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FICTION

# Great Speeches in History

Read by **Norman Rodway • Samuel West**  
**Elizabeth Bell • Peter Marinker**



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1	Socrates – 399BC *	11:47
2	Demosthenes – 330 BC *	14:07
3	Cicero – 63BC *	11:12
4	William of Normandy – 1066 +	3:09
5	John Ball – 1381 *	2:25
6	Martin Luther – 1521 +	6:09
7	Sir Thomas More – 1535 *	7:14
8	Queen Elizabeth I – 1588 •	3:23
9	Queen Elizabeth I – 1601 •	6:09
10	King Charles I – 1649 +	7:00
11	Oliver Cromwell – 1653 *	2:23
12	William Pitt the Elder – 1741 +	4:03
13	Edmund Burke – 1774 *	6:22

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14	Patrick Henry – 1775 #	7:08
15	Samuel Adams – 1776 #	4:45
16	William Pitt the Younger – 1792 +	4:14
17	Thomas Erskine – 1792 *	6:31
18	Georges Danton – 1793 +	4:09
19	Charles James Fox – 1795 *	7:44
20	George Canning – 1798 +	2:52
21	Robert Emmett – 1802 +	4:19
22	Lord Macaulay – 1831 +	3:54
23	John Bright – 1855 *	6:55
24	Abraham Lincoln – 1863 #	3:19
25	Emile Zola – 1898 *	8:42
26	Emmeline Pankhurst – 1912 •	8:22

**Total time: 2:38:17**

- \* Read by Norman Rodway + Read by Samuel West
- Read by Elizabeth Bell # Read by Peter Marinker

Cover picture: *Catiline denounced by Cicero*, by Cesari Maccari (1840-1919).  
Palazzo del Senato, Rome/Alinari.

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# Great Speeches in History

In the age of the nine-second soundbite – reportedly now the average length of time a US presidential candidate has to present his or her views on a particular issue via a television broadcast – it may seem indulgent to offer a selection of great speeches, some of which lasted several hours in their original format. Do we still have subjects that stir the emotions as powerfully as those which gave rise to the speeches performed here?

It might be equally argued, however, that the preservation of some of the finest forms of argument ever made is a moral duty, for without knowing our past we are condemned to repeat its errors. What matter that today's speeches are, by and large, poor shadows of those of former times? Occasionally we are startled from complacency, and are moved by a politician doing his or her best.

The speeches selected here are all, in a broad sense, politically motivated, in that they were given in circumstances in which the orator found him or herself pressed to speak in the hope of bringing about change in the public world. This is perhaps as it should be; the speech is by definition a public performance, an attempt to persuade the audience of the orator's point of view, having gained their attention in the first place.

If there is a unifying theme to this selection, then it is the suggestion that each of these

speeches was given at a crossroads in history. Sir Thomas More's speech might be said to have put the final touch to the end of the supremacy of Rome over the Church of England. It is perhaps less evident with some of the other speeches that any turning point was being marked by their particular words on that especial occasion; but turning points of history can be moments when opportunities for change for the better are lost, as well as grasped.

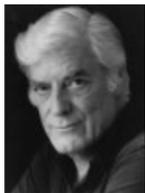
Thomas Babington Macaulay, the 19th-century writer and politician, and no mean speech-maker himself, said that "the object of oratory alone is not truth but persuasion." It is not for me to judge the truth or otherwise of the speeches here, but each of them, in different ways, demonstrates the truthfulness of Macaulay's assertion. Even Charles I, moments before his execution, is determined to persuade his listeners of the validity of his own position.

"Let thy speech be short, comprehending much in few words," is the exhortation in Ecclesiastes. No more then, except to hope that more of our contemporary orators might argue a little more, and assert a little less.

**Notes by Gary Mead**

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## The Cast



**Norman Rodway** is an Associate Artist of the RSC, where his many roles have included *Richard III*, Mercutio in *Romeo and Juliet* and Gloucester in *King Lear*. He has also worked for the Royal National Theatre in *The Seagull* and *Hedda Gabler*, and other major theatres nationwide. His TV credits include *Rumpole of the Bailey*, *A Month in the Country* and *The Young Indiana Jones Chronicles*.



**Samuel West** has been widely praised for his performance as Leonard Bast in the Merchant Ivory film, *Howard's End*. His other film credits include *Carrington* and *Reunion*, and he has been seen on UK TV in *Persuasion*, *Heavy Weather* and *The Vacillations of Poppy Carew*. Theatrical roles have included Valentine in *Arcadia* and Algernon in *The Importance of Being Earnest*.



**Elizabeth Bell's** vast stage experience includes the roles of Donna Elvira in *Don Juan* and Julie Danton in *Danton's Death* at the Royal National Theatre. She has also toured extensively with the RSC as Gertrude in *Hamlet*. She has worked for the Royal Court, Almeida, Bush and Stephen Joseph theatres and her many TV credits include *Hedda Gabler*, *The Diary of Anne Frank* and *Unfinished Business*.



**Peter Marinker** has worked extensively in theatre nationwide throughout the UK and in the USA, including leading roles in *Lancelot and Guinevere* and *The Merchant of Venice* at the Old Vic, and the title role in *Macbeth* for the Open Space Theatre. His TV work includes numerous roles for the BBC, and his film credits include *The Russia House* and *Emerald Forest*.

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Selected by Gary Mead and Duncan Steen  
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