

*Speakers in the Schools*  
A Statewide Program of the New York Council for the Humanities

**Tips for the Speaker:  
Working with High School Students**

**Talking with the classroom teacher:**

- Inquire about the teacher's goals for the lecture.
- Discuss the focus and content of your lecture.
- Inquire about the nature of the students in the class– what are their interests and abilities, their background knowledge; what can you expect from the students in terms of participation?
- Offer to send background reading(s) the teacher can assign to students in preparation for the lecture.
- Discuss your technological needs (overhead, proxima, microphone, etc.) and your room requirements (classroom, auditorium, seating arrangement, etc.).
- Find out roughly how many students will attend the lecture.
- Ask the teacher what kind of teaching the students are accustomed to – lecture, group work, seminar-like discussions, etc. This may help give you a sense of what you can expect from students.
- Discuss possible formats for your talk with the teacher - how will you use the time (lecture/discussion/Q&A)? Make sure you are aware of how much time is available for each portion of the program and when the class period ends.
- Ask for directions to the school and parking information.
- Ask about check-in procedures and where you should report upon your arrival.
- Ask if there is anything the teacher thinks would be helpful for you to know about the class as you prepare for your lecture.
- Tell the teacher if there is anything you would like him/her to do in preparation for your arrival.

**A few things to keep in mind when talking to high school students:**

- ❑ High school students can be a great audience - they are curious and have lots of energy.
- ❑ Share, in advance of your talk, your goals for lecture so the students have a sense of what to expect.
- ❑ High school students generally have a fairly short attention span. Try to engage them at various points throughout your talk – even if it is just a question that requires a ‘show of hands’. Visuals can also help refocus them through your presentation.
- ❑ Maintain your enthusiasm about your topic to help keep their interest.
- ❑ High school students often need a little help taking notes. Providing a handout with an outline of the key elements for your lecture can help facilitate note taking. Also, write key phrases on the board, speak slowly, and repeat key points.
- ❑ Maintain eye contact. Ask students to put name tags on their desk to facilitate interaction with them.
- ❑ Be mindful to use age-appropriate vocabulary and define new terms.