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Expletive Deleted: A Good Look At Bad Language



Synopsis

Have we always "sworn like sailors"? Has creative cursing developed because we can't just slug people when they make us angry? And if such verbal aggression is universal, why is it that some languages (Japanese, for instance) supposedly do not contain any nasty words? Throughout the twentieth century there seems to have been a dramatic escalation in the use and acceptance of offensive language in English, both verbally and in print. Today it seems almost commonplace to hear the "f" word in casual conversation, and even on television. Just how have we become such a bunch of cursers and what does it tell us about our language and ourselves? In *Expletive Deleted*, linguist Ruth Wajnryb offers an entertaining yet thoroughly researched, lighthearted look at this development, seeking to reveal the etymologies of various terms and discover how what was once considered unfit-for-company argot has become standard fare. Wajnryb steps outside the confines of English in her search for answers, exploring whether offensive words in English are mirrored in other languages and examining cultural differences in the usage of dirty words. For instance, why is it that in some languages you can get away with intimating that a person and his camel are more than just good friends, while pouring scorn on a mother's morals guarantees you a seat on the next flight out? An amusing and idiosyncratic look at the power of words to shock, offend, insult, amuse, exaggerate, let off steam, establish relationships, and communicate deep-felt emotions, *Expletive Deleted* is a must-read for anyone who loves language -- or has ever stubbed a toe. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

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Customer Reviews

[...]This is the best book ever! I found this gem at a small book store on the Lower East Side of Manhattan when dodging heavy rain. There she was, flirting with me. As a professional speaker, I often am challenged about the use of "bad language" in my workshops and speeches. Even more regularly, a participant will inform me that I am using words or phrases that often offend people yet they don't find themselves offended. Language is fascinating and the building blocks of my career. I find myself making judgments and assumptions about particular campuses, participants, etc., on the walk from my rental car to the venue about how much "bad language" is appropriate or not. There are venues where I purposely carefully choose my words and others where I feel more comfortable speaking as I would normally. I don't use "bad language" to appeal to the younger crowd (yes, I have actually been asked this many times). I use "bad language" because that is how I talk, how many family spoke, and what I am used to doing when I want to express myself. The question is why? What makes good language good and bad language bad? As Wajnryb states in the subtitle, *Expletive Deleted* is an in-depth review linguistically and anthropologically of the use of words throughout a mostly western historical perspective. I loved this book. Cussing, swearing, and blasphemy, are complicated characters in a humorous and dramatic soap opera involving the Catholic Church, wars, politics, and geography. I now know why the language I use is considered "bad" and feel even more justified in my word choices. :-) I will continue to monitor the impact of my language choices, AND giggle knowing that my words are themselves a form of activism.

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