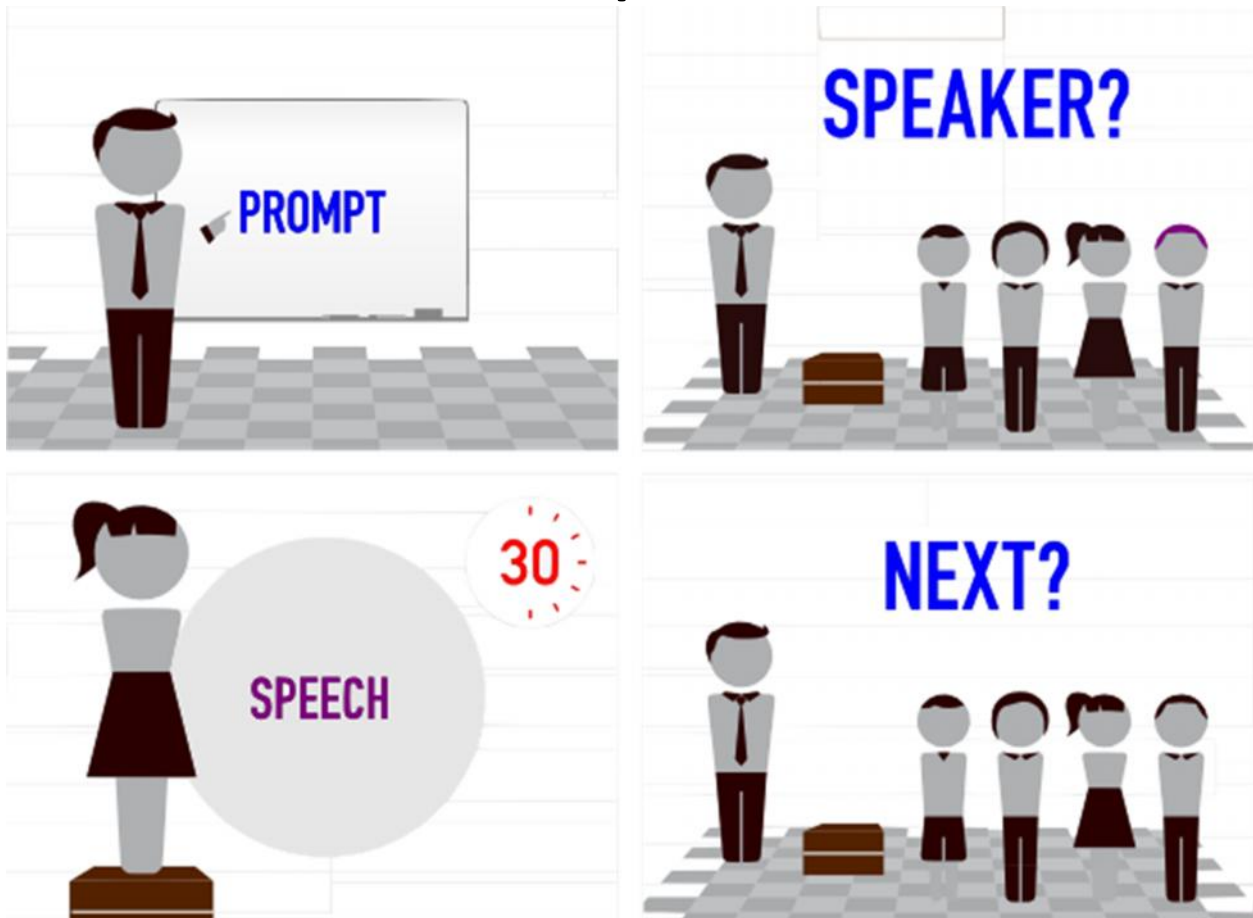


## Soapbox



Here a student gives a short speech affirming or denying a prompt, and another speaker follows up by supporting, supplementing, or refuting the first speech's argument. Thus the Soapbox gives "the floor" to one student at a time while ensuring that air time overall is evenly distributed.

When used to introduce a unit, the Soapbox will activate students' prior knowledge and get them thinking about key questions before delving more deeply into content. Students may also be assigned reading as homework the previous night and then use Soapbox speeches to spark a discussion on the text. This discussion in turn might become a pre-writing activity for an essay or Mini Paragraph assignment. Of course, the activity can also wrap up a unit, with speeches arguing about the most direct cause of World War I.

Requirements of the soapbox will vary depending on students' skill levels and teachers' purposes. At the most basic level, each speech might include the explicit statements "my claim is..." and "my warrant for this claim is..." Teachers might also require every speech to cite textual evidence, to present three warrants in an organized manner, or to summarize and refute a

previous speech. This last possibility might also set up a writing activity like Defeating the Critic in which students have to address counterarguments to their claims.

Speeches may be given from a “soapbox” like a low stool or chair, provided it is secure and sturdy. Alternatively, students can simply speak from a designated area at the front of the room, or in more crowded classrooms, a roll of toilet paper could be passed between students so that they could speak from their seats.

Step	Teacher Move	Student Move
1	Prepare a “soapbox.”	
2	Prepare a list of controversial prompts	
3	From the soapbox, give a 30-second speech presenting and defending a definite opinion on a controversial subject. This speech need not reflect your personal beliefs; in fact, the more outrageous your claims are, the better.	Listen and form your own opinion on the topic at hand.
4	Invite a volunteer (or call on someone) to give his own 30-second speech on the subject. Time the speech and provide ten-second warnings if desired.	<i>Speaker:</i> support, refute, or modify the previous speech’s claims with your own warrants. <i>Class:</i> listen and be prepared to speak next.
5	Repeat step 3 as desired.	Repeat step 3 as required.
6	Depending on the size and interest level of the class, repeat steps 2–4 as desired using different topics.	Repeat steps 2–4 as required.