



# The Word Detective

*By Evan Morris*

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## The Word Detective By Evan Morris

Comic, skeptic, cyber-sleuth, syndicated columnist, and inspired wordsmith, Evan Morris is the Word Detective. He's an etymologist with a sense of humor, a lexicographer with an attitude. Morris's unique approach to language and his distinctive brand of absurdity have found a loyal following of readers curious about everything from soup to nuts--and that means the origins of the phrase soup to nuts, and thousands more words and phrases. This book is a collection of 150 of Morris's language columns, which appear in newspapers throughout the country and on his popular Web site.

A clueless husband writes the WORD DETECTIVE to ask if his wife has insulted him by calling him gormless. Coworkers write to settle a watercooler dispute about the logic of feed a cold, starve a fever. The Word Detective snoops around, follows the leads, and uncovers the answers. The book is chock-full of fascinating lore about the origins and uses of the English language and includes special sections exploring groups of words such as euphemisms, eponyms, and onomatopoeic forms. Funny and offbeat, clever and curmudgeonly, irreverent and irritable, this detective is for all of us who appreciate a dash of wit with our words.

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## The Word Detective By Evan Morris Bibliography

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## Editorial Review

### Amazon.com Review

Who needs Sherlock Holmes when you've got a word detective? Evan Morris, whose Web site and syndicated column solve more mysteries than even Scotland Yard could manage, has assembled a book of entertaining questions and answers that will amuse, educate, and resolve arguments all at once. From "amok" to "zarf", the definitions and origins of words are explained with a delightful combination of wit and research that will leave curious readers delighted.

Each entry begins with the original question asked of Morris, complete with the writer's misspellings and misinformation, and a few of these may result in cringes from the serious wordsmiths out there. One query incorrectly remembers the metaphor "hair of the dog that bit you" as "Something like *bite the dog's tail* or *the dog that bit you last night*," and Morris makes plenty of entertaining suggestions regarding these incorrect versions before finally explaining that the phrase have been around since about 1546, and specifically refers to a hangover remedy. The author is in especially fine form while explaining the phrase "passing the bar"--who knew that it dates back to a requirement that lawyers wrestle a grizzly "bar" before entering into practice? The correct explanation follows Morris's whimsical tale, but 16th-century England just doesn't have quite the same entertainment value. Several special sections cover larger topics, such as food- and animal-based phrases (easy as pie, dog days), onomatopoeia, euphemisms, diner slang, and Yiddish expressions. While not as detailed as the alphabetical entries, words like "wreck", "mensch," and "throb" are given satisfying, if short, descriptions. --*Jill Lightner*

### Review

...carefully researched, informative, and charmingly written....Word-fanciers of all ages will cherish this remarkably reader-friendly volume. -- *Kliatt*, January 2002

### From the Inside Flap

Comic, skeptic, cyber-sleuth, syndicated columnist, and inspired wordsmith, Evan Morris is the Word Detective. Morris's unique approach to language and his distinctive brand of humor account for his loyal following of readers who wonder about everything from soup to nuts and that means the origins of the phrase *ysoup to nutsO*, as well as hundreds of other perplexing words and phrases.

*The Word Detective* is a collection of Morris's language columns, which appear in newspapers around the world and on his popular Web site. The Q & A format makes for lively and unusual interactions between Morris and his readers: Dan from Brooklyn is perturbed by television newscasts that incorrectly use the word *factoid* to mean *ya piece of triviaO* (Morris agrees and adds that *factoid* was actually coined by Norman Mailer in 1973 to mean *ya rumor disguised as a fact.O*) Tim via the Internet asks how the word *moxie* came to mean *ycourage.O* (Morris replies that *Moxie* was, and still is, the name of a soft drink with a taste so intense it takes real gumption to swallow the stuff.) Whether the question is from a student hoping to win a word dispute with his professor or a daughter-in-law trying to wow her mother-in-law with an esoteric phrase, the Word Detective snoops around, does the legwork, and uncovers the answers.

This little book is chock-full of fascinating lore about the origins and uses of the English language and includes special sections exploring groups of words, such as euphemisms, eponyms, and onomatopoeic forms. Offbeat and irreverent (don't get him started on television pundits or the bogus theory that the word *posh* is an acronym for *yport outbound, starboard homeO*), the Word Detective is for all of us who appreciate a dash of wit with our words.

## **Users Review**

### **From reader reviews:**

#### **Doris Griffin:**

The event that you get from The Word Detective is the more deep you looking the information that hide inside the words the more you get interested in reading it. It does not mean that this book is hard to comprehend but The Word Detective giving you thrill feeling of reading. The author conveys their point in a number of way that can be understood through anyone who read the idea because the author of this publication is well-known enough. This book also makes your vocabulary increase well. Therefore it is easy to understand then can go to you, both in printed or e-book style are available. We propose you for having this particular The Word Detective instantly.

#### **Jose Tiernan:**

People live in this new day time of lifestyle always try to and must have the free time or they will get wide range of stress from both lifestyle and work. So , once we ask do people have extra time, we will say absolutely of course. People is human not really a huge robot. Then we question again, what kind of activity do you possess when the spare time coming to an individual of course your answer will probably unlimited right. Then do you try this one, reading books. It can be your alternative inside spending your spare time, the actual book you have read is The Word Detective.

#### **Amy Rodriguez:**

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#### **Mathew Jones:**

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