American Speeches: Political Oratory from the Revolution to the Civil War and Political Oratory from Abraham Lincoln to Bill Clinton

Priscilla Finley
University of Nevada, Las Vegas, priscilla.finley@unlv.edu

Citation Information
https://digitalscholarship.unlv.edu/lib_articles/278

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalscholarship.unlv.edu/lib_articles

Part of the Library and Information Science Commons, Other History Commons, Speech and Rhetorical Studies Commons, and the United States History Commons

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the Library Faculty/Staff Scholarship & Research at Digital Scholarship@UNLV. It has been accepted for inclusion in Library Faculty Publications by an authorized administrator of Digital Scholarship@UNLV. For more information, please contact digitalscholarship@unlv.edu.

CHOICE

Ted Widmer (director, John Carter Brown Library; speechwriter, Clinton administration) has selected significant familiar examples of political oratory for this two-volume set. The first volume covers the Revolution to the Civil War, and includes selections from the expected Founding Fathers as well as leaders in the antislavery, women's rights, and labor movements. Volume 2 begins with Lincoln on Reconstruction and offers a broad selection of speakers urging social change on many fronts, including J. Robert Oppenheimer, Mario Savio, and Jesse Jackson among the presidents, senators, and generals. The reading experience is uninterrupted by notes on the page, although line-by-line annotations are available at the end of each volume to gloss the names, events, literary allusions, and historical context that stirred each speech's initial auditors. Brief biographical notes and bibliographic citations round out the critical apparatus. Providing evidence of both "a measure of just how far political discourse has fallen in this country," as Marc Weingarten observed in the Los Angeles Times, and what William F. Buckley identified as "powerful ignition points for hot flashes of indignation, contempt, rage, veneration and yearning" in The New York Times Book Review, these speeches are indispensable reference points from America's oratorical heritage. Summing Up: Essential. Lower-level undergraduates, professionals, and general readers.

-- P. Finley, University of Nevada, Las Vegas