

Books

A good debater should be an avid reader. Books, even more than newspapers and magazines, are produced in a considered and thoughtful way. Here are some recommendations of books every debater should read.

Aristotle, *The Art of Rhetoric*

As we learnt in Chapter 11, rhetoric was big business in Ancient Greece, and there was a vast array of what we would now call debate coaches plying their trade. Aristotle was the original and best. You'll have heard of him if you study Philosophy; he is one of the great philosophers. *The Art of Rhetoric* combines philosophical principles with practical advice about how to persuade. It suffers from repetition and irrelevance in places, but it's worth persevering; there is much for debaters to learn from here.

Jonathan Coe, *Middle England*

The best sort of novels contain debates, even are debates, as different characters and different groups of people present different points of view and different responses to what is happening in the world. As in a debate, the reader watches and listens, and can make up her own mind about what she thinks. *Middle England* is that sort of novel. Opening in 2010 and ending in 2018, it spans a tumultuous eight years in British history from the point of view of Benjamin Trotter, a fifty something man from Birmingham, and his family and friends. As well as presenting the characters' ups and downs and ins and outs, the novel debates many of the major issues of recent years in Britain: identity politics; anxieties about immigration; the effects of austerity; the divide between the generations; the divide between London and the rest of England; and above all, looming over it all, Brexit. By the end of it, you will have a much clearer understanding of what has been happening in British politics and society over the last few years. You'll also have laughed a lot; it is very funny.

Martin Cohen, *Critical Thinking Skills for Dummies*

Critical thinking is a vital skill for debaters; the topics covered in Chapters 5, 6 and 7 were essentially critical thinking. The 'Dummies' brand is well known for offering accessible introductions to complex subjects, and this book is no exception. It is set out in a way that is easy to follow, with helpful interactive exercises, but it will also stretch and challenge the reader, helping to make their analysis and construction of arguments much sharper.

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Philip Collins, *When They Go Low, We Go High*

Philip Collins used to be a speechwriter for Tony Blair, who was UK Prime Minister 1997 - 2007, winning three General Elections, so he knows a thing or two about how to persuade. In this book he takes a selection of some of the great speeches of history, from the ancient Athenian Pericles in 431BCE to Michelle Obama in 2016, and gives us a detailed analysis of how they work, breaking down their techniques in forensic detail. He's not afraid to give examples of how rhetorical techniques can be misused; Adolf Hitler is in there. He also has very important things to say about how important rhetoric and debate are for a healthy democracy. Highly recommended.

Lewis Iwu, *Words That Win*

Iwu was a schoolboy star, debating for one of the few maintained schools (so far) to win the ESU Mace competition, then being picked for the England team in the World Schools Debating Competition. Now he runs a consultancy offering training in the skills debating has taught him to business leaders and charities. *Words That Win* sets out to show how these skills can be put to use in the business world, but along the way offers a lot of really practical tips for debaters. It assumes quite a lot of knowledge and experience of debating, and is most useful for debaters who have already reached a high level of expertise.

Sam Leith, *You Talkin' To Me*

This is a brilliantly written, highly entertaining analysis of how persuasive language works, peppered with hundreds of helpful examples. It ranges from high culture to low culture, from Hitler to Homer Simpson, from Cicero to J-Lo. It is also extremely funny; his three page analysis of a song from the *South Park* movie had me laughing out loud.

Debbie Newman, *The Noisy Classroom: Developing Debate and Critical Oracy in Schools*

This book is packed with practical suggestions for things to do in lessons, ranging from formal debates to easy to set up, quick fire activities which will get students engaging in debate and discussion. Debbie Newman shows how debating in the classroom does not have to be restricted to the humanities, but can extend to sciences and Maths as well. Highly recommended for teachers.

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