

Advanced Pronunciation Practice

Stress and Phrasing

This activity will require students to listen to and emulate the stress and phrasing patterns of a native English speaker.

Materials Needed:

- * a copy of the speech for each student
- * the 1995 film *The American President* starring Michael Douglas and Annette Bening
OR a clip of the movie (available on YouTube - http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zemrWB1c_hE or search for "The American President speech" - should be about 5 minutes long)
- * pencils
- * a podium (if available)

Procedure:

- * Students read the speech to make sure they have a basic understanding before starting pronunciation work. It may be necessary to teach some vocabulary.
- * Play the speech scene from the movie and have students follow along.
- * Play the speech again. Students mark places where the speaker pauses. If you want, you can have them make different marks for long and short pauses.
- * Play the speech again. Students mark the words that are more strongly emphasized in each phrase (between pauses).
- * Optional - Play the speech one more time so students can check their markings.
- * Divide the students into equal groups. Groups work through the speech, marking words that can be linked or reduced.
- * Divide the speech into more or less equal chunks (same number of chunks as students per group), and have groups decide who in their group will be responsible for each chunk.
- * Students practice their chunk of the speech, copying the stress and phrasing of the actor in the movie, and linking/reducing as marked by the group. Teacher moves around the room correcting pronunciation of individual words and answering any question the students have as they practice.
- * Groups practice giving the speech, one chunk after another, one student after another, from the beginning to the end of the speech.
- * Groups take turns giving the speech to the class from behind a podium (if available).

Watching the movie is optional, but it will give the students some context for the speech, and they get more into giving the speech when they feel like they know the character.

For the last couple of months, Senator Rumson has suggested that being President of this country was, to a certain extent, about character. And although I've not been willing to engage in his attacks on me, I have been here three years and three days, and I can tell you without hesitation: Being President of this country is entirely about character.

For the record, yes, I am a card-carrying member of the ACLU, but the more important question is, "Why aren't you, Bob?" Now this is an organization whose sole purpose is to defend the Bill of Rights, so it naturally begs the question, why would a senator, his party's most powerful spokesman and a candidate for President, choose to reject upholding the constitution? Now if you can answer that question, folks, then you're smarter than I am, because I didn't understand it until a few hours ago.

America isn't easy. America is advanced citizenship. You've got to want it bad, because it's going to put up a fight. It's going to say, "You want free speech? Let's see you acknowledge a man whose words make your blood boil, who's standing center stage and advocating at the top of his lungs that which you would spend a lifetime opposing at the top of yours. You want to claim this land as the land of the free? Then the symbol of your country cannot just be a flag. The symbol also has to be one of its citizens exercising his right to burn that flag in protest." Now show me that, defend that, celebrate that in your classrooms.

Then you can stand up and sing about the land of the free.

I've known Bob Rumson for years. And I've been operating under the assumption that the reason Bob devotes so much time and energy to shouting at the rain was that he simply didn't get it. Well, I was wrong. Bob's problem isn't that he doesn't get it. Bob's problem is that he can't sell it! We have serious problems to solve, and we need serious people to solve them. And whatever your particular problem is, I promise you Bob Rumson is not the least bit interested in solving it. He is interested in two things, and two things only: making you afraid of it, and telling you who's to blame for it. That, ladies and gentlemen, is how you win elections. You gather a group of middle-aged, middle class, middle income voters who remember with longing an easier time, and you talk to them about family and American values and character, and you wave an old photo of

the president's girlfriend, and you scream about patriotism. You tell them she's to blame for their lot in life. And you go on television, and you call her a whore.

Sydney Ellen Wade has done nothing to you, Bob. She has done nothing but put herself through school, represent the interests of public school teachers, and lobby for the safety of our natural resources. You want a character debate, Bob? You'd better stick with me because Sydney Ellen Wade is way out of your league.

I've loved two women in my life. I lost one to cancer. And I lost the other because I was so busy keeping my job, I forgot to do my job. Well, that ends right now.

Tomorrow morning, the White House is sending a bill to Congress for its consideration. It's White House Resolution 455, an energy bill requiring a twenty percent reduction of the emission of fossil fuels over the next ten years. It is by far the most aggressive stride ever taken in the fight to reverse the effects of global warming. The other piece of legislation is the crime bill. As of today, it no longer exists. I'm throwing it out. I'm throwing it out and writing a law that makes sense. You cannot address crime prevention without getting rid of assault weapons and hand guns. I consider them a threat to national security, and I will go door to door if I have to, but I'm going to convince Americans that I'm right, and I'm going to get the guns.

We've got serious problems, and we need serious people. And if you want to talk about character, Bob, you'd better come at me with more than a burning flag and a membership card. If you want to talk about character and American values, fine. Just tell me where and when, and I'll show up. This a time for serious people, Bob, and your fifteen minutes are up.

My name is Andrew Shepherd, and I am the president.