

**LESSON PLAN**  
**Speak & Tell!**  
**Command the Stage**  
**With Proper Body Language**

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## **LESSON PLAN:**

# ***Speak & Tell! Command the Stage with Proper Body Language***

## **OVERVIEW & RATIONALE**

*Body language* reveals a lot about a public speaker *and* the message they're sharing. This lesson plan helps students understand that relationship between body language and effective public speaking, and adapt nonverbal signals accordingly. Through detailed lecture notes, large-group discussion guides, a large-group screening/analysis activity, and a Peer Team public speaking activity/assessment, students will learn how to recognize and apply positive body language; and recognize and adjust negative body language. Students will also make observations about the body language of speakers from iconic American speeches; and they will be informed by those observations as they cultivate an effective delivery style when they make an oral presentation.

**This collection of 3 x lesson plans is designed to be used in tandem with the Luminari video *Speak & Tell! Command the Stage with Proper Body Language***

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**Content in this collection of lesson plans aligns with the Common Core State Standards Initiative: English Language Arts Standards > Speaking & Listening > Grade 9-10**

<http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/SL/9-10/>

**GRADE LEVEL OF TARGET GROUP:** 9<sup>th</sup> & 10<sup>th</sup> graders. ADAPTABLE for rising 8<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> graders.

**TOTAL TIME:** 3 x 60-minute class periods, plus out-of-class assignment/assessment with a suggested turnaround time of 24 - 48 hours.

**\*Full description of Benchmark & Performance Standards at end of this document**

### **Comprehension and Collaboration:**

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1](#)

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1.A](#)

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.2](#)

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.3](#)

### **Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas:**

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.4](#)

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.5](#)

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.6](#)

## **GOALS FOR UNDERSTANDING // ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS**

- What is meant by “body language” when delivering speeches and formal or informal presentations?
- Is there a difference between body language used in everyday communication and body language that should be used for public speaking? *If so, explain the difference.*
- What factors may affect a speaker’s body language?
- What constitutes *negative* body language and how might it affect the audience’s perception of the speaker’s message?
- What are the criteria for *effective* body language and how might it affect the audience’s perception of the speaker’s message?
- What methods can help public speakers become more aware of, and evaluate, their own body language?
- Besides body language and facial expressions, what other *visual* aspects of a public speaker’s performance could contribute the audience’s perception of the speaker’s message?

**In alignment with Common Core and the National Communication Association** proposal for *Making Oral Communication a Successful Part of the Common Core* <https://www.natcom.org/communication-currents/making-oral-communication-successful-part-common-core>

**By the end of these lessons students will be able to:**

- Apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate speeches and public speaking techniques by screening a variety of examples from diverse sources.
- Analyze an audience and adapt to its particular needs regarding visual aspects of presentation.
- Cultivate an effective delivery style for oral presentations.

## **LESSON I – Introduction and lecture (60 minutes total)**

**Supplies:** Internet connection; SmartBoard or ability to project instructor's screen on overhead.

*Body language* reveals a lot about a public speaker *and* the message they're sharing. In this lesson, we will explore the relationship between body language and effective public speaking, and adapt our nonverbal signals accordingly.

### **We will begin by screening a 9-minute video titled *Speak & Tell! Command the Stage with Proper Body Language***

The instructor will play the LUMINARI VIDEO *Speak & Tell! Command the Stage with Proper Body Language*  
available at the following link:

<https://www.luminari.org/speak-tell-online/>

### **LARGE GROUP DISCUSSION - After screening the Luminari video**

As we just saw in the Luminari video, *body language* refers to nonverbal signals we use to **communicate**. *Body language* is a normal part of our daily conversations, and each person has their own distinct way of moving and communicating through nonverbal signals.

The way we stand, the way we use our hands, the way we look (or *avoid looking!*) at other people when we speak, whether we fidget, the facial expressions we use to accompany our words... these are all examples of **body language**.

**TIP:** Remember, *body language* is about nonverbal signals. It does *not* include **verbal elements**, i.e. *spoken elements*, such as volume of voice, tone of voice, inflection, saying *umm/uhhh*, etc.; nor does it refer to elements related to the *content* of the speech, i.e. word choice, grammar, length of speech, etc.

For this lesson, we are going to focus on what we see, not on what we hear.

**QUESTION:** Is there a difference between body language used in everyday communication and body language that should be used for public speaking? *Defend your answer.*

**A.)** For many people, there usually *is* a difference between their casual, everyday body language and the more formal type of body language that is expected on more formal occasions, such as speaking in public.

Each of us has our own idiosyncrasies in how we move and in which nonverbal signals are part of our communication style.

When we deliver a speech, it both looks and feels natural to use *some* of those movements that complement our personalities – but experts do recommend that when speaking in public, it is more appropriate to project body language with a notable level of professionalism and formality.

**QUESTION:** What are the criteria for *effective* body language, i.e. nonverbal signals that convey a fairly high level of professionalism and formality?

**A.) e.g.** An array of negative body language includes:

- Good posture
- Feet planted in a strong stance
- Strong eye contact with the audience
- Precise and controlled hand/arm motions
- Decisive gestures to emphasize a point, such as nodding your head or making a bold gesture with your hand.
- Smiling when appropriate, and using other facial expressions appropriate to the tone and subject matter of your speech.

**QUESTION:** How might that *effective* body language influence the audience's *perception* of your message when you speak?

**A.) e.g.** Those nonverbal signals could suggest confidence, intellect, leadership, congeniality, and conviction in the subject matter – all qualities that may make the audience listen more closely to what you are saying *and* place more value on your message.

Now let's talk about *negative* body language. Note that negative body language could be conscious *or* it could be unconscious, meaning you are not even aware that you are giving off those nonverbal signals!

**QUESTION:** What nonverbal signals from your body language do you think might give a *negative* impression to an audience?

**A.) e.g.** An array of negative body language includes:

- Slouching or angled away from the audience
- Fidgeting, swaying, leaning or shifting frequently
- Rapid or excessive movements; and, repetitive motions.
- Arms crossed defensively; tightly-clasped hands
- Arms and hands moving in a distracting manner; nervously clasped hands
- Head bent and not making eye-contact with the audience
- Sweating, wiping sweat from your lip, hairline, etc.
- Touching face, e.g. rubbing nose, eyes, adjusting hair, etc.
- Uncomfortable facial expressions, ranging from frowning to furrowed brows, rapid blinking, or a “deer-in-the-headlights” expression.

**QUESTION:** How might an audience interpret negative body language? (Remember, these may or may not be true! We are simply considering how the audience may *interpret* negative body language without understanding what is causing it.)

**A.) e.g. Possible interpretations of *negative* body language include:**

- You lack confidence and authority
- You lack self-esteem
- You are hostile, standoffish, or self-centered.
- You are bored by or indifferent to the topic about which you are speaking.
- You lack faith in the content or data you have used in your speech.
- You did not adequately prepare therefore your message is untrustworthy.

**QUESTION:** In addition to negative body language (including facial expressions), what other *visual* aspects of a public speaker's performance could contribute the audience forming a negative impression of the speaker and/or the message?

**A.) e.g. Answers may include:**

- Disheveled or distracting clothes
- Awkward handling of props and visual aids
- A microphone that is not at the right height for the speaker, causing the person to bend or stretch unnaturally to reach it.

**An uncomfortable speaker makes for an uncomfortable audience. The flip-side of that is that an *at-ease* speaker makes for an at-ease audience.**

But in order to make sure we are not using negative body language, we must **build an awareness** of what our own habits are when it comes to nonverbal signals in daily communications. We also must understand what **other factors are at play** that may be affecting our body language when we give a speech.

**QUESTION:** What other factors may contribute to negative body language when giving a speech?

**A.) e.g. Answers may include:**

- **Without a doubt, nerves contribute to a lot of negative body language.** When we are nervous or excited, our bodies produce adrenaline, which is a substance that gives our bodies a jolt of excess energy, and it is sometimes very difficult to control how our bodies express that energy!

**QUESTION:** Name possible reasons why people get nervous about public speaking.

**A.) e.g. Answers may include:**

- The speaker experiences social anxiety and/or has a fear of speaking in public, contributing to a range of nervous gestures, fidgeting, posture issues, and pained facial expressions.
- The speaker is nervous because they are addressing a hostile audience that may disrupt the speech, challenge their message, or mock them.
- The speaker is nervous because they are unprepared, which may lead to clumsy or erratic motions, such as flipping tensely through notecards.

- The speaker is nervous because the speech is being graded for school; or, because an important outcome is at stake, such as being accepted to college or being hired for a job.

**QUESTION:** What other factors *not related to nerves* may contribute to negative body language?

**A.) e.g. Answers may include:**

- The speaker was not given adequate time or resources to develop the speech, which contributes to negative body language when presenting it.
- The speaker may not be feeling well on the day of the speech but was unable to reschedule it for a later date.
- Distracting audience behavior, e.g. people talking, switching seats, coughing, etc.; or a distracting environment, e.g. extraneous noises at the site, room too hot or cold, etc.

**QUESTION:** What, if anything, can the speaker do *in advance* to reduce the impact of all of these factors?

**A.) e.g. Answers may include:**

- Visit the site of the speech in advance to understand its layouts and to reduce (or, at least, *be aware of*) potential distractions.
- Practice strategies to improve concentration and ignore distractions.
  - **TIP:** Try rehearsing your speech in a variety of loud and distracting environments!
- Practice strategies to manage nerves, such as the **deep breathing** exercise demonstrated in the **Luminari video**.
  - **TIP:** It also may help to remind yourself that being nervous is a sign that you *care about giving a good presentation!* Channel that nervous energy into preparing a good speech.

Of course, it's hard to *fix* bad body language without knowing just which kind of nonverbal signals we're sending out! With that in mind, now let's talk about how we can build awareness of our own body language.

**QUESTION:** What methods can we use to become more aware of, and evaluate, our own body language *in daily communications*?

**A.) e.g. Methods may include:**

- Asking a trusted family member or friend to tell you about positive *and* negative body language they've observed in you.
- If possible, screen any videos that were taken of you in the past, such as informal ones at a gathering of family or friends; or more formal occasions such as recorded class presentations. Assess your body language (positive *and* negative) and think about what may have been contributed to it.



- Record yourself as you rehearse a speech and assess subtle and overt body language.
- Rehearse speeches with a trusted Peer Group, so its members can provide constructive feedback on body language.

**TIP:** The instructor may ask the following question/s *at their discretion*. These should only be asked in a respectful classroom environment, so as not to invite insulting, insensitive, or narrow-minded comments *during* the discussion; *or* invite bullying *outside* of the classroom.

### **VARIATIONS ON THE QUESTION:**

- **As your instructor, you see me speaking to this class all the time! What, if any, observations can you make about *my* body language?** e.g. Uses lots of gestures, walks around a lot, makes frequent eye contact, etc.
- **Has anyone ever commented on *your* body language (positive *or* negative), or drawn your attention to aspects of your body language that you were not aware of, e.g. slouching, fidgeting, facial expressions, etc.?**
- **Are you, personally, aware of potentially negative body language habits that you're trying to break?**
  - **If so, what are they, and what strategies have you used to try to break those habits?**

### **CLOSING REMARKS:**

We've covered a range of topics related to body language and how audiences may be influenced by nonverbal signals. In our next lesson, we'll screen excerpts of iconic speeches in American history and analyze those speakers' body language.

Please review today's lecture notes and complete the assigned readings for homework, in preparation for that lesson. Also note that there is an *optional reading assignment* with instructions for deep-breathing exercises to help reduce stress and anxiety. You may want to try practice those breathing exercises if you have anxiety about public speaking.

## **LESSON I - HOMEWORK**

- **REVIEW the LUMINARI VIDEO – *Speak & Tell! Command the Stage with Proper Body Language*, available at the following link: <https://www.luminari.org/speak-tell-online/>**
- **OPTIONAL READING ASSIGNMENT - READ & APPLY: “Deep Breathing Exercises & Techniques for Stress Management and Relief.” WebMD. <sup>1</sup> <https://www.webmd.com/balance/stress-management/stress-relief-breathing-techniques#1>**

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<sup>1</sup> Ambardekar, Nayana. “Deep Breathing Exercises & Techniques for Stress Management and Relief.” WebMD, WebMD, 19 Jan. 2020, [www.webmd.com/balance/stress-management/stress-relief-breathing-techniques#1](https://www.webmd.com/balance/stress-management/stress-relief-breathing-techniques#1).



## **LESSON II**

**Supplies:** Internet connection; SmartBoard or ability to project instructor's screen on overhead.

In our last class, we talked about a number of different nonverbal signals that could be interpreted as *positive* or *negative* by an audience listening to a public speaker. Today, we're going to observe and assess the body language of speakers delivering some of history's most iconic speeches.

**LARGE GROUP ACTIVITY:** We will watch the first speech together, as a large group; and then, you will be divided into smaller Peer Teams to analyze other public speakers.

### **The best way to assess body language is to watch a recording of the speaker WITH THE VOLUME TURNED OFF.**

This strategy allows you to focus entirely on what you are *seeing*; and, by isolating the body language, you will become more aware of how nonverbal signals contribute to the mood, tone, and impact of a speech.

#### **Instructions-STEP 1 - DISTRIBUTE HANDOUT OF QUESTIONS TO STUDENTS.**

- As you watch the following speech – *with the volume turned off* – consider the questions on the handout, and we will **DISCUSS THEM** after we screen the speech.

**Instructions-STEP 2 -** The instructor will play an iconic speech with the volume turned down completely, available to screen at the following website:

**“Top 100 Speeches of the 20th Century by Rank.” *American Rhetoric*<sup>2</sup>**  
[www.americanrhetoric.com/top100speechesall.html](http://www.americanrhetoric.com/top100speechesall.html)

The instructor may choose which particular video to screen (e.g. the #1 ranked speech *I Have A Dream*, by Martin Luther King, Jr.); or, the instructor may offer a short selection of videos and ask the class to vote upon which one to watch.

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<sup>2</sup> Eidenmuller, Michael E. “Top 100 Speeches of the 20th Century by Rank.” *American Rhetoric*, [www.americanrhetoric.com/top100speechesall.html](http://www.americanrhetoric.com/top100speechesall.html).

**Instructions-STEP 3** - After screening the video, the instructor will lead the classroom as they discuss and debate questions (**provided on the handout**).

- Can you guess the *mood* of the speech based on the nonverbal signals given by the speaker, e.g. *Is the speech funny, somber, instructional, informational, inspirational, etc.? Defend your answer.*
- What *overall impression* do you get of the speaker, e.g. *Are they confident, showy, reserved, authoritative, good-natured, stern, etc.? Defend your answer.*
- Note your impressions of the speaker's facial expressions, and what you think those expressions convey about the *tone* of the speech.
- Identify positive *and* negative examples of facial expressions.
- How, if at all, does the speaker use hand and arm gestures; and, did you find those gestures to be distracting or decisive?
- How does the speaker use other body language, e.g. *Head motions, eye contact, handling notes or touching the podium, posture, etc.*
- Did you find that body language to be to be distracting or decisive?
- Note examples you perceived as *positive* body language from the speech. *Defend your answer.*
- Note examples you perceived as *negative* body language from the speech. *Defend your answer.*
- Did you detect any nonverbal signals that suggested nerves or anxiety? *Defend your answer.*

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## **Introduction of ACTIVITY/ASSESSMENT**

Now that we have discussed, as a group, the body language of a speaker, you will do a similar activity for a grade, working in Small Peer Teams.

### **INSTRUCTIONS (SEE ATTACHMENT FOR PRINTABLE ASSIGNMENT & RUBRIC)**

- The instructor will divide the class into Peer Teams of 2 – 3 students each, depending on class size.
- Each Peer team will be given the remaining class period to **come to consensus** on a speech to assess, **selecting from the list “Top 100 Speeches of the 20th Century by Rank.” *American Rhetoric***<sup>3</sup> [www.americanrhetoric.com/top100speechesall.html](http://www.americanrhetoric.com/top100speechesall.html)
  - The instructor will ensure that the chosen speeches do not duplicate each other.
- **Peer Teams will screen their selected speech MULTIPLE TIMES:**
  - With the **volume turned off**. Assess the VISUAL components of the speech only.
  - With the **volume turned on**. Assess the VISUAL AND AUDIO components of the speech, and how they do or *do not* complement each other.
- **Peer Teams will create a 7 – 10 minute ORAL PRESENTATION WITH POWERPOINT TO BE GIVEN IN THE NEXT CLASS PERIOD.**

#### **The PPT will include:**

- A succinct summary of the speech, who delivered it, to what audience was it delivered, and the speech’s significance in history.
- The **link** to the speech, with specified time code for a brief excerpt to screen (1 minute maximum), **which serves as a strong example of the speaker’s body language**.
- A compiled list of **3 examples of body language** that the group perceived to be **positive; and** a brief justification for why they perceived those nonverbal signals as positive.
- A compiled list of **3 examples of body language** that the group perceived to be **negative; and** a brief justification for why they perceived those nonverbal signals as negative.
- An **overall assessment** of the body language and how it contributed to and/or detracted from the message and purpose of the speech.
- A bibliography.

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<sup>3</sup> Eidenmuller, Michael E. “Top 100 Speeches of the 20th Century by Rank.”

**The ORAL PRESENTATION will include:**

- 7 - 10 minute oral presentation
- The presentation will include the succinct explanation of the speech, the speaker, and the speech's significance in history.
- The presentation will include playing the **1-minute excerpt** that serves as a strong example of the speaker's **body language**.
- EACH member of the Peer Team must deliver an equal portion of the oral presentation, providing a summary of their assessment of the speaker's body language, as noted in their PowerPoint.
- Oral presentations should be professional and compelling, **striving to demonstrate *positive body language*** as has been discussed in this lesson.

## **LESSON II - HOMEWORK**

Students will complete their speech assessments and PowerPoint Presentations, and be prepared to deliver the ORAL PRESENTATION in the next class period (or, according to the specified turnaround time given by the instructor).

## **LESSON III - ASSESSMENT/ASSIGNMENT**

**Supplies:** Internet connection; SmartBoard or ability to project instructor's screen on overhead.

**In this class, each Peer Teams will deliver its 7 - 10 minute oral presentation, using the overhead or SmartBoard to project the PowerPoint that serves as a visual aid.**

*If remaining class time permits, students will compare and contrast the range of body language observed in the oral presentations; and, they will reflect on techniques they will apply to their own public speaking efforts to build more awareness of, and improve, their own body language.*

## **FOR FURTHER STUDY**

Instructors may choose to expand this lesson and complete the Lesson Plan for the Luminari video *Speak & Tell: Overcoming Stage Fright*, to provide additional strategies for combatting anxiety that contributes to negative body language.

The Luminari video *Speak & Tell: Overcoming Stage Fright* is available at:  
<https://www.luminari.org/speak-tell-online/> (Note: Scroll down to video)  
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## **SEE SEPARATE ATTACHMENTS for printables for:**

- p. 10
- pp 11 - 12

## **REFERENCES\***

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*\*This list does not imply a promotion of the sites nor their sponsors; nor has any entity paid for or requested inclusion in this resource. Instructors are encouraged to review and vet the materials as per their individual school policies before inclusion in this curriculum.*

## **BENCHMARKS AND PERFORMANCE STANDARDS**

### **Common Core State Standards Initiative**

#### **English Language Arts Standards » Speaking & Listening » Grade 9-10**

<http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/SL/9-10/>

#### **COMPREHENSION AND COLLABORATION:**

##### CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1

Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9-10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

##### CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1.A

Come to discussions prepared, having read and researched material under study; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence from texts and other research on the topic or issue to stimulate a thoughtful, well-reasoned exchange of ideas.

##### CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.2

Integrate multiple sources of information presented in diverse media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) evaluating the credibility and accuracy of each source.

##### CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.3

Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric, identifying any fallacious reasoning or exaggerated or distorted evidence.

#### **PRESENTATION OF KNOWLEDGE AND IDEAS:**

##### CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.4

Present information, findings, and supporting evidence clearly, concisely, and logically such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and task.

##### CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.5

Make strategic use of digital media (e.g., textual, graphical, audio, visual, and interactive elements) in presentations to enhance understanding of findings, reasoning, and evidence and to add interest.

##### CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.6

Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate. (See grades 9-10 Language standards 1 and 3 [here](#) for specific expectations.)