



2024 National Order of the Arrow Conference

Session: Inside the pre-Ordeal Ceremony

Lead Trainer Name: [Name]

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Session Length: 45 minutes

Session Description

Analyze the pre-Ordeal Ceremony and learn about the meaning, symbolism, and the symbolic progression to the pre-Ordeal Ceremony.

Learning Outcomes

Outcome 1: Explain the role of the pre-Ordeal Ceremony in the induction, and the benefits that come from studying it;

Outcome 2: Demonstrate that there are multiple levels of meaning to the text, tokens, and physical enactment of the ceremony;

Outcome 3: Guide the participants to understand the underlying messages in the text of the ceremony and the significance of symbolic tokens, movements, and actions; and

Outcome 4: Enable the participants to perform original analysis of the ceremony and interpret the text for themselves.

Theme Connection: Seek New Heights

[The theme of the 2024 NOAC is Seek New Heights, emphasizing the drive for excellence that characterizes the OA and our daily lives. How will your session incorporate this theme?]

[Theme Connection Description]

Facility and Material Needs

Facility Needs

Is this session remote delegate-compatible? No

Does this session need audio/video (AV) capabilities? Yes

Are there any other specific facility needs for this session? N/A

Material Needs

Material	Quantity	Source
Computer/ Laptop		
Accompanying PowerPoint Presentation		
Projector and Screen		
4 Tokens+ (Bow, Bowstring, Quiver, Arrows)		
pre-Ordeal videos (downloaded ahead of time)		
Appropriate Cables & Cords (Laptop charger, extension cord, projector adapter)		
Optional: unlit fire lay & the 15 blazes		

Session Preparation Steps

Step 1: Make sure all technology works in the room & you are familiar with the layout and comfortable in the presenting area prior to the first day.

Step 2: If using it, ensure that the pre-Ordeal Demonstration video is accessible to you during the session. It is highly recommended that the video be downloaded.

Step 3: If you are utilizing an unlit fire lay & the 15 blazes, think about how and where you will set up a pre-Ordeal ring to use in the “Beyond the text” section.

Step 4: Study the pre-Ordeal Ceremony intensely, particularly the excerpts discussed in this session. Consider your own answers to the discussion questions, as well the messages you think are being illustrated by the themes in the ceremony.

Step 5: Work with ceremony teams, either as a ceremonialist, coach, or adviser. Have experience leading discussions, guiding the group towards strong conclusions without forcing specific answers. Be prepared for the group to reach conclusions that you did not think of before, without allowing the group to arrive at answers that are not consistent with the ideals of Scouting and the Order of the Arrow.

Lesson Plan

Introduction

2 minutes

Slides [##]-[##]

Introduce yourself and give a brief background of your ceremony and/or training experience. Then, assess the participants by asking them to introduce themselves (if time allows) or ask the group as a whole how experienced they are with ceremonies.

Trainer Instructions: Keep their experience levels in mind as you lead discussions. Be careful not to move too quickly through concepts that some may be unfamiliar with, and also do not spend too much time over-explaining concepts that might seem basic to them.

Explain that this session is focused on improving understanding of the pre-Ordeal Ceremony to uncover meanings and symbolism that may not be obvious from simply watching the ceremony occasionally. Pose the question to the participants: What are the benefits of studying the ceremonies?

Trainer Instructions: Allow the participants to explore many possible benefits, but guide them towards improved quality of ceremonies, improving the experience of candidates going through the ceremony, and increased understanding of the ceremonies among arrowmen in general.

Explain that in the first half of the session, they will be seeking messages in the ceremony text – something that is meant to be communicated to the candidates by the experience of going through the ceremony. They will find these messages by exploring themes – subjects or topics that the principals talk about to illustrate the messages of the ceremony.

In the second half of the session, they will be examining the tokens, movements of the candidates and principals, and symbolic actions in the ceremony (such as the firing of the bow) that illustrate the rich meaning of the ceremony.

Topic 1 – Review the pre-Ordeal Ceremony

2 minutes

Slides [##]-[##]

The following items will be on the two slides that corresponds to this section. Allow participants 1-minute to answer each question to themselves & have them write it down.

- What is the main function of the pre- Ordeal Ceremony?
- What is the main idea or “takeaway” for the candidates?

Topic 2 – Identifying and Analysis of Themes in the Text

26 minutes

Slides [###]-[###]

Trainer Instructions: The next portion of the session involves small group discussion. Try to achieve groups of mixed experience levels – avoid groups where everyone is unfamiliar with the ceremony, or everyone has a lot of ceremony experience. Use judgment when dealing with youth and adults – youth may benefit from the wisdom of adults in their group, but adults can sometimes dominate group discussion, detracting from the youth’s experience. By this point, hopefully you will have a good read on what kind of adults you are dealing with and can group them accordingly.

Divide the participants into small groups of three to six. Review the meanings of "theme" and "message" as used in this session (see the introduction). Then display the first set of quotes and ask the participants to take a moment to think about what theme the quotes might be discussing. After everyone has had some time to read the quotes and think about them, ask participants to share the potential themes they came up with to link the two quotes. Hopefully, someone will say “listening” or “thoughtfulness” or something along those lines. Reveal to the participants that the exact word you had in mind was contemplation: deep, reflective thought. Display and read aloud the discussion questions for the theme of contemplation. Then repeat this process for the other two themes of journey and adversity.

Trainer Instructions: It is important to monitor the group discussions closely. Some groups may be confused and lost right away, and need assistance to get them on the right track. Without your help, they will get discouraged and give up. Other groups may work quickly and “finish” long before other groups. These questions are deep, and do not have easy answers – if a group is done quickly, they could probably benefit from more discussion. Ask them to discuss their answers with you, and provide some input that might make them consider the questions more

Once all groups have had enough time to consider the discussion questions for their assigned theme, ask participants to share some of what they came up with, focusing on one question at a time, moving through each theme in turn. Make sure that the discussion does not stray too far from the assigned topic and its role in the ordeal. Try to let the groups who were assigned each theme lead the discussion on that theme, and let the rest of the participants benefit from the time they spent studying it.

In between discussing each theme, ask the whole group what potential messages are being communicated through the use of each theme. If the group is stuck, here are some examples to guide them towards:

Contemplation:

1. It is important, as arrowmen, to listen to your heart and do what you think is right.
2. Think before you speak; listen to the point of view of others.
3. Seek to know yourself, and find your place in the world.

Journey:

1. The ordeal is designed to prepare the candidates for life as an arrowmen. Their troop recognized that they were ready for this path, and elected them, beginning their “journey”.
2. The candidate’s dedication to the ideals of scouting has equipped them to overcome the ordeal.
3. Like the ordeal, life as a servant leader can be difficult, but the candidates are Prepared to face it.

Adversity:

1. Remain cheerful and resilient, even when you are in a difficult situation.
2. Love one another, even when you have trouble communicating.
3. Offer your service, even if the task is difficult or you are very tired.
4. Do the right thing, even when it is not popular.
5. The tests of the ordeal are representative of challenges you will face in life. The ordeal is meant to prepare you to be a good person, and inspire others to follow your lead.

Trainer Instructions: Congratulate the participants on the analysis they have done, and remind them of the benefits of ceremony analysis they identified in the introduction. Explain that they will next discuss how the principals use tokens, movement, and action to make the ceremony impressive, and help the candidates remember the deeper meanings.

Topic 3 – Beyond the Text

12 minutes

Slides [###]-[###]

Explain that while the text of the pre-Ordeal Ceremony is rich in meaning and symbolism, simply reading the ceremony is an incomplete path to understanding. To truly appreciate the ceremony, it must be seen in action! The staging of the ceremony, the tokens brought to the ring, and the symbolic movements all contribute to a beautiful spectacle that brings the text to life, and makes a lasting impression on the candidates. The remainder of the session will focus on the purpose of these more tangible parts of the ceremony - their purpose, their symbolic meanings, and the poignant moments they create.

Discuss each of the points below with the group, first by narrating the moment of the ceremony where each takes place, then reading aloud the relevant text, then asking the participants to share what they think the purpose of the object, action, or movement under discussion is.

1. **The 15 blazes:** the ideals of Scouting guide us toward the beginning of our life of cheerful service in the OA.
2. **The unlit firelay:** within the heart of each candidate is the potential to become a true servant leader (the spark), and the Ordeal will take place within them, awakening their cheerful spirit (lighting the fire present in the Ordeal Ceremony.)
3. **Presentation of the bow:** a physical demonstration that a cheerful servant is not defeated by stress or pressure, but is resilient and flexible, like the bow.
4. **Presentation of the bow string:** A physical manifestation of the bonds of brotherhood. When the bow is drawn, the ends of the bow grow closer together - so too, the candidates grow closer to their soon-to-be-brothers during the tests of the

Ordeal. The string will become the rope of the Ordeal ceremony, and eventually the more abstract Obligation which binds each member of the Order to one another.

5. **The step forward:** Each candidate makes a conscious decision to proceed with the Ordeal, fully advised of the challenges ahead. This is their first step on the inward journey, and one of the more memorable parts of the ceremony.
6. **Stringing the bow:** this represents the combination of brotherhood and cheerfulness that the candidates will experience in their clan, which provides the power to launch them on their journey.
7. **Testing the bow:** Like the bow, the candidates themselves will be tested. Their willingness to test the bow is proxy for their willingness to be tested themselves.
8. **Drawing the arrow:** Just like the most reliable arrow is chosen first from the quiver, each candidate was selected by their troop because of the qualities of servant leadership that their peers recognized in them. A clear symbolic connection is made between each candidate and the arrow, comparing the path of the arrowman to the upward flight of the arrow.
9. **Shooting the arrow:** Reinforcing Allowat's message, Kichkinet illustrates the "lofty journey" that arrowmen take. The arrow flies upward into darkness, so that the descent is not seen, and the candidates can imagine it continuing on upward forever - the rest of their lives! This moment represents the Ordeal itself: the moment that the candidates begin their new lives as cheerful servant leaders. Later, they will read messages from the "Spirit of the Arrow", encouraging them to stay the course.
10. **Placing the bow on the fire lay:** This is the proper place for the bow, since it represents those ideals (brotherhood and cheerfulness) which will allow the "inner fire" to be ignited in the hearts of the candidates.
11. **Kichkinet joins the candidates and leads them:** Leading by example, Kichkinet challenges the candidates to find "the Arrow" - themselves! This may create a moment of confusion when the candidates realize that they are not looking for a physical arrow, and make them wonder what Kichkinet actually meant as they led them away towards the Ordeal Ceremony.

Conclusion & Takeaway Challenge

3 minutes

Slides [###]-[###]

Remind the participants that the decisions they make day to day determine the future they will face. They now have a decision to make: what will they do with the knowledge they have gained during this session. Hopefully they have all come to a better understanding and appreciation of the pre-Ordeal Ceremony - now what? Ask them to take a minute in silence

Trainer Instructions: As a reminder, make sure to direct any questions to ice@oa-bsa.org and do not feel as if you must answer every question if you are not comfortable or 100% on the information. Thank the delegates for attending the session and mention that you will stick around for 5 to 10 minutes after the session if anyone has any questions or feedback.

to decide how they will use what they have learned to help others in their lodge, or their future candidates – then write these down. Ask for volunteers to share their decisions before thanking everyone for attending, and wishing them a great rest of their NOAC.

Trainer Instructions: After the delegates have left your classroom, make sure you walk the room to make sure nothing was left behind and the room is clean. Remember to take your belongings with you and do not store your laptop and training material in the room overnight.

Appendix: Resources and Source Material

[Please add all referenced sources or handouts that would be useful to share with session attendees.]

Resource	Link
Order of the Arrow, Mission & Purpose	Available online at: https://oa-bsa.org/about/mission-purpose

Inside the pre-Ordeal Ceremony | Training Syllabus

Ceremony for the Ordeal, May 2022 Revision	Available online at: https://oa-bsa.org/uploads/publications/ordealceremony-2022.pdf
Pre-Ordeal Ceremony Demonstration, available through the Inductions portal	Available online at: https://oa-bsa.org/resources/inductions