**Subject area/course**: English/Language Arts

**Grade level/band**: 11-12

**Task source**: College Readiness Assignments for Texas (CRAFT)

**Speaking to the Occasion**

**STUDENT INSTRUCTIONS**

1. **Task context**:

Many people, including public and private leaders, fear speaking in public. However, preparing and delivering effective oral presentations is part of life in the 21st century. The best way to meet any fear of public speaking is to be prepared for the challenge by drafting and practicing a speech suitable for the occasion. Effective communication is always appropriate to the occasion and to the audience; it is not generic. This task focuses on one type of oral presentation in particular: the commencement speech.

Your English class is having a competition to select this year’s graduation speakers at your high school. In order to prepare for the competition, your class will listen to at least two commencement addresses to identify the features of the speeches and discuss how they respond to a specific rhetorical situation (speaker, audience, purpose, occasion, genre).

Following that, you will locate a commencement speech to analyze on your own, doing the research necessary to understand the interrelationship of message, speaker, audience, and occasion. You will identify the message of the speech and the stylistic patterns and other rhetorical devices the speaker employs and then consider how they might be used in your speech.

Next, you will plan, draft, practice, revise, and deliver your own five-minute high school graduation speech to be considered for the competition. Your message should be appropriate to the occasion, offer anecdotes, stories, or vignettes that address the past and/or future, perhaps note future trends or problems that the graduates will face, and advise graduates how to define and/or ensure success in life after graduation.

Finally, you will compose a 600-700 word writer’s statement that analyzes your speech in terms of the tone, message, and use of rhetorical devices. You should clearly explain your decisions that shaped the development of your speech and specifically refer to and cite lines from you written speech to support your explanation. This is your opportunity to talk about the creation, inspiration, and direction of your speech, as well as reflect on the revision process you went through.

You will also be listening to your classmates’ speeches to vote for a winner. As you listen to the speeches of your classmates, take careful note of which features of their texts and delivery are effective and which are less effective, and consider how what you’ve surmised could prove useful to you in the future in crafting and delivering oral presentations and in conveying messages to an array of audiences.

1. **Final product**:

Compose and deliver an effective five-minute commencement speech appropriate to the occasion, which offers anecdotes, addresses the future, and suggests how the audience should take action. You will submit a written copy of your speech, along with your 600-700-word writer’s statement.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

1. **Knowledge and skills you will need to demonstrate on this task:**

* How speakers develop an engaging message, use language resourcefully, and deliver a speech effectively for a specific audience on a specific occasion
* Look closely at the language the speaker has chosen, noting the use and effect of rhetorical devices (including figurative language and use of anecdotes), length and variety of sentences, pronoun use, word choice, level of formality, etc.
* Characteristics of speech effective delivery
* Themes and features of commencement speeches and connect them in specific ways to speaker, audience, and occasion
* Collaboratively analyze and discuss the organization, message, and presentation skills of a speaker and ideas, themes, or trends present in commencement speeches that make the speeches effective or ineffective.
* Produce a speech draft that create tone and style appropriate to topic, audience, and task.
* Participate in the review and revision process with peers and instructor.
* Deliver your final, revised speech to the class.

1. **What materials will I need to complete this task?**

* *What to* *Note When Examining Speeches handout* (at end of document)
* *Speech Evaluation Form* to provide feedback to classmates (at end of document)
* Access to the Internet for conducting research

1. **How long will I have to complete this task?**

This assignment could take as little as a week of intense work or up to two weeks, depending on your teacher’s instructions.

1. **How will my work be scored?**

Your teacher will score your presentation based on the SCALE Effective Communication Oral Presentation Rubric and your writer’s statement using the LDC Informational/Explanatory Rubric. You should make sure you are familiar with the language that describes the expectations for proficient performance.

**What to Note When Examining Speeches**

**Delivery:**

Is the volume adequate?

Is the pacing appropriate (speaker doesn’t rush or run out of time)?

Does the speaker use emphasis and expression effectively?

Is the speaker’s tone practiced but natural?

Do the speaker’s posture and body language convey interest?

Do they distract from the content?

Does the speaker make adequate eye contact with the audience?

**Content/Message:**

What is the message or main theme(s)?

Does the speaker use other topics to support the main theme?

Is the content appropriate for the audience and occasion?

Does the speaker refer to the audience and occasion?

Does the speaker use anecdotes, examples, quotations, and allusions effectively?

Does the speaker refer to the past and/or future effectively?

Does the content move beyond mere repetition of tired clichés to engage the audience?

**Structure:**

Does the speech have an opening, a middle, a closing?

Do these serve a particular function?

Is the speech organized in ways that help listeners to follow (e.g., use of transitions)?

**Language:**

Is the style and level of formality appropriate for the audience and occasion?

Do the speaker’s words clearly express the speaker’s meaning?

Is the speaker’s word choice appropriate and effective?

Does the speaker use pronouns effectively and inclusively?

Note the speaker’s sentence length and patterns.

**Other:**

How does the audience seem to react to the speaker? (If known)

**Speech Evaluation Form**

**Student evaluator:**

**Speaker, including relationship to school/institution/occasion:**

**Occasion, including place and date:**

**Length of speech in minutes:**

**Delivery:**

**Content/Message:**

**Structure:**

**Language:**

**Other:**