



# *English-Speaking Union Scotland*

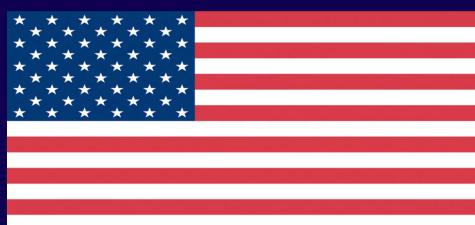
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# Public Speaking Competition: Handbook & Training Guide

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*supported by*

**The U.S. Consulate  
General Edinburgh**



**U.S. Embassy London**

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# Welcome!

The ESU was founded in 1918 to promote international friendship and understanding. Today, the ESU is a dynamic educational charity and our aims have remained the same- to promote the value of effective communication around the world and help people realise their potential.

The importance of effective spoken communication skills cannot be underestimated. Even in a global village where communication has moved more and more online, the ability to speak confidently in public remains invaluable for people in all walks of life. World leaders in politics, law, religion, business, science and technology all have an important skill in common: they speak with confidence.

Additionally, many significant events in history centred around speeches. These speeches and the orators who delivered them spurred the public into action, inspired change and communicated crucial ideas at times when they were most needed. A good speech can bring people from around the world together.

Oracy skills are key to all our activities. Our Public Speaking Competition involves both a junior division (for s1 to s3 pupils) and a senior division (for s4 to s6 pupils).

The format is the same for both divisions and will this year consist of online heats and a national final. Prior to these events, we will be running an exciting speaking workshop.

This year we are absolutely delighted that our Public Speaking Competition is kindly sponsored by the U.S. Consulate General Edinburgh. We're teaming up with the Consulate to deliver a programme with a focus on international relations, and the bond between our two countries.



# The U.S. Consulate General Edinburgh

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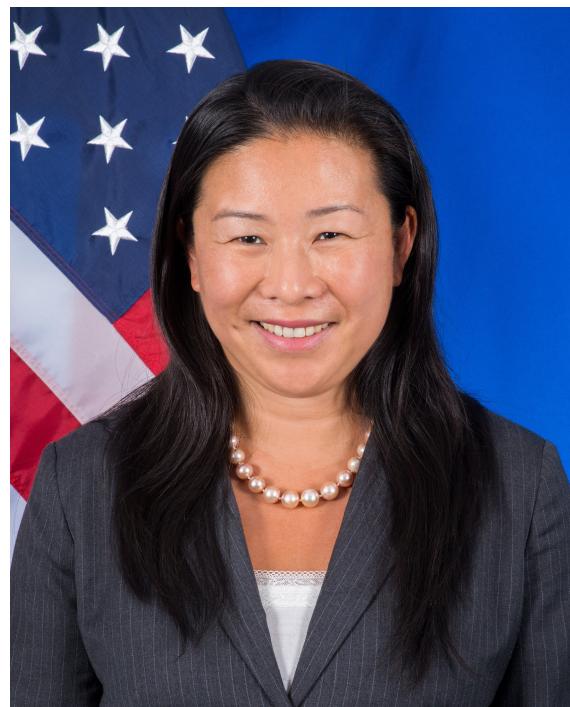
The U.S. Consulate General Edinburgh was first established in 1798. Today, the Consulate's primary responsibilities include providing assistance to U.S. citizens in Scotland and furthering the U.S.-Scotland relationship. The American Citizen Services provided by the Consulate include passport issuance, Consular Report of Birth or Death Abroad, and voting assistance. As part of the work to strengthen the U.S.-Scotland relationship, the Consulate undertakes cultural and economic outreach, including a range of activities with schools and U.S. and Scottish businesses, as well as builds shared security through engagement with military partners. For all the latest news from the Consulate, follow them on Twitter – @USAinScotland.

## School Outreach

The U.S. Consulate General Edinburgh and Principal Officer Ellen Wong, the highest ranking U.S. government official in Scotland, welcome opportunities to engage with students across Scotland aged 14-18 years old and can provide an interactive presentation on U.S. civics and the U.S.-Scotland relationship followed by a Q&A session. The presentation can be held in-person or virtually and is popular with Modern Studies, Politics and International Relations classes and societies. For further information and to arrange this opportunity for your class, please contact Andrew Liddle, Programs Manager, U.S. Consulate General Edinburgh by email at: *LiddleAB@state.gov*

# **Ellen Wong, Principal Officer, U.S. Consulate General Edinburgh**

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Ellen Wong is the Principal Officer of the U.S. Consulate General in Edinburgh, Scotland, United Kingdom, a role she has held since October 2018. As Head of the Consulate, Ellen is responsible for all American Citizen Services in Scotland, and promoting the U.S.-Scotland relationship.

Ellen previously served as the Deputy Political and Economic Counselor at the U.S. Embassy in Dhaka, Bangladesh, and formerly as the Senior Country Officer for Germany.

From 2010 to 2015, Ellen served in Beijing, China and as Special Assistant for East Asia and the Pacific in the Office of the Under Secretary for Economic Growth, Energy, and the Environment. Earlier Department of State assignments included Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, and Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam.

Ellen has a BA in Politics and German from Princeton University, and an MA from the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies.

# Competition Timeline

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## **Friday, 13th November 2020**

- Online training workshop.

## **Monday, 23rd November- Friday, 11th December 2020**

- Preliminary heats

## **January 2021**

- Invitations to final sent out

## **Saturday, February 13th 2021**

- Grand Final, venue to be confirmed

# Competition Format

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We are changing this year's competition format slightly to cater to the new world of online events.

Heats will be taking place *online*, on weekday evenings. Participants will be sorted into groups based on availability and geographic area to ensure maximum diversity in groups and will deliver their speeches on Microsoft Teams.

The preliminary heats are the first stage of the competition. Participants speak in a random order determined by the head judge and deliver a *five-minute* prepared speech, which must be connected with the theme. A timekeeper will give a signal at 4:30 (to indicate that 30 seconds remain), a double signal at 5:00 (to indicate that the participant's time is up), and again at 5:30 (at which point the participant must conclude their speech immediately). The judges may mark down speeches that are significantly shorter than 5 minutes, and anything said after 5:30 will not be written down as part of adjudication.

The speech is followed by around 2 minutes of impromptu questions from the judges.

Speakers will be required to turn their cameras on when speaking. No visual aids or props may be used, but of course the speakers' personal notes are permitted.

The judges will choose the top speakers from the heat (usually around 8) to progress to the final. The judges' decision is final, but participants are encouraged to seek feedback, regardless of the result.

More specific information on format and logistics will be sent once you have submitted your entry to the competition.

# Themes

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For our preliminary rounds this year, both juniors and seniors will choose one of the same three themes.

Each of these themes relates to something that could be improved with through international cooperation.

Your job is to answer two questions for your audience when interpreting the theme: 'why is this theme an important thing my audience should care about?' and 'how will international cooperation aid in development of my theme?' It's up to you how much to prioritise each of these questions - you may want to focus more on the first, more on the second, or devote roughly equal time to both. That's up to you to decide.

The themes are specific enough to guide you but general enough for you to interpret them in your own way. Remember that the judges of this competition will be hearing multiple speeches on the same theme, so it is in your best interest to take an interesting and novel approach.

Make sure you bolster your interpretation of the theme and the arguments you make with research. We chose these themes specifically because we think there is a wide range of research that can go into them- a rich source of quotes, statistics and historical examples to choose from.

Two sites we highly recommend for research are  
<https://share.america.gov/> and <https://www.whitehouse.gov/>

Most importantly - have fun! Choose the theme that excites you most and which you know you can speak passionately about.

## Theme 1: Space Exploration

In the past, countries competed against each other in "the space race". However, nowadays we see cooperation through endeavours like the International Space Station.

Exploring space has many potential benefits - from the technological to the philosophical- but we face significant barriers and risks in this realm too. *Why should we care about space and how might international cooperation bolster this area?*

Recommended research site: <https://www.nasa.gov/>

## Theme 2: Empowering Women

Around the world, women face significant barriers. While their hardships may differ country to country, there are also common threads that unify all women.

Organisations like the UN have made great strides to empower women, and many international agreements have an explicit focus on women's rights. *Why should we care about women's empowerment and how might international cooperation boost this area?*

Recommended research site: <https://www.usaid.gov/what-we-do/gender-equality-and-womens-empowerment>

## Theme 3: Cyber Security

Cyber security is increasingly becoming an issue countries have to deal with, with implications in areas as wide ranging as finance, national security and election integrity. However, with the internet crossing borders, countries are having to investigate ways to work together in this area. *Why should we care about cyber security and how can international cooperation bolster this area?*

Recommended research site: <https://www.cisa.gov/>

# First-Time Speakers

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## Getting Started

For many pupils, speaking in a competition for the first-time will be a nerve-wracking experience and even very experienced speakers get nervous before speaking in public.

Some confident pupils will immediately volunteer for competitions while others may be reluctant to speak in public. They may, however, become more involved in public speaking over time, especially if they are able to help the competitors prepare, attend heats and ask questions. You will know which of your pupils will be able to compete initially and which will need more help to become more confident

## Building Confidence

You should let pupils know that it is perfectly natural to be nervous before speaking in a competition and that, in many ways, it is a positive thing – a few nerves can encourage dynamism and quick thinking.

Most young people are much better public speakers than they think are. However, many pupils will be very nervous about speaking in public, especially in front of their peers.

Working with their team mates and pupil coaches can help encourage speakers – both in their preparation and showing them that all speakers get nervous before a competition. The pupil coaches and team mates can play an important role in encouraging and supporting speakers.

There are a number of strategies that can help young people overcome their nerves. These may be particularly useful for pupils competing for the first time.

## Preparation

Good preparation helps. If a speaker has done a lot of research and worked with others to prepare their arguments and practise their speeches, they will be much less nervous.

It is also a good idea for the speaker to practise answering questions on their topic. You can involve other pupils in helping with this!

## The Audience is on Your Side!

At the heats most of the audience will comprise fellow competitors and some supporters. The other competitors will also be feeling nervous so everyone is in the same boat. The supporters may also have invested time in helping the speaker to prepare and they want the speakers to succeed.

Speakers should not see the audience as an intimidating factor but remember that they are on their side! If you are chairing, encourage the audience to applaud the speeches and remind the speakers that the audience is here to enjoy and learn from their speeches.

Even though the speeches are "virtual", encourage speakers to imagine an audience in front of them. While this may sound like it will make speakers more nervous, it actually helps their speeches feel more real and connect with the listeners.

## Positive Mental Attitude

Encourage a positive mental attitude by encouraging speakers to be confident. Team mates should support each other and pupil coaches should say encouraging words to their teams. If a pupil is especially worried before a competition, the teacher can go through their speech with them and offer reassuring advice.

# Guidance for Speakers

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## Getting Started

### Interpreting the Theme

Speakers should ask two questions when interpreting the theme: 'why is this theme an important thing my audience should care about?' and 'how will international cooperation aid in development of my theme'. If their speeches answers both of these questions, they're off to a flying start!

Speakers should also remember that their audience and judges will be hearing numerous speeches based around the same three themes, so an interesting or creative interpretation with a memorable title is likely to be rewarded. However, the most important thing is that speakers are comfortable with their speech, and it is a true reflection of their own personal style.

## Brainstorming

One way for speakers to decide on a topic is to write down as many words and ideas as they can think of that are connected with the theme in 60 seconds. Another method is to take individual words from the theme (or various different permutations), put them into a search engine and see what kind of results come back.

Once the speaker has decided on a topic for the speech, it is useful to go back and brainstorm again; writing down all the words and ideas relating to that topic that come to mind in 5 minutes. This process will help the speaker to identify all the possible arguments which they may want to use in their speech. I

# Research

Once the speaker has decided on a topic for the speech and has taken the time to think about all the possible angles or arguments, they should begin researching in more depth. Even where the speaker has prior knowledge of the topic, it is important for them to broaden their perspective as much as possible, and to ensure that the evidence and information they use in their speech is reliable and up-to-date.

A site we highly recommend for research is <https://share.america.gov/>

## Different types of sources

Speakers should aim to utilise fact-based resources (e.g. encyclopaedias), academic resources (e.g. journals or reports) and opinion-based resources (e.g. newspapers or news websites). A broad range of knowledge and information to draw from demonstrates a depth of research and engagement with the subject, which is likely to be rewarded by the judges.

## Up-to-date information

Speakers should ensure that the information they are relying on to support their arguments is up-to-date. The Internet is invaluable for checking that the information already obtained (e.g. a journal or newspaper article) is the most up-to-date information available. However, don't just rely on Wikipedia!

## Anecdotal evidence

Anecdotal evidence (personal stories, myths, memories etc.) is generally unpersuasive, as it usually lacks clarity, certainty and universal applicability. However, depending on the nature of the speech and the style of the speaker, anecdotal evidence can sometimes be used to great effect (particularly if the speaker's primary goal is to entertain or inspire empathy in the audience; anecdotal evidence can be used to demonstrate the human dimension of an issue).

# Key Elements of the Speech

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## 1: Expression & Delivery

### What is the purpose of the speech?

The purpose of the speech (or the purpose of the speaker) is what distinguishes one type of public speech from another. A politician seeks to persuade the voters. A school teacher or a university professor seeks to inform and inspire their students. A comedian seeks to entertain the audience.

In a competitive context, speakers should always approach their task of speech writing with a clear purpose in mind. Good speeches should attempt to do all four – persuade, inform, inspire and entertain the audience and the adjudicators.

### Make an impact from the start!

First impressions are important. The audience and the adjudicators are at their most attentive at the very beginning of the speech. It is crucial to grab their attention from the very start with a confident and flawless opening.

An excellent way to grab the attention of an audience or an adjudication panel is to make the speech relevant to them (i.e. “how crucial a role we all have to play”). The use of single words or very short sentences at the start of a speech makes for a dramatic opening (a shocking statistic or quote can have a similar effect). Note also how effective the use of alliteration for emphasis, the use of powerful or dramatic language, and the contrast between long and short sentences.

An opening that conveys a sense of humour or sorrow (or another emotion) can also be effective. The most effective type of opening will be determined by the subject matter of the speech and the speaking style of the speaker. Similar emphasis should be put on the conclusion of the speech. It should link back to the opening of the speech (e.g. the problems that were identified, the questions that were posed etc.). All the techniques identified above (and many, many more) may be used to help a speaker to achieve a dramatic or otherwise memorable conclusion. It is often effective, at the end of a speech, to finish with a rhetorical question.

## Linguistic Skills

Speakers who have spent a lot of time researching for their speech will probably be very familiar with the surrounding issues, as well as background or ancillary subject matter. However, speakers should bear in mind that most audience members will not have their level of specialist knowledge on the subject and should therefore avoid technical, specialist or abbreviated jargon or other unfamiliar terminology.

Speakers should also resist the temptation to use overly lofty or ornate language, which often undermines the clarity of the speech. When trying to communicate an idea to a large group of people, it helps to keep language clear.

Finally, the Public Speaking Competition is not an English language exam. Speakers are not penalised under E&D (or under any other section of the marking scheme) for occasional grammatical errors, mispronunciations etc.

## Confidence and Style

Confidence and style are at the core of effective expression and delivery. Speakers feel more confident, and exude that confidence when delivering their speeches, by following the tips discussed above (having a clear purpose or goal, making an impact from the start with a dramatic or otherwise memorable opening, and using verbal, non-verbal and linguistic skills or techniques effectively).

A good way to practise projecting confidence is for speakers to record themselves delivering their speech. This allows speakers to go back and assess their own strengths and weaknesses. Once speakers have mastered the art of projecting confidence when speaking in public, developing a speaking style comes next. A compelling speaking style is what makes a speaker unique. Some speakers have an emotive speaking style, and feel most comfortable persuading the audience of important social, economic or global issues. For such speakers, an ability to convey passion and emotion is a huge strength.

Others have a witty, light-hearted or humorous speaking style and feel most comfortable when entertaining the audience; often delving into satire and using rhetorical devices such as sarcasm and irony to great effect.

Both methods of illustration can be effective, depending on the subject matter of the speech and the natural style of the speaker!

## Verbal Skills

Speakers should remember that delivering a speech is not like reading an essay. If the reader of an essay misses a line or misunderstands a phrase, they can go back and re-read it. If a person listening to a speech misses a line or a phrase, they don't get an opportunity to hear it a second time. For that reason, when giving a public speech, it is imperative that speakers speak slowly, clearly and loudly. This will help to ensure that the audience and the adjudicators hear every word, and can comprehend what is being said as they are listening.

Speakers should also attempt to vary their pitch and tone of voice, as well as the pace of their speech (where appropriate). These variations help to keep the audience and the adjudicators alert, and help the speaker to maintain their attention for the full five minutes of the speech. However speakers should take care to ensure they sound natural; an obviously forced variance in tone can be as distracting and unpersuasive as speaking entirely in monotone.

Pauses can also be extremely effective. Two or three well-timed pauses can effectively juxtapose five minutes of constant speaking, and can be used to emphasise an important point or signal the transition from one section of the speech to another.

## Non-Verbal Skills

Much of a speaker's communication is non-verbal, so public speakers must be conscious of their body language if they are to engage the audience and the adjudicators.

'Open gestures' (which help to engage the audience) include facing the audience, and using hands and arms freely to demonstrate, emphasise or otherwise support the words being spoken. By contrast, 'closed' gestures (which often disengage the audience) include the speaker folding their arms, facing away from the audience or hanging their head.

The use of facial expression and eye contact are both related to good body language. Facial expression may also be used to mirror the message or emotion being conveyed by the speech (e.g. a humorous quote, a shocking statistic, a sorrowful narrative etc.), adding a sense of sincerity or truth to the words being spoken. Eye contact is another important way for speakers engage with the audience and the adjudicators, and convince them of their confidence and their credibility. Movement is another technique which public speakers use to keep the audience and the adjudicators alert. Similar to the effect of changing your pace or tone of voice, or the use of pauses, physically moving your body during your speech has the effect of varying what the audience is hearing and seeing, which helps to maintain their attention.

## 2: Reasoning & Evidence

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### Using empirical evidence

There are various types of evidence which a speaker may use in support of an argument in their speech. Any empirical evidence used in support of an argument should (1) have a reliable source, (2) be up to-date and (3) be relevant to the speech. Irrelevant evidence, evidence that comes from an unreliable source, or evidence that is out-of-date will inevitably undermine the credibility of the argument and the speaker.

Speakers should avoid using too much empirical evidence. Speeches that contain large amounts of facts and figures or lengthy quotations are unlikely to be particularly persuasive, because the audience and the adjudicators are unable to absorb large amounts of statistics, large excerpts from reports, etc.

Speakers should also remember that simply stating the evidence is not a substitute for explaining their arguments logically, providing the audience with certain pieces of evidence in support of those arguments, and analysing the evidence to demonstrate how or why it supports the overall thesis of the speech.

Ultimately, any empirical evidence used should support or complement an argument in the speech, not dominate it.

### Using Examples and Analogies

An argument does not always have to be supported by facts, figures, quotations etc. Arguments can also be supported by analogies or examples of things that people know to be true under the status quo.

Arguments supported by analogies or examples are often even more persuasive than arguments supported by statistics or quotations, the sources of which many people may be unfamiliar with.

Good speakers are able to balance analogies and empirical evidence to sound both relatable and credible.

# 3: Organisation & Prioritisation

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## Why structure is important

Audiences and adjudication panels are made up of people. Most people have relatively short attention spans. For that reason, if a speaker stands up, starts speaking and continues to speak constantly for five minutes, most people (including audiences and judges) will tune out after about two minutes.

Public speakers use structure to help maintain their listeners' attention. By telling the audience and the adjudicators at the start what they can expect to hear, presenting the arguments in order of priority, gravity or importance, and reiterating what they have heard at the end, the speaker gives their speech a sense of symmetry or unity and compounds the arguments in the minds of the audience and the judges.

Structure can also be used by speakers to make their speech more interesting (and therefore easier to follow). For example, many speakers group their points or arguments into categories at the start of their speech. Another example is when speakers give each group of points or arguments a label which is part of a theme that runs right throughout the speech.

## The outline of a typical speech

### Introduction

The speaker should tell the audience who they are, what they are speaking about, why, and what they want to have achieved or proven by the end of the speech. A map of the main points in the speech should be provided. Each point should be given a label (see above) and perhaps a brief explanation of what will be analysed.

### Main arguments

The speaker should then move onto to the main points of the speech, remembering to deal with each point in order of priority (in the same order they were listed in the introduction), and signalling to the audience when they are moving from one point to the next.

## Conclusion

The speaker should tie together all the main points of the speech, remembering to refer back to the introduction (in particular, to any specific targets or goals that the speaker intended to achieve or prove). The conclusion should not be a simple re-statement of the speech; rather, it should be a comprehensive but succinct summary of all the main strands in support of the overall thesis of the speech.

NB: The outline described above is just one way of structuring a speech. Speakers will not lose marks just because they structure their speech or organise their points in a slightly different manner to the one presented above. In particular, the structure outlined above is not always suitable for speakers who prefer to use a narrative as a method of illustration.

Crucially, the speech must be easy for the audience and the adjudicators to follow and understand. Speakers who achieve that aim in an interesting way will be rewarded for it.

## Timing

Timing goes hand-in-hand with structure. Once a speaker has established a good structure and has found the method of using notes which works best for them, it's important to practise delivering the speech within the five minutes allowed. A good speaker will know exactly how long they are going to spend on each section of their speech. Speakers should try to ensure that they spend a similar amount of time on sections of the speech of similar importance.

Speakers should practise speaking for one, two, three minutes etc., so that they know what it feels like to speak for different blocks of time and how much information they are able to cover in that time.

It is entirely appropriate for speakers to have a stopwatch or similar device with them when they get up to speak.

# Training Exercises

## Parachute Debate

This exercise is a good one to use with newer speakers, allowing them to see speaking as something fun and learn about how to use speaking to advocate for others.

Get your group to take on the role of significant figures (celebrities, politicians etc. - dead or alive), all in a plane that is about to crash. There is only one parachute. One-by-one, each speaker must deliver a two-minute speech as their chosen figure, arguing for why they, and not anyone else, deserves the parachute. After their two-minutes, allow each speaker to take and respond to a question from the other participants. At the end of the exercise, get the group to vote for who they think deserves the parachute- they can't vote for themselves!

## Mirror Speeches

Getting speakers to deliver their speech in front of a mirror serves two purposes: allowing a private space to practice without anyone else present, and making a speaker hyper-aware of how their face looks when they are speaking.

This may be embarrassing at first! Let the speakers know that everyone is embarrassed when they have to look at their face delivering a speech for a prolonged period of time- this is natural. Once you get over the embarrassment though, it can be useful to experiment- delivering your speech in radically different tones or styles to see what works best.

## Famous Speech Recitals

Famous speeches are famous for a reason! The next section of this guide covers some iconic and historically significant speeches, and what makes them so effective. Get your pupils to choose one of these speeches they like best and deliver it themselves, word-for-word. For the first delivery, they should try to imitate the style and mannerisms of the original speaker as best they can. Thereafter, encourage them to shift the speech into their own style, changing the tone and mannerisms- or even some of the language- into a form they find most comfortable. Then get them to think about what from this speech they can apply to their own.

# Learning from Famous Speeches

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This year, we've teamed up with the US Embassy in the UK to deliver a public speaking programme focused on US-UK relations and famous trans-Atlantic speeches.

One of the things the UK and US can be most proud of is a strong public speaking tradition. Some of the greatest orators who have ever lived- Winston Churchill, Martin Luther King Jr, Oprah Winfrey- hail from the UK and US. Below, you'll find some examples of famous speeches with notes on what we can learn from them.

## Martin Luther King Jr- I Have a Dream Speech

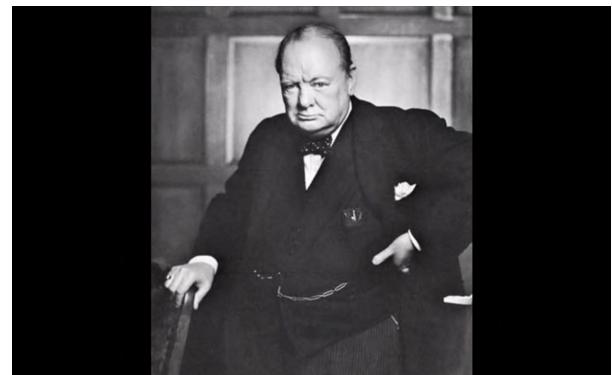
You will be familiar with this famous speech but it's well-known for a reason. The points King makes may seem obvious now but it's useful to watch this speech thinking about the context of the time. It's an effective speech because of how King makes supposedly radical and extreme arguments look like common-sense.



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## Winston Churchill- We Will Fight Them on the Beaches

This speech is doing two things: inspiring a country that felt at its lowest point not to give up hope, and encouraging people to take action. This speech led to the famous Dunkirk evacuation - a potent example of rhetoric inspiring people, with profound consequences. Churchill's delivery isn't amazing, but his words stand out.



## Barbara Castle- Oxford Union Debate



In this speech, Barbara Castle makes a case against the European Union. A lot of this speech is repeating arguments in favour of the EU to draw attention to how ridiculous Castle thinks they are- this is very difficult to do! If done badly it can sound like you are making your opponent's arguments for them.

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## Ronald Reagan- Tear Down This Wall

There are two things to learn from this speech. Firstly, Reagan is speaking from Berlin, a different audience than the one he would be facing in the US. Knowing your audience, and pitching a speech to whatever their level may be, is crucial. Secondly, note the "call to arms" at the end of the speech. This is an extremely powerful rhetorical device that brings your audience in with you.



## Oprah Winfrey- Lifetime Achievement Award



Oprah Winfrey is one of the most powerful speakers living today. In this speech, she talks passionately on the future of women. The best speakers are able to choose an emotion and use it to captivate their audience. In this speech, Oprah uses the emotion of hope (as well as some humour) to achieve this.