
ESU SPEAKING COMPETITION 2016

Written by Shannon Mutton – Year 10 student

The English -Speaking Union (ESU) was founded by Sir Evelyn Wrench in 1918. Winston Churchill was the patron of the competition and its purpose was to give young people the opportunity to be more vocal about their opinions and to develop their confidence. It also aims to promote the value of effective communication throughout the globe.

This year the competition took place on Friday 22nd January 2016, hosted by our own school in the Auditorium. The schools that attended were Warwick and Finham Park.

Each team included a main speaker, chairperson, and a questioner. The main speaker of each team was dismantled and was assigned to the chairperson and questioner of another school. The Whitley Academy representatives were Year 10 students: Imogen Foley as the questioner, Katie Yuan as chairperson and Louise Ainge as main speaker. Each school was given a different selection of topics but only the main speaker was able to choose one. The topic we chose was – **YouTube if you want, I prefer a good book.**

15 minutes were provided before the competition in order for the students to familiarise themselves with their topic of discussion and with their team members. Louise worked with one team from Finham and Katie and Imogen worked with another. Katie and Imogen discovered that their subject was “**Should scientists be morally responsible for their discoveries?**”

After the teams’ preparation, it was time for the competition to begin.

After several moments of anticipation, it was time for the Whitley Academy team to deliver their presentation. This was Katie and Imogen’s team. It began with Katie’s opening speech, and she engaged the crowd with her “exceptionally flamboyant nature”. After the main speaker had presented her opinions, it was Imogen’s role to question the speaker, and try to

outsmart her opponent. She was very successful at this, and was able to think of questions that probed and challenged the mind of the speaker.

Following the carefully-plotted speech of the first Whitley Academy team was the second team with Louise as the main speaker. She was very confident with what she was saying and her passion towards the topic evident through her voice, gestures and natural behaviour. She also responded quickly to questions with well thought-out and clever answers to indicate that she was fully prepared.

The speech was followed by a short break, and then it was time for the announcements. Before the winner was announced, awards were given to individuals who had expressed their own talents to the judges. To the school's joy, it was declared that **Imogen had won the best Questioner award and Katie had won the Outstanding personality award.** Following this was the announcement for the two schools who would progress to compete in the finals. Unfortunately, Whitley Academy was not chosen to continue within the competition. However, participating members did receive individual feedback and were acknowledged for their effort and commitment towards the competition. The team did not feel disheartened because they knew that they had tried hard, and thought of their performance as an achievement to be proud of.

Katie had this to say about her experience: "Even though we did not win, I am not disappointed with myself and I honestly thought that Warwick deserved to win, as their main speaker was excellent, and showed his passion towards the topic." She also said that it was a fantastic event organised by the ESU as it helped with her improvisation skills and her ability to engage the audience.

To improve next time, Katie needs to speak slower in order to emphasise her speech. Louise needs to be more confident in her abilities and Imogen needs to ensure her voice is projected. The team has taken this feedback into consideration, and will use it to further improve their skills later on.