Rationale and Definition
If your instructor assigned you to do a speech to entertain, you are lucky. Since so many public speaking text book authors declare entertainment as one of the three major goals of a public speech, it is a great skill to practice. It is hard to deny the value of entertainment. Humor has been used to soothe many difficult situations. At a board meeting in San Francisco where there was a heated debate about closing Golden Gate Park to traffic on Saturdays in addition to Sundays, the group in favor of closing the park on Saturday played the old hit song “Saturday in the Park” by Chicago in the background of their video drawing huge laughs from both sides of the issue. In Half Moon Bay, where they had to close down Devil’s Slide affecting several commuters and hurting businesses, Casey Sample, owner of his café, created a special “Devil’s Slide Closure” menu that includes “deviled eggs” and “fallen angel hair pasta”. Casey said, “it is throwing a little humor into the situation. What are you going to do about it”? As reported in the San Francisco Chronicle, July 12, 2006, Kathy Griffin, the star of Bravo’s “My Life on the D-List” filed for divorce from her husband of four and a half years after she discovered he had been taking money from her bank accounts. “Eventually, I end up putting everything into the act. I kind of turn tragedy into comedy and I find that’s a great way for me to kind of deal with it.”

A speech to entertain may be either informative or persuasive in nature, but the supporting materials are selected primarily based on their entertainment value. The speech still must make a valid point or argument, but it can be done using humor.

In intercollegiate forensics competition, a speech to inform on a “lighter” topic was typically moved into the speech to entertain category. I remember several years ago, a student did her speech to inform about the Barbie Doll’s history and the message she sent to young girls. Although there were several serious implications, the subject of “Barbie” definitely lent itself to humor, thus falling in the speech to entertain category.

Many speech topics can fall under the goal to inform, to persuade and to entertain. Take, for example, the topic of 911. As an informative speech, one could describe how to use the system. As a persuasive goal, one could examine the problem of long response times. For a speech to entertain, I had a student provide an amusing speech about the misuse of 911. “Hello, 911? My cat is stuck up in a tree” “Have you ever seen the skeleton of a dead cat up in a tree? It WILL come down!”

What if I am not funny?
Before I go any further, I want to reassure you that a speech to entertain is indeed a speech and should not resemble a stand-up comedy act. If you are thinking that you are not funny and could not possibly pull off a speech that his humorous in nature, I hope I can reassure you by first saying that is most likely not the case. Have you ever had someone laugh hysterically at something you said and had no idea why they were laughing? Humor is extremely subjective. For example, in the first paragraph where I made reference to a Chicago song, many of you may not have heard of that 70’s band! Not too many students will be old enough to get that joke. Perhaps you are old enough to get that joke but still do not think it is funny. Just like persuasion, where you can not convince everybody in the room, the same is true with attempts at humor. You can prepare yourself by having a wide variety of people hear your speech and give you feedback.

Sadly, many people laugh at the expense of others. I read an article in the San Francisco Chronicle the other day where the headline was “Man Stuck in Chimney.” This poor man was locked out of his home and decided to try entering through the chimney. He got stuck. Eventually his neighbors heard his yelling and called the police. Since the chimney was narrow, the man decided to take off his clothes so he would have more room.
The next response I have to students who do not think they are funny is to simply pick a topic that lends itself naturally to humor. A comedian I saw many years ago at a public performance in San Francisco started his short act by saying: “I would like to thank George W. Bush for making my job as a stand-up comic very easy!” I take this to mean he credits Mr. Bush and not himself for his very funny material. I had a student research chap stick addiction where she was able to find plenty of information on how one can become addicted to lip balm. Another student found an article on the pigeon talking about how pigeons have been used to test the effects of cocaine on humans. Many times, material is funny on its own.

**Entertainment Speech Topics**
Searching for the perfect topic can be fun; humor is just about everywhere. I find something in the newspaper almost every day. Many instructors also allow students to convert their informative or persuasive speeches into a speech to entertain.

**Speeches about People**
There are definitely famous people who lend themselves to humor such as:
- Michael Jackson
- Martha Stewart
- Brittany Spears
- Dr. Laura
- Paris Hilton
- Bill Clinton
- Elvis Presley
- President Bush

**Speeches about Objects**
Many times an informative speech in this category can also be looked at in an entertaining way:
- Yo-yos
- Barbie
- Duct tape
- Under ware
- Krispy Kremes
- Women’s magazines
- Dogs
- Alarm clocks
- Pigeons
- Cell phones
- Stupid pedestrians
- Self help books
- Grilles

**Speeches about Processes**
Many things one must go through can be extremely frustrating, but a humorous approach can help one to deal with them.
- Job hunting
- Wedding planning
- Dating
- Shopping
- Moving
- Anything to do with the Department of Motor Vehicles
- How to tip properly
- How to get rid of a telemarketer
How to take advantage of free stuff
Dumpster diving
Subliminal advertising

**Speeches about Conditions**
Many conditions are no laughing matter, but there are plenty that lend themselves to humor in a self-deprecating way:
- Addiction to bingo
- Addiction to scrabble
- Addiction to caffeine
- Phobias such as the fear of clowns
- Obsessive compulsive checking disorder
- Snoring
- Being left handed
- Addiction to the internet
- Addiction to soap operas
- Parent’s over involvement in their children’s sports
- Treating pets like children
- Addiction to exercise
- Pre-Menstrual Syndrome
- Math anxiety
- Chap stick addiction
- Chronic tardiness

**Speeches about Concepts**
The benefits of being pessimistic
- Women’s guilt
- Gender differences in communication
- Fad diets
- Text-book error
- Warning labels
- Revenge
- Termite Flatulence
- Metrosexuality

**Speeches about issues**
The unfair portrayal of blacks on television
What would happen if marijuana was actually legalized
- Republican oppression
Sports that should not be on television
- Air rage
The misuse of the 911 system
- America’s obsession with making everything bigger
- Mannequin attacks
Deceptive prescription drug advertisements

**Group effort**
Try to get as much feedback on your topic choice as you can. Since humor is so subjective, the more classmates you talk to, the more you will find ways to relate to them. I hold a workshop during class time where students brainstorm topics and help each other find jokes. When the class works together it can generate
more interest in the performances. If a student has two or three different topics in mind, the others give their feedback on which one they should go with, thus giving that student more confidence.

Structure
Because this is an actual speech and not a comedy routine, it calls for the same speech structure typically used in informative or persuasive speeches, in fact, many students prepare their entertainment speeches as if they are informative or persuasive and then insert the humor. Speeches about a process would logically follow a chronological structure. The problem-cause-solution structure is popular for speeches about issues. The topical structure is used the most frequently. To illustrate how these speeches can be set up, I will provide examples of different preview statements. These preview statements have puns in them allowing for both structure and entertainment.

A speech about why athletes should not be considered role models:

“To better understand why professional athletes should not be considered role models I will first fumble through some of their actions, then I will tackle the issue of a growing disconnect between fans and athletes, and finally I will intercept the notion that good athletes are role models.”

A speech about the feminist movement
“First, I’ll cook things up by talking about why this movement is bad for all males and then I’ll scrub and rinse away all your doubts by explaining why this is also bad for women. Lastly, I will lovingly and tenderly tell you what must be done to correct this imbalance before it is too late.”

A speech about naked people from the perspective of the average art student
“First we will flaunt the bare facts about what it is that nude models do in art classes, then we will strip down to the scandalous reality of the human figure…”

Transitions are just as important in a speech to entertain, but they can be done in an entertaining fashion as well. I still remember a speech about Elvis Presley where the student sang all of his transitions using Elvis songs. “You ain’t nothing but a transition, and you’re moving all the time…” Or, “Return to thesis, purpose unknown”.

In a speech about republican oppression, a student wrote “Now that we have learned how this deliberate persecution began, let us take a RIGHT and discuss some of the issues surrounding misunderstood republicans”.

Humor does not need to be present in every transition or preview statement; it is only a suggestion for a possible place to insert humor. A speech about things people do when they don’t think anyone is watching, “To get an idea of how strange people can be we will first spy on them in their homes. Next we will gaze at unknowing strangers out in public, and finally we can laugh at the people that were fortunate enough to be caught on tape”.

In a speech about the benefits of being cheap, “First I’ll talk about the benefits of being cheap, then move on to the importance of being cheap, and finally how to be cheap”.

Using Supporting Materials in a speech to entertain
Because this is a speech that is informative or persuasive in nature, supporting your ideas is crucial. The difference is the support is chosen primarily for its entertainment value. This does not mean that all of your supporting materials need to be funny, it just means you have more choices with what to do with it. I will go over testimony, examples and statistics.
Testimony
Sometimes just the source of the testimony or where it came from can be amusing. I had a student do a speech about what this world would be like if marijuana were made legal. She started off her first point by saying, “Now, I for one have never smoked marijuana, but my credible sources, who I found hanging out in the parking lot next to the library, they told me…”. I heard a student use himself as testimony by saying “…and according to me, April 1st, 2000, it was horrible!”

Making fun of where a source came from can be amusing. A student made the claim “pigeon poop erodes stone and marble, according to the world book encyclopedia under ‘P’”. In the speech about Barbie, the student used testimony from the book Forever Barbie. In a speech about PMS, a source came from the book Raging Hormones. That student also made fun of the internet by saying “…which I know is true because I found it on the internet”. A speech about the benefits of being cheap included the book Home Cheap Home.

Testimony can be of a serious nature as well. An article in Parenting Magazine from January 1997 in an article titled. “Barbie: Is she Good for Girls?” states, “her unrealistic proportions send a message to girls that their bodies need to be model-perfect and the age range she reaches, 3 to 10 year olds, is a critical period in the development of self-esteem.” She followed that serious testimony with a joke, “…Well, duh, you don’t have to be Albert Eyesight to see that. I mean, a woman with a chest so large and a waist that small would not be walking up-right…”.

Statistics
A common strategy for using statistics is to just state the actual statistic and then make a quick joke about it immediately after that. In the making marijuana legal speech there was a statistic from the National Institute on Drug Abuse from 1989 which reported that approximately 40 million people are users of marijuana. That translates to about one out of every six people in this room (point to an audience member). The Barbie speech contained statistics from Advertising Age, October 1995 that stated “Mattel calculates that somewhere in the world two Barbie dolls are sold each second and that average sales total 1.5 billion dolls a week. For those of you who are not good at math, that is seven days!” In a speech about the walkman, a student cited an old Health Today magazine warning about the possible hearing loss resulting from playing a walkman too loud. As I recall, the statistic was, “32 billion Americans lost almost all of their hearing; hearing that no technology will be able to replace. I asked a former friend what he thought of this growing hearing loss phenomenon and he said and I quote, “huh?”

Examples
Examples must be used to clarify ideas just like in any other speech, but they can also be used to generate humor. A speech about warning labels can contain several brief examples of silly warning labels such as: on sleeping pills, may cause drowsiness, on a curling iron, never use while sleeping, on a frozen burrito, remove plastic wrap before eating, on a Superman costume, does not allow the user to fly. On salt, contains sodium.

Instead of just stating that people call 911 for stupid, non-emergency purposes, an example might be, “Hello, 911? I was wondering about the snow levels.” To illustrate how our fairy tales would have to be altered to make more sense if marijuana were made legal, the first example had to do with Santa Clause: “If you think about our fairy tales and nursery rhymes, someone had to be on something to think these up. Take Santa Clause: We have a jolly fat man flying around on a reindeer. If marijuana were legalized he would not be saying “ho, ho, ho” he would have to say “I’m so-ho high”!

Caroline Rhea, host of the hit show “The Biggest Loser”, gives specific examples about how people do not take compliments well. In response to “You have a nice smile”, she gives the response “My tooth in the back is black”. In response to “nice dress”, her example is “I spent one dollar on it at a garage sale and I have not even washed it”!
Ways to generate humor
Everyone has a way of delivering humor that is natural for them. I am going to go over several different ways one can generate humor. Many of these methods require good timing with delivery which is another useful skill one can pick up from performing this type of speech.

Physical humor
Movement holds attention in any speech, but it can be a great way to generate humor and relax the speaker. During a transition in the pigeon speech, the student actually moved like a pigeon while saying “Let’s peck into the problems of pigeons living in our cities”. In the 911 speech, the student fell to the floor when discussing medical emergencies and said “I’ve fallen, and I can’t get up!” He then gets back up and says “Don’t worry, I’m ok, I just wanted to show you what a medical emergency might look like. It was great to see how quickly you all rushed to my aid”. In a speech about the unfair portrayal of blacks on television, the student put on a swim cap to illustrate a “brother” auditioning for the show “Baywatch”.

Self deprecating humor
People laugh at the expense of others, but many people are the first to laugh at themselves. So often I see people who are overweight making jokes such as, “I want to get to this preview statement and speech very fast because I am hungry”! A comic named Carry Snow, who used to be overweight, did almost all of her jokes about that. She used to say she loved taking antibiotics because on the label it told her to “take with food”. When she lost weight, she also lost all of her material! The number of blonde jokes is staggering. Throughout the years I have heard several speeches about blonde stereotypes. A friend of mine often proclaims she is having a “blond moment”. People also love to joke about getting older. My friend Lee talks about how he is growing hair in all the wrong places. Jay London, a finalist on the show “Last Comic Standing” makes fun of his physical appearance by opening with the statement that he is the fourth guy on the left on the evolutionary chart. He also mentions that he is not worried about identity theft because “nobody would want to be me”. My favorite is how he ends his hilarious show by saying “I’d like to end with a joke”.

Using visual aids
Visual aids are a factor of attention and suspense in any speech, but can certainly be used for entertainment purposes. A speech explaining what PMS is had a visual aid that simply had the letters PMS written on it; that was all. In fact, PMS was not written neatly which for some reason got a lot of laughs. I still remember a line from the visual aid explanation where the PMS initials were explained. “…And men, PMS is a women’s problem and you really should stay out of it. In fact, when we have PMS, we Prefer Men Shut up”!

To illustrate the unfair portrayal of blacks on television, a blank visual aid was presented to show us the list of African Americans who have starred in a successful television drama. (This was back in 1997)

Word play or puns
People love puns or they hate them, but they get a reaction either way. I will never forget a speech about lobotomies where a student said, “…and finally, we will get to ‘lobottom’ of this by discussing…” A speech about pirates contained several puns, starting with the definition of piracy which boiled down to “crime on boats…talk about your watered down definitions…and I will tell you some ways that we can protect ARRRselves…” Jay London would come onto the stage wearing overalls and start by asking, “How do you like my overall look?” He is also brilliant at word play, for example, “I called 1-800-bad hair and they gave me an extension”. One can “gloss over the nature of chap stick addiction. Commercials are using puns to help people remember their products. The Charmin toilet paper commercial featuring the bears claims their toilet tissue is “great for bear bottoms”. At times, the puns go a bit too far. Saying “I’ll give you some leafy green reasons why you should become a vegetarian” could be considered overdoing it!
Analogies using current events
Not everybody follows current events, but a variety of comparisons to current events can get a lot of laughs. In
the speech about pirates, this was used frequently. “This problem could go un-checked and get worse, much
like the Bush twins at a kegger.” Or, “this is a problem we can not afford to ignore, much like Wynona Ryder at
a Neiman Marcus.” Finally, “…All of these countries have a thriving tourist market that could be hit harder than
a bite from Mike Tyson if nothing is done to stop this disturbing trend”. A student made a joke about Dan
Quayle: “So, Dan Quayle could not spell potato. Sure he could, it just depends on your definition of spelling”. Then there was George Bush with his “brilliant military strategy…”

Relate directly to the audience, involve the audience
As you sit through your public speaking course and absorb information about your classmates, use some of it in
your entertainment speeches. Many people say we tend to be egocentric meaning we like to hear about
ourselves. If you find that someone in your class hates shopping, you can make a reference to that. It always
helps to keep track of previous speech topics your classmates have done so you can make a specific reference to
that topic and that student. I remember a student did a sales speech promoting coke so every time the subject of
coke came up and it related to a health issue, the class looked at her and enjoyed a good laugh.

Irony
Jon Carroll, a writer for the San Francisco Chronicle, started off his column with the following: “You see the
problem. You need coffee early in the morning, and yet you have to make the coffee early in the morning.
People should not be required to make coffee until they have had some coffee.” That is a wonderful example of
irony.

Impersonations
Some people are naturally gifted at doing impersonations that are dead on. It is fun to see a female impersonate
a male. In the republican oppression speech, the female student did amazing impressions of George Bush,
Richard Nixon and Bill Clinton. A male who did his speech on the unfair portrayal of blacks on television did a
great job impersonating the maid from the television show, The Jeffersons.

Sample outline and sample speech
To end this chapter, I am providing a sample outline and then a sample speech written in its entirety. The
sample speech text was for just under a ten minute speech and the outline was for a speech lasting between 8
and one half to nine minutes.

Outline by Alexis Litzky, currently a graduate student at San Francisco State University. The outline was done
in the spring of 2002 for a speech about dumpster diving.

1. Introduction
   A. Paul Hawken, from www.mindfully.org and author of Natural Capitalism
      (http://www.mindfully.org/Sustainability/Hawken-Resource-Waste.htm) wrote that Americans
generate more than 1 million pounds of waste per person, per year. We each use 125 pounds of
material each day, directly and indirectly. The environment suffers when we constantly generate new
consumer goods to replace the “old ones,” which are usually perfectly fine. Most of us are familiar
with recycling, and that is an excellent way to cut back. However, I would like to introduce a new
form of conservation that everybody can do with a few tools, a little creativity, and a good attitude.
   B. That’s right. I’m talking about dumpster diving, an active form of garbology.
   C. First we’ll dive right in and figure out what dumpster diving is. Then we’ll dig around and find out
what you’ll need to get started rooting right away. Finally, we’ll pull out where the best garbage, I
mean treasures, can be found!
2. Body
   A. So let’s dive right in and see what it means to be a “dumpster diver.”
      1) **Allthingsfrugal.com**
         a. Dumpster divers are people who search for discarded items that other people have
            thrown out that are still useful, can be recycled, and still have a use or value. Includes
            curbside riffling as well as dumpster at stores and apartment complexes. That’s not too
            bad, right?
      2) **Wikipedia.com**
         a. A lot of people dive “for the thrill of the hunt, or as a creative outlet.” However, since
            dumpsters are usually on private property, diving can be a legal offense, even though
            the law is enforced with varying degrees of rigor.”
      3) So I decided to call the Sonoma County Sheriff’s office to find out what exactly the penalties.
         You know, just in case.
         a. It is considered petty left from your local garbage collector.
         b. Nothing will happen unless the company reports the crime, and they usually only
            report it if large quantities go missing. So just try not to be greedy garbage stealers.
            a. Cardboard incident of 1998
      4) Dumpster diving can be profitable, especially in areas where aluminum cans and bottles have
         return bottle deposits, or if you live in a neighborhood where people move a lot. Items can be
         kept or resold at rummage sales, barter/swap meets, given as gifts, pawned, or even
         sold for scrap.

   B. Now that’s we’re in this mess, let’s see what we’ll need to get started.
      1) **Jolly art of Junking, Larry Almond wrote in 1997:**
         a. Car – it’s not required, but nice if you want to carry something large home or just not
            look too shady.
            a. If you do bring a car, bring a phone book so you can look up addresses easily.
               It doubles a step up into the dumpster!
         b. Flashlight or headlamp for night diving.
         c. Dress:
            a. Sturdy shoes and jean – you never know what you’ll come across.
            b. Recommended: plastic gloves. But you know your own sanitary requirements.
            c. Baseball cap or beanie to keep your hair from falling into anything.
            d. Dive stick – long pole with a hook/poker.
            e. Grocery bags or baskets.
               i. Milk crates double as baskets and a step!
            f. Pepper spray – in case of emergency and potentially a strategic tool.
            g. Razorblade to open bags and boxes.
            h. You will look like you are prepared for biological warfare. This is normal.
      2) Other things to be aware of:
         a. If anyone in authority or faux-authority asks you what you’re doing, just tell them
            you’re looking for boxes or recyclable material.
         b. You might get some bruises on your abdomen or arms from reaching.
         c. Beware of trash compactors!
         d. Know when it’s garbage day, as you could hit paydirt.
   C. So now that we’ve found what we need, let’s pull out the best and worst places to dive.
      1) Where to go:
         a. Your neighborhood could yield some interesting blackmail.
         b. Affluent neighborhoods are great because rich people are always throwing away
            things: clothes, kitchen appliances, husbands, you name it!
c. College neighborhoods - all sorts of goodies at the semester end.

d. Bakeries - old donuts and bread.

e. Thrift stores - throw out things they can sell.

f. Electronic stores - throw out open packages and/or broken equipment the employees don’t want. According to Cory Doctorow, May 1997, Wired Magazine, there’s big bucks in tech trash. He found $8,000 worth of RAM and was able to resell it for $5,000.

g. Bookstores - books and magazines that aren’t TOO old.

h. Video stores - movie posters and videos.

2) Dumpsters to avoid:

a. Medical offices – biohazard material, needles, glass, etc.

b. Office supply stores – lots of empty boxes!

c. WARNING: Some restaurants put bleach in their food to get people to stop eating out of their dumpsters.

d. If you have a really bad experience, support groups are available.

3. Conclusion

A. Today we’ve reviewed the finer points of dumpster diving. We dove right in and defined what it means to dive, and then dug around to find what we’d need to get started. Finally, we pulled out some of the best and worst spots for diving.

B. I sincerely hope you all took a few notes this evening. I’ve given you all the information you’ll need to start your own treasure hunt soon. And while it may not be for everyone, the next time you’re feeling brave (and a little cheap) go ahead and dive right in, you never know what you might find!

Sample speech written by Christine Warda. Christine Warda is now a first year doctoral student at Southern Illinois University. This speech about pigeons was done in 1997.

We’ve all felt the rush, the fear, as we walk through a city, a park, or perhaps even, a Safeway parking lot. This fear is more commonly known as Don’t wannagetpoopedonaphobia: the fear of passing pigeons…or pigeons passing. On the other hand, I’ve been told that if one is pooped on, it’s considered a sign of good luck. Nevertheless, getting pigeon poop on a nice dress is hardly a lucky way to start my day.

Today, let’s recognize who the pigeon is and realize many similarities between ourselves and pigeons that are helpful in understanding our own methods of learning, behavior, and perhaps even, the effects of drugs on the body. We’ll do this by first soaring into the history of the pigeon; next we’ll peck into some problems of pigeons living in our cities; and finally, we’ll notice, through similarities in lifestyle and behavior, just how coo the pigeon truly is.

Notice the opening device, thesis and preview of main points. It should be clear that the student is discussing history, problems of pigeons in our cities, and similar life styles. Check out the word play using soaring, peck, and how coo!

Soaring back in time, we find that passenger pigeons had an early impact in the communication industry. They were the Peck Bell of Ancient Greece. They delivered news of the Ancient Olympics and were the Ancient Egyptian’s cordless phone, as well as, their primary cuisine. Early colonists brought domestic pigeons to America. Since that time, pigeons have been bred to over 200 varieties, have been used as message carriers during wartime, as racing and game competition, as extras on The Partridge Family, guest stars on Sesame Street, and are now starring in their own Nissan car commercial.

Notice the word play with “Peck Bell”. Lists are always a good tool when you can add a couple of amusing items to the list; in this case making reference to Sesame Street and the Nissan car commercial.

During both World Wars and the Korean War, Homer (doh!) pigeons were used to deliver messages by the US Army Signal Corps. One famous pigeon was Cher Ami. (VA) Cher Ami is known for documenting the longest
flight ever by a passenger pigeon. The distance: 2300 miles. To put this into perspective, that’s like driving from Los Angeles to Seattle, twice.

_The visual aids were normal pigeon bodies, but in the case of Cher Ami, there was a big picture of Cher instead of the normal pigeon head. Hard to resist the Homer Simpson “doh” joke!_

Another famous pigeon was GI JOE. GI JOE was credited with making the most outstanding flight of any US Army Homing Pigeon. On the morning of October 18, 1943, according to _Raising Turkeys, Ducks, Geese, Guineas, and (pause) Pigeons_, GI JOE flew 20-odd miles under extremely trying conditions, in the same number of minutes, to deliver a message. He is thus credited with saving the lives of at least 1000 allied soldiers. In 1946, GI JOE was awarded the Dickens Medal of Gallantry by the Lord Mayor of London. When duty called, GI JOE was there. GO JOE! Now that we’ve soared back in time, let’s peck into the problems of pigeons living in our cities.

Pigeons have moved into our cities, because the tall buildings are ideal for nesting. And, the lack of hawks, falcons, and other predators, make this the ideal setting for the pigeon to live a long and peaceful life. Now while some people and muppets, like Bert & Ernie, enjoy the pigeons’ presence and sit for hours tossing breadcrumbs to them, others hate the pigeon. They feel the pigeon is the cause of all their problems and they want to KILL the pigeon. They consider them disease-carrying menaces that desecrate buildings and monuments, or as Woody Allen called them, RATS WITH WINGS. I think, at this time, it’s appropriate to bring up that old, familiar saying, “it takes one to know one.”

_Woody Allen can be considered an easy target. Many people can relate to hating pigeons._

International Wildlife, January-February, 1996, shows that city officials around the world have fought to halt the bird boom, enticing pigeons to eat feed laced with Depo-Provera (the contraceptive), jolting them off buildings with electrified wires (giving them that ruffled look), scaring them with plastic owls (ooohhh), and sending them to that big downtown up yonder by deploring marksmen with air rifles (click gun). And we wonder why pigeons are so paranoid?! (as the pigeon…looking around)

_Movement was key here; watching the student do the pigeon head turn was wonderful._

One of the reasons for this hatred, appropriately coined Pigeonism, is according to the book _Everyone Poops_, by Tero Garmi, “pigeons poop.” And when you put 2000 pigeons together by one city hall, park, car…huge piles of pigeon poop soon show up. Now, pigeon poop erodes stone and marble, according to World Book Encyclopedia, under P. In fact, it also clogs and stops up roof drains on buildings. Now, while pigeon pooper scoopers aren’t on the market yet, cleaning the poop is done by professionals. This tends to be very expensive, because there’s not a lot of people who make a living as professional pigeon poop picker uppers.

_Two sources are quite amusing: Everyone Poops and World Book Encyclopedia, under P. Also some alliteration using the series of ‘P’ words._

Another reason people have become pigeonists, is that pigeons can spread such diseases as histoplasmosis, salmonella, and citicosis, which affects the lungs and other organs. Still, as the July 6, 1996 issue of _The San Francisco Chronicle_ tells us, humans very rarely contract diseases from pigeons. _So, perhaps through education, employment, and health care, we can turn these pigeonists into pigeon lovers. We can do this. This is America. We can build that bridge to the 21st century…oops, wrong speech._ Now that we’ve pecked into the problems, let’s kick the negative vibe, slip on some shades, and notice through similarities in lifestyle and behavior just how coo the pigeon truly is.

_A reference to Bill Clinton’s state of the union speech_

During the mating season, the males bow and coo at the females…like a bunch of construction workers. If she likes his style, they smooth each other’s feathers, he feeds her a couple of seeds, they go back to his nest and sip
a glass of fine champagne. The moment comes...or the pigeons do...and voila! A baby pigeon is conceived. Pigeons mate for life. Together they build the next. The female lays one or two eggs and they take turns sitting on them.

After about 17 days the eggs hatch, giving birth to blind, nearly featherless squabs. Both mommy and daddy feed the squab with a white liquid technically referred to as pigeon’s milk. It’s made in the throat of the parent and spit into the squab’s young beak. In comparison, I think I would vomit on my mother if she hacked up a loogie and tried to spit it in my throat. But, the squab must enjoy it, for they live in the nest until they’re fully grown. This is the reason you hardly ever see a baby pigeon strolling through the park. Well, unless he’s an orphan, a runaway, or he just looks really young for his age.

This is almost identical to our own, ideal child rearing practices, in which we live at home and are considered children (squabs, if you will) until we reach age 18, full maturity, and then we leave the nest. And in noticing the similarities in lifestyles, we can begin to understand why pigeons have become the ‘bird of choice’ in the research arena.

Pigeons, like humans, learn from one another. International Wildlife, Jan-Feb 1996 documents a study in which 4 wild and crazy pigeons were trained to pierce the paper cover of a box containing seed. They were released back to their own flock. A paper covered seed box was placed out. Within one month, 24 new street pigeons had acquired this skill. And they told two friends, and they told two friends. And so on, and so on. Again, making a reference to the popular television commercial.

Now this is identical to our own methods of learning, in which we watch and mimic others: parents, teachers, and role models to acquire skills for ourselves. And realizing how similar we are to pigeons in something as complex as learning, we begin to see that studying the pigeon more in other areas may prove to be beneficial.

For example, The Journal of Experimental Analysis of Behavior, January 6, 1996, documents a study in which the effects of cocaine are being tested on pigeons. This gives us a super opportunity to study the long and snort, I mean short, term effects of the drug, without loss or addiction of human lives. Now, while researching the topic pigeons, the same question kept repeating itself in my head. “Just how do they get the pigeons for these studies?” I mean, does a lab tech. run out into Central Park and just grab the first couple she can get her hands on? Or do they advertise? Wanted: Test Pigeons for Cocaine Study. I can just see it, the next day, there’s 2000 pigeons lined up around the corner of the lab. Sort of like a Chorus Line. “God, I hope I get it, I hope I get it. How many pigeons does he need? How many boys, how many girls?”

It was hilarious to see the student sing that song from A Chorus Line while moving around like a pigeon. That was one of the best moments in the speech.

Today, we’ve recognized who the pigeon is, and realized many similarities between ourselves and the pigeon that are helpful in understanding our own methods of learning, behavior, and perhaps even, the effects of drugs on the body. We did this by first, soaring into the history of the pigeon. Next, we pecked into the problems perpetuated by pigeons presiding on our planet, particularly in our pueblos. (I’m semi-bilingual) And finally, we noticed through similarities in lifestyle and behavior just how coo the pigeon truly is. So, in the future, when you’re walking through that park, that city, or that Safeway parking lot, and you start to feel it, that fear, that rush from don’twannagetpoopedonaphobia, don’t let it interfere with your life. Because the only way to beat a phobia is to face that phobia head on. (Look up, poop drops, the end.)

The speech ended with a clear summary, more word play, and finally, a reference to the opening device used in the speech.

Summary
A speech to entertain can be a fun endeavor. I hope I have shown that one does not have to be hilariously funny to take on this type of speech and that it is a speech and not a stand up act. If you are convinced that you are not
funny, just pick a naturally funny topic. Involve your classmates in your topic and joke selection; if your instructor holds a workshop in class, your classmates can give you feedback and input, which will give you more confidence when facing that audience.

When you have the right topic, remember to write it like it is an informative or persuasive speech before worrying about inserting humor. The speech can be structured just like an informative or persuasive speech. Don’t forget about supporting your points with statistics, examples, or testimony.

When you decide on the text for the speech, think about all of the different ways to generate humor. Everyone has their own unique way of selecting and delivering humor, do what is fun and natural for you. Again, the more you cater to your specific audience members, the more confident you can feel.