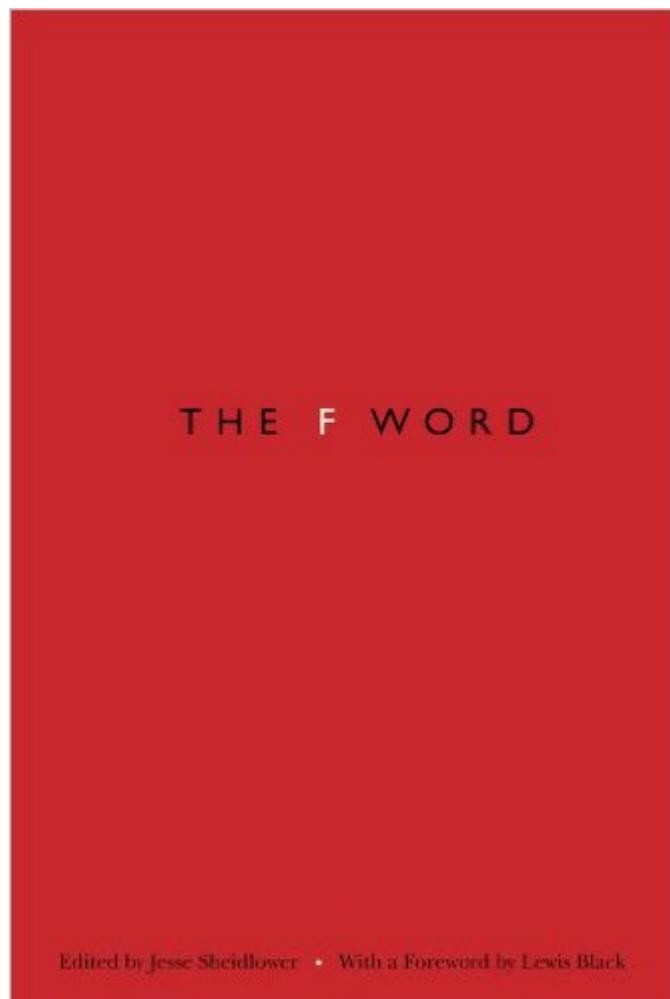


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The F-Word



Synopsis

We all know what frak, popularized by television's cult hit Battlestar Galactica, really means. But what about feck? Or ferkin? Or foul--as in FUBAR, or "Fouled Up Beyond All Recognition"? In a thoroughly updated edition of The F-Word, Jesse Sheidlower offers a rich, revealing look at the f-bomb and its illimitable uses. Since the fifteenth century, no other word has been adapted, interpreted, euphemized, censored, and shouted with as much ardor or force; imagine Dick Cheney telling Democratic Senator Patrick Leahy to "go damn himself" on the Senate floor--it doesn't have quite the same impact as what was really said. Sheidlower cites this and other notorious examples throughout history, from the satiric sixteenth-century poetry of James Cranstoun to the bawdy parodies of Lord Rochester in the seventeenth century, to more recent uses by Ernest Hemingway, Jack Kerouac, Ann Sexton, Norman Mailer, Liz Phair, Anthony Bourdain, Junot Diaz, Jenna Jameson, Amy Winehouse, Jon Stewart, and Bono (whose use of the word at the Grammys nearly got him fined by the FCC). Collectively, these references and the more than one hundred new entries they illustrate double the size of The F-Word since its previous edition. Thousands of added quotations come from newly available electronic databases and the resources of the OED, expanding the range of quotations to cover British, Canadian, Australian, New Zealand, Irish, and South African uses in addition to American ones. Thus we learn why a fugly must hone his or her sense of humor, why Canadian Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau muttered "fuddle duddle" in the Commons, and why Fanny Adams is so sweet. A fascinating introductory essay explores the word's history, reputation, and changing popularity over time. and a new Foreword by comedian, actor, and author Lewis Black offers readers a smart and entertaining take on the book and its subject matter. Oxford dictionaries have won renown for their expansive, historical approach to words and their etymologies. The F-Word offers all that and more in an entertaining and informative look at a word that, while now largely accepted as an integral part of the English language, still confounds, provokes, and scandalizes.

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Customer Reviews

Scholarly exploration of "the most immodest word""Tis needful that the most immodest word / Be looked upon and learned."--William Shakespeare in "Henry IV, Part II"Remember when then-Vice President Dick Cheney told Senator Patrick Leahy (D-VT) to "Go f*** yourself" on the floor of the United States Senate? (on June 22, 2004). Leahy took it all in stride and joked about the incident in 2007: "When it comes to the vice president, it's always better to be sworn in than to be sworn at."Now we have the acronym, "WTF" (shorthand for "What the f***?")--regularly seen on facebook and in twitter and text messages.The most vulgar, most obscene and most verboten slang word in the English language now has an entire book devoted just to it. "The last taboo has fallen," trumpeted "U.S. News & World Report."Numerous word-usage examples are provided and documented beginning as early as the 1500s and 1600s, with the original shocking connotation of an act of copulation.More recent examples--historical, popular, literary and academic--come from "Time," "Newsweek" and Frank Zappa--"SNAFU" ("Time," 1942, "a laconic Army term for 'situation normal, all f***ed up'"), "FUBAR" ("Newsweek," 1944, "fouled up beyond all recognition"), "Eff" (Ernest Hemingway, 1945, "Just tell them to Eff off."), and "Mr. Bufu" (for butt-f***er), from Frank Zappa's 1982 hit song "Valley Girl."Contains an elaborate foreword by Roy Blount, Jr.--plus the excellent introduction by Sheidlower sheds light on our contemporary slang state of mind, the early etymological provenance of the "f word," a chronological exploration of the "f word's" appearances in dictionaries, and an exploration of euphemisms for and phrases containing the "f word.

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