Students in an Effective Speaking course craft and deliver impromptu group speeches about primary sources examined in the archives.

Introduction

In this exercise model, students examine primary sources in the archives, then craft and deliver collaborative impromptu speeches summarizing their observations.

Because this course was part of a learning-community entitled “Telling Brooklyn Stories,” my students examined a variety of maps of areas surrounding their Brooklyn campus. (This activity fits into a larger semester-long project about maps. View a complementary exercise here.) The model can be used with any topic or set of primary sources; likewise, the public speaking component can be incorporated into non-communications courses (I have shared helpful evaluation guidelines here).

I want students in my public speaking courses to see themselves as people who can communicate effectively in a variety of contexts. I shape curricula to move from impromptu speeches to formal speeches requiring more preparation and research. Activities such as this one, a low stakes assignment in which they are likely to succeed, allow students to build confidence and to practice the verbal and non-verbal delivery techniques they learn in class.

The activity requires critical thinking and teamwork, and pushes students to synthesize their analysis in a clear and competent way. The group speech promotes collaboration. And the skill of informal speaking will benefit students no matter what field they pursue.

Objectives

Students should be able to:

- Compare and contrast a suite of historical maps
- Effectively summarize their conclusions in a 4 minute impromptu group speech
Context

Through an in-class collaborative glossary exercise conducted before the visit to the archives, students learn about types of maps (for example: manuscript, political, topographical, thematic) and key terminology (for example: legend/key, scale, title, neatline).

Students have already learned elements of effective verbal and nonverbal delivery.* Particularly important to this exercise are well-crafted introductions, conclusions, and transitions. Students have already conducted individual impromptu speeches in advance of this group speech exercise.

*For instructors outside of the communication discipline, see Further Reading below for suggested resources on effective verbal and non-verbal delivery.

Visit

Number of Visits: 1
Duration of Visit: 2 hours 15 minutes

This activity fits into a larger semester-long project about maps. View a complementary exercise here.

Agenda

10 minutes  Standard introduction after a pre-visit
20 minutes  Intro to maps
10 minutes  break
60 minutes  Small group work
10 minutes  Wrap up: prepare speeches
20 minutes  Wrap up: deliver speeches
5 minutes  Wrap up: instructor feedback

Archives staff lead an introduction to maps. They use various examples from the collections to illustrate key terminology and to differentiate map types.

In small groups of 4 – 6, students compare and contrast three maps: a transit map, a manuscript map, and a commercial map of downtown Brooklyn.

The instructors provide students with a handout to guide analysis.
Wrap Up

Together, each group takes 10 minutes to develop a short impromptu speech on one or more of their maps. They determine the map(s) they want to discuss; the content of their speech; and who will deliver the introduction, main points, and conclusion.

Each group then delivers their 4 minute speech to the class. At the end of the visit, the instructor provides general feedback on the quality of the content, organization, and delivery of the impromptu speeches.

Assessment

Speeches are evaluated on content (quality of analysis and information), delivery (verbal and nonverbal), and organization (meeting time requirements, clear main points, clear introduction, clear transitions, clear conclusion).

Students are graded as a group on the content and organization of the speech. Each individual is evaluated on his or her own delivery. In order to reduce student anxiety, instructors should provide the evaluation forms well before any public speaking assignment.

Archival Material Used

Group 1

Area of Brooklyn Heights bounded by Remsen Street and Furman Street, circa 1800; Pierrepont-[18--??]e.Fl; Brooklyn Historical Society.

Boerum Hill Fourth Annual House Tour, 1969; H. Dickson McKenna Collection, ARC.060, box 1, folder 6; Brooklyn Historical Society.

Hagstrom’s Map of New York Subways, Elevated Lines, 1942; Flat Maps NYC-1942.Fl; Brooklyn Historical Society.

Group 2

Area of Brooklyn Heights bounded by Fulton Street and the East River, circa 1800; Pierrepont-[18--??]g.Fl; Brooklyn Historical Society. click for image

Downtown Brooklyn, circa 1990; Flat Maps B A-[1990??].Fl; Brooklyn Historical Society. Official map and guide of the Brooklyn Elevated Railroad, 1885; Flat Maps B C-1885a.Fl; Brooklyn Historical Society.

Group 3
Map of area roughly bounded by Fulton Street, Joralemon St., Clinton St., and Pierrepont St.; Pierrepont-[18--?]a.Fl; Brooklyn Historical Society.

The Heart of Brooklyn: A Great Shopping, Amusement and Business Center, circa 1940; Flat Maps B A-[194-?]Fl; Brooklyn Historical Society.

Brooklyn and Queens transit system, Borough of Brooklyn, circa 1930; Flat Maps B C-[1930?].Fl; Brooklyn Historical Society.

Group 4

Map of the Benson & DeBeauvois property in Brooklyn belonging to H.B. Pierrepont, 1868; Pierrepont-1820(1868).Fl; Brooklyn Historical Society.

Boro Hall Civic Area Center, 1955; Flat Maps B A-1955.Fl; Brooklyn Historical Society.

Map of the New York City Subway System, 1955; Flat Maps NYC-1955.Fl; Brooklyn Historical Society. click for image

Group 5

Map of H.B. Pierrepont’s Farm in Brooklyn, 1856; Pierrepont-[1856].Fl; Brooklyn Historical Society.

Montague Business Improvement District, 2003; Flat Maps B A-2003.Fl; Brooklyn Historical Society. click for image

Brooklyn Heights Residential District of Wall Street, circa 1921; Flat Maps NYC-[1921?].Fl; Brooklyn Historical Society.

Further Reading


This Exercise Was Used In

SPE 1330: Effective Speaking A learning community in which first-year students enroll in
the same English Composition and Effective Speaking courses. Both fulfill general education requirements.

Adaptability

Instructors can use an impromptu speech as a wrap-up activity regardless of discipline or student ability level.

Course Materials (included)

Introduction to Maps
In-Archives Handout
Speech Evaluation Form

Cite This Exercise

TERMINOLOGY

Neat line: A line or border that encloses the geographic detail of a map.

Compass rose: Indicates which way is north. Not all maps orient north at the top.

Scale bar: A way to visually show the scale (the ratio of distance on the map to the corresponding distance in real life) of a map. A chart of some common conversions:

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Inset: A smaller map located within the neat line of a larger map. Insets can include detail of a location shown on the larger map. For example, a map of New York State could have an inset of New York City that shows NYC in more detail.

Cartouche: Panels on a map which enclose parts of the map such as the title, legend, scale bar, etc. Cartouches are often decorated and are very common on early maps.

Relief: Indicates landscape or underwater elevation. Common types of relief include:
SOME TYPES OF MAPS

Cadastral maps

A fancy way of saying “property map.” These may show property boundaries as well as lots, buildings, names of landowners, etc.

Historical maps

Depicts an earlier time period, for example a map published in 1995 showing Flatbush as it was in 1873. These often include modern references (such as a street grid) on top of historic information.

Nautical charts

Created to help people navigate waterways. These often show bathymetric (underwater) relief, such as soundings or isolines.

Pictorial maps

Also known as illustrated maps, pictorial maps are more artistic than technical. They are often designed for children.

Political maps

These show administrative and political divisions, like countries, states, or wards.

Road maps

These show roads, highways, etc. They are often made by gas companies or motor clubs.

Topographical maps

These show landscape details and relief. Common examples include hiking maps or state/national park maps.

Manuscript maps

A map that is created by hand (as opposed to printed maps).
HOW TO READ MAPS

*Sometimes it is difficult to extract information from maps. The following strategies can help you interpret a map.*

**Examine the map (don’t forget to look at both sides of the map!)**

- What does it show? What type of map is it? (cadastral, topographic, etc.)
- How is it oriented?
- What year is depicted? In what year was the map made?
- What map elements can you find on the piece? (cartouche? inset? relief?)
- What is strange, interesting, or confusing about it?
- Is the map accurate? How do you know, or how could you find out?

**Compare and contrast maps from the same time period**

- Do the maps share any significant details?
- How do the maps differ?
- How have names changed or stayed the same? (streets, islands, churches, etc.)

**Compare and contrast maps from different time periods**

- What features of the area depicted have changed?
- Which have stayed the same?
- How are the maps stylistically similar or different?

**Make inferences**

- In what ways did the mapmaker intend people to use/appreciate/read the map?
- What can you learn from this map that may not have been part of its intended use?
  - What does the map tell you about the time period that it was made in?
  - How does the map illustrate historical movements or trends (shipping, industrialization, immigration, racism, etc.)
What is the map’s call number?
What is the map’s title (if available)?
What is familiar to you about the map?
What is strange or unfamiliar about the map?
What about this map stands out to you?
What materials were used to make this map?
Who do you think made this map?
When was this map made? What time period does the map depict (i.e., is it the same as when it was made)?
What area of Brooklyn does the map depict?
What do you think is the purpose of this map?
Why do you think this map survived?
Why do you think this map is in the archives at Brooklyn Historical Society?
Where is City Tech (our college) in relation to this map?
What additional information do you need to better understand this map?
What questions do you have for BHS staff about this map?
Group Impromptu Speech - Evaluation Form
by Justin Davis

Part of an in-archives exercise at http://www.teacharchives.org/exercises/impromptu-speeches/

Name _____________________________  Delivery Score _____ / 40
Name _____________________________  Delivery Score _____ / 40
Name _____________________________  Delivery Score _____ / 40
Name _____________________________  Delivery Score _____ / 40
Name _____________________________  Delivery Score _____ / 40
Name _____________________________  Delivery Score _____ / 40
Name _____________________________  Delivery Score _____ / 40

Each Speaker (individually) will be evaluated on:
• Delivery (Verbal and Nonverbal) (40 points)
• Conversational Style
• Gestures and Body Movement
• Vocal Variety
• Eye Contact
• Rate
• Pauses

The Group (as a whole) will be evaluated on:

Introduction (15 points)  Group Score = _____ / 15
• Attention Gained
• Clear Statement of Purpose
• Clearly Statement of Central Idea

Organization (15 points)  Group Score = _____ / 15
• Clear Pattern
• Adequate Explanations
• Clear Transitions and Connectives
• Within Time Limits (Effective Pattern)

Content (15 points)  Group Score = _____ / 15
• Well developed ideas/perspective
• Appropriate supporting material

Conclusion (15 points)  Group Score = _____ / 15
• Prepared Audience
• Reinforced Central Idea
• Ended with a “Clincher” (Interesting or Vivid Thought)

Group Total = _____ / 60