



Presidential Speechwriting: From the New Deal to the Reagan Revolution and Beyond (Presidential Rhetoric and Political Communication)

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The rise of the media presidency through radio and television broadcasts has heightened the visibility and importance of presidential speeches in determining the effectiveness and popularity of the President of the United States. Not surprisingly, this development has also witnessed the rise of professional speechwriters to craft the words the chief executive would address to the nation.

Yet, as this volume of expert analyses graphically demonstrates, the reliance of individual presidents on their speechwriters has varied with the rhetorical skill of the officeholder himself, his managerial style, and his personal attitude toward public speaking. The individual chapters here (two by former White House speechwriters) give fascinating insight into the process and development of presidential speechwriting from Franklin D. Roosevelt's administration to Ronald Reagan's. Some contributors, such as Charles Griffin writing on Eisenhower and Moya Ball on Johnson, offer case studies of specific speeches to gain insight into those presidents. Other chapters focus on institutional arrangements and personal relationships, rhetorical themes characterizing an administration, or the relationship between words and policies to shed light on presidential speechwriting.

The range of presidents covered affords opportunities to examine various factors that make rhetoric successful or not, to study alternative organizational arrangements for speechwriters, and even to consider the evolution of the rhetorical presidency itself. Yet, the volume's single focus *on* speechwriting and the analytic overviews provided by Martin J. Medhurst not only bring coherence to the work, but also make this book an exemplar of how unity can be achieved from a diversity of approaches.

Medhurst's introduction of ten "myths" in the scholarship on presidential speeches and his summary of the enduring issues in the practice of speechwriting pull together the work of individual contributors. At the same time, his introduction and conclusion transcend particular presidents by providing generalizations on the role of speechwriting in the modern White House.

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