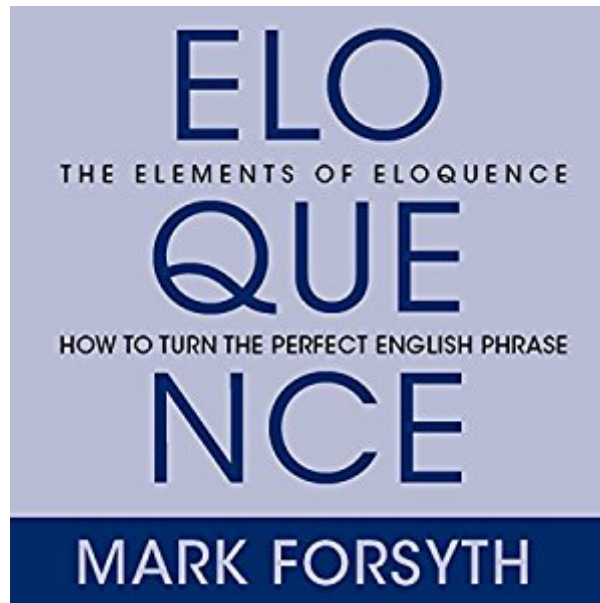




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The Elements Of Eloquence: Secrets Of The Perfect Turn Of Phrase



Synopsis

From classic poetry to pop lyrics, from Charles Dickens to Dolly Parton, even from Jesus to James Bond, Mark Forsyth explains the secrets that make a phrase - such as "O Captain! My Captain!" or "To be or not to be" - memorable. In his inimitably entertaining and wonderfully witty style, he takes apart famous phrases and shows how you too can write like Shakespeare or quip like Oscar Wilde. Whether you're aiming to achieve literary immortality or just hoping to deliver the perfect one-liner, *The Elements of Eloquence* proves that you don't need to have anything important to say - you simply need to say it well. In an age unhealthily obsessed with the power of substance, this is a book that highlights the importance of style.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I listened to this an audiobook while driving back and forth from Fresno to Sacramento. There was a point where I was laughing so hard that I feared for my safety. Mark Forsyth did a brilliant job of taking the listener/reader through the "figures of rhetoric" by way of great literature and popular music. Certain rhetorical styles simply work, whether they be alliteration (the repetition of sounds) or repetition of the final words or phrases (Epistrophe) or the repetition of the beginning words or phrases (Anaphora). This stuff works and we know it does and we are exposed to it on a daily basis, but we will never remember the technical terms and we barely notice them as they occur all around us. I am a lawyer and I think that knowing the technical terms, and the ideas behind those terms, might help me do intentionally what I am doing unintentionally. I think that others might have a

similar experience, but this book is not a technical handbook. It is an enjoyable voyage through the English language, literature and lyrics. Here is an example: "The second kind of pleonasm is quite different. It's the lazy adjective noun. This is a world of personal friends, added bonuses and free gifts. They are annoying for two contradictory reasons: first of all nobody talks like that, and secondly everybody talks like that. I have never said the words 'free gift'. It would seem a sinister thing to say when gathered around the Christmas tree. 'Here's my free gift, and, as an added bonus, here's a festive Christmas card.' People would think I'd gone mad. Yet, if you wander into a shop or make the terrible mistake of turning on the television or radio, you will hear of heavens that are safe, cooperation that is mutual, and prizes that are, it turns out, to be won. Such phrases lumber about the language like zombies. They were created long ago by insanely evil marketing executives who were desperate to progress forward and sell their foreign imports to the general public. But, like Frankenstein's monster, they could not be stopped. They still lurk in shops and howl from televisions; even though their original inventor is past history." Likewise: "There are people who would find that line inspiring. They would read it and run off to live better lives of purity and holiness up a hill somewhere. There are others who would find it infuriating. Twice. They would read it and as they did so the veins would stand out on their furious foreheads, the saliva would drip from their maddened mouths, and they would take a big red marker pen out of their pockets and delete two words. First, there's the word 'up'. What other direction can you lift something? It's almost as bad as 'fall down' or 'enter into'. It is (some would say) an insult to the intelligence and an abuse of the English language. But it's not nearly as bad as 'from whence'. Whence means from where. So what does 'from whence' mean? 'From from where'? It's enough to make you shoot yourself, and then write an angry letter to the paper. People who think like this lead terrible lives. They have never married, simply because they couldn't bear to hear the words: Dearly beloved, we are gathered together in the sight of God, and in the face of this congregation, to join together this man and this woman in Holy Matrimony . . . They can't enjoy Hamlet because of the unnecessary 'that' in 'To be or not to be, that is the question'. And they can't even throw themselves in front of a train and put an end to their lives of misery and woe, because they're not sure about railway tracks." Pleonasms can be fun. Language can be fun.

Mark Forsyth is a linguistic genius, who is able to translate his esoteric erudition into plain English,

and lead the reader through a wonderful thicket of the unusual and the exotic. If you have any interest at all into the technicalities of language, this is the book for you. Forsyth chooses examples that are familiar to the average reader, but puts them into a teaching context that is both novel and erudite. "The Elements of Eloquence" will teach any of us a great deal, but painlessly and pleasantly.

Read this in a day and a half; got in a fight with my fiancé over putting it down. Charming, saucy, illuminating and instructive. James Spader should read the audiobook. That's how I hear Mark Forsyth's lucid and jaunty voice. (Already on Etymologicon and it has the same breathless intelligence.) If you have ever taken (or are now taking) an English class, this book will give you a wonderful birds-eye view of the essentials. If you have ever taken (or are now taking) Latin "for the sake of all that is holy, DROP EVERYTHING AND BUY THIS BOOK. Forsyth crystallized years' worth of Catullus & Ovid for me, without even mentioning either.

Put simply, if you want to take your writing to the next level, you must read (and reread) this book. The author has brought together the most common, and some not so common, figures of speech and literary devices to enable the reader to understand them and see how they have been utilized by writers, great and small (no merism intended), to give their writings depth, meaning, and whimsy. We all sense it when we read interesting and arresting (no alliteration intended) literature. But we often don't know why the passage, or poem, or prose captures and captivates us. Well, this book will tell you why and you will be dazzled and delighted. It will also help you in your interpretation of literature. Someone has said, "you don't know what a text means, until you know how it means." In other words, meaning is locked up in the way the text has been put together in terms of its grammar, syntax, and literary artistry. Once you understand the "how" of its construction, the meaning appears. This book will show you the "how" of the text's construction. The author has a great style of writing that always keeps your interest and he fills his pages with numerous examples of the figure or device he is describing. So, hurry and get this book. It will make you a better writer and a better reader - two goals for the price of one.

This is the first Mark Forsyth book I've read, but I plan on reading his others. His writing style is engaging and his examples are apropos. Additionally, he uses many esoteric words, and I love looking up new words. Further, if you've ever struggled to truly appreciate Shakespeare, this book will help you out of that hole, because many of the examples he uses are Shakesperian. He also

uses many famous poets such as Wordsworth, Eliot, Emerson, and more. Contemporary examples abound as well, including Beatles songs, Katy Perry lyrics, and the Eagles. He also uses the Bible. Overall, I highly recommend this book for any rhetorician, philologist, or writer.

An insightful, engaging, and humorous look into the figures of rhetoric. It makes the material accessible, easy to understand, and at least for me, had me laughing out loud in public while reading it. My copy now contains multiple notes, highlights, and other markings. As a writer, this is an invaluable resource for making conscious choices in crafting memorable turns of phrase.

I am a word nerd, and a proud one. I bought this book after reading a passage on ablaut reduplication that a co-worker shared with me. This book would be handy for someone who writes for a living or for school, but it is a joy to read for anyone who loves the English language in all of its quirks and glory. Besides, Mr. Forsyth's writing is laugh-out-loud funny. Highly recommend.

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