearing: Red shirt, jeans, brown shoes

Hair: Black, slightly messy

Speaking: Like a child, high pitched

I suck at writing

Fine. You don't need to be a scholar and journalist to write an OPP. Remember- THIS IS A SCRIPT, NOT A "SPEECH". You can write monologues, dialog between characters, etc. In fact, most OPPs are just dialog between characters. Write as if these characters are going through everyday situations! Go scene by scene, don't worry about length until you finish your script.

Attitude / Teamwork

The OPP community is very warm! Everyone is supportive (and secretly deceptive sometimes). Even from other schools, it just seems to be a 'fun event' to participate in. And it is! Please keep it that way within Arcadia. Gather all the OPPers and have some bonding time! Work with each other, utilize brainstorming workshops. Make some close friends! Don't be a downer, please let everyone express themselves, that's what this event is about. Be a family!

Quick review

1. Find a topic/moral of the story/message
2. Come up with a problem/storyline
3. Create characters
4. Start writing out a script