Way back when

The Ancient Greeks invented the field of **rhetoric**, in which speakers called **orators** play upon both reason and emotion to persuade their audiences. The Greeks used oratory to inform political and judicial decisions, and also to develop and share new philosophies.

Great thinkers presented their ideas in front of audiences, and orators often competed against one another in public contests for cash prizes, fame, and political influence! Greek orators were so well known for their abilities that even after Greece were conquered by Rome, wealthy Romans would send their kids to Greece to learn public speaking.

The most famous Greek orators were the **Ten Attic Orators**, who lived in and around Athens during the 5th and 4th centuries B.C.E. (a time often known as the “Golden Age” of Athens). They were: Antiphon; Andocides; Lysias; Isocrates; Isaeus; Aeschines; Lycurgus; Demosthenes; Hypereides; and Dinarchus.

Of these, the four most important were probably the following:

- **Antiphon** helped install an **oligarchy**, or government of the few, in Athens in 411 B.C.E., and was executed for treason when traditional Athenian democracy returned.
- **Isocrates** (pictured), who belonged to a school of orators called the **Sophists**, became rich by teaching rhetoric to wealthy students
- **Lycurgus** held a number of public offices in Athens and oversaw both public finances and public morals.
- **Demosthenes** overcame a speech disorder to become the most famous orator of all time. He often spoke on behalf of keeping Athens free from the clutches of a conquering king called Philip of Macedon. These fiery speeches were called **Philippics**.