

Writing a speech to toast a bride and groom

Year 10

STELLA®

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This narrative describes a brief part of a reading unit presented to Year 10 students of mixed ability. The clientele of the school represents a monocultural middle class group.

Following the reading of the novel, *A Town Like Alice* by Nevil Shute, in which the main characters marry and the narrator acts as best man, the students discussed what kind of things people usually say in speeches at weddings. Much of their discussion centred on what was appropriate for all guests (including grandparents and young children) to hear and what was not appropriate.

Aspects of humour were discussed including the comical telegrams traditionally read out. Finally, the students viewed wedding speeches from films and discussed which ones they found to be most appropriate and interesting. ('Four Weddings and a Funeral', 'A Town Like Alice', 'The Other Sister' etc). Lively class forums about the content of such speeches then ensued:

- How much time should be devoted to each member of the couple?
- Should one speak about how they met?
- How much humour should be involved?
- What kind of "friendly " anecdotes are OK?
- For whom is this day special?
- What thought would you like the audience to remember about your speech?

Following this discussion the students composed a speech using their knowledge of the fictitious characters from their reading.

In terms of teaching speech writing the unit worked remarkably well because there was hardly a 15 year old who had not been to a real wedding, let alone one who had not seen one on film. It was a real life situation and one which they might have to perform themselves at a later stage. The task involved collecting interesting biographical material and making critical choices as to what one could say on such an occasion. The other interesting by-product was a discussion of rituals and ceremonies and the role that certain speech patterns play on such established occasions. For example, 21st birthday parties, engagement parties, bar-mitzvahs, confirmation parties, funerals and wakes.

This activity might be evaluated as a written or spoken task at any year level but works particularly well at Year 10.