



What makes a speech great?

Emotional connection

Presenter

Making an emotional connection with an audience is one of the most important elements of a successful speech. Earl Spencer, though not known for his skills as an orator, is remembered for his eulogy in 1997 at the funeral of Diana, Princess of Wales, when he expressed concern for her children.

Simon Lancaster

He decided to play up rather than playing down the emotion in a way that caused tremendous waves right round the world. And it felt so out of time and so fairy tale, and just at the point where Diana was becoming the fairy tale. I think it really kind of hammed up the emotion at a time where the royal family had been a bit stand offish and people wanted to have their emotions bigged up rather than played down. And so I think he played to the audience very well and a lot of people remember it.

“It is a point to remember that of all the ironies about Diana perhaps the greatest was this. A girl given the name of the Ancient Goddess of Hunting was in the end the most hunted person of the modern age.”

Simon Lancaster

And he talked about the origins of her name. Diana is the ancient god of hunting thereby suggesting that she had been hunted by the paparazzi and perhaps hadn't enjoyed the protection that she might have been entitled to. So his task in that speech as far as he was concerned was both to raise his own standing by getting on the right side of the public emotion that he did. But also to kind of instil in memory the version of Diana that he wanted remembered as this vulnerable person who didn't have the support that she could have expected. And on both counts he succeeded.

Presenter

Winston Churchill is perhaps the most famous orator of the modern era. He proved the power of rhetoric to rally a nation at a time of war, delivering this rousing speech to the House of Commons in June, 1940 at a critical point in the Second World War.

“We shall fight on the beaches. We shall fight on the landing grounds. We shall fight in the fields and in the streets. We shall fight in the hills. We shall never surrender.”

Simon Lancaster

He repeats a phrase or word or clause within a particular sentence and does so in order to show that you are fixated about an issue. That you feel very emotional about it. Of course he could have said “We will fight on the streets comma sands, comma, beaches comma. But that would have lost the effect and by emphasising “We will fight. We will fight. We will fight”. That is actually all the audience will then hear.