

Reflections: Speeches from the Heart

Rob Peck

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The entries of Rob Peck's speech collection *Reflections* represent decades of his contributions to the Toastmasters Club and other public speaking venues.

Though these forty-one speeches include addresses given during Toastmasters meetings, they also comprise guest sermons and eulogies. They cover theological topics like pre- and post-resurrection Jesus, as well as covering the process of speech writing itself. They are arranged in chronological order and represent both an evolving social perspective and maturing prose skills.

There are paragraph breaks, headings, and shifts in each entry that hint at their cadences and paces; still, reading, rather than listening, to them compromises the power of their delivery. In "Five Secrets to Making a Great Speech," Peck notes as much: a 1971 UCLA study concluded that the content of a speech only makes up 7% of its emotional content, while body language and sound comprise 55 and 38% of its power, respectively. Regardless of this dilution, Peck's words are often powerful on their own merit, even without the benefit of witnessing their delivery.

Personal anecdotes stand out among the entries for their vibrancy, as do the chapters' involving discussions of philosophical topics. The more unique the entries are, the more they hold general interest, as is the case with the entertaining entry "Ten Sleep Canyon," about a family vacation. There are several heartrending eulogies that distinguish the book, too, highlighting its emotive nature; each amounts to a loving picture of its subject, with people memorialized in personally meaningful ways. Indeed, evocative and emotional language is a collection feature.

Drawing on examples from Peck's life, biblical texts, and quotes from historical figures, each individual speech is well supported internally. However, stories and concepts repeat throughout the book, impeding continued investment—a choice defended with the not wholly convincing assertion that the speeches, which appear unchanged from their original versions, use these tales in distinctive ways to suit their individual purposes. Reading the collection through troubles this notion: the repetitions sometimes happen word for word, in which case their reiterations are extraneous. This is true of "Five Secrets to Making a Great Speech" and "How to Become a Better Speaker," which share the story of a boy's loss at a public speaking competition; two of their lessons on being a great speaker are identical, resulting in a lull. There are exceptions, however: while multiple entries focus on the Golden Rule, these ably reflect its variety of iterations throughout the world, and subsequent mentions of the Golden Rule seem to build upon each other, exploring the topic in new ways.

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AIMÉE JODOIN (February 3, 2022)

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