



No Uncertain Terms: More Writing from the Popular "On Language" Column in The New York Times Magazine

William Safire

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There is no wittier, more amiable or more astute word maven than Pulitzer Prizewinning columnist William Safire.

For many people, the first item on the agenda for Sunday morning is to sit down and read Safire's "On Language" column in *The New York Times Magazine*, then to compose a "Gotcha" letter to the Times. Each of his books on language is a classic, to be read, re-read and fought over. Safire is the beloved, slightly crotchety guru of contemporary vocabulary, speech, language, usage and writing, as close as we are likely to get to a modern Samuel Johnson. Fans, critics and fellow language mavens eagerly await his books on language. This one is no exception.

William Safire has written the weekly *New York Times Magazine* column "On Language" since 1979. His observations on grammar, usage and etymology have led to the publication of fourteen "word books" and have made him the most widely read writer on the English language today. The subjects for his columns come from his insights into the current political scene, as well as from technology, entertainment and life in general. Known for his delight in catching people (especially politicians) who misuse words, he is not above tackling his own linguistic gaffes. Safire examines and comments on language trends and traces the origins of everyday words, phrases and clichés to their source. Scholarly, entertaining, lively and thoughtful, Safire's pointed commentaries on popular language and culture are at once provocative and enlightening.

Want the 411 on what's phat and what's skeevy? Here's the "straight dope" on everything from "fast-track legislation" to "the Full Monty," with deft and well-directed potshots at those who criticize, twist the usage of or misunderstand the meaning of such classic examples of American idiom as "grow'd like Topsy," "and the horse you rode in on," "drop a dime" (on someone), "go figure" and hundreds more, together with sharp, witty and passionately opinionated letters from both ordinary readers and equally irate or puzzled celebrities who have been unable to resist picking up a pen to put Mr. Safire in his place or to offer detailed criticism, additional examples or amusing anecdotes.

No Uncertain Terms is a boisterous and brilliant look at the oddities and foibles of our language. Not only "a blast and a half," but wise, clever and illuminating, it is a book that Mencken would have loved and that should be on the desk (or at the bedside) of everyone who shares Mr. Safire's profound love of the English language and his penchant for asking, "Where does that come from?"

This new collection is a joy that will spark the interest of language lovers everywhere.

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