Beyond the Box  
Source Material of a Champion Original Oratory



This is an Expository speech on Operation Christmas Child given by Amanda Hasegawa. She is on the Stoa Hall of Fame: 2014 NITOC Finalist and was a finals contestant throughout the year.

Stoa explains expository speaking in this way on their website (http://stoausa.org/events/expository/):

An Expository speech is a prepared speech, written by the competitor, which explains or “exposes” a topic usually with the help of visual aids. The goal is to develop a winsome, polished, speaker who can present a creative, well-organized speech while efficiently employing audio/visual aids or props.

*Directions: Use this source material to enhance your understanding of expos. This speech is an excellent example of champion speaking. You may want to consider doing this event in Season 20.*

“BEYOND THE BOX”

BY AMANDA HASEGAWA

**You can watch the entire round at:**

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HFZZv0rGl4k

Had you told me two years ago that I would get to NITOC finals, I wouldn’t have believed it. As a nervous novice, I could hardly give an impromptu! But Ephesians 3:20 says that “[God]...is able to do far more abundantly than all that we could ask or think, according to the power at work within us.” I had a lot of fun with this speech and saw God work powerfully. I’m so thankful to share it with you!

*Note: for those who don’t know, Operation Christmas Child is a Christian organization that delivers shoeboxes full of toys and basic supplies to children around the world.*

**Passion**

This expository speech was very near to my heart because I used it as a platform to share about something I love. Summer of 2013, I was given the opportunity to deliver gift shoeboxes in the Philippines with Operation Christmas Child (OCC). I witnessed *incredible* things, and I longed to engage my speech and debate community with the vision of the organization. I realized that, as a Christian, homeschool community, my audience was probably familiar with Operation Christmas Child. However, I wanted to challenge their preconceived ideas and expose aspects of the ministry that were largely unknown.

I’ve been involved with Operation Christmas Child for years, packing boxes since age 5 and volunteering at the processing center since age 13. I remember watching a promo video around age 7 and wistfully telling my mom, “Ah, I wish I could pass out shoeboxes one day!” Never did I imagine that my half-dream, half-prayer would come true! My trip became the springboard for ideas and sparked development of my speech as a result.

**Props**

Instead of the mystery “Which came first, the chicken or the egg?” expository poses the question, “Which came first, the props or the speech?” For me, they came simultaneously. I began by writing my speech; but as I brainstormed introductions and points, I thought through which props I’d be using. You don’t want visuals for every word, but strategically placed props add to the speech powerfully. For example, when I shared about a little girl praying for lollipops, I took out an actual bouquet of the candy. As I wrote and rewrote my introduction, key points, and conclusion, I jotted down ideas for props in the margins.

But I’m getting ahead of myself; let me first explain my base. Traditionally, “expos-ers” use an easel and presentation boards to enhance their speech, but I knew for certain that I didn’t want to use that set-up. Could I use some OCC boxes instead? As I brainstormed, my sister proposed the ingenious idea of making a stack of rotating cartons (the big cardboard boxes used in the OCC warehouses). My first thought: *Wow, that’s an awesome idea!* My second thought: *How in the world can I do that?* To say that it took much planning is an understatement. Yet, after many, many measurements, adjustments, and sketches, I finally found a workable setup. I attached three-wheel casters to the bottom box with Velcro, then placing long strips of Velcro on the tops and bottoms of the other cartons so they’d stack.

The challenge was attaching my presentation boards to my base. Using a traditional easel, you can keep a basket in the back for props and conceal it with a curtain. I didn’t have that luxury. Because the audience would see every side of my base, I learned to get creative with the ways in which I concealed my boards: Pull-out pockets, flip books, and folding shelves included. The top carton became my “easel”; each side used Velcro to hold one or more presentation boards. I stored all my props in a shoebox and had fun as I carried the box with me and would pull items out throughout the presentation.

All this being said, you don’t have to go all out with your props and base. Many competitors use the traditional boards-and-easel setup and do just fine. The key to props is to be creative: think of concrete ways to illustrate your points and theme your boards in accordance with your topic. “But I’m not artsy!” Not to worry. Many of my ideas weren’t uniquely mine; I received *constant* input from my family. I also kept an idea notebook, in which I jotted down or sketched any ideas that came to mind. Regardless of your creative abilities, remember this all-important rule: have fun! When it comes to props, the sky’s the limit.

**Presentation**

I wanted to keep the judges on the edge of their seats, so I started with a dramatic opening. After asking if everyone was ready, I started my speech by painting a vivid picture of the Rwandan Genocide through the eyes of a young survivor. It grabbed the attention of the audience and brought gravity to a topic that some might consider familiar and childish. I then transitioned into my topic by introducing the item that helped transform that genocide survivor: an Operation Christmas Child shoebox. The comments on my opening were mixed; many enjoyed it, but some thought it overdramatic and too “interp-ish”. Experiment with your own styles. If it doesn’t work, scrap it.

When I transitioned from point to point, I rotated my stack of cartons to display different sides. It kept the presentation flowing and created distinction between my ideas. Using boxes with a five-paragraph format was a challenge – since boxes only have four sides. However, the side with the introduction doubled as my conclusion board. Though I had to make revisions to this setup throughout the season,

the concept worked. My conclusion brought closure to the story of the genocide survivor and brought everything full-circle (or should I say, full-box?).

Think of the presentation as the tip of the iceberg. Yes, it gleams beautifully, and it’s the portion on display for all to see. But underlying the presentation is a mass of time, energy, resources, and planning. Furthermore, the presentation itself offers only a glimpse of the topic at hand. If your topic is something that you love, don’t limit your learning to the icecap of your presentation. Keep delving into the depths and exploring; you never know what you may find.

**Pointers**

When remembering these tips, use the acronym C.A.R.E.S.

**C: Counting the Cost**

When I finally decided to do an Expository, tournament season was right around the corner. I had to work quickly and pulled a not-so-pleasant all-nighter in order to finish my boards a couple weeks before the tournament. That won’t be you, right? Of course not.

Count the cost of your Expository in terms of time. Starting preparation early can reduce stress later. Even if you work on it a little bit each day, the minutes and hours add up. Be honest with yourself about your other commitments to determine if you have enough time to do an Expository. Remember, the more elaborate the speech, the more time it will take to craft it.

Another area that is unique to Expos is counting the cost in resources. It can become quite an expensive speech. During brainstorming sessions, make a list of any items you’ll possibly need. Then check your home first before running to the store. Hobby Lobby became my lifesaver; they had nearly everything I needed, and they always had coupons (plus, I had a gift card – Score!). Last-minute supply trips are almost inevitable, but keep in mind their cost, not only in money but also in time.

**A: Alliterations**

Perhaps you’ve noticed my persistent use of the letter ‘p’ in this article. In my Expository, I used alliterations to organize my units of thought, and the judges seemed to appreciate this strategy. Per my brother’s suggestion, I purchased a Toy Story 3 Peas-in-a-Pod plush toy. When I gave my roadmap, I took it out and placed it on a folding shelf. The individual ‘peas’ represented my points: Personal, Power, and Presentation. This tied all my points together and reinforced the alliteration in my judges’ minds.

**R: Revisions**

It’s tempting to agonize over your boards the first time around. “If I make it perfect now, it’ll save me trouble later, right?” Wrong. While you don’t want to haphazardly slap props on a board, also realize

that revision is an essential and inevitable part of the process. So embrace it! Tournament ballots are especially helpful as you consider revisions. At my first tournament, one of my boards employed large, glittery snowflakes as backgrounds for photos. After reading my ballots, though, I scrapped them. Keep in mind that revisions may occur even to the end of the season. About a week before NITOC, I overhauled three of my boards and started fresh. I’d *strongly* advise against this. Learn from my mistake and count the cost even as you plan revisions.

**E: Emergency Kit**

Props ripping right before you enter the competition room (which did happen to me) is every speaker’s worst nightmare. But an emergency kit allows you to complete last-minute repairs with relative ease. Scissors, tape, neodymium magnets, foam adhesives, a pencil, a Sharpie, Velcro, and duct tape (*extremely* useful) are some items that I kept in my box. An emergency kit is an expos-er’s lifesaver!

**S: Style**

Everyone has a unique presenting style. Some of the judges commented that my boards were too busy, but that they fit my topic. Props aren’t the only thing to consider, though. I also learned that it’s much easier to make your Expository fit your speaking style than the other way around. For much of the season, my speech was not my own. Yes, I was the one who wrote it and memorized it, but I was trying to change who I was as a speaker. More than halfway into the season, my sister came to my rescue. She looked me straight in the eyes and told me that I needed to rewrite my speech. It wasn’t me speaking – it was a stage-performer version of me. She was right.

Also, remember that your expository is a conversation, despite the fact that it has props and is one- sided. Your judges are individuals with emotions, thoughts, and stories. Though you need to maintain your professionalism, try to connect with them on a deeper level, whether by tugging on their heartstrings or making them laugh.

**Potential Problems**

Though known for its aesthetic element, this makes Expository the most fragile speech. There are two common problems associated with it:

**Prop Drops**

It was the third round of my first tournament. My prop was rather small, my hand a bit shaky. The prop stuck to the board...then fell off. What to do? The most important thing is to keep talking as if there was no interruption. If you can do so subtly, try to smoothly pick up your prop and stick it back on the board or in your basket. And breathe. Prop drops happen to everyone. Prepare beforehand by having your speech so well memorized that when a prop does drop, you can continue without a hitch.

**Transportation**

There are horror stories of Expository speakers who begin unpacking their props at a tournament only to find them damaged from the car ride. Keep transportation in mind even as you’re planning your speech. Space efficiency and durability are your two best friends. The OCC cartons that formed my base were collapsible, and I could remove the casters (wheels) on the bottom. I also invested in a plastic art tote for my presentation boards. Because the tote was a large, flat rectangle, it made for space-efficient storage, as well as protection. If your props do end up breaking during transportation, don’t panic! Remember, you have an emergency kit for a reason.

**Perspective**

This is vital to any speech, but it’s the most difficult aspect. Going into the season, my heart’s cry was this: God, please let me touch the judges! You are doing such an incredible work through this ministry, and I want people to see its gravity. Use me to impact my audience for the sake of your glory and the children touched by OCC! Let me reach the greatest number of people I can with my message. However, as tournaments came and went, I could sense a shift in my focus. The same sparkle in my eyes, the wonder at God’s work – they slowly began to fade. My focus began wandering to the rankings. The most frightening part was that I could make my presentation sound heartfelt and sincere without having my heart fully engaged. And that is a terrible place to be.

If your topic is dear to your heart, you will encounter the same struggle. Yet, in our weakness, God is gracious and merciful. He brought me to the place where I ceased to be concerned about rankings. God answered my prayer: He allowed my message to reach the most people possible.

My philosophy was that God gave me a message to share, and I wanted my delivery to do it justice. Touching people at their core and impacting lives was the focal point. Rankings were merely a measurement for how well I did this. Likewise, God has given you a mind fearfully and wonderfully equipped. All creativity, wit, and logic are gifts from Him, the God of knowledge. So you can deliver each speech to His glory. Of this, I am beyond sure.

**The Speech, As Scripted at 2014 Tournaments**

Bullets whizzed past him. With a pounding heart and breaths coming in short gasps, his eyes darted back and forth, searching frantically for anywhere to hide. He was running for his life. He was six years old. Alex Nsengimana survived one of the most horrific crimes against humanity: the 1994 Rwandan Genocide. During this bloody, 100-day rampage, he witnessed his family’s murder and narrowly escaped death, himself. The orphanage became his home for a year. Yet, in the midst of his darkness, Alex received a simple gift that would help to change his life forever. **Today, I want to share with you how God is using Operation Christmas Child to impact lives beyond the box.** Perhaps you’ve heard of this ministry, but even if you’ve been involved for years, I pray that God would reawaken your wonder at His marvelous work. The concept itself is rather simple. Operation

Christmas Child collects hand-packed shoeboxes from 10 countries and sends them to impoverished children around the world. And, no, it’s not just for Christmas; the shoeboxes are actually distributed all year long. Dave and Jill Cooke began the program in 1990 when they sent 9 trucks full of aid supplies and shoebox gifts to war-torn Romania. Then, in 1993, Franklin Graham from Samaritan’s Purse adopted the project and expanded its reach across the globe. God is using Operation Christmas Child to impact lives beyond the box, and we’re going to explore this through the three P’s: my Personal involvement, the Power of these simple gifts, and how you can Participate!

Operation Christmas Child holds a special place in my heart. I packed my first box when I was 5 years old and have been packing ever since. I always loved watching promo videos of ecstatic children with their boxes, and I dreamed of being the one to hand it to them. I didn’t understand the extent of the project, though, until I volunteered at a processing center when I was 13.

Imagine a warehouse with cartons like these stretching as far as the eye can see—thousands of shoeboxes for children that God has already picked out. It’s overwhelming, to say the least, and I look forward to volunteering every year. Then, this past summer, God opened the opportunity to distribute shoeboxes in person. Every summer, Samaritan’s Purse sends out one team of youth ages 16 to 22. Along with 18 other youth, I was chosen to go to the Philippines. It was a dream come true. In 4 days, my team did 10 distributions and reached about 2,000 children. I witnessed God do far more abundantly than all that I could ever imagine. See, I’d grown up reading verses like Psalm 103:8 that the Lord abounds in love, but it was only as I watched God pour out His blessing on these children that I really began to grasp what that means. I saw a little girl who prayed for a single lollipop receive a whole bag from God! This is just one evidence that God loves to love. I also experienced God’s sovereignty. Prior to the Philippines, I used to remark, “Oh, yeah. God has a child picked out for every box,” but after the trip, I can tell you with *absolute certainty* that there are *no* coincidences in God’s Kingdom. For example, my second distribution was to the 300 poorest kids in a school of 4,000. After the children opened their boxes, one little boy shared that he’d prayed for a monkey toy then opened his box and held up a stuffed monkey for all to see. What are the odds? Yet God is sovereign. No words can describe the lifelong impact Operation Christmas Child has left on me!

Yet, I’m not the only one who has been affected by this ministry. God is using these simple gifts to display His power around the world. Over 100 million shoeboxes have been distributed since 1993. To put that into perspective, Samaritan’s Purse Television notes that “If all the children who have gotten shoebox gifts held hands, they would circle the globe twice”.

But even more astounding is that each shoebox holds a story. When Operation Christmas Child came to a Filipino cancer ward, a scrawny girl, her hair gone from chemo, was among those who received a box. But when her bony fingers lifted the lid, what was inside but hair bows and hairclips! The worker who’d given her the box was horrified. “I’m so sorry, ma’am! We have no control over these boxes!”. The mother just stared at her with tears in her eyes. “How did you know? My daughter has been

picking up hairclips from the gutter. She loves them and always begs me to buy them, but I tell her we can’t even afford to pay for her medicine, much less for something she does not need!”. Yet out of His abundant love, God gave this precious girl hairclips. Incredible. Or take this distribution in Mexico. As she entered a church carrying her baby, a thirteen-year-old girl received a shoebox. When she opened it, she burst into tears. Her mother came to see what was wrong, and when the girl showed her the box, the mother, also, began crying uncontrollably. When the pastor hurried over, he discovered that the box had been packed by the girl’s long-lost relatives who had moved to the United States. In God’s divine sovereignty, He used this shoebox to reconnect a family across two countries. And this, out of millions of boxes! But even more importantly, Operation Christmas Child is impacting the eternity of people around the world. The heartbeat of the program is to introduce to children to Jesus. Brother Aldy from the Philippines described it this way: “For us, it’s not shoebox. It’s shoebox to the Bible. Shoebox to the Gospel”. After the distribution, Operation Christmas Child invites the recipients to a twelve-week discipleship program called The Greatest Journey. Those who complete the program receive a Bible and commit to sharing the Gospel with and praying for 9 family members and friends. Since 2009, 1,168,215 children have reported decisions for Christ through The Greatest Journey. And there are stories upon stories of family members and friends coming to know Jesus through the testimony of their children. The Power of these simple gifts reflects the power of our great God!

So how can you Participate? The most important thing you can do is pray. In fact, Franklin Graham declared that he’d rather have 100 boxes with prayer behind them than 10,000 boxes without. Operation Christmas Child has even created prayer cards with ideas for every day of the week. As Max Lucado explains: “Our prayers may be awkward. Our attempts may be feeble. But since the power of prayer is in the One who hears it and not in the one who says it, our prayers do make a difference” In addition to praying, you can pack a shoebox. Many people pack boxes all year long! If you’ve never packed a shoebox, samaritanspurse.org/operation-christmas-child can walk you through the process step-by-step. But you’ve been packing for awhile, like I have. Well, last year, I discovered that people coordinate packing parties to pack hundreds—or even thousands—of boxes. The way it works is that there are shoeboxes at one end of the room, as well as tables filled with hygiene items, school supplies, stuffed animals, toys, and—of course—candy. It’s as simple as grabbing a shoebox and fill it with the items of your choice. These parties affect the community, even as they reach children overseas. At my first packing party, we packed about 900 boxes, and police officers; Kohl’s employees; and a Muslim lady came. They got to hear about the Gospel even as they packed shoeboxes! Again, people start preparing for these parties as early as the day after Christmas. Whether you coordinate a packing party or simply pray, know that you are impacting lives beyond the box, for eternity!

It’s been a privilege to be part of the incredible work that God is doing. Operation Christmas Child is far more than a nice tradition for the Christmas season. Through my Personal involvement, Powerful testimonies, and opportunities to Participate, we saw that God is using this ministry to impact lives

beyond the box. His work continues throughout the year, and His miracles can span a lifetime. Remember Alex, the 6-year-old survivor of the Rwandan Genocide? After receiving his box, he joined the African Children’s Choir, and God opened the door for him to come to America for school. Last March, he returned to the orphanage where he had been raised, this time to pass out shoeboxes. He also sought out the very man who had killed his family. Instead of revenge, Alex offered him forgiveness and told him about the love of Christ. What a testimony! *This* is why I pack shoeboxes. *This* is the power of a simple gift.