

Rhetoric
A Very Short Introduction

By Richard Toye

Questions for Thought and Discussion

- Are there any specific speeches or orators that members of your group particularly admire (or dislike)? What is it about them that provokes these strong reactions?
- Do you sympathise with Plato's negative view of rhetoric? What are the counter-arguments?
- Why is tricolon (the three-point list) such an effective rhetorical technique?
- It is natural to assume that speakers should 'always say what they mean', but are there any exceptions? Take the example of the film scene in *The 39 Steps*, described in the book, as a starting point for discussion.
- Can the character of a speaker affect the validity of his or her argument?
- In what ways can speakers use non-verbal symbols to reinforce their arguments?
- What does it mean to say that rhetoric is 'a social phenomenon'?
- Have there been any recent news stories that highlight the difficulties that orators face when addressing multiple audiences?
- How does technology affect rhetoric?
- Devise a rhetorical exercise that would help speakers strengthen their skills.
- Martin Luther king was an extremely effective orator, but if you tried to speak like him you might risk sounding silly. Why?
- If a speaker uses a ghost-writer, does that make the speech less 'authentic'?
- Why do different countries have different expectations surrounding public speech?
- What are the causes of rhetorical failure?
- Did the book change your views about what is appropriate with regards to public speaking? Did it make you feel more or less inclined to make a speech yourself?

Other books by this author

The Roar of the Lion: The Untold Story of Churchill's World War II Speeches (Oxford University Press, forthcoming, 2013)

Further Reading

Sam Leith *You Talkin' To Me? Rhetoric from Aristotle to Obama* (London: Profile, 2011)

Elvin T. Lim *The Anti-Intellectual Presidency: The Decline of Presidential Rhetoric from George Washington to George W. Bush* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008)

Max Atkinson, *Lend Me Your Ears: All You Need to Know About Making Speeches and Presentations* (London: Vermillion, 2004)

Jeffrey K. Tulis *The Rhetorical Presidency* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987)

George Lakoff and Mark Johnson *Metaphors We Live By* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1980)