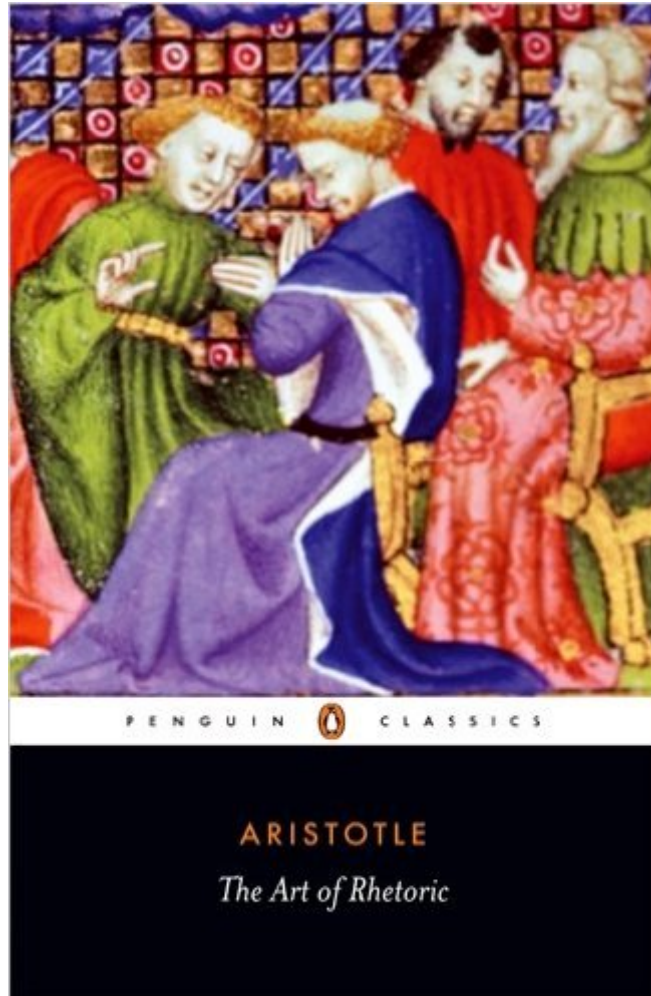


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The Art Of Rhetoric (Penguin Classics)



Synopsis

With the emergence of democracy in the city-state of Athens in the years around 460 BC, public speaking became an essential skill for politicians in the Assemblies and Councils - and even for ordinary citizens in the courts of law. In response, the technique of rhetoric rapidly developed, bringing virtuoso performances and a host of practical manuals for the layman. While many of these were little more than collections of debaters' tricks, the Art of Rhetoric held a far deeper purpose. Here Aristotle establishes the methods of informal reasoning, provides the first aesthetic evaluation of prose style and offers detailed observations on character and the emotions. Hugely influential upon later Western culture, the Art of Rhetoric is a fascinating consideration of the force of persuasion and sophistry, and a compelling guide to the principles behind oratorical skill. For more than seventy years, Penguin has been the leading publisher of classic literature in the English-speaking world. With more than 1,700 titles, Penguin Classics represents a global bookshelf of the best works throughout history and across genres and disciplines. Readers trust the series to provide authoritative texts enhanced by introductions and notes by distinguished scholars and contemporary authors, as well as up-to-date translations by award-winning translators.

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Customer Reviews

As an old philosophy student trying to break back into the topics I found this to be a nice intro to the philosophical study of Rhetoric. The author's notes and chapter summaries are very helpful, making

me look for other works he has translated. Also has large book intro which briefly outlines the formation of Rhetoric in Attic times, noting several other Greek orators and their works for additional reading.

Both the introduction and the translation by Hugh Lawson-Tancred are very much below the standard one expects from Penguin. Most importantly, the English of the translation is frequently incomprehensible. I advise everyone who wants to study this masterpiece of a book to use another edition, e.g. that of George Kennedy, published by Oxford in 1991, or the Loeb edition. That is, if you want to understand why so many people in so many ages found this book brilliant!

Rhetoric sounds dubious. Is it concerned about convincing people of what you think is right for you but not necessarily good for the person you want to convince. Is it about selling your ideas to gain power or wealth by overwhelming your audience with false arguments convincingly presented? Aristotle tries to solve this dilemma insisting that all persuasion should be with the intention of making a contribution to happiness by furthering virtuous behavior. He also presents the methods you should use to convince people to believe you. I find the book useful from both points of view. Aristotle explains very clearly that to be persuasive you have to be rational and have the ability to understand and arouse emotions of the audience in your favor. The book was written as a kind of handbook to be used 2400 years ago. Most of it, but not all is still valid to day. It has become a common practice to use PowerPoint presentations to convince people. The method of Aristotle is about content, structure, logic and emotions. Some slides may still be useful, but if you really want to be successful you better focus on the content using Aristotle type argumentation. All people that have to make speeches or presentations will find a wealth of ideas in this book. I found it a pity that the book does not contain complete speeches of Aristotle. The book should be of special interest to politicians and leaders in business that have to address large audiences with some critical and skeptical members.

As a trial lawyer and a pragmatist, I've long dismissed philosophy as the useless art of contemplating one's navel. That assessment began to change recently when I audited a continuing legal education seminar in which the speaker analyzed trial advocacy on the model of Aristotle's "Rhetoric." His speech was brief and his analysis superficial, but he'd aroused my curiosity. I got this book and read it. The general principles Aristotle formulated for forensic rhetoric over 2,000 years ago still hold true in the 21st century courtroom. Some of the specifics have changed (e.g. no torture

for slave witnesses), but human nature hasn't, and human persuasion hasn't, either. Aristotle's "Rhetoric" should be required reading for all first year law students. I regret not reading it 30 years ago. Apparently philosophers do more than just stare at their navels.

As Hugh Lawson-Tancred states in his introduction to this volume, "It would be hard to deny that the ability to persuade, convince, cajole, or win round is one of the most useful skills in human life." That was as true when Aristotle wrote "The Art of Rhetoric" in ancient Greece as it is in Western culture today. Aristotle urges orators to take human nature into account when preparing speeches, and consequently discusses many aspects of human nature and character, the stages of life and their characteristics, virtues, justice, and crime and punishment. Many things about argument have not changed over the millennia; for instance, Aristotle recommends arguing for some greater, universal good when the written law is contrary to your own position, but when the written law is in accord with your position, he counsels that you argue that best judgment means adhering to the written law. Aristotle also offers methods for establishing proof and provides tips on style when speaking. "The Art of Rhetoric" is a timeless classic, offering great insights into psychology and the human condition. It offers important benefits to the prospective reader--knowing how pop culture figures, preachers, politicians, and other public figures seek to influence others would make the reader not just a better speaker, but a much more discerning listener as well.

Be careful. The hardcover edition of this paperback book is from a different translator; it is not translated by Hugh Lawson-Tancred, as advertised. There is no hardcover edition of this Penguin edition, translated by Hugh Lawson-Tancred.

The content of this book is a key to modern democracy understanding, and the art of persuasiveness. The kind of book that you want to make sure your child will read in the future. I couldn't put it away. This is a fundamental to read prior to address other modern deliberation books. You would appreciate Cicero political speeches better.

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