



Words are people too... Bob's rarely used... and rarely useful "Encyclobodomy" of words and phrases. "A definitive and complete fabrication"

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waptoo (Oct 8, 2013)

Softcover \$15.88 (376pp)

978-0-615-82389-8

Pitta combines his love of language and humor in a lighthearted book that explores the joy of words and draws on everyone's love of a good joke.

According to humorist Bob Pitta, long ago, the word "question" (an inquiry) was derived from the terms "quest" (which you had to go on to get information) and "shun" (to avoid), mainly because people would ask for information from someone else so they wouldn't have to go on the dangerous quest for the information themselves.

Quest-shun. As in: What are we to do with a book of fake etymology?

Formatted like an encyclopedia then arranged into pseudochronological order, *Words are people too...* presents unabashedly false, often funny explanations of how words came to be, along with witty discussions of the components that make them up.

Each entry is designed to delight. Often, a word may be explained simply through puns. For example, according to Pitta, the word "burden" came from the fact that cavemen saw the work it took for birds to move their homes, or "dens," from the ground into the safer trees. So, they referred to any heavy load or difficult task as a "burden" (bird-den). Other words are evoked through homonyms or even word play: The word sweat evolved as a contraction of the cavemen's words "It's wet!"

Most entries have playful stories, some more involved than others. It's these stories that make up much of the humor. Pitta tells the whole tale of the fictional Marie Allete Pomposette, the first woman to try on a corset. When she was asked if it hurts, she said, "Of course it hurts!"

This often amusing book probably finds its best use in a waiting room or bathroom—one could almost hear the author making the quip that the latter is exactly where his writing belongs. In short bits, it can be fun and bring a smile, and some entries are more effective and fully developed than others. However, most readers will probably shy away from reading it straight through, and the author might agree that one can only take so much at a time of the kinds of things that belong in a bathroom.

Pitta definitely has a quirky, offbeat sense of humor. As such, a reader's enjoyment of the book will likely depend on his or her own preferred style of comedy. Puns and wordplay aren't for everyone. That said, there is a broad audience for the kind of silliness and simple joy found here. Almost anyone might enjoy skimming it once in a while. After all, many believe that our world today could use a lot more laughter. Though, readers might want to keep it down in the bathroom; people might question why they are giggling on the toilet. That's one quest probably best shunned.

DIANE GARDNER (January 6, 2014)

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