

Making Your Interpretive Readings Come Alive

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Purpose

- The purpose is to develop skill in conveying the meaning and emotions of a prose or poetry selection.
- **Prose** material includes short stories, novels, letters and essays.
- **Poetry** is a different genre that includes more literary.

Description

- Interpretive reading is the effective communication of an author's thoughts and/or feelings to the listener.
- The reader should draw meaning from the selection to share with the audience.
- All the skills of reading aloud, including vocal flexibility, clear articulation and correct pronunciation, as well as pauses and rate variation, can be used in interpretive reading.

Select Literature to Read

- The selection can be from any published source, including poetry, fiction, children's literature, news articles, speeches, letters and journals.
- Always make sure you pick literature that you like and your audience will appreciate.

Analyze Your Material

- Understand what the author was intending for you to know or feel when the reading is done.
- Understand the characters and decide what you will or will not include in your reading.
- You must prepare an introduction to put the audience in the proper frame of mind for hearing your presentation.

Edit Your Selection

- Often, a lot of description and narration can be edited out. Find the parts that are most important for the listeners to understand the author's intent and keep them interested. Edit out the rest.
- Side-plots often can be eliminated without destroying the overall meaning of the story or novel.

- Keep the dialogue clean from unnecessary tag lines, such as “he said” or “she remarked.”
- Usually, poems tend to be shorter than stories or novels. Because poetry often is written in stanzas, you can eliminate an entire stanza or several lines without damaging the piece’s impact on the listeners.
- If you put two poems together into one programmed reading, you must have some kind of transition between them to help the listeners know when one poem stops and the next one begins.

Mark Your Manuscript

By marking your material, you will remember what you planned to do or say while performing your interpretive reading. You have many ways to mark your script, and there is no right or wrong way to do it. **Here are a few suggestions you can use:**

- To remind yourself about pausing and speaking at an appropriate rate, use a single slash (/) for a short pause, an inverted v (^) for a medium pause and a double slash (/ /) for a long pause. Note this example:
 - *Alone / and afraid / the girl walked slowly to the farmhouse. ^ Upon her arrival / she looked at the dark house / and waited. //*
- For emphasis, use the single or double underline to remind yourself about words that are important. Here is an example:
 - *He was worried and confused.
Why didn't she open the door?*
- To remind yourself about what attitude you want to convey, write a word or phrase in the margin. For example:
 - *[Smile here] or [Build your anger] or [Get quieter]*
- You can use **highlighters** to color certain passages or draw faces to remind you about how you want to use facial expressions.
- Manuscript should be placed on clean cardstock.



Present Your Interpretive Reading With Confidence

To develop your confidence, you must practice using your voice and body to convey the author’s message to your listeners. **Here are a few suggestions for improving your vocal delivery:**

- Speak at an appropriate rate. Speak slowly, particularly if you have or use an accent.
- Remember to speak at the right volume for the room in which you are reading. Showing variety will help demonstrate your ability.
- Use emphasis and variety when expressing yourself. Some words need more punch than others. Be sure you know which words should have emphasis and mark them so you don’t forget.
- Crisp articulation and correct pronunciation are key ingredients to being understood.
- Make your voice believable when you are trying to convey different characters.

Rules of Interpretive Reading

- All presentations must include an introduction that includes:
 - General subject area of your literature
 - Title and author of the selection
 - Reason for selecting this piece
 - Any additional information the listeners need to make sense of your piece
- The selection is to be read from the printed page by using a typed manuscript. Mount your script on black construction paper or put your reading into a small black binder to make yourself look more professional.
- The selection is not to be presented as a memorized piece.
- The participant should stand still during the presentation. Pacing can become distracting. Taking one step for emphasis on character changes is acceptable throughout the presentation.
- Costumes, makeup or props may not be used.

Practical Enhancements

- Walk to the center of the speaking area. Smile and make eye contact with the people in the audience. Do your introduction.
- Hold your script at your side when you deliver your introduction. While not always a rule, your introduction will appear better prepared if you deliver it from memory.
- Take one step forward, then begin reading the selection.
- Read your selection using various techniques.
- When finished with the selection, nod your head and take a step back. This signals that you have completed your presentation.

Practice Makes Perfect

Select a piece of literature. Use this selection to practice reading, analyzing, cutting and preparing it for interpretation. **Here are some suggested activities:**

- Cut the selection to no more than seven minutes.
- Write an introduction following the rules on Page 2.
- Mark your selection using some of the suggested markings from the “Mark Your Manuscript” section mentioned earlier.
- Read your selection out loud. Practice varying your rate, pitch, volume and emphasis.
- Practice reading the selection for three to five minutes with a pencil between your teeth. See how this affects your articulation once you remove the pencil.
- Have your friends join you and each bring a piece of his or her favorite literature to share.
- Start reading books, short stories, magazines, plays, poems and just about any other form of literature. Find your own preferences and interpret them for others.

Examples of Communication Arts presentations can be viewed at www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL9ennltriCeYFMBCptWVejSkkRxoD2r_A

Credit for “Material: Making Literature Come Alive,” NDSU Extension, April 2000

Visit North Dakota 4-H on-line at www.ndsu.edu/4h

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County commissions, North Dakota State University and U.S. Department of Agriculture cooperating.

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web-2-15; web-5-16

N.D. Communication Arts Program

4-H Interpretive Reading

Evaluation Form

Title of Reading _____

Name of Presenter _____ Preteen Teen

Age _____ Years in 4-H _____ County _____ Placing _____

Please check topic area: Humorous Serious Individual Team

(Preteen time 3-8 minutes; Teen time 5-8 minutes) Time _____

	Things Done Well	Things That Could Be Improved
<p>I. Preparation (15%)</p> <p>A. Selection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Theme or specific topic - Fits reader's audience 		
<p>II. Delivery and Presentation (85%)</p> <p>A. Introduction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conversational delivery - Source and author <p>B. Meaning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Phrasing - Emphasis <p>C. Emotion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mood - Climax <p>D. Vocal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Voice - Enunciation – clarity, pronunciation - Volume - Rate - Emphasis where needed <p>E. Physical</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Facial expression - Response - Eye contact - Handling of Script 		