The cultural artifact speech is a product of our increasingly diverse culture. It is a speech that allows us to come to know more about the many cultures represented in our country as well as our classrooms. The best cultural artifact speeches will 1) teach us about the artifact that is the focus 2) teach us about the culture from which the artifact comes and 3) teach us a little about the speaker. Good cultural artifact speeches help us break down the stereotypes of difference and help us to look at people from cultures other than our own as unique individuals.

For the purposes of this speech we will use a loose definition of culture: “The earth from which you grow.” Under this definition all of the elements that are part of the environment that has shaped your identity are part of your culture. These cultures are not necessarily based on racial or ethnic groups but may also be based on group affiliations such as “deaf culture”, “gang culture” and “youth culture”.

RESEARCH
All of your research should come from your personal background. You need to choose a physical item that is readily available to you. This item should have both personal and cultural significance. The history of the item you are discussing should come as second nature to you. Most Jewish people can recite the story behind the menorah without pause, many African-Americans can share the story of Kwanzaa, deaf people will readily share the history of American Sign Language and Muslims can quickly tell you the significance of their prayer mats. The item you choose should be as much a part of your identity as it is a part of your culture. You will need to share the cultural significance of your item as well as its personal significance to you. You will also need to decide whether your speech should include a demonstration of the use of the item. In the past students have chosen to include a few of the following demonstrations: how to braid corn rows, how to get out of quicksand, how to drape a sari, how to do salsa dancing, how to do break dancing.

ORGANIZATION
Begin with an attention step. Once you have gained the audience’s interest introduce your thesis statement and preview of main points. The body of your speech should have 2-3 main points with 2-3 sub points beneath the main points. You should have transitions between your main points. These should review the previous point and preview the next. Your conclusion should wrap up the presentation. Remind your audience of your main points and leave them with concluding remarks that will help them remember your speech and the item you have discussed.
LANGUAGE
Use clear, descriptive language to share the importance of your item. When necessary define culture-specific terms and explain them in language that clarifies the meaning for your audience. You may also want to use one-two personal stories that give your audience insight into the importance of this item within your life and your culture.

SAMPLE Cultural Artifact Outline

Introduction:

1997 was a monumental year for gay men and lesbian women across the USA. According to the December/January 1998 issue of “Out” magazine, Hawaii came close to granting legal gay and lesbian marriages, audiences cheered the movie “in & Out”, and sit-come star Ellen DeGeneres made homophobia something to laugh at. Things will never be the same. For this reason, I would like to explain the significant symbolization of the gay and lesbian community. First I’ll discuss the history and meaning of the pink triangle and second, explore the true meaning of the rainbow flag.

Body:

II. The pink triangle is easily one of the more popular and widely recognized symbols for the gay community.
   A. The history of the pink begins before WWII.
      1. Punishment for homosexuality in concentration camps
      2. Prisoners wore inverted triangles that defined type of prisoner
         a. Green-regular criminal
         b. Red-political prisoner
         c. 2 yellow overlapping-Star of David-Jew
         d. Pink-homosexual, lowest of all
      3. Pink triangle prisoners were a disproportionately large focus of attacks from both guards/inmates.
         a. 50,000 to double-killed
         b. 1970’s gay lib groups resurrected pink triangle
         c. Easily recognized and draws attention to oppression and persecution
      4. ACT-UP, AIDS Coalition To-Unleash-Power took the symbol
         a. inverted the symbol-point up-active fight
         b. today-pink triangle represents pride, solidarity, promise to never let Holocaust occur again.

Transition: Now that you have the history of the first significant symbol for the gay community, let’s discuss what the more recent and perhaps more familiar symbols are for this co-culture.
B. The rainbow flag has become the most easily recognized colors of pride for the gay community.
   1. 1978-1st appeared at San Francisco Gay & Lesbian Freedom Day Parade
   2. Gilbert Baker-designer
      a. prototype-8 stripes
      b. each color represented a component of the community
   3. 1979-mass production of flag including change in colors-6 stripes
   4. John Stout
   5. one-mile long flag-NY-1999

Conclusion:

III. Today we have investigated the history and significance of the two most influential artifacts of the gay and lesbian community. Heather Findlay, in her article “Gay 101” from the book, Out Facts, argues that gays and lesbians hold symbolization in extremely high regard because they have been forced to keep much of their social lives in the closet. Therefore, the proliferation of these symbols is a sign that gay invisibility is fast becoming a minor, modern inconvenience.

DEMONSTRATION SPEECH-3-4 minutes
Choice 2—Speech 1

This speech is an opportunity to describe how something works, taking the focus off “watching” you, the speaker, and giving the audience something else to pay attention to. Further, it allows you to practice reducing details and phrasing more carefully, to say exactly what you need to say and that’s all you need to say. It is typical of most process-type speeches to use a form of the chronological organizational format. The first point of the body sets up the audience with where this process came from or how it came to be significant. The next point demonstrates the process, walking the audience through the steps. This represents the present portion of the format. The final point is how to use it, indicating the future point of the speech. The chronological pattern is not the only organization pattern that you can choose to use. The topical and the spatial are also possibilities and you just need to look at your topic area to decide which fits best. I will be looking for the use of a clear organizational format, control of your body during delivery (standing in the ready-position, allowing for natural gestures, making eye-contact with the audience, apparent practice with the demonstration portion of the speech), a clear intro and conclusion, clear preparation, good use of phrasing and language, a clear, complete sentence outline that is typed and error-free and follows the traditional format of numbering, and that you are finding that energy and bringing it to the speech to show the audience that you are enjoying delivering this speech and are sincere about this speech.

SAMPLE SPEECH Demonstration Speech Outline
Introduction:

I. About 10 years ago, my husband and I decided to do some redecorating. It was a rude awakening as I am sure most of you know, that contractors charge at least an arm and a leg to do this kind of work around a home. We realized that we needed some alternative choices, so instead of hiring out to do all the work, we divided what needed to be done into a couple of areas: what my husband and I could do ourselves and what we had to hire out to have done. This was more within our budget. I never expected I would become so enamored with what I learned to do: wallpapering and it is easy and rewarding. First I want to roll out some reasons that you need to consider learning this process, then I will hang the process of wallpapering for you, and then we’ll smooth out these steps to see the results.

Body:

II. Hanging wallpaper is an easy and rewarding experience.
   A. There is 2 reasons why you should know how to hang wallpaper.
      1. Contractors charge very high prices for the work.
      2. It is easier than you think to learn how to do it.

Transition: Now that you have my philosophy and motivation for this project, let’s discuss the process.

B. There are 5 steps to do a good job.
   1. The 1st step is to assemble the tools.
      a. First you will need a tape measure, a 4’ level, a bucket of paste, a paint roller, and razor blades.
      b. Then you will need a 4‖ broad knife, a smoothing brush, a seam roller, and a sponge.
   2. The 2nd step is to measure and cut your paper.
      a. Measure your wall.
      b. Cut your paper this length.
   3. The 3rd step is to paste your paper.
      a. Paste and roll your paper.
      b. Let your paper expand.
   4. The 4th step is to hang the expanded sheet on the wall.
      a. Unfold and position the top on the wall.
      b. Unfold and position the bottom on the wall.
   5. The 5th step is to finish up.
      a. Trim the top and bottom.
      b. Roll the edges of the paper.

Transition: I hope that the job of hanging wallpaper sounds easier than you might have anticipated. Now let’s discuss the finishing touches.
C. Complete three panels and examine them.
   1. Smooth the wall surface and remove excess paste
   2. Examine the installed panels for uniformity in color and proceed in the same manner around the room.
   3. Geometric and other matching patterns may need additional selvage trimming.

Conclusion:

Ill. So now you have a very basic understanding of why hanging paper is worth investigating as well as how to go about doing it. It is a rewarding experience and something I take great pride in having accomplished. I know I can plan to make changes in any room of my house. Just think about how much $$$ you will save and how creative and beautiful your space will be. You will discover that you have an artist's touch after all.