



Eats, Shoots & Leaves: The Zero Tolerance Approach to Punctuation

By Lynne Truss

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Eats, Shoots & Leaves: The Zero Tolerance Approach to Punctuation By Lynne Truss

The spirited and scholarly #1 *New York Times* bestseller combines boisterous history with grammar how-to's to show how important punctuation is in our world—period.

In *Eats, Shoots & Leaves*, former editor Lynne Truss, gravely concerned about our current grammatical state, boldly defends proper punctuation. She proclaims, in her delightfully urbane, witty, and very English way, that it is time to look at our commas and semicolons and see them as the wonderful and necessary things they are. Using examples from literature, history, neighborhood signage, and her own imagination, Truss shows how meaning is shaped by commas and apostrophes, and the hilarious consequences of punctuation gone awry.

Featuring a foreword by Frank McCourt, and interspersed with a lively history of punctuation from the invention of the question mark in the time of Charlemagne to George Orwell shunning the semicolon, *Eats, Shoots & Leaves* makes a powerful case for the preservation of proper punctuation.

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Eats, Shoots & Leaves: The Zero Tolerance Approach to Punctuation By Lynne Truss Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #6765 in Books
- Brand: Gotham Books
- Published on: 2006-04-11
- Released on: 2006-04-11
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 7.20" h x .64" w x 5.00" l, .46 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 240 pages

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Who would have thought a book about punctuation could cause such a sensation? Certainly not its modest if indignant author, who began her surprise hit motivated by "horror" and "despair" at the current state of British usage: ungrammatical signs ("BOB,S PETS"), headlines ("DEAD SONS PHOTOS MAY BE RELEASED") and band names ("Hear'Say") drove journalist and novelist Truss absolutely batty. But this spirited and wittily instructional little volume, which was a U.K. #1 bestseller, is not a grammar book, Truss insists; like a self-help volume, it "gives you permission to love punctuation." Her approach falls between the descriptive and prescriptive schools of grammar study, but is closer, perhaps, to the latter. (A self-professed "stickler," Truss recommends that anyone putting an apostrophe in a possessive "its"-as in "the dog chewed it's bone"-should be struck by lightning and chopped to bits.) Employing a chatty tone that ranges from pleasant rant to gentle lecture to bemused dismay, Truss dissects common errors that grammar mavens have long deplored (often, as she readily points out, in isolation) and makes elegant arguments for increased attention to punctuation correctness: "without it there is no reliable way of communicating meaning." Interspersing her lessons with bits of history (the apostrophe dates from the 16th century; the first semicolon appeared in 1494) and plenty of wit, Truss serves up delightful, unabashedly strict and sometimes snobby little book, with cheery Britishisms ("Lawks-a-mussy!") dotting pages that express a more international righteous indignation.

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From [Booklist](#)

This impassioned manifesto on punctuation made the best-seller lists in Britain and has followed suit here. Journalist Truss gives full rein to her "inner stickler" in lambasting common grammatical mistakes. Asserting that punctuation "directs you how to read in the way musical notation directs a musician how to play," Truss argues wittily and with gusto for the merits of preserving the apostrophe, using commas correctly, and resurrecting the proper use of the lowly semicolon. Filled with dread at the sight of ubiquitous mistakes in store signs and headlines, Truss eloquently speaks to the value of punctuation in preserving the nuances of language. Liberally sprinkling the pages with Briticisms ("Lawks-a-mussy") and moving from outright indignation to sarcasm to bone-dry humor, Truss turns the finer points of punctuation into spirited reading.

Joanne Wilkinson

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Review

Eats, Shoots & Leaves "makes correct usage so cool that you have to admire Ms. Truss."—**Janet Maslin, The New York Times** "Witty, smart, passionate."—**Los Angeles Times Book Review**, Best Books Of 2004: Nonfiction "This book changed my life in small, perfect ways like learning how to make better coffee or fold an omelet. It's the perfect gift for anyone who cares about grammar and a gentle introduction for those who don't care enough."—**The Boston Sunday Globe**

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Deborah Anderson:

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Kenneth Allen:

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Judith Judd:

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