



# Words Like Loaded Pistols: Rhetoric from Aristotle to Obama

*Sam Leith*

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Rhetoric is all around us. It's what inspires armies, convicts criminals, and makes or breaks presidential candidates. And it isn't just the preserve of politicians. It's in the presentation to a key client, the half-time talk in the locker room, and the plea to your children to eat their vegetables. Rhetoric gives words power: it persuades and cajoles, inspires and bamboozles, thrills and misdirects. You have been using rhetoric yourself, all your life. After all, you know what a rhetorical question is, don't you?

In *Words Like Loaded Pistols*, Sam Leith traces the art of persuasion, beginning in ancient Syracuse and taking us on detours as varied and fascinating as Elizabethan England, Milton's Satanic realm, the Springfield of Abraham Lincoln and the Springfield of Homer Simpson. He explains how language has been used by the great heroes of rhetoric (such as Cicero and Martin Luther King Jr.), as well as some villains (like Adolf Hitler and Richard Nixon.)

Leith provides a primer to rhetoric's key techniques. In *Words Like Loaded Pistols*, you'll find out how to build your own memory-palace; you'll be introduced to the Three Musketeers: Ethos, Pathos and Logos; and you'll learn how to use chiasmus with confidence and occultation without thinking about it. Most importantly of all, you will discover that rhetoric is useful, relevant – and absolutely nothing to be afraid of.

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