

Choral speaking is the interpretation of poetry or poetic prose by several or many voices speaking as one. It is bringing words to life giving written symbols a new vitality through adequate oral expression. It has educational values because it contributes to the enjoyment and appreciation of literature to improved reading, to personality and character growth and to better speech.

*Abney gives these helpful pointers for choral speaking:

1. Choose the right poems-- poems adapted to literary appreciation of the group, emotionally as well as mentally
2. Voice your choir according to pitch(soprano, second soprano, alto or timbre (light, dark)
3. Know the rhythm and sound patterns of the poem
4. Know your poem. Whether you are reading it from the printed page or from memory, be familiar with the content of the poem
5. Read the poem aloud to the class with sincerity and inspiration. You must have sincerity, enthusiasm, vitality, and intelligence in your own presentation if you hope to inspire others.
6. Afford a correct example in your speech. A correct example is often more valuable than a correct method. Check your vowels, consonants, and diphthongs. If you are in doubt, speech books will guide you.
7. Clarify the meaning of the poem through explanation of unknown words, phrases, dialect or other unfamiliar references. A hyper-intellectual analysis is not desirable, but thought mastery is essential to interpretation.
8. Read the poem a second time, or invite a student to read it.
9. Arrange the poem for choral speaking through participation
10. Let the group try various suggested arrangements with attention to thought mastery, correct rhythm, pure tone, and good diction.
11. Select the solo parts, if any, by tryout and class judgment
12. Keep the voices light. Volume can be increased when necessary but poems must never be forced
13. Memorization becomes spontaneous through actual participation in verse speaking

She also gives the following precautions:

1. Avoid cheap elocutionary material
2. Avoid material beyond the pupils' powers of appreciation and enjoyment
3. Do not exploit your directing ability. Great directing consists in bringing out the latent possibilities of the choir and guiding those abilities toward a satisfying end. Remain as inconspicuous as possible. Often it is possible to turn the choir over to a student leader without disturbing either the security or the artistry of the choir
4. Avoid sing-song patterns and broken thoughts which result in jerky grouping or phrasing.
5. Avoid emphasizing tone volume at the expense of good quality.
6. Avoid choosing 'star' pupils for all solo parts. Such pupils need the training least, and leadership is frequently developed by giving the average child ample opportunity to grow
7. Avoid using the choir simply as a 'show device'. If it becomes merely exhibitionary in its aim, it has no place in a democratic educational program
8. Avoid mechanical direction which results in mechanical interpretation, clipped vowels, and over-long pauses

*Abney, Louise, "The Art of Choral Speaking," The National Elementary Principal, 17th Yearbook, July 1938, pp 365-366

The Gypsies
Rachel Field

1. Last night the gypsies came
 2. Nobody knows from where-
 3. Where they've gone to nobody knows
 4. And nobody seems to care-
 5. Between the trees on the old swamp road
 6. I saw them 'round their fire
 7. Tattered children and dogs that barked
 8. As the flames leaped higher and higher--
 9. There were black-eyed girls in scarlet shawls
 10. Old women wrinkled with years
- All: Men with handkerchiefs round their throats.
And silver loops in their ears
Ragged and red like maple leaves
When frost comes in the fall.
10. The gypsies stayed but a single night
 9. In the morning, gone were all-
 8. Never a shaggy gypsy dog
 7. Never a gypsy child
 6. Only a burnt-out gypsy fire
 5. Where danced that band so wild
 4. All gone and a way--
 3. Who knows where?
 2. Only a wind that sweeps
 1. Maple branches bare..

The Baseball Game

While the breakfast table waited
For a man that never came,
The syrup jug suggested
That they have a baseball game
The kitchen folk applauded, saying
"Waiting 'round such a bore
We'll play a game instead of china
And the clock shall keep the score
We'll ask the pancake batter
From the kitchen for the fun
He's such a splendid batter
And he's thin enough to run."
The cream jug was a pitcher
Of reputation great
He deftly put the butter ball
Right over the home plate
The pancake batter made a strike
And ran for second base
But a spry young tea spoon got the ball
And beat him in the race
But he recovered soon
And said, "Oh, well, I'm used
To being beaten by the spoon
The clock said five to seven
The excitement mounted high.
But the game abruptly ended
When the pitcher caught a fly..

A Wasted Word

A wast ed word
That nobody heard
Weht circling round the air.
It tried to get in
With the radio's din,
But it wasn't wanted there.

It flew to a frog
On a floating log,
B ut it couldn't find his ear.
The dogs were sleeping,
The birds were cheeping,
And none of them seemed t o hear.

It tried a bear
And it tried a hare
And it tried a dancing mouse.
But one was busy
And one was dizzy
And one was cleaning house.

The poor little word
That nobody heard
Grew very faint and thin,
Like the tiny sigh
When the moth goes by
And folds his wing-tips in.

B ut it came at last
Just b efore it passed
Where I stood b y the wishing well.
'Twas a magic word,
And 'twas I who heard.
I heard--but I'll never tell!
Eunice Tietjens

CLOUDS

If I had a spoon
As t all as the sky;
I'd dish out the clouds
That go slip-sliding by.

I'd take them right in
And give them to cook
And see if they tasted
As g ood as they look.

Dorothy Aldis

Mountains have a dreamy way
Of folding up a noisy day
In quiet covers, cool and gray.

Only mountains seem to know
That shadows come and shadows go
Till stars are caug ht in pools b elow.

Only mountains, dim and far,
Kneeling now b eneath one star,
Know how calm dark valleys are.

Janes.

THE NIGHT WIND

Have you ever heard the wind go "Yooooo"?
 'Tis a pitiful sound to hear!
It seems to chill you through and through
 With a strange and speechless fear.
'Tis the voice of the night that broods outside
 When folk should be asleep,
And many and many's the time I've cried
To the darkness brooding far and wide
 Over the land and the deep:
 "Whom do you want, O lonely night,
 That you wail the long hours through?"
And the night would say in its ghostly way:
 "Yooooooooooooo!
 Yooooooooooooo!
 Yooooooooooooo!"

My mother told me long ago
 (When I was a little tad)
That when the night went wailing so,
 Somebody had been bad;
And then, when I was snug in bed,
 Whither I had been sent,
With the blankets pulled up round my head,
I'd think of what my mother'd said,
 And wonder what boy she meant!
And, "Who's been bad to-day?" I'd ask
 Of the wind that hoarsely blew;
And the voice would say in its meaningful way:
 "Yooooooooooooo!
 Yooooooooooooo!
 Yooooooooooooo!"

That this was true I must allow--
 You'll not believe it, though!
Yes, though I'm quite a model now,
 I was not always so.
And if you doubt what things I say,
 Suppose you make the test;
Suppose, when you've been bad some day
And up to bed are sent away
 From mother and the rest--
 Suppose you ask, "Who has been bad?"
 And then you'll hear what's true;
For the wind will moan in its ruefulest tone:
 "Yooooooooooooo!
 Yooooooooooooo!
 Yooooooooooooo!"