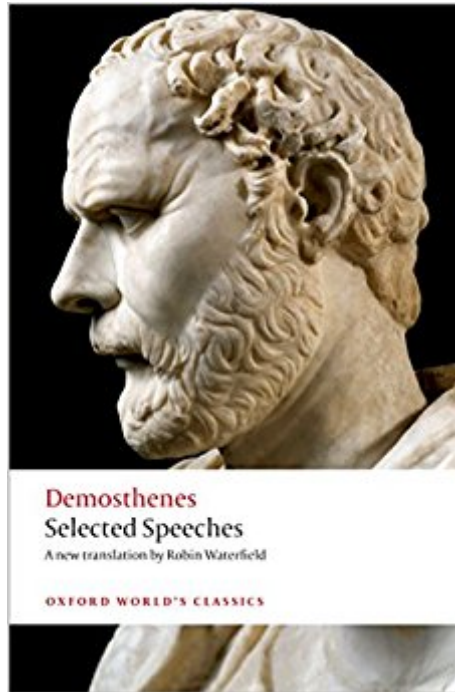


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Selected Speeches (Oxford World's Classics)



Synopsis

'Even if everyone else succumbs to slavery, we must still fight for our freedom.' Admired by many in the ancient world as the greatest of the classic Athenian orators, Demosthenes was intimately involved in the political events of his day. As well as showing a master orator at work, his speeches are a prime source for the history of the period, when Athens was engaged in a doomed struggle against the rising power of Macedon under the brilliant father and son, Philip and Alexander. Demosthenes wrote for the courts, both for political trials in which he was involved and for other cases in which he acted as ghost-writer for plaintiff or defendant, and his lawcourt speeches give an unrivalled glimpse of the daily life of ancient Athens. He also played a central role in education in Greece and Rome from the Hellenistic period onward, and was imitated by the greatest of Roman orators, Cicero. This selection includes the fullest range of Demosthenes' speeches, for trials both public and private and for the assembly, in a single volume.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

With this volume, the 4th-century Athenian orators make their first appearance in the Oxford

"World's Classics" series, to which Waterfield has already contributed numerous highly-regarded translations (mainly of Greek prose authors -- see my review of his translation of Plato's "Symposium"). Chris Carey's introduction includes a bibliography, chronology and three helpful maps (including one of the Athenian agora). He provides brief prefaces to each speech or speech set, and the explanatory notes at the end are supplemented by a glossary of historical and literary terms, and an index of proper names. Waterfield's translation is lively, readable, and often colloquial (sacrificing some of Demosthenes' longer periods, but capturing his renowned stylistic variety). This offers a stimulating counterpoint to the formality preferred by other translators. Carey's succinct introduction caters to the wide readership this volume is likely to attract, with sections on Demosthenes' life and times, style, ancient reception, and on Athenian law and politics, all of which are well tied to the selected speeches and couch complex issues in economical and insightful terms. A key strength of the volume is its commitment to giving a rounded sense of Demosthenes both as rhetorical composer (on others' behalf as well as his own) and as historical actor. This is communicated both in the balance of Carey's notes and in the selection itself: alongside virtually mandatory inclusions like "On the Crown and the Third Philippic", several highlights from the "private" part of the corpus are included (notably the darkly entertaining Against Conon).

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