

Oration Tips Inspired by Frederick Douglass

Frederick Douglass spent the majority of his life reading, writing, and spreading the message of equality for all humanity. He harnessed the power of words to inspire the hearts and minds of people all over the world. Refined oratorical skills were one of his primary weapons against the oppressive, unjust forces in society. When Frederick Douglass was a teenager, he earned enough money to buy his first book, *The Columbian Orator* by Caleb Bingham. The *Columbian Orator* is a book about the art of oration, as well as a collection of great speeches throughout history. Not only did this book help Douglass learn how to read, but it also helped him become one of the greatest orators of all time. The following tips are tried and true lessons employed and perfected by Frederick Douglass.

- ❖ PRONUNCIATION is the most important part of oration. The audience must understand the words you are saying.
- ❖ Pay proper attention to accent, emphasis, and cadence. The simple question, Will you ride to town today? can mean 4 different things, depending on the placement of the emphasis.
- ❖ Do not be monotonous. Vary your volume, intonation, and pitch.
- ❖ Keep your voice at a natural volume. If you are naturally soft-spoken, do not resort to shrill yelling for the sake of volume.
- ❖ Control facial expressions and body gestures to coincide with the mood of the speech. Do not appear stiff.
- ❖ Believe what you are saying. It makes the oration more natural, and therefore more moving.
- ❖ Make the best use of your natural voice. Do not try to make your voice something it is not.
- ❖ In general, try to end each sentence louder than its beginning.