



Churchill: The Power of Words

Winston S. Churchill , Martin Gilbert (Editor)

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Throughout his six decades in the public eye, Winston Churchill understood and wielded the power of words. His speeches, books and articles have fascinated generation after generation with their powerful narrative style. Martin Gilbert has selected 200 extracts from Churchill's oeuvre that reflect his life, career and philosophy. They range from intimate memories of his childhood to his contributions to debates on social policy and war and his efforts after 1945 to see the world a better place. In them, we see how he used words for different purposes: to argue for causes, to advocate courses of action, and to tell the story of his own life. As Churchill's official biographer, Martin Gilbert is uniquely qualified to make this selection, and his informed and subtle choice of extracts, together with his illuminating text linking them together, create a fascinating biographical narrative of Churchill's life as recounted in his own words.

Churchill: The Power of Words Details

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From Reader Review Churchill: The Power of Words for online ebook

John Kenrick says

Wonderful collection

This carefully selected collection of Churchill's speeches provides a front row seat to some of the most eloquent moments of the 20th century. Aside from his wisdom -- and his prescient calls to stop Hitler before it was too late, I was fascinated to see how Churchill's inspiring addresses during World War I (when he served in the cabinet) pre-echo many of the points he would make in his celebrated speeches during World War II. Great photos, an appendix of helpful maps, and brief but extremely helpful editor's notes make this an enjoyable and essential read for those like me who are interested in Churchill and his contribution to history.

Luis says

Amazing read.

Almost an auto-biography. This is a compilation of Churchill's own words over the years.

Hi is a visionary and a leader. The words inspire us. The historic parallels make us think about our own age.

Ethan says

I found this to be a great collection of Churchill's best writing and speeches. I certainly learned a lot from this collection, and my respect for Sir Churchill is ever growing.

Becky says

Churchill: The Power of Words is a compelling read for anyone interested in history, British history in particular. It isn't a biography exactly. Instead it's a chronological arrangement of (select) quotes taken from his writings and speeches that give you a sense of who he was. Each quote is introduced by Martin Gilbert. On the top left-hand corner, readers find the year, and, on the top right-hand corner, readers find Churchill's age. I found this layout to be wonderful. There are no chapters, no natural stopping places. I tried to use years as goal-setters. But once World War II started, I found it too compelling to read it just a year at a time. I read greedily.

I found it fascinating and thought-provoking.

Favorite quotes:

One must never forget when misfortunes come that it is quite possible they are saving one from

something much worse; or that when you make some great mistake, it may very easily serve you better than the best-advised decision. (1896) p. 14

As I think Ruskin once said, 'It matters very little whether your judgments of people are true or untrue, and very much whether they are kind or unkind,'... (1899) p. 29

What is the use of living, if it be not to strive for noble causes and to make this muddled world a better place for those who will live in it after we are gone? (1908) p. 63

We did not enter upon the war with the hope of easy victory; we did not enter upon it in any desire to extend our territory, or to advance and increase our position in the world; or in any romantic desire to shed our blood and spend our money in Continental quarrels. We entered upon this war reluctantly after we had made every effort compatible with honour to avoid being drawn in, and we entered upon it with a full realization of the sufferings, losses, disappointments, vexations, and anxieties, and of the appalling and sustaining exertions which would be entailed upon us by our action. The war will be long and sombre. It will have many reverses of fortune and many hopes falsified by subsequent events, and we must derive from our cause and from the strength that is in us, and from the traditions and history of our race, and from the support and aid of our Empire all over the world the means to make this country overcome obstacles of all kinds and continue to the end of the furrow, whatever the toil and suffering may be. (1914) p. 88.

To fail is to be enslaved, or, at the very best, to be destroyed. Not to win decisively is to have all this misery over again after an uneasy truce, and to fight it over again, probably under less favourable circumstances, and perhaps alone. (1915) p. 108

Before a war begins one should always say, 'I am strong, but so is the enemy.' When a war is being fought one should say, 'I am exhausted, but the enemy is quite tired too.' It is almost impossible to say either of these two things at the time they matter. (1918) p. 138

'What shall I do with all my books?' was the question; and the answer, 'Read them,' sobered the questioner. But if you cannot read them, at any rate handle them and, as it were, fondle them. Peer into them. Let them fall open where they will. Read on from the first sentence that arrests the eye. Then turn to another. Make a voyage of discovery, taking soundings of uncharted seas. Set them back on their shelves with your own hands. Arrange them on your own plan, so that if you do not know what is in them, you at least know where they are. If they cannot be your friends, let them at any rate be your acquaintances. If they cannot enter the circle of your life, do not deny them at least a nod of recognition. It is a mistake to read too many good books when quite young. A man once told me that he had read all the books that mattered. Cross-questioned, he appeared to have read a great many, but they seemed to have made only a slight impression. How many had he understood? How many had entered his mental composition?

How many had been hammered on the anvils of his mind and afterwards ranged in an armoury of bright weapons ready to hand? Choose well, choose wisely, and choose one. Concentrate upon that one. Do not be content until you find yourself reading in it with real enjoyment. (1925) p. 178-9.

We are in the presence of a disaster of the first magnitude which has befallen Great Britain and France. Do not let us blind ourselves to that. It must now be accepted that all the countries of Central and Eastern Europe will make the best terms they can with the triumphant Nazi Power. The system of alliances in Central Europe upon which France has relied for her safety has been swept away, and I can see no means by which it can be reconstituted. (1938) p. 202

You must have diplomatic and correct relations, but there can never be friendship between the British democracy and the Nazi Power, that Power which spurns Christian ethics, which cheers its onward course by a barbarous paganism, which vaunts the spirit of aggression and conquest, which derives strength and perverted pleasure from persecution, and uses, as we have seen, with pitiless brutality the threat of murderous force. That Power cannot ever be the trusted friend of the British democracy. (1938) p. 203

Whenever we speak of 'bloodless war' it must not be supposed that it is not attended in every country in this anxious, melancholy time by strain, by loss, and, in some countries, by a very severe degree of privation and suffering among the mass of the population. Moreover, the bloodless war is becoming intensified. There is hardly a day when the papers do not show it is becoming intensified. The strains resulting from it will in this year, still more if it is prolonged, test not only the financial and economic strength of nations but the health of their institutions and the social structure of their civilization. (1939) p. 211-2

We must not underrate the gravity of the task which lies before us or the temerity of the ordeal, to which we shall not be found unequal. We must expect many disappointments, and many unpleasant surprises, but we may be sure that the task which we have freely accepted is one not beyond the compass and the strength of the British Empire and the French Republic... It is a war, viewed in its inherent quality, to establish, on impregnable rocks, the rights of the individual, and it is a war to establish and revive the stature of man. (1939) p. 224

Of all the wars that men have fought in their hard pilgrimage, none was more noble than the great Civil War in America nearly eighty years ago. Both sides fought with high conviction, and the war was long and hard. All the heroism of the South could not redeem their cause from the stain of slavery, just as all the courage and skill which the Germans always show in war will not free them from the reproach of Naziism, with its intolerance and its brutality. (1940) p. 233-4

Very few wars have been won by mere numbers alone. Quality, will-power, geographical

advantages, natural and financial resources, the command of the sea, and, above all, a cause which rouses the spontaneous surgings of the human spirit in millions of hearts--these have proved to be the decisive factors in the human story. (1940) p. 236

You ask what is our policy? I will say: It is to wage war, by sea, land, and air, with all our might and with all the strength that God can give us; to wage war against a monstrous tyranny, never surpassed in the dark and lamentable catalogue of human crime. That is our policy. You ask, what is our aim? I can answer in one word: It is victory, victory at all costs, victory in spite of all terror, however long and hard the road may be; for without victory, there is no survival. Let that be realized; no survival for the British Empire, no survival for all that the British Empire has stood for, no survival for the urge and impulse of the ages, that mankind will move forward towards its goal. (1940) p. 243

We are moving through a period of extreme danger and of splendid hope, when every virtue of our race will be tested, and all that we have and are will be freely staked. This is no time for doubt or weakness. It is the supreme hour to which we have been called. (1940) p. 259

Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few. (1940) p. 264

We have but one aim and one single, irrevocable purpose. We are resolved to destroy Hitler and every vestige of the Nazi regime. From this nothing will turn us--nothing. (1941) p. 285

Cindy says

Interesting, educational and a little hard to read. The writings and insights into Churchill's life helped me learn about multiple areas of history I knew little about. Granted, it was written by Churchill, so perhaps was self-serving. But I have a new admiration for him. He was eloquent, articulate and persuasive. Because it was somewhat technical and dry, it took me a while to finish, but was worth reading.

D.A. Cairns says

The Power of Words is an aptly titled book. As I read through this selection of Winston Churchill's published writings and public speeches I was struck by the eloquence and wisdom of this great twentieth century political leader. So many great quotes, so many profound statements, such great insight into the truly dramatic events of the first half of the twentieth century. This isn't a biography, but a historical account as seen through the eyes of a man who fought for his country and then served as a parliamentarian for over fifty years. Twice Prime Minister, during the second World War, and again during the Korean War, Churchill's

descriptions, reflections and predictions are remarkable. A great man. A great book. It made me wish I had seen and heard him speak in person. That must have been something special for those so privileged.

Jonathan says

I really enjoyed this book. Churchill is such a superb writer it is impossible not to be a bit mesmerised by the thoughtful but colourful prose as he records his extraordinary life in letters, speeches, articles and book excerpts. I listened to the audio version and Michael Jayston does an incredible impersonation of Churchill from his youth and transitioning through to his final years, his voice getting more gravelly as he goes. Impersonating Churchill, or anybody, is not to be done lightly but Jayston pulls it off brilliantly. In fact it is an improvement on the real Churchills speaking voice which really does sound terribly old fashioned to a modern ear. And he was a better writer than speaker anyway so the audio gives you the best of both worlds.

Marcia King says

What's not like in a book of Winston Churchill's speeches? He fits the description of a "great leader" perfectly. Truly a man for his time. I heard this as an audio book as it's better to hear his words verbalized. Can't imagine a better Prime Minister especially when Great Britain stood virtually alone against the malignant Nazi threat. Highly recommend

Inge Van Delft says

I thought I'd try and read something different than the usual novel, so I picked this off the audiobook shelf at the library. I expected it to be dry and, well, kind of boring, but I was pleasantly surprised by how interesting it turned out to be. I am glad I listened to this as an audiobook though, as the reader was excellent and brought the speeches to life. This was my first look at Churchill going beyond a brief mention in a history book or documentary and the book gives a real picture of the man through his own words and words of those around him. He strikes me as a genuine character with great insight. One speech in particular made a great impression on me; the "Some form of Gestapo" speech. I gather it was a very controversial speech, but the wisdom he shows as he spoke about the rise of socialism and the future of free speech, freedom of parental choice in education, freedom of opinion! I'd say he was spot on, as we can see around us today.

Terence says

Although skeptical about the format of the book at first, I became a convert. I think the editor did a good job setting the context and allowing Churchill's words to do all the talking.

This book is best used as a complimentary resource after one has read other books on Churchill. That said, I recommend it.

Erin says

I basically loved this book from cover to cover. Every piece written by Churchill was beautiful and elegant and all of the introductions provided by Martin Gilbert helped to place all of the writings in the wide scope of history in which Churchill "lived and moved and had his being." What a remarkable body of work Churchill left behind. I felt really grateful for his forethought in preserving all his speeches and articles. Being able to take a peek into his mind during the turbulent times of the two World Wars was fascinating and also greatly encouraging. The fact that a man and leader of his caliber existed gives me hope that another like him can arise and positively impact our world. And I feel like his life is a testimony to the fact that you don't necessarily have to be university educated to make an impact on the world. What Churchill lacked in formal higher-education he more than made up for in his determination, his passion for his country and its people, and his belief in decency and fair play on a global scale. You can't fail to read this book and be inspired. And I highly recommend that you read it.

Jean says

"Churchill The Power of Words" is an anthology of WSC's speeches and writings, chronologically arranged by his authorized biographer Sir Martin Gilbert. I read this as an e-book on my Kindle app for my iPad. I recently listened to an audiobook of "Never Give In: The Best of Winston Churchill's Speeches" by Winston Churchill, these two book go together magnificently. I could both read and listen to WSC's key speeches, the better to absorb all the nuances of WSC. It is so great to read the beautiful masterful vocabulary of WSC. He wrote with such a poetical and mannered way; today all we hear are snappy sound bites from our politicians. Some people call Churchill anachronistic, but he was born at the end of the Victorian era and was always a Victorian man. WSC was always well mannered decent, never held a grudge, always respectful to the opposition's right to debate with civility and graciousness, so different from what we see today from our politicians. A great example was included in the book, the speech WSC gave when India got its independence. The speech was a perfect example of Victoria manners as he had opposed giving India its independence at that time.

The first part of the book covers WSC's early life and the frequent brushes with death. WSC loved the danger and excitement of his life as a soldier and war correspondent. The book covers the Spanish American War, his time in India, the war in the Sudan, Boer War and also WWI, the 1930s and WWII. What I enjoyed was WSC's language. Gilbert included speeches about trade unionism as well as budgets. Churchill's language and narrative thrust was colorfully bellicose and even somewhat bombastic, full of apocalyptic Old Testament images of fire and floods, who else but WSC, could make a budget so exciting. The famous speeches from the 1930s and WWII are well known but I did enjoy these lesser known speeches. The book was 536 pages long.

Brandon says

This book really emphasized the power of his speeches and the importance of them and also much about his early life and education. This books shows his life through his book My Early Life and through sections of his book. It also shows the struggles he had to deal with WWI and WWII. It also tells about his early life and how he followed early his by telling us a bit about his parents and telling us that his dad was in politics as

well. This book also tells us about him being in the army and him going to all these other countries and being in war probably helped him with WWII and WWI. It shows many of his speeches and shows us how he got involved with politics by giving many of the jobs he had in Parliament and how in the beginning of WWII he became Prime Minister of the United Kingdom

Lisa Blane says

Churchill the power of words,

Good book it shows what a true great leader he was Only wish people like him were around today. It makes you think hard what his messages were .

Liv says

It was an interesting read for as dry as it may have come off as. And, while it wasn't necessarily a biography, through his writings and speeches you can grasp a further understanding of the person he truly was.
