

classroom

Cutting Your Interp

OK – You’ve finally picked your interp selection. You may have even typed out an entire book chapter on the computer. Now what? Today we are going to go over how to edit your interp piece to maximize your 10 minute limit to create the emotional connection and story arc that will make your piece successful.

I will be relying heavily on the Cutting a Script for Interpretation Section from Thane Rehn’s book *As I Was Saying* and *Getting Started in Oral Interpretation* by Lanny Naegelin and Ron Krikac

The best option for cutting is not to cut at all ☺ Cutting is risky – let’s face it – most good works of literature have been carefully constructed by the author and every word has meaning and purpose. Ideally, you would use an uncut excerpt from your piece – if you have chosen a long work. But usually, it is not as easy as that and cutting must be done.

Let’s go over a few hints to help with the process.

I What do we want in the end result?

1. A Piece that has a clear beginning, middle, and end.

All good stories have this. The reader or listener should feel satisfied at the end and feel like things have been “wrapped up”.

B. A Piece that can be easily followed – no confusion!

Someone who has never seen or read the play should be able to follow and understand it without difficulty. Judges will tell you that this is often a major problem with interps! Sometimes the selection is just not clear. It is to the writer – because they are quite familiar with the book or selection chosen. But for the listener who is totally unfamiliar with the piece sometimes it is 10 minutes of trying to figure out what is going on! Remember, you will already be switching back and forth from character to character without any aids like a new paragraph or quotation marks and the audience must be able to follow.

C. A Piece that “reads” about 9 minutes

As you add movements and pauses, the piece will stretch to 10 minutes – that is the goal.

Great – So let’s look at what to do next.

II Find Your Focus

1. Choose the Climactic Scene of the play or book.

Mr. Rehn suggests that “the main character in most winning interpretive speeches is sympathetic, and undergoes some moral victory or growth over the course of the piece.” Last season, Reed Gaertner used a selection from a book called Blood of the Lambs. He cut an entire book down to 10 minutes. He focused on the key event that changed his main character – a life-threatening car accident. Through the care he receives after the accident, the main character, a Muslim terrorist, becomes a Christian. This was definitely a satisfying ending for the audience. Furthermore, I think many people were motivated to find out more about this true story.

1. Choose a subplot that runs throughout the play or book

This will not be the main plot of the book, but may reflect a valuable lesson learned – our a relationship that causes growth

1. End on an uplifting note to please the audience.

This can be tricky to do with a chapter of a book, yet it is important for the overall success of the piece.

Picking pieces or parts of your piece that are uplifting or end on a good note are pleasing to audiences.

Key is seamlessness – having all the pieces fit together smoothly – not a hodgepodge of things thrown together.

Have you ever watched a movie shortly after you’d read the book the movie was based on? Characters are missing, events may have been merged, certain storylines have been emphasized that is different from the book. The screenwriters are dealing with some of the same issues that you are dealing with. The movie Emma, based on the Jane Austen novel, starring Gwyneth Paltrow reduces a 400 page novel to a 2 hour movie – and does so exceedingly well.

Cut your piece down to only what is necessary to support the focus you picked – then eliminate anything else. Keep thinking – what can I remove to do the least harm to the piece? Remember, things need to keep moving to some sort of climax.

III Eliminate Anything Unnecessary to the Focus

1. Subplots (other than the one you have chosen, if you have chosen one)

Minor Characters

Extended passages of description

You may be able to set the mood with less description than the author

Digressions or offshoots that are set-ups for something you are cutting

Dialogue Labels – Mary said, “”

OK – Now let’s look at a few rules that you should know before you begin to cut.

IV NCFCA rules that apply to Interp Cutting\*

1. Allowances in the rules make it easier to cut
2. Phrases from several sentences may be combined
3. Single words taken from several sentences may be combined

Although single words taken from nearby sentences may be added for

transition or character identification, single words from separate

sentences may not be strung together to create new sentences

1. Lines may be taken from one or more characters and given to another character

1. You may repeat an author’s words or phrases when the author does

not do so.

Amelia Bedelia example – “choc, choc, choc, choc chocolate” became

a cute little dance and memorable phrase just from the word

chocolate

1. You may add a 150 word intro to the beginning of the piece

This gives you a chance to set the scene – to give background

information that will allow your audience to understand the portion

of the piece that you will be focusing on.

1. NEWSFLASH – The intro can quote one separate source

If you were at the club meeting last week and came to “All About

Interps” you would have been warned that you could not quote

another source in your intro – a bible verse for example. Since then,

NCFCA has posted REVISED rules for the speech categories and one

of the most surprising (and pleasing) changes was the new allowance

for the intro:

*Directly quoted material (Bible verses, song lyrics, quotes, etc.) may be used in*

*the introduction, and must be included in the 150 word count. If directly quoted*

*material is used, the source must be mentioned in the verbal delivery of the*

*speech and cited parenthetically within the typewritten script. A Source Citation*

*Page would then be required to be submitted with the script.*

This is great news as so many of us are used to relating what the

bible says to everything else and wanted to make that connection

in the intro of our pieces. Now we can.

2. The intro can include a hook

Next club meeting we will be talking about “hooks” or how to open a

speech or intro to an interp that will grab the audience’s attention

right away. For now, though, we will just concentrate on setting the

scene properly.

1. What is NOT allowed when you cut
2. It is not permissible to change the author’s words

The exceptions are pronoun/antecedent substitution and their

corresponding articles, and verb tense

1. Your own intro words may not be said in character

We don’t want to be putting words in the author’s mouth. It must be

clear who is doing the speaker – the author or the interpreter.

Once you have trimmed your piece, get some other people to read through it or hear you read it. If your mom has been working with you, have your dad or older sibling take a look at it. Another option is to take it to the Help Desk next club meeting. There you can have another set of eyes look over your piece. They can let you know if they were able to follow the story easily – if the focus was engaging and memorable. It is great to get several opinions and recommendations.

When you are starting to feel good about how the script is shaping up, take the time to read it out loud. Don’t worry about trying to do different voices – just listen to the words and the plot development – you may find you want to further change things a bit.

\*http://www.ncfca.org/IEEventDescriptions