Chapter One

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In this chapter you will learn

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I have come to tell you something about slavery—what I know of it, as I have felt it . . . they cannot speak as I can from experience; they cannot refer you to a back covered with scars, as I can; for I have felt these wounds; I have suffered under the lash without the power of resisting. And yet my master has the reputation of being a pious man and a good Christian.

—Frederick Douglass, 1841, “I have Come to Tell You Something About Slavery,” Lynn, Massachusetts

The strength of America’s response, please understand, flows from the principles upon which we stand. Americans are not a single ethnic group. Americans are not of one race or one religion. Americans emerge from all of your nations. We’re defined as Americans by our beliefs, not by our ethnic origins, our race, or our religion.


How many times you have been directly influenced or even changed by the words of someone else? Most of us, at some point in our lives, have listened carefully to another person speak publicly. Most of us, at least once, have left a public speech or lecture feeling different about the world, the issues that concern us, and even ourselves. None of us witnessed Frederick Douglass’s 1841 speech against slavery. None of us heard Abraham Lincoln, almost twenty years later, explain, “If I could save the union without freeing any slaves, I would do it, and if I could do it by freeing all the slaves, I would do it, and if I could do it by freeing some and leaving others alone, I would also do that. What I do about the colored race I do to save the union.” Only some of us heard Rudy Giuliani speak. Yet all of us have been powerfully influenced by these speakers. Their speeches contribute to our understanding of very complicated and important events.

This book will facilitate your success as a beginning public speaker. It presents the practice of speaking in as many natural settings as possible and allows you to practice this skill in a classroom environment. The components of the public speaking process are broken down into discrete steps in the chapters that follow, and you will be asked to incorporate these into your speeches. Some of the techniques and steps presented in this text may seem contrived at first, but they will allow you to develop a strong base of knowledge regarding effective speech making. As you gain confidence, you will use this knowledge to branch out on your own, incorporating various aspects learned in this book into your own real-life speaking experiences.

Public speaking is a learned skill that gets more rewarding over time. Every speaker had to learn how to give effective speeches—even Frederick Douglass, Abraham Lincoln, Rudy Giuliani, and the many others you will read about in this text. The more you try out this new skill, the more quickly you will feel competent at giving speeches. After you finish your public speaking course, you will find that you give speeches at work and in your community. You will speak to give directions, share information, explain procedures, encourage or influence decisions, and more. The public dialogue you will read about in this text is lively and engaging. With care and practice, you will find that you too can influence the discussions that take place in the public dialogue in positive ways.
This chapter introduces you to the power and influence of public speaking, the differences between public speaking and other forms of communication, and the reasons why people choose to enter the public dialogue. It invites you to consider the opportunities you will have to speak publicly and to recognize the importance of learning the basic skills necessary to do so successfully and effectively. When we consider the power these actions have to shape lives, we begin to get a sense of the challenges, responsibilities, and thoughtfulness that goes into designing, delivering, and listening to effective public speeches. To learn more about the power of communication in shaping community, visit the Web site for the Public Dialogue Consortium at http://www.publicdialogue.org/working.index.html.

The Power and Influence of Public Speaking

When you speak publicly, you have the power to influence others. With every speech you give, you make choices about the kind of influence you will have. If you watch television, listen to the radio, or read newspapers and magazines, you are familiar with public arguments and debates. We see politicians solve problems by taking sides on issues and “doing battle” with their “opponents.” Social dilemmas are presented as “wars,” and groups position themselves on either side of the “dispute” offering “the solution” while harshly critiquing and negating the “other” side. We even watch, read about, or listen to people engage in hostile or threatening exchanges over differences in belief and action. The power to influence others through opposition and even anger seems quite common and almost normal.

But there are other ways to influence people when you give speeches. As you’ve watched and listened to combative exchanges, you may have heard critics of this approach call for more civility in public exchanges. The word *civility* comes from a root word meaning “to be a member of a household.” In ancient Greece, *civility* referred to displays of temperance, justice, wisdom, and courage. Over time, the definition has changed only slightly, and in public speaking *civility* has come to mean care and concern for others, the thoughtful use of words and language, and the flexibility to see the many sides of an issue. To be civil is to listen to the ideas and reasons of others and to give “the world a chance to explain itself.”

To be uncivil is to have little respect for others, to be unwilling to consider their...
ideas and reasons, and to be unwilling to take responsibility for the effect of one’s words, language, and behaviors on others. To learn more about the meaning of civility, go to the University of Colorado Conflict Research Consortium’s Web site at http://www.colorado.edu/conflict/civility.htm.

Deborah Tannen, author of The Argument Culture: Moving from Debate to Dialogue, offers one of the most compelling descriptions of many people’s views about the incivility that characterizes much of our present-day public debates. Tannen describes “a pervasive warlike atmosphere that makes us approach public dialogue, and just about anything we need to accomplish, as if it were a fight.” She explains that in an argument culture, people tend to approach people and situations with a me-against-you frame of mind. They see each issue, event, or situation as if it were a contest, a fight, a battle over which side is correct. They begin with the idea that the best way to discuss any topic is through attack and by pitting one party against another. Although conflict and disagreement are a familiar part of most people’s lives, the seemingly automatic nature of this response is what creates the argument culture so common today.

Tannen and others concerned with the argument culture recognize there are times when strong opposition and verbal attack are called for, and most of us can think of instances too. But this form of communication isn’t the only way people discuss issues, offer solutions, or resolve differences. We can view public speaking not only as engaging in a public argument, but also as participating in a public dialogue.

A dialogue is a civil exchange of ideas and opinions between two people or a small group of people. The public dialogue is the civil exchange of ideas and opinions among communities about topics that affect the public. To participate in the public dialogue is to offer perspectives, share facts, raise questions, and engage others publicly in stimulating discussions. When we enter the public dialogue we become active citizens, participating in our nation’s democratic process. We can also become participants in the global dialogue when we speak about issues that affect the entire world, such as the environment. Giving a speech is a natural way to enter the public dialogue, because when we give a speech we have a chance to
clearly state our own perspectives. We also have a chance to open the door to hearing other people’s perspectives. In this sense, giving a speech can be like participating in an unending conversation in which your own ideas are organized and in which others will participate. Kenneth Burke describes this conversation as follows:

Imagine that you enter a parlor. You come late. When you arrive, others have long preceded you, and they are engaged in a lively discussion, a discussion too passionate for them to pause and tell you exactly what it is about. In fact, the discussion had already begun long before any of them got there, so that no one present is qualified to retrace for you all the steps that had gone before. You listen for a while, until you decide that you have caught the tenor of the argument; then you put in your oar. Someone answers; you answer them; another perspective is shared. The hour grows late, you must depart. And you do depart, with the discussion still vigorously in progress.

Throughout this book you will be exposed to the power and influence of public speaking. As you study this process, you are asked to take a civil approach to your speaking. You are encouraged to give speeches that help clarify issues and stimulate thinking even as you inform, persuade, or invite others to consider a perspective. Although you may have strong views on issues, a civil approach to public speaking often is the most powerful way to present those views.

### Speech Step 1.1 / Choose an Approach to Public Speaking

Consider how you might approach giving a speech in this class. Would you prefer the combative approach Tannen describes or the dialogue approach? Why would you prefer the style you chose? Can you think of times when you might use the combative approach? Can you think of times when you might use the dialogue approach? What might be the effect of using these very different approaches in a speech?

### Culture and Speaking Style

Culture has a powerful effect on communication. Whether it be the culture that comes from our nationality (the country we grew up in) or the culture that comes to us via our ethnic heritage (Italian American, for example), we can’t ignore the effect of culture on communication. When we give or listen to speeches, we bring our cultural styles with us. Consider a few examples of ways that culture influences public speaking:

The traditional West African storyteller, called the griot, weaves a story with song and dance, and enlivens a tale with all sorts of sound effects. He or she changes the pitch to suit the characters and the action and adds all kinds of popping, clicking, clapping sounds to dramatize the events of the story. The members of the audience respond like a chorus. They interpose comments at convenient intervals, add their own sound effects, and sing the song of the tale along with the griot.

To this day, poets are held in the highest esteem in Arab societies. The Arab poet performs important political and social functions. In battle, the poet’s tongue is as effective as is the bravery of the Arab people. In peace, the poet might prove a menace to public order with fiery harangues. Poems can arouse a tribe to action in the same manner as the tirade of a demagogue in a modern political campaign. Poetry frequently functions in a political context to motivate action, and, as such, it is accorded as much weight as a scholarly dissertation.
Ann Richards’s speaking style is dominated by the use of inductive and experiential reasoning, folk wisdom, and concrete examples and stories as the basis for political values and judgments. A favorite line she uses is, “Tell it so my Mama in Waco can understand it.” Her accessible style . . . encourages audience participation and reduces distance between the speaker and audience.11

These examples may come from cultures very different from your own or very familiar to you. What they suggest is that the ways we approach a public speech often reflect our different cultures, and sometimes even our maleness or femaleness.

Research on cultural styles of communication helps explain some of these differences. In general, many white males are comfortable with the direct, competitive style of interaction found in public presentations. Because historically this group of people has held more public offices and positions of power in the United States, it makes sense that their preferred style of communication has become the norm for public speaking. However, many other communication styles are also used. African American men, for example, tend to be more comfortable with a complex style of speaking. This style may be competitive, but it is more subtle, indirect or exaggerated, intense, poetic, rhythmic, and lyrical. Hispanic or Latino males usually reject the competitive style, favoring a more elegant, expressive, or intense narrative form of public communication. Similarly, Arab Americans tend to use an emotional and poetic style (poets often respond to and interpret political events in Middle Eastern countries) and rely on rhythm and the sounds of words to express their ideas.12

Other research suggests that in most Native American cultures, framing an issue as having only two sides is rare. In many Native American cultures, multiple perspectives are welcomed and competition is discouraged, while cooperation is privileged when discussing important matters. In addition, a more circular and flexible style of presentation is common, as well as the use of stories to explain ideas or teach beliefs. Humor or teasing are often used to make a point or teach a lesson. In many Native American, as well as some Asian and Asian American cultures, direct eye contact is a sign of disrespect, and publicly proving that someone else is wrong is a serious insult.13

The research on styles of speaking specific to women is slight. We do know that, in general, African American and Hispanic or Latina women may use a style of speech similar to the lyrical, rhythmic, or poetic style used by the males of their cultures, but it tends to be more collaborative than adversarial. White and Asian American women seem to share this sense of comfort with collaboration rather than attack, but do not often incorporate the poetic or lyrical forms of speaking used in many African American and Hispanic communities. In general, we also know that women from many different cultural backgrounds tend to incorporate a more personal tone, use as evidence more personal experiences and anecdotes as well as concrete examples, and establish connection and common ground with their audiences in their public speeches.14

In reading about these differences, you may have recognized your own culture’s influence on your style of communication. These differences suggest there is more than one way to approach public speaking. Public speaking can occur when we argue with others or take sides on an issue. It can take place when we connect, collaborate, and share stories or humor with our audience. It also happens when speakers use various styles of language or delivery. To enter the public dialogue is to recognize the many different styles of speaking and to use those that fit you and the audience best. To explore ways to think about bridging cultural communication differences, go to http://www.ksu.edu/counseling/ispeak/people_to_people.htm and visit the Web site Intercultural Competence: Moving Beyond Appreciation and Celebration of Difference.
On any given day, we are bombarded with information: computers, televisions, radios, newspapers, magazines, movies, billboards, logos on cups and clothing and cars, even bosses, teachers, friends, and family fill our days with words, sounds, symbols, and conversation. We receive so much communication in a single day that researchers estimate 70 to 80 percent of most people’s days are spent listening to others communicate. In fact, so much communication crosses our paths every day that we have come to call this era the information age.

How does public speaking fit into the information age? Consider the different sources of communication that contribute to the present information age and that we study in communication classrooms:

**Intrapersonal communication**: Communication with ourselves via the dialogue that goes on in our heads.

**Interpersonal communication**: Communication with other people that ranges from the highly personal to the highly impersonal. Interpersonal communication allows us to establish, maintain, and disengage from relationships with other people.

**Group communication**: Communication among members of a team or a collective about topics such as goals, strategies, and conflict.

**Mass communication**: Communication generated by media organizations that is designed to reach large audiences. This type of communication is transmitted via television, the Internet, radio, print media, and even the entertainment industry.

**Public communication**: Communication in which one person gives a speech to other people, most often in a public setting. This speech has predetermined goals and is about a topic that affects a larger community. In public speaking, one person, called the speaker, is responsible for selecting a topic and focus for the speech, organizing his or her ideas, and practicing his or her delivery. The speaker also is responsible for responding to audience questions and feedback.
Unlike casual conversations with friends and family, public speaking contains a structure and purpose that adds a level of responsibility not found in many everyday interactions. Unlike mass communication, the ability of the audience to respond directly sets it apart from many sources of information. And, unlike private conversations with one’s self or with friends, public speaking is public. It is directed at groups of people and designed to be shared with those outside the immediate audience.

From these definitions, we can see that public speaking is unique because the responsibility for the organization, delivery, and flow of communication falls mostly on one person. However, if we think of public speaking as participating in the public dialogue, additional differences between public speaking and other forms of communication emerge.

**Public Speaking Creates a Community**

We often think of public speaking as an isolated, individual act. We imagine one person standing in front of a group of people presenting information to them. We forget that public speaking occurs because individuals belong to a community and are affected by one another. We speak publicly because we recognize this connection. When we share ideas and information and consider questions and possibilities with others, we recognize we are “members of a household.” Even if we disagree with members of that household (our audience), we recognize we are connected to them. We create a community when we speak because we are talking about topics that affect us as well as each member of the audience.

At times we may forget we belong to a larger community and can participate in discussions that affect us all. Sometimes we feel isolated or think our interests and needs are not important to society. However, we are members of a larger social community, and we can and do add our voices to the public conversation. When we do, we recognize the need to stimulate the public dialogue, to answer the claims or statements of those who spoke before us, and to offer the larger commu-
nity ideas for consideration and discussion. To think more about which issues in your community you can address as a public speaker and how you can go about it, complete Interactive Activity 1.1, “Convening Public Dialogue,” online under Student Resources for Chapter 1 at the Invitation to Public Speaking Web site.

Public Speaking Is Audience Centered

Public speaking also stands apart from other forms of communication because speakers recognize the central role of their audience. Speakers speak to audiences—without them we are not engaged in public speaking. Moreover, in public speaking the makeup of the audience directly influences the speaker’s message. Consider the following scenarios:

Su Lin’s older brother recently had a near miss while riding his bike across town. Upset by the lack of awareness on the part of motorists, Su Lin wants to speak out at the next city council meeting to argue for motorist education programs.

Gretchen’s brother recently had a near miss while riding his bike across town. Upset by the lack of awareness on the part of motorists, Gretchen has decided to give a speech on motorist safety in her public speaking course.

Arturo rides his bicycle to work every day and has persuaded many of his coworkers to do the same. He recently had a near miss with a distracted and rushed motorist and he wants to speak to his coworkers about what they can do to educate motorists about safe riding practices.

The audience in these three scenarios dictates the choices each speaker will make. Each of the three audiences, the city council, the public speaking class, and the other cyclists, have different positions, beliefs, values, and needs regarding motorist safety. City councils have financial limitations, time constraints, as well as voter preferences that Su Lin will need to consider. Gretchen’s classmates probably struggle with issues of relevance of the topic to their lives (they may ride the bus) and busy schedules that make them want to drive quickly (getting from work to school and back in a limited time). At Arturo’s workplace, the other cyclists probably worry about their own vulnerability too, whether riding to work is really worth the risk, and how to manage one more responsibility—motorist education.

What these three examples suggest is that public speaking is distinctly audience centered, or considerate of the positions, beliefs, values, and needs of an audience. To be audience centered is to keep your audience in your mind with every step of the public speaking process, including your research, organization, and presentation. You can learn how to analyze an audience and stay audience centered by completing Interactive Activity 1.2, “Thinking About Your Audience,” online under Student Resources for Chapter 1 at the Invitation to Public Speaking Web site.

Although conversations with friends are, in some sense, audience centered, consider the very different role of the audience (and even the speaker) in this scenario:

Peter’s older brother recently barely avoided an accident while riding his bike across town. Upset by the lack of awareness on the part of motorists, Peter vents his frustrations to his friends while they work out at the local gym.

Certainly Peter’s friends are his audience, but he likely is more concerned with airing his feelings and anger and getting support from his friends than he is with framing his position in a particular way.

Public speaking also is audience centered because speakers “listen” to their audiences during speeches. They monitor the feedback given to them by audiences, the verbal and nonverbal signals an audience gives a speaker. Audience
feedback often indicates they understand, are interested in, and receptive to the speaker’s ideas. This feedback assists the speaker in many ways. It helps the speaker know when to slow down, explain something more carefully, or even tell the audience she or he will return to an issue in a question-and-answer session at the close of the speech. Audience feedback assists the speaker in creating a connection with the audience so they feel acknowledged, important, and able to participate if they wish.

We often think of public speaking as distinct because it is what a speaker does in front of an audience, when it actually is distinct because of the ways the speaker relates the ideas in the speech to the audience.

Public Speaking Encourages Dialogue

A final difference between public speaking and other kinds of communication is that public speaking sets the stage for the unending conversation Kenneth Burke described earlier in this chapter. The speaker is responsible for framing this conversation, or dialogue, and for laying the foundation for future discussions. Public speaking encourages dialogue because speakers want the people who hear the speech to be able to engage others, and perhaps even the speaker, in a conversation about the topic or issue after the speech is given. Public speaking encourages dialogue because the speaker is interested in discussing issues and in hearing more about them from the audience.

To review the unique aspects of public speaking you’ve just read about, complete the InfoTrac® College Edition Exercise 1.1, “Defining Public Speaking,” featured online under Student Resources for Chapter 1.

Speech Step 1.2 / Consider the Unique Aspects of Public Speaking

Choose a speech topic for a speech you might give in class. How would you speak about this topic in a way that differs from presenting it intrapersonally, interpersonally, in a group setting, or via mass media? How do you think a speech about this topic would begin to create community or contribute to the public dialogue? How would you make this speech audience centered?

A Public Speaking Model

Consider the following components to the public speaking process as it has been discussed thus far:

Speaker: A person who stimulates public dialogue by delivering an oral message. The speaker researches the topic of the speech, organizes the material that results from the research, presents the message, and manages discussion after or, in some cases, during a speech. Throughout this process, the speaker considers the needs and characteristics of the audience.

Message: The information conveyed by the speaker to the audience. Messages can be verbal or nonverbal. For example, a speaker giving a speech about his interest in playing guitar would use words to describe his first guitar and use facial
expressions, gestures, and tone of voice to convey his excitement about learning to play his first song. The goal of the speaker is to craft a message relevant to the audience. Most of our messages are intentional, but sometimes we send an unintentional message to our audience. An unintentional message can be an unplanned pause, a sigh, or a frown that conveys an idea or a feeling we had not planned to communicate. Messages connect people with ideas and are framed so they enhance or stimulate public discussion. When we speak, we convey messages by encoding, or translating ideas and feelings into words, sounds, and gestures. When we receive the message we decode it, or translate words, sounds, and gestures into ideas and feelings in an attempt to understand the message.

Audience: The complex and varied group of people the speaker addresses. Because of the audience-centered nature of public speaking, the speaker must consider the positions, beliefs, values, and needs of the audience throughout the design and delivery of a speech.

Channel: The means by which the message is conveyed. A message can be conveyed through spoken words, vocal tone and gestures, and visual aids. Additionally, messages can be conveyed through technological means such as a telephone, a microphone, or the Internet.

Noise: Anything that interferes with understanding the message being communicated. Noise may be external or internal. External noise, interference outside the speaker or audience, might be construction work going on outside the classroom window or a microphone that doesn’t work in a large lecture hall. Internal noise, interference within the speaker or audience, might be a headache that affects one’s concentration or cultural differences that make it hard to understand a message.

Feedback: The verbal and nonverbal signals the audience gives the speaker. Feedback from an audience indicates to the speaker the need to slow down, clarify, respond to questions, alter delivery, and the like.

Figure 1.1
The Public Speaking Process Represented Visually
Context: The environment or situation in which a speech occurs. The context includes components such as the time of day and the place in which the speech is given, the expectations the audience has about the speech, and the traditions associated with a speech. For example, in a church setting a sermon could be given in the late morning, in a sunny church with hard wooden pews. The audience would expect the sermon to deliver an inspirational, moral message, and the sermon would follow a traditional organization based on a reading from the Bible.

Notice the interconnected nature of each of these components. Also note that the speaker is both a “speaker” as well as a “listener,” attending to feedback from the audience. The audience also has a key role, listening to the message so they can contribute to the discussion that may occur when the speech is done. Look for the interconnection of these components as you complete the InfoTrac College Edition Exercise 1.2, “The Speaking Model,” featured online under Student Resources for Chapter 1.

When Do We Speak in a Public Setting?

Public speaking occurs in certain contexts or circumstances. The context is the environment or situation in which a speech occurs. There are many different contexts for speaking (formal or informal settings, large audiences or small audiences, serious issues or lighthearted ones, and so on), and you will learn more about these as you read this text. However, certain contexts will prompt some people to speak, whereas others do not motivate us to give a speech at all. Understanding three of the most basic contexts helps us recognize when we might speak publicly.

In the following descriptions, notice that everyday people, not just famous or politically powerful ones, insert their voices into the public dialogue in order to share their knowledge, experiences, or perspectives. Each of these people began their speaking careers for different reasons, but each became well-known speakers without setting out to do so. Each person, in addition, decided to speak for different reasons, yet each has had a powerful impact on the lives of everyday people.

We Decide to Speak on Matters of Importance

We often find we are compelled to speak because an issue is of such importance that to let it go would do a disservice to ourselves and others around us. Consider the story of Lois Gibbs, who, prior to 1978, described herself as a “typical American woman” with a “typical American family” living in a “typical American town.” When Gibbs learned that 20,000 tons of toxic chemicals were buried beneath her home and those of her neighbors in the Love Canal section of Niagara Falls, New York, she decided to speak out.

The issue and hazards of dioxin, the chemical poisoning her community and causing numerous illnesses, birth defects, and miscarriages in the families that lived there, was of such importance that Gibbs began giving speeches. Over a thirty-year period, Gibbs spoke about hazardous wastes and environmental activism to neighbors, friends, and homeowners. She delivered speeches to city planners, legislators, and to other officials in her civic, state, and national governments. She even traveled internationally to speak out about hazardous waste disposal and was twice an invited guest on The Phil Donahue Show, a popular and influential television talk show that aired from 1970 to 1996.

Gibbs is a compelling and extraordinary example of the impact of someone who decided to speak out. Not only has she received international recognition as
an environmental activist, but she is credited with bringing the issue of hazardous waste disposal to the attention of people nationally and internationally. Equally compelling, though, is how she describes her evolution as a speaker. When she first began to give speeches, Gibbs “was nervous.” She repeatedly referred to herself as a “typical housewife,” whose biggest decision before she decided to speak publicly was “what color wallpaper to use” in her kitchen. She describes her first speaking experiences as “intimidating” attempts to understand the “jibber jabber” of officials who did not want her nosing around. She “was so self-conscious that everything [she] said seemed to come out wrong”; she “got a little silly.” Part of it was “nerves”; she “wanted a cigarette and a cold drink.”

After several years of speaking, Gibbs recognized her own evolution and perhaps some of the motivation and endurance required to accomplish what she did: “Fifty or sixty people came out [for a rally] . . . . I stood up and shouted: ‘Do you want out?’ and they shouted back, ‘Yes!’ . . . . It was exhilarating to be in touch with the crowd that way. I had come a long way since that first time, when I was so scared.”

Gibbs spoke in the context of deciding to speak out. In doing so, she exposed dangerous hazardous waste disposal practices and pressured officials to take responsibility for their actions and decisions. She encourages others to act on their motivations as well. Find “the courage to change the way the government works,” she says, because, in “order for things to change, the truth has to be understood by a large group of people who then use this knowledge to fuel their efforts to win justice.” To learn more about Lois Gibbs and her reasons for speaking, go to http://www.goldmanprize.org/recipients/recipientProfile.cfm?recipientID=15n.

We Are Asked to Speak About Our Experiences and Expertise

People often speak publicly because they have important experiences or expertise to share. Ryan White, only a child when he began his public speaking career, is an example of someone who was asked to speak and share his experiences with others. White, a hemophiliac, received a blood transfusion at the age of 13 that changed his life: the blood-clotting agent Hemofil contained the AIDS virus, and he became infected. In 1985 White’s school superintendent banned him from attending Western Middle School, near Kokomo, Indiana, White’s hometown. Although the state health board recommended he be readmitted, and the family filed suit with the U.S. District Court in Indianapolis, the parents of Kokomo school children signed 117 claim forms threatening to file a civil suit if White was allowed in the classroom.

After two years of protests and school boycotts by parents and children, court orders and injunctions that kept White in and out of school, and continual health problems, White and his family moved to Cicero, Indiana, to escape the publicity in Kokomo. Shy about speaking out publicly and mistrustful of being in the spotlight, White was selective about the speaking engagements he agreed to. At the age of 16, he traveled to Omaha to speak to reporters, a religion class at Father Flanagan’s Boys Town, and adults at the Joslyn Witherspoon Concert Hall:

“Are you afraid of dying?” asks a student at Boys Town. “No,” Ryan says. “If I were worried about dying, I’d die. I’m not afraid, I’m just not ready yet. I want to go to Indiana University.” . . . “What was it like in Kokomo?” a girl asks . . . . “A lot of people would back away from me on the street,” Ryan says. “They’d run from me. Maybe I would have been afraid of AIDS too, but I wouldn’t have been mean about it.” . . . Afterward, a reporter asks Ryan what was the worst thing about Kokomo. “I had no friends,” Ryan says. “I was lonely. All I wanted was to go to school and fit in.”
Reluctant to deliberately put himself in the spotlight, White explained, “It’s embarrassing . . . . I’m helping people, I think, and I don’t want people treated like me. But now I just want to be like everyone else.”

As a result of the speaking invitations White received and his willingness to share his experiences, the public education process about AIDS and HIV improved. In one of his last public appearances, in 1990, White appeared in Los Angeles with former president and first lady Ronald and Nancy Reagan. At this event, the Ryan White National Program for AIDS Education was established by Athletes and Entertainers for Kids. Born in 1971, White died on April 8, 1990. He never made it to Indiana University, but because of the national exposure he received and his willingness to speak publicly about his experiences, White is described as “one of the nation’s most persuasive advocates for AIDS patients’ rights” and “a miracle of humanity.” Watch a video clip of a student speaker, Mike Piel, who was also able to make a connection with his audience and remain audience centered. You can find this clip under Speech Interactive on your Invitation to Public Speaking CD-ROM.

We Are Required to Speak in Class or at Work

Occasionally, people become public speakers out of necessity. Either our jobs require us to speak, we take a course that has public speaking as a component, or we discover we are in a situation where we have no choice but to speak out. Although these can be challenging moments, when people are required to speak they often discover they have the potential to make profound contributions to the public dialogue.

If you are required to speak in class, what topics would you like to speak about? How do you think you could use the experience of speaking in class to prepare yourself for the larger public discussion?
In the 1950s, Senator Joseph McCarthy campaigned ruthlessly against what he saw as a communist threat to the United States. McCarthy’s efforts caught the attention of the country, and by 1953 this senator from Wisconsin had reached the height of his political power. He had the authority to subpoena individuals from all walks of life, to scrutinize their professional and personal activities, and to charge them with communist activities with little or no evidence of such affiliations. Even President Eisenhower and his leading aides and cabinet officers seemed anxious to please McCarthy, and McCarthy’s senate colleagues knew and feared his influence.

However, in 1954 the national sentiment began to change, and people began to challenge McCarthy’s power. McCarthy’s ability to find communists and communist affiliations in every corner of society turned from being seen as potentially useful information to being viewed as absurd, unfounded, and slanderous accusations of innocent people.

McCarthy’s reign came to a close in the Army-McCarthy hearings when he relentlessly charged a young law clerk who had served two weeks on the investigation team for the military special counsel with communist affiliations. Joseph Welch, the military special investigator, was required to speak in response to the accusations. Here is what he said to McCarthy during the hearings in 1954:

Until this moment, Senator, I think I never really gauged your cruelty or your recklessness. . . . Little did I dream you could be so reckless and so cruel as to do an injury to that lad. . . . I fear he shall always bear a scar needlessly inflicted by you. . . . I like to think I am a gentleman, but your forgiveness will have to come from someone other than me. . . . Let us not assassinate this lad further, Senator. You have done enough. Have you no sense of decency, sir, at long last? Have you left no sense of decency?

At the close of his speech, the hearing room burst into applause and McCarthy, “flushed and stunned, sat in silence.”

To hear a clip of Welch’s speech, go to [www.webcorp.com/mccarthy/mccarthypage.htm](http://www.webcorp.com/mccarthy/mccarthypage.htm).

Unless we are in a classroom setting, or required to speak as part of our job, being required to speak out publicly is a rare occasion for most of us. However, even in a classroom, you can contribute positively to the public dialogue by selecting topics that are relevant and engaging. Similarly, required public speaking prepares you for situations in which you decide to or are asked to speak. It also allows you to practice for those times you find yourself entering Burke’s room, listening to the conversation, and inserting your voice into the larger discussion.

To learn more about how you can continue your public speaking training after this class, go to the Toastmaster Web site at [http://www.toastmasters.org](http://www.toastmasters.org). To examine several recent instances of speaking and determine why speakers engage the public, complete the InfoTrac College Edition Exercise 1.3, “Deciding to Speak,” featured online under Student Resources for Chapter 1.

**Speech Step 1.3 / Consider Why You Would Speak in Public**

Outside of your public speaking classroom, when would you decide to speak publicly or agree to give a speech if you were asked? In this class, what topics will you choose to speak about? What do your answers to these questions indicate about your possible contributions to the public dialogue discussed in this chapter?
Sam

When I was asked to speak at my high school graduation, I was a little scared, but I knew it would be okay. I wrote my speech early and rehearsed it. I asked my family to sit down and listen to me practice over and over again. On graduation day, I thought I was going to be sick—I knew there was going to be a lot of people there, but there ended up being more than I expected. I was so scared! My family was sitting in the front row, which made me even more nervous. But every time I looked at my dad, he would make funny faces. I knew I was shaking, but thanks to the inventor of the podium, no one noticed. When I look back on that day, I am so glad that someone asked me to enter the public dialogue and give a speech. It was worth it!

Chapter Summary

When people give speeches, their words have the power to influence people and to shape actions and decisions. Whether we hear the actual speech or not, the ideas expressed in a speech enter and shape the public dialogue for years to come. The public dialogue is the open and honest discussion that occurs among groups of people about topics that affect those groups. It takes place when a speaker offers perspectives, shares facts, raises questions, and engages others in stimulating discussions. As we join that dialogue with our own speeches, we rely on and respond to these earlier speakers.

In this book, you will learn to enter this dialogue civilly, which is to display care, respect, thoughtfulness, and flexibility. And, although there may be great passion in your speeches, that passion is informed by the desire to contribute to the public dialogue in productive ways. As you enter the public dialogue, you will notice your speaking style is shaped by your culture as well as your gender. You also will be exposed to styles different from your own. This range of styles is essential to the health of the public dialogue, and understanding these differences assists you in responding civilly to others.

Although we live in the information age and are surrounded by communication every day, public speaking is unique from other forms of communication. It has a structure, purpose, and role for the speaker that are different from other forms of communication. Other forms of communication, such as intrapersonal, interpersonal, group, and mass communication, do not place as much responsibility on the speaker, nor do they have the same purpose (addressing issues that affect the larger community) or structure (one individual is responsible for the bulk of communication).

Public speaking also is unique from other kinds of communication because it creates community, is audience centered, and encourages dialogue in ways that other types of communication do not. The model of the public speaking process highlights the role of the speaker and explains the message, audience, and channel as well as the influence of noise and feedback. Understanding these components, as well as the differences between the various types of communication, will help you learn to give effective speeches.

We speak publicly either because we have decided to speak, we are asked to speak, or we are required to speak. These three reasons make up the foundation of any context for speaking—whether it be formal or casual, serious or lighthearted, or otherwise. You will probably encounter all three reasons for speaking in your lifetime. Recognize that public speaking is an essential part of communication. It has been used to help us understand, grapple with, and make decisions about our world and our lives. This book invites you learn to speak publicly so you can enter the rich and complex conversation that not only is unending, but makes up the public dialogue so important to our lives.
After reading this chapter, use your CD-ROM and the Invitation to Public Speaking Web site to review the following concepts, answer the review questions, and complete the suggested activities.

Key Concepts
- civility (5)
- public dialogue (6)
- intrapersonal communication (9)
- interpersonal communication (9)
- group communication (9)
- mass communication (9)
- public communication (9)
- audience centered (11)
- feedback (11)
- speaker (12)
- message (12)
- encoding (13)
- decoding (13)
- audience (13)
- channel (13)
- noise (13)
- context (14)

Review Questions
1. Who are the most compelling speakers you have encountered? Why did they speak: did they decide, were they asked, or was it required? What issues did they discuss? How do these issues relate to the public dialogue discussed in this chapter? What made these speakers such strong presenters?
2. In this chapter, Deborah Tannen’s notion of the argument culture is discussed. What is your perception of this culture? Have you been exposed to public communication as an argument? What were your reactions to this kind of interaction? If the people engaged in this interaction were to communicate civilly, what specific things would change?
3. Make a list of the issues you find interesting and have followed for some time. Who spoke publicly on those issues? If you don’t know who gave speeches on these issues, spend time in the library and on the Internet finding these speeches. How do these speeches affect your own positions on these issues? How does this activity shape your perception of the unending conversation discussed in this chapter?
4. What cultural or gendered influences do you think will become (or already are) a part of your speaking style? Are these similar to those discussed in this chapter? If they are different, identify the differences and how they affect communication. Discuss this topic in your own public speaking class so that you and your classmates begin with a recognition of the differences you will encounter as you all give speeches.
5. Make a list of all the times you have presented information publicly. Include in your list occasions that range from formal to informal, carefully prepared in advance to impromptu, and presentations to a variety of audiences. Given this list, how much experience speaking publicly would you say you actually have had? Which situations were more comfortable for you than others? Why?
6. Write your own definition of public speaking. Now compare that definition to the one offered in this chapter. Compare it also to the model of public speaking. Now design your own model of the public speaking process, and label each of the components. How many of the components of the model described in this chapter (speaker, message, audience, channel, feedback, and noise) did you include? Be as creative and honest as you can with your model. What did you highlight or emphasize? Why?
7. When and why are you motivated to speak publicly? Would you decide to speak? Would you say yes if you were asked to speak? What if you were required to speak? Are there reasons you absolutely would or would not speak publicly? What are those reasons?
The Invitation to Public Speaking Web Site

The Invitation to Public Speaking Web site features the review questions about the Web sites suggested on pages 5, 6, 8, 15, and 17, the interactive activities suggested on page 11, and the InfoTrac College Edition exercises suggested on pages 12, 14, and 17. You can access this site via your CD-ROM or at http://www.wadsworth.com/product/griffin.

Web Links

1.1: Public Dialogue Consortium (5)
1.2: The Meaning of Civility (6)
1.3: Intercultural Competence (8)
1.4: Lois Gibbs (15)
1.5: Joseph Welch (17)
1.6: Toastmasters (17)

Interactive Activities

1.1: Convening Public Dialogue (11)
Purpose: To think about how you can help start a public dialogue in your community.

1.2: Thinking About Your Audience (11)
Purpose: To consider your classroom audience.

InfoTrac College Edition Exercises

1.1: Defining Public Speaking (12)
Purpose: To illustrate the differences between public speaking and other forms of communication

1.2: The Speaking Model (14)
Purpose: To apply the speaking model to a contemporary speech.

1.3: Deciding to Speak (17)
Purpose: To consider the various reasons for speaking.
Speech Interactive on the Invitation to Public Speaking CD-ROM

Use your Invitation to Public Speaking CD-ROM to access Speech Interactive and Video Clip 1: Remaining Audience Centered: Mike Piel (16). As you watch Mike speak, consider the language strategies he uses to communicate the importance of his topic to his audience. Click on “critique” to answer the following questions: What does Mike say to connect his topic to his audience? How does his language help him remain audience centered?

Mike gave this speech in an introductory public speaking class. His assignment was to give a four- to five-minute persuasive speech about a local issue. Watch for ways in which Mike remains audience-centered as he gives his speech.