

Title: Think Again

Author: Mansura Mahmuda

Level: Intermediate to Upper-Intermediate

Genre: Fiction (Family Relationships, Speech Competition, Friendship)

Adapted, edited with author's permission by Cherie Brown. Photos, Mansura Mahmuda.

---

Why do you think I can't do it?"

"You are not **mature** enough to talk about this. You don't have that much knowledge about the **topic**."

"So suggest how I can gain more knowledge about this topic."

"No, I am telling you to choose something else. Something you learned from your school teachers."

"But I like this topic."

"Did you ever learn anything about human relationships at school?"

"Not really."

"So choose a topic that your teachers taught you in class."

"No I want to talk about what I have chosen already."

"Okay, it's your decision. But let's see what happens."

To prepare herself, *Tasnuva*, a 13-year-old high school girl starts to read romantic novels by famous writers from home and **abroad**. She has to talk for a speech **competition** in her school. If she can do well, she will get more books as **prizes**. She has chosen a topic based on the relationship between her parents whom she loves. She wants to talk about love and human relationships. The day of the speech is **approaching** and her speech is already prepared. She **practices** almost every day. Her **aunt Nusaiba**, a university student, is trying to help her, but *Tasnuva* is not an easy person to give **advice** to.

---

It's the day of the speech competition. *Tasnuva* is so **excited**; for the first time in her life she can wear one of her mother's saris. How beautiful she looks! Her parents are so happy to see their daughter doing something with such **excitement**. Her friends and other people

in her class are giving her more **attention** today. She is in full bloom now, and she appears before them like a flower.

There are three English teachers who will judge the speeches; *Salma* Miss, the Literature teacher, *Amena* Miss, the Language teacher and *Farzana* Miss Teaches, who teaches Spoken English. All of them look very happy as she begins her speech.



She **delivers** her speech very nicely, but as she continues, she notices her teachers seem to be troubled as they listen to her. Now, she becomes **worried**. After the speakers leave the stage, the judges gather together to talk quietly about each speech. They seem to have **a lot** to say to each other.

*Tasnuva* comes directly to *Ruma*, who is rather a **lonely** girl in her class and sits beside her. “I really enjoyed your talk.” says *Ruma* with a smile. They wait together to find out the result of the speech competition.

Before declaring the winners and their prizes, *Salma* Miss gives her feedback on the students’ **performance**. She talks about the topic choice, language use, pronunciation, body language and eye **contact** of the speakers **during** the presentation. She mentions a lot of things, and when it is time to talk about *Tasnuva*’s speech she has some strong words to say.

“That was not a wise choice of topic *Tasnuva*”, she begins. “Your examples did not sound at all realistic. It was like something from a romantic novel.” says *Salma* Miss, and all the other teachers support *her*.

“I don’t understand.” thinks *Tasnuva*, “Why do they think that it doesn’t sound realistic? I thought it was pretty good!”

“You should have chosen something that you knew more about.” Says *Salma* Miss.

In the end, *Tasnuva* **achieves** 10th position among the ten finalists. She is in the last place and she is very **upset**. She leaves the **hall** with *Ruma*, who takes her to the school canteen. *Ruma* buys some *singaras* and two **cups** of **coffee**. *Tasnuva* observes *Ruma* all the while with her keen eyes. As she drinks her coffee *Tasnuva* breaks the silence,

“I noticed your tears from the stage, *Ruma*.”

“Oh! It’s nothing. Something you said touched me.”

“Do tell me.” says *Tasnuva*. “You don’t need to **hide** your feelings from me! I won’t tell anyone; I promise.”

A moment of silence passes, then *Ruma* speaks.

“Will you take me to your home one day?” *Ruma* expresses her wish in a **weak** voice.

“Oh! Sure. Why not?” says *Tasnuva*.

“I’d like to meet your **parents**.”

“Why’s that?” *Tasnuva* finds *Ruma*’s **request** a little strange.

“Actually, while listening to your speech, I was unable to imagine such a family and such a home as the one you described, but it sounded so lovely.”

“You want to see our home? That’s great!”

“Every day I **wake** up to the sound of my parents fighting. They keep **shouting** at each other. My mother sometimes claims that father is having a relationship with another woman.”

“Oh my God! What are you talking about?” *Tasnuva* is very surprised.

“My aunts always tell my mom to leave him. But she can’t make that decision because of me.” *Ruma*’s eyes fill with tears and she starts to cry **quietly**.

“Don’t cry, dear! I’ll take you home to meet my parents. I am sure they will welcome you.”

“I can’t **imagine** such a wonderful home, where parents **cook** together, and give flowers to each other, and visit **nice** places with their children every weekend – it’s like a dream to me. You are so **lucky**.” says *Ruma* in a **sad** voice.

“Yes, I **guess** I am lucky.” says *Tasnuva*. “I didn’t realise that other families are not always like that. Maybe your parents need to see a **psychologist**.”

“Who has the **courage** to say that?” says *Ruma* **bitterly**.

“That’s really **tough**.” says *Tasnuva*.

From that day on, the two girls become much closer to each other, sharing their **sadness**, and trying, together, to find answers to their problems. *Ruma* visits *Tasnuva*’s home often and they have **lunch** or **dinner** together **regularly**. They have made her feel so welcome, she soon feels as if she has become the part of the family.

“**Thank** you for sharing your family with me.” says *Ruma* to *Tasnuva*. “Before I heard your speech, I had begun to doubt that it was possible to have a happy family, but now I know for sure that it is.”

“You’re welcome,” says *Tasnuva*, “and I am sure that one day you will have a happy family too.”

*Ruma* smiles. “Maybe I can. Now that I know what a really happy family looks like. I think *Salma* Miss was **a bit** too tough on you. Even if other people didn’t think it was a good topic, you described **exactly** what you knew about. It’s wasn’t unrealistic at all!”



---

## Learning Activities

### Vocabulary

#### 1. Words from the second 1000 high frequency General Service Word List (GSL)

abroad	a bit	cook	dinner	guess	lonely	nice	prizes	sad / sadness	upset
advice	bitterly	courage	during	hall	a lot	parents	quietly	shouting	wake (up)
attention	coffee	cups	exactly	hide	lucky	performance	regularly	thank	weak
aunt	competition	delivers	excited/excitement	imagine	lunch	practices	request	tough	worried

#### 2. Words from the Academic Word List (AWL)

achieves      approaching      contact      mature      psychologist      topic

#### 3. Comprehension Questions (These questions reflect the Lower Order Thinking (LOTS) skills described in Bloom's new taxonomy)

1. **Remembering:** (Try answering this question without looking back at the reading).  
What place did *Tasnuva* achieve in the speech competition?
2. **Remembering:** Why did *Tasnuva*'s aunt suggest she should choose a different speech topic?
3. **Understanding:** What is a 'psychologist', and why do you think *Tasnuva* suggested that *Ruma*'s parents needed to see one?
4. **Understanding:** Why did *Tasnuva*'s teachers seem to be troubled as they listened to her speech?
5. **Understanding:** What did *Ruma* mean when she told *Tasnuva* that she had "*described exactly what she knew about*"?

#### 4. Critical Thinking Questions (These questions reflect the Higher Order Thinking (HOTS) skills described in Bloom's new taxonomy)

1. **Analysing:** List the words in the story that describe **negative** emotions or qualities. Do the same for **positive** emotions. Which list is longer? Can you make both lists equal in number by adding other words that you know of.
2. **Applying:** Have you ever taken part in a speech competition, or watched others do that? How do people feel before they take part? How do they feel afterwards (if they win, or if they do not win)? If you had to give a speech. Which topic would you choose and why? How will you know if it is a suitable topic or not?

3. **Evaluating:** Do you think *Tasnuva* should have changed her topic after hearing her aunt's advice? Why or why not? When do you think it is better NOT to listen to someone's advice?
4. **Creating:** Hold your own English speech competition. Each person should decide on their own topic and prepare a two/three-minute speech. Everyone in the class will judge the speeches. Use the guidelines below to help you give feedback and a score on each person's speech. The information on the left tells you what to look and listen for.

**1= very weak > 5 = very strong**

Speakers Name:	My Name:				
Topic:					
	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
<b>Topic Choice</b> (The topic was interesting and the speaker seemed to know it well)					
<b>Language Use</b> (The speech made sense to me and I did not notice many grammar or vocabulary mistakes)					
<b>Pronunciation</b> (The words were clear and I understand what the speaker said)					
<b>Body Language</b> (The speaker used body language in a natural way to emphasize important points)					
<b>Eye Contact</b> (The speaker looked at the audience while speaking and did not read directly from notes)					

**Total Score = \_\_\_\_\_/25**

**Extra Activity:**

For fluency and pronunciation practice, work with a partner, and practise the dialogue sections of the story until you can say your lines without looking. Try to make it sound natural, by thinking about how each speaker is feeling as they speak. You could even turn the story into a short play, and perform it.