



Farnsworth's Classical English Rhetoric

By Ward Farnsworth



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Masters of language can turn unassuming words into phrases that are convincing, effective, and memorably beautiful. Lincoln and Churchill had this power: having heard their words once, the reader or listener can scarcely imagine the world without them. What are the secrets of this alchemy? The answer lies in rhetoric in the honorable sense of the word – not the dronings of bad politicians, but the art of using language to persuade, influence, or otherwise affect an audience. Rhetoric in this sense is among the most ancient academic disciplines, and we all use it every day whether expertly or not. This book is a lively set of lessons on the subject. It is about rhetorical figures: practical ways of applying old and powerful principles – repetition and variety, suspense and relief, concealment and surprise, the creation of expectations and then the satisfaction or frustration of them– to the composition of a simple sentence or a complete paragraph. Though first examined in classical Greece and Rome, these techniques also were studied closely by earlier generations of the best English writers and orators and were often employed by them to exquisite effect. Classical English Rhetoric recovers this knowledge for our times. It organizes, illustrates, and analyzes the most valuable rhetorical devices with impeccable clarity and in unprecedented detail. The book amounts to a tutorial on eloquence conducted by virtuoso faculty: not just Lincoln and Churchill, but Dickens and Melville, Edmund Burke and Thomas Paine, and more than a hundred others. The result is a new addition to the list of indispensable books for the writer or speaker – a highly useful reference tool, and a rewarding source of instruction and pleasure for all lovers of the English language.

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Editorial Review

Review

"Not only educational but delightful." --David Mamet, *New York Times* bestselling author

"Many things, from dictators to advertising, have made modern people suspicious of and cynical about language mobilized to move us. Fortunately, Ward Farnsworth's delightful swim in a sea of well-chosen words should help to rehabilitate the reputation of rhetoric."-- George F. Will, *New York Times* bestselling author and syndicated columnist

"The most immediate pleasure of this book is that it heightens one's appreciation of the craft of great writers and speakers . . . Mr. Farnsworth wants to restore the reputation of rhetorical artistry per se, and the result is a handsome work of reference." --*Wall Street Journal*

"As Ward Farnsworth--a professor of law at Boston University--demonstrates in his witty handbook, the various rhetorical techniques are actually the organizing principles behind vivid writing and speech . . . More important, this handbook also provides a slew of examples to reveal how great writers have added force and color to their sentences by employing these tropes or figures." --*Washington Post*

"Mr. Farnsworth, who despite being a professor of law writes clearly and trenchantly, wastes no time here with the trite and the trivial . . . This wealth of examples, if you will only look into them, will stimulate your interest, gratify your curiosity, and amplify your own writing." --*Baltimore Sun*

"So, dear reader, I say it even if I say it myself--get this book! No, really, get this book! Read clever Farnsworth, and read him again, and you may become more clever yourself." --*Chronicle of Higher Education*

"Ward Farnsworth's invaluable review of classical English rhetoric is not only a vital tool for aiding clear expression, but a timely reminder that, despite the confusion of the present technological age, human nature, and our ability to communicate in clear and often beautiful ways is unchanging." --Victor Davis Hanson, coauthor of *Who Killed Homer?: The Demise of Classical Education and the Recovery of Greek Wisdom*

"Every writer should have this book." --Erin McKean, editor of *Verbatim: The Language Quarterly* and CEO of wordnik.com

"I must refrain from shouting what a brilliant work this is (praeteritio). Farnsworth has written the book as he ought to have written it--and as only he could have written it (symploce). Buy it and read it--buy it and read it (epimone)." --Bryan A. Garner, author of *The Elements of Legal Style*

"An engaging and accessible guide, valuable to all who wish to improve their rhetorical skills or better appreciate the abilities of others." --*Library Journal*

From the Back Cover

Advance Praise for Farnsworth's Classical English Rhetoric:

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- David Mamet

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- George F. Will, syndicated columnist

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About the Author

WARD FARNSWORTH is professor of law and the Nancy Barton Scholar at Boston University School of Law.

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