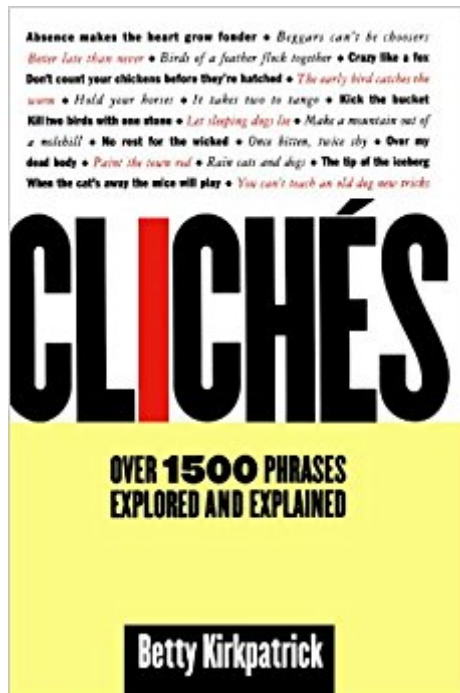




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Cliches: Over 1500 Phrases Explored And Explained



Synopsis

Betty Kirkpatrick has compiled an exhaustive dictionary--a must for writers, crossword puzzle buffs, and anyone who is intrigued by language. Sample entries from *Cliches*: Let the cat out of the bag is an idiom cliché meaning to reveal a secret. In origin it refers allegedly to a fairground trick by which traders sold unwary buyers a cat in a bag, assuring them it was a pig. The buyers did not realize their mistake until they let the cat out of the bag, by which time it was too late. Bite the bullet is an idiom cliché meaning to steel oneself to accept something distressing. In origin it probably refers to the days before anesthesia, when soldiers wounded in battle were given a lead bullet to bite on to brace themselves against the pain of surgery. Fly off the handle is an idiom cliché meaning to lose one's temper. Originally American, the expression has its origin in an ax or hammer, the handle of which becomes loosened and flies off after it has struck a blow.

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Customer Reviews

The cliché is " ... the bad guy of the English language. Furthermore it is the worst kind of bad guy--the bad guy that used to be a good guy before it suffered a fall from grace or, in the case of the cliché, a fall from freshness." Was this always so? Is originality of usage a classic value or a more recent one? In an exhaustive, 10-page introduction to *Cliches: Over 1,500 Phrases Explored and Explained*, lexicographer Betty Kirkpatrick presents a fascinating history of the classification of this linguistic category as well as of various aspects of language, illustrating its elasticity and ongoing evolution. For the literal thinker, it may be satisfying to know that the word

cliché comes from the French *clicher*, meaning "to stereotype" (a printing term), but a succinct and consensual definition? No can do. Clichés are, Kirkpatrick contends, "impossible to pigeonhole." Designating such categories as quotations and misquotations, euphemistic clichés, catchphrases, vogue expressions, or buzzwords, Kirkpatrick has assembled 207 pages of commentary on the subject. For all of the wrath and ridicule expended on it, the cliché, to coin a phrase, is as old as the hills. Look up as old as the hills in Betty Kirkpatrick's *Clichés* and you'll find the phrase, its history, and examples of its usage. You'll want to keep this entertaining dictionary in your reference library for when your dinner guest asks, "What is the shape of things to come?" You'll be able to provide two thought-provoking answers, the first of which will come from your copy of *Clichés*; the second may come from your tarot. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Kirkpatrick, the editor of the *Bloomsbury Thesaurus* (Bloomsbury, 1993) and the latest edition of *Roget's Thesaurus* (Little, Brown, 1996), has turned her lexical attention to the cliché. In this dictionary, she examines and categorizes more than 1500 clichés, using her own classification system. Arranging entries alphabetically, she moves from "absence makes the heart grow fonder" to "zero hour." Kirkpatrick offers an explanation of each cliché's meaning, uses it in a sentence, places it in historical context, and explains who is most likely to use it (e.g., the young or the old, doctors or sports announcers). Thus, the reader can learn that "every effort is being made" is a hackneyed phrase most often used by officials to "reassure people who fear that very little is being done" and that it originated in the 20th century. An interesting introduction exploring the idea of the cliché and how it has been treated over time adds a touch of scholarship to this general-reader dictionary. It will be handy in almost any reference collection and is therefore recommended for all libraries. ?Neal Wyatt, Chesterfield Cty. P.L., Va. Copyright 1997 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Sometimes you just want to read a book and smile well this is the book for you, I was pleased to see some of the clichés in this book that I have used in my various other reviews, how many of these clichés have you ever used in a conversation or your writings, on page 196 I did not know that we'll see and we'll let you know are clichés how many times have you heard those two clichés during a job interview.

I love this book - people use cliches everyday and don't know where they came from. I keep it

handy so I can educate my friends when the use a cliché'. ONE THING I FORGOT WAS TO ORDER "LARGE PRINT." The book was a great bargain.

Any etymological information is scanty or assumed. This was a waste of my time, a waste of my money and a waste of my shelf space. After reading the belabored introduction and several pages of exemplary clichés, I couldn't pick the book up.

I don't want to go overboard (p. 78), but I must disagree with my previous reviewers here and say that this book is a worthwhile addition to any writers' shelf. I could jump on the bandwagon (p. 100) and criticize it for a lack of an index or the absence of overly detailed etymological information, but take it from me (p. 175), it does what it sets out to do fair and square (p. 57). Notwithstanding what a previous reviewer wrote, the book certainly does shed light on (p. 167) the basic etymological origins of the most common (and many not-so-common) clichés. Call me old-fashioned (p. 25) but I think the most important aspect of this book is that it keeps first things first (p. 63) by defining clichés in a straight forward (p. 173) and dispassionate way -- something that prevents the text from eroding into the kind of mess that develops when an author tries to both inform and entertain. At first glance (p. 7), I thought that an index was conspicuous in its absence (p. 33). But all things considered (p. 5), I wondered how effective an index in a case like this would be since it would necessarily have to be organized by key words in a phrase (even if there are several versions of it), the meaning of the phrase, and the meaning of any mistaken interpretations. In the final analysis (p. 94), I think that that the book is fine the way it is ... certainly nothing to be sneezed at (p. 135). Last but not least (p. 100), while it's not for me to say (p. 96) whether owning this book will help you be a better writer or understand the written word better, I will say that if you glance through its pages and fail to learn something to your advantage (p. 112) I will eat my hat (p. 50). I will summarize in order to be perfectly clear (p. 17): I am not saying this is the greatest thing since sliced bread (p. 79), but it is certainly quite good.

I just wanted to let everyone know that the "cliches" are really all of the standard american idioms, which English second-language learners need, along with enough background and explanation to help them achieve complete understanding. It is the perfect gift and well-written idioms textbook for an ambitious learner. I am a volunteer tutor and my student is Korean, and he has devoured this book to discover the secrets behind all of those clever expressions we hear on the Sunday TV shows, and many we use in cultured banter.

I recently had the opportunity to examine this book in depth, and I admit this book was rather disappointing. This book only DEFINES phrases such as: "Absence makes the heart grow fonder," but NEVER explains the ORIGINS of each phrase. Since most everyone knows the definition of phrases such as "Just what the doctor ordered" defining it is seems almost pointless. Want to look up a cliché about being sick(for instance)? Think again, each 'cliché' is listed ONLY alphabetically and can not easily cross-referenced by subject matter giving it ZERO practical application to the modern writer or researcher. For those seeking deeper understanding of clichés, you'd best look elsewhere. This was a superficial effort at best.

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