



The Miracle of Language

By Richard Lederer

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Master verbalist Richard Lederer, America's "Wizard of Idiom" (*Denver Post*), presents a love letter to the most glorious of human achievements...

Welcome to Richard Lederer's beguiling celebration of language -- of our ability to utter, write, and receive words. No purists need stop here. Mr. Lederer is no linguistic sheriff organizing posses to hunt down and string up language offenders. Instead, join him "In Praise of English," and discover why the tongue described in Shakespeare's day as "of small reatch" has become the most widely spoken language in history:

1. *English never rejects a word because of race, creed, or national origin. Did you know that jukebox comes from Gullah and canoe from Haitian Creole?*
2. *Many of our greatest writers have invented words and bequeathed new expressions to our everyday conversations. Can you imagine making up almost ten percent of our written vocabulary? Scholars now know that William Shakespeare did just that!*

He also points out the pitfalls and pratfalls of English. If a man mans a station, what does a woman do? In the "The Department of Redundancy Department," "Is English Prejudiced?" and other essays, Richard Lederer urges us not to abandon that which makes us human: the capacity to distinguish, discriminate, compare, and evaluate.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

In this collection of entertaining and enlightening essays, Lederer (*Anguished English*) celebrates language as "incomparably the finest of our achievements" and passes along some eloquent testimony on the emancipating power of language in the lives of Helen Keller, Richard Wright, Malcolm X, Anne Frank. Also appraised are the contributions of other writers who, "sculpting significance from the air, have changed the world by changing the word." The first of these is William Shakespeare, whom Lederer identifies as the most prolific word-maker who ever lived (the Bard, it turns out, invented at least 10% of his vocabulary). Next is Samuel Johnson who, with his breakthrough dictionary, captured the majesty of English and gave it a dignity long overdue. Others include Ambrose Bierce, Lewis Carroll, Mark Twain, Emily Dickinson, T. S. Eliot, George Orwell. A delightful and edifying collection. BOMC and QPB alternates.

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From School Library Journal

YA--This latest collection by the noted verbalist sparkles like a gem. It is finely polished, well crafted, and certain to de light. Readers are invited to ponder if our mother tongue is indeed prejudiced. The misuse of redundant words and how new words are born are also ex plored. On a deeper level, beyond the wit and bouyancy, Lederer shows that words are not just used to engage but also to instruct. This collection of essays is a treasure and should be cherished by all who open it.

-Mary I. Quinn, *Fair fax County Public Library, George Ma son Regional, Annandale, VA*

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From Kirkus Reviews

New England schoolmaster, columnist, and bestselling author Lederer (*Crazy English*, 1989) offers an enthusiastic new assemblage in tribute to language generally and the English kind in particular. Sounding in turn like D'Israeli the Elder on curiosities of literature, William Targ on bibliomania, H.L. Mencken on words, or William Lutz on doublespeak, Lederer compiles a scrapbook that preaches, naturally, to those who are devoted to the wonder of words aggregated. There are tributes to heroes of our tongue: Shakespeare, Johnson (with incursions by Bierce and other witty lexicographers), Lewis Carroll, Mark Twain, Emily Dickinson, T.S. Eliot, and George Orwell. In terms of one syllable, Lederer proves the power of short words. They can, he says, ``make a straight point between two minds," which seems a little hard to do, but you get the line. English isn't perfect, however: It's sexist (queens do not rule queendoms), lacks certain utilitarian words (what will we call the decade that will follow the Nineties?), and lends itself to redundant repetition, too, as Lederer cheerfully illustrates and shows. He likes libraries and letter-writing (citing St. Paul as a great correspondent). There's even a lesson in versification and examples of favored writing from his prep- school students. The text concludes with a few hundred pithy comments on words by practitioners from Aristophanes to Wittgenstein. A golly-gee skimming of the manifest wonders of ``the most glorious of all human inventions," not deep but easygoing enough to satisfy Lederer's legion of fans. -- *Copyright ©1991, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Stephen Williams:

This The Miracle of Language are usually reliable for you who want to be considered a successful person, why. The reason why of this The Miracle of Language can be one of the great books you must have is definitely giving you more than just simple examining food but feed you with information that perhaps will shock your before knowledge. This book will be handy, you can bring it just about everywhere and whenever your conditions in e-book and printed versions. Beside that this The Miracle of Language forcing you to have an enormous of experience for instance rich vocabulary, giving you trial run of critical thinking that we understand it useful in your day exercise. So , let's have it and enjoy reading.

Tyrone Smith:

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Joanne Starks:

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