

Graduation Speech Outline

I. Introduction

- A. **Hook:** A sentence or two that puts the listener on the scene with strong sensory details. Don't focus solely on the physical description; specifically try to help the listener feel your experience *emotionally*.
- B. **Thesis (optional):** In two to three sentences, state the purpose of your speech: your personal truth or life lesson and its application as a universal truth or statement about life or human nature (*may be omitted if it interrupts the flow*).

II. Body of Speech

- A. The Incident – What Happened? Describe the Moment.
 - 1. Establish the setting – SHOW, don't tell!
 - 2. Clearly state who was involved
 - 3. What was said by whom? Recreating dialogue is very effective. What thoughts were going through your mind? What did you experience with your five senses?
 - 4. Clearly show your *initial* reaction to the moment. How did you feel? How did you respond?
- B. What did you learn? Examine the incident from a variety of angles.
 - 1. What lesson did you learn at the specific moment? Or maybe you didn't learn anything from it at first – that's fine, too.
 - 2. How did the lesson immediately – or gradually – evolve for you? In other words, how did this experience transform from a chance happening to some broader context? What other meanings, interpretations, or ideas revealed themselves to you as you reflected upon the experience? A simile, metaphor, or analogy might be appropriate here.
 - 3. Were there any other similar experiences you had had, or some that you knew others had gone through, that you connected to your own? If so, try to incorporate this "connection."
- C. How has the experience and subsequent reflection changed you *personally*?
 - 1. How have your actions or your behavior changed as a result of your experience? Provide specific, *meaningful* examples.
 - 2. How has your view on life changed as a result? What's your new credo?
- D. What is the universal truth you discovered from your experience?
 - 1. How will your newfound awareness affect your future decision-making and the way you treat others?
 - 2. How might this lesson apply to all of us, and specifically your classmates as you move on to the challenges of high school? Avoid sounding too preachy or "holier than thou."

- III. **Conclusion** – Closing thoughts: Your challenge is not to repeat anything you've said so far. Give some fresh insight. This could take the form of advice to others. You could use a quotation from a famous or not-so-famous person or a poem. Definitely, however, you must restate your universal truth.