

# **The Danum Read Aloud Competition 2026**

Choose one of the book openings  
from this doc and practise it,  
ready to perform to an audience.

<https://youtu.be/SVost4tjEMU>

## ANNE FRANK

### THE DIARY OF A YOUNG GIRL

*This monologue is taken directly from part of the book's Friday, 5 February, 1943 entry*

Dear Kitty,

Just recently Mrs. Van Daan came out with some perfect nonsense. She was recalling the past, how well she and her father got on together and what a flirt she was. "And do you know," she went on, "if a man gets a bit aggressive, my father used to say, then you must say to him, 'Mr. So and So, remember I am a lady!' and he will know what you mean." We thought that was a good joke and burst out laughing. Peter too, although usually so quiet, sometimes gives cause for mirth. He is blessed with a passion for foreign words, although he does not always know their meaning. One afternoon we couldn't go to the lavatory because there were visitors in the office; however, Peter had to pay an urgent call. So he didn't pull the plug. He put a notice up on the lavatory door to warn us, with "S.V.P. gas" on it. Of course he meant to put "Beware of gas"; but he thought the other looked more genteel. He hadn't got the faintest notion it meant "if you please."

Yours,

Anne

## **Final speech from Charlie Chaplin's 'The Great Dictator'**

I'm sorry, but I don't want to be an emperor. That's not my business. I don't want to rule or conquer anyone. I should like to help everyone - if possible - Jew, Gentile - black man - white. We all want to help one another. Human beings are like that. We want to live by each other's happiness - not by each other's misery. We don't want to hate and despise one another. In this world there is room for everyone. And the good earth is rich and can provide for everyone. The way of life can be free and beautiful, but we have lost the way.

Greed has poisoned men's souls, has barricaded the world with hate, has goose-stepped us into misery and bloodshed. We have developed speed, but we have shut ourselves in. Machinery that gives abundance has left us in want. Our knowledge has made us cynical. Our cleverness, hard and unkind. We think too much and feel too little. More than machinery we need humanity. More than cleverness we need kindness and gentleness. Without these qualities, life will be violent and all will be lost...

To those who can hear me, I say - do not despair.

Let us fight to free the world - to do away with national barriers - to do away with greed, with hate and intolerance. Let us fight for a world of reason, a world where science and progress will lead to all men's happiness. Soldiers! in the name of democracy, let us all unite!

## **Elizabeth Swan (Keira Knightley), Pirates of The Caribbean**

You will listen to me. Listen! The Brethren will still be looking here to us, to the Black Pearl to lead. And what will they see? Frightened bilge rats aboard a derelict ship? No.

No, they will see free men and freedom! And what the enemy will see is the flash of our cannons. They will hear the ring of our swords, and they will know what we can do.

By the sweat of our brows, and the strength of our backs and the courage of our hearts. Gentlemen, hoist the colours!

***George's Marvellous Medicine* by Roald Dahl,**  
**adapted for stage by David Wood**

**George:**

What's this? 'Golden gloss hair shampoo'. To wash her tummy nice and clean. In! (He pours some in). 'Ultra-bright toothpaste'. To brighten up her brown teeth! In! (He squeezes some in) 'Superfoam shaving soap'. For the whiskers on her nose! In! (He sprays some in). 'Vitamin enriched face cream' (opening and sniffing) Mmmmm! To smooth out her wrinkles! In! (He scoops some in) 'Scarlet nail varnish'. If the toothpaste doesn't clean her teeth, this will paint them as red as roses! In! (He pours some in, chanting)

Oh Grandma if only you knew  
What George has got in store for you!

(He picks up the next container) 'Nevermore ponking deodorant spray, guaranteed to keep away unpleasant body smells for a whole day'. She could use plenty of that. In! (He sprays some in) 'Round the bend lavatory cleaner'. In! (He squirts some in, chanting).

Oh Grandma if only you knew  
What George has got in store for you!

Hey! Look! 'Helga's Hairset. Hold twelve inches away from the hair and spray lightly'. In! (He sprays some in) 'Perfume. Flowers of turnips' (he smells a whiff of it). Pooh! Smells of old cheese! In! (he sprays some in) 'Pink plaster powder (he demonstrates the powder puff) For filling in the cracks! In! (He throws in some powder and holds up a lipstick) 'High glass lipstick' In!

Oh Grandma if only you knew  
What George has got in store for you!

## Judy Hopps, Zootopia



"When I was a kid, I thought Zootopia was this perfect place, where everyone got along and anyone could be anything. Turns out, real life is a little bit more complicated than a slogan on a bumper sticker. Real life is messy. We all have limitations, we all make mistakes, which means - hey, glass half full! - we all have a lot in common.

And the more we try to understand one another, the more exceptional each of us will be. But we have to try. So no matter what type of animal you are; from the biggest elephant to our first fox, I implore you - try. Try to make the world a better place. Look inside yourself and recognize that change starts with you. It starts with me. It starts with all of us."

## "The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King" (2003)



Aragorn:

Hold your ground! Hold your ground!

Sons of Gondor, of Rohan, my brothers,

I see in your eyes the same fear that would take the heart  
of me.

A day may come when the courage of men fails,  
when we forsake our friends  
and break all bonds of fellowship,  
but it is not this day.

An hour of wolves and shattered shields,  
when the age of men comes crashing down,  
but it is not this day!

This day we fight!!

By all that you hold dear on this good Earth,  
I bid you stand, Men of the West!!!

## **My Life as a Cat,**

**Carlie Sorosiak p 24-25**

Maybe this is a good time to remind you: I had no idea how to be a cat. I was an actor without a script. If you were in my metaphorical shoes, could you avoid detection? Could you enter an alien world and fit in seamlessly? I was bound to fail in some respects, so please try not to judge me too harshly.

Even if you're acquainted with Earth, cats are easy to miss. The link. They dash. They burrow in bushes, under couch cushions, in the bowels of handbags on closet shelves. I'll be honest and say that even the handsomest ones are comical to look at: ridiculously pointy ears, string-like whiskers, and a constantly replenishing source of fur, which sticks to your tongue when you lick it. (Why would you want to lick it, you might ask? See my later discussion on hairballs.)

Cats are considered a standoffish species, also known as 'aloof'. Many prefer their own company, despise loud noises, and often stuff their bodies inside boxes for no apparent reason. Tuna fish is a yes. Garlic is a no. A group of them is called a clowder, not to be confused with chowder, there is no soup involved.

I wish I'd known any of this before I was required to play the part of a cat. I was forced to act purely on instinct.

And my instinct told me to destroy the curtain.



A tall woman with a navy coat and a bright red mouth comes towards us and she reaches out a hand and she says hello I'm Ms Everett the head teacher and you must be October what an unusual name isn't it lovely to have you here and her hand is still in front of me and I look at it and up into her face which is smiling redly but the smile is starting to twitch and slip a bit. Shake hands whispers the woman who is my mother and I don't know how to do that or really what it is so I take the bony hand in both of mine and shake it from side the same way a fox shakes it's prey and Mrs Everett's smile falls off her face. She puts it back on very quickly, but I know I haven't done the right things and I'm glad. Ms Everett is saying so you've never been to school before like I don't know that and I don't say anything back because she already knows everything. I hear you're very clever she tries again but I don't need to answer that either because how would she know how could anyone know except Dad and he's far away. Perhaps you'd like to meet your new friends and I look up again because I don't have any old friends and I definitely don't want any new friends and she's leading us over to a group of chattering blue jumpers and they're looking at me like the fox's prey and my legs suddenly aren't connected to my brain any more and they're trembling more than my unpocketed hands. Here you go she says and she turns to the woman who is my mother and says always best just to let them settle in right away isn't it. The woman who is my mother tries to give me a hug and I step back neatly and so she turns it into a funny wave and then they both walk off across the gritty playground and leave me to be hunted.

They circle me. They are sharks who smell my blood as it pounds against my skin. They get closer and closer and open their mouths to show me a thousand rows of jagged teeth that will tear me from my bones like ripping paper and they will make my flesh into mince. Their voices bubble around me and there are questions and hisses and shouts and so much noise that it's a wall all around me and I can't swim away because they're everywhere and there's nowhere to hide and I am about to try to burst through the crowd and through the voices and through the noise.

## Once

Morris Gleitzman

Once I was living in an orphanage in the mountains and I shouldn't have been and I almost caused a riot.

It was because of the carrot.

You know how when a nun serves you very hot soup from a big metal pot and she makes you lean in close so she doesn't drip and the steam from the pot makes your glasses go all misty and you can't wipe them because you're holding your dinner bowl and the fog doesn't clear even when you pray to God, Jesus, the Virgin Mary, the Pope and Adolf Hitler?

That's happening to me. Somehow, I find my way towards my table. I use my ears for navigation.

Dodie who always sits next to me is a loud slurper because of his crooked teeth. I hold my bowl above my head so other kids can't pinch my soup while I'm fogged up and I use Dodie's slurping noises to guide me in. I feel for the edge of the table and put my bowl down and wipe my glasses. That's when I see the carrot.

It's floating in my soup, huge among the flecks of cabbage and the tiny blobs of pork fat and the few lonely lentils and the bits of grey plaster from the kitchen ceiling.

A whole carrot.

I can't believe it. Three years and eight months I've been in this orphanage and I haven't had a whole carrot in my dinner bowl once. Neither has anyone else. Even the nuns don't get whole carrots, and they get bigger servings than us kids because they need the extra energy for being holy.

We can't grow vegetables up here in the mountains. Not even if we pray a lot. It's because of the frosts. So if a whole carrot turns up in this place, first it gets admired, then it gets chopped into enough pieces so that sixty-two kids, eleven nuns and one priest can all have a bit.

I stare at the carrot.

At this moment I'm probably the only kid in Poland with a whole carrot in his dinner bowl. For a few seconds I think it's a miracle. Except it can't be because miracles only happened in ancient times and this is 1942.

# **The Night Bus Hero**

**By Onjali Q Rauf (p12)**

Detention with Mr Lancaster is as boring as watching paint dry. I know, because one time that's exactly what he made me do. He made me sit by a school wall that had been painted and wait for it to dry. But usually he just makes me sit and write lines, like today. I think that Mr Lancaster hopes that if he makes detentions boring enough, I won't want to do another one. But what he doesn't understand is that I really don't mind detentions. My brain calms down and my ears close up and my eyes stop blinking, and instead of seeing the room I'm in or the words I'm writing, I start to see brand new ways of getting back at everyone. Some of my best, most brilliant ideas have come from sitting in detention.

This detention made me realise that I needed to do something different. Something big. I needed to go outside the box Mrs Vergara's always talking about – that one inside your head that makes you do the same thing again and again. I needed to try something new. Something that would really get everyone talking about me, and which would be a hundred times better than putting snakes in the school soup

# Charlie and the Chocolate Factory by Roald Dahl

## VERUCA

Where's my Golden Ticket? I want my Golden Ticket! Oh yes... here it is! As soon as I told my father that I simply had to have one of those Golden Tickets, he went out into the town and started buying up all the Wonka candy bars he could lay his hands on. Thousands of them, he must have bought. Hundreds of thousands! Then he had them loaded onto trucks and sent directly to his own factory. He's in the peanut business, you see, and he's got about a hundred women working for him over at his joint, shelling peanuts for roasting and salting. That's what they do all day long, those women... They just sit there shelling peanuts. So he says to them, "Okay, girls," he says, "from now on, you can stop shelling peanuts and start shelling the wrappers off these crazy candy bars instead!" And they did. He had every worker in the place yanking the paper off those bars of chocolate, full speed ahead, from morning till night.

But three days went by and we had no luck. Oh... it was terrible! I got more and more upset each day, and every time he came home I would scream at him, "Where's my Golden Ticket? I want my Golden Ticket!" And I would lie for hours on the floor, kicking and yelling in the most disturbing way. Then suddenly, on the evening of the fourth day, one of his women workers yelled, "I've got it! A Golden Ticket!" And my father said, "Give it to me, quick!" And she did. And he rushed it home and gave it to me, and now... I'm all smiles... and we have a happy home... once again.

## War Horse by Michael Morpurgo

### Pages 51-53

I turned to look at Topthorn who was already up on his toes ready for the trot that we knew was to come. I moved instinctively closer to him and then as the bugle sounded we charged out of the shade of the wood and into the sunlight of battle.

The gentle squeak of leather, the jingling harness and the noise of hastily barked orders were drowned now by the pounding of hooves and the shout of the troopers as we galloped down on the enemy in the Valley below us. Out of the corner of my eye, I was aware of the glint of Captain Nicholls' heavy sword. I felt his

spurs in my side and I heard his battle cry. I saw the grey soldiers ahead of us raise their rifles and heard the death rattle of a machine-gun, and then quite suddenly I found that I had no rider, that I had no weight on my back anymore and that I was alone out in front of the squadron. Topthorn was no longer beside me, but with horses behind me I knew there was only one way to gallop and that was forward. Blind terror drove me on, with my flying stirrups whipping me into a frenzy. With no rider to carry I reached the kneeling riflemen first and they scattered as I came upon them.

I ran on until I found myself alone and away from the noise of the battle, and I would never have stopped at all had I not found Topthorn once more beside me with Captain Stewart leaning over to gather up my reins before leading me back to the battlefield. We had won, I heard it said; but horses lay dead and dying everywhere. More than a quarter of the squadron had been lost in that one action. It had all been so quick and so deadly.

I never saw Captain Nicholls again and that was a great and terrible sadness for me for he had been a kind and gentle man and had cared for me well as he had promised. As I was to learn, there were few enough such good men in the world. 'He'd have been proud of you, Joey,' said Captain Stewart as he led me back to the horse lines with Topthorn. 'He'd have been proud of you the way you kept going out there. He died leading that charge and you finished it for him. He'd have been proud of you.'