

Pros and Cons, ed. Debbie Newman and Ben Woolgar

Now in its 19th edition, this is a standard reference book for every debater. It lists the key arguments for and against all the major debate topics. It is regularly updated as new topics come on stream. Essential packing for all debate competitions, as you will be allowed to refer to it in prep time. Don't make the mistake, though, of thinking that having good arguments will be enough by itself for you to win the debate; what matters is how you use them. Still, this is an excellent book, and well worth reading between debates as well, as it will make you very well informed.

James O'Brien, *How To Be Right*

O'Brien is a rare thing; a liberal talk show host. In this book he demonstrates, with transcripts from his shows, how he takes on and dismantles racists, sexists, and homophobes. While I admire his stand against prejudice and ignorance, I have some issues with this book. As the title suggests, there is something rather self-righteous about O'Brien's tone, and he does seem to pick the least intelligent and least well informed callers. Moreover, the host of a talk show always gets the last word, so it is not really an equal contest. It is a bit like watching a Premier League team knock a League Two team out of the FA Cup; convincing, but not exactly impressive. That said, he does demonstrate formidable rebuttal skills, from which any debater can learn.

William Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*

I know of no better treatment in drama or fiction of how politics actually works: the factions, the conspiring, the delicate courtship of potential allies, the insidious undermining of rivals, the conflict between high minded idealism and calculating pragmatism, the sheer emotion of it all. Most of all, though, Mark Antony's speech at Caesar's funeral is one of the best examples of persuasive rhetoric ever written; it is worth taking it apart line by line and word by word to see how it works.

**Shakespeare's
Julius Caesar
tells you how
politics works**

And finally...

There's no better way of understanding how politics works than actually doing it. So do it.

Get involved in campaigns; go to meetings; join a political party; be an active citizen; make change happen. Use your debating skills to leave the world a better place than you found it.

Debating will change your life. Use it to change other people's lives, for the better.

You are the future!