



Crazy English: The Ultimate Joy Ride Through Our Language

By Richard Lederer

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In this revised edition of his classic book, Lederer frolics through the logic-boggling byways of the English language and unveils new chapters on misnomers, retronyms, and "The Department of Redundancy Department".

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

One of the most unforgettable moments of my youth was learning the word *pneumonoultramicroscopicsilicovolcanoconiosis*. I was in third grade. So what if Richard Lederer has come up with a chemical compound that consists of 1,913 letters? Owning a word like *pneumonoultramicroscopicsilicovolcanoconiosis* is empowering at any age. If you have ever been completely wowed by the power you can have over language, or its power over you, Richard Lederer is your patron saint. His oft-reprinted introduction to *Crazy English*, which was originally published in 1989, claims that English is "the most loopy and wiggy of all tongues." And then he demonstrates: "In what other language do people drive in a parkway and park in a driveway? ... Why do they call them *apartments* when they're all together?" And so on. Lederer's pace is frenetic. He alights on oxymorons ("pretty ugly," "computer jock"), redundancies, confusing words (are you sure you know the meaning of *enormity*?), phobias, contronyms, heteronyms, retroactive terms (*acoustic guitar, rotary phone*), and a host of other linguistic delights.

Though English may be one of the crazier languages--Lederer claims that about 80 percent of our words are not spelled phonetically--they are all, he says, a little crazy. "That's because language is invented ... by boys and girls and men and women, not computers. As such, language reflects the creative and fearful asymmetry of the human race, which, of course, isn't really a race at all." --Jane Steinberg

From Publishers Weekly

A journalist, teacher at St. Paul's School in Concord, N.H., and public-radio commentator, Lederer (*Anguished English ; Get Thee to a Punnery*) again adroitly mixes instruction with hilarity by showing that English, though the richest and most widely used of all the world's languages, is "crazy." The text is a dazzling collection of anagrams, alliterations, idioms, illogical spelling rules (bough, ghost, honor, rhyme) and larky oxymora (Chaucer's classic "hateful good," today's "military intelligence," "postal service"). Verses, quizzes and anecdotes accompany Lederer's essays on "the antics of semantics," greatly expanding the pleasure of what he correctly claims is "the ultimate joy ride through our language." Doubleday Book Club and Literary Guild alternates; author tour.

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About the Author

Richard Lederer is the author of more than 30 books about language, history, and humor, including his best-selling *Anguished English* series and his current book, *Presidential Trivia*. He has been profiled in magazines as diverse as *The New Yorker, People*, and the *National Enquirer* and frequently appears on radio as a commentator on language. Dr. Lederer's syndicated column, "Looking at Language," appears in newspapers and magazines throughout the United States. He has been named International Punster of the Year and Toastmasters International's Golden Gavel winner.

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