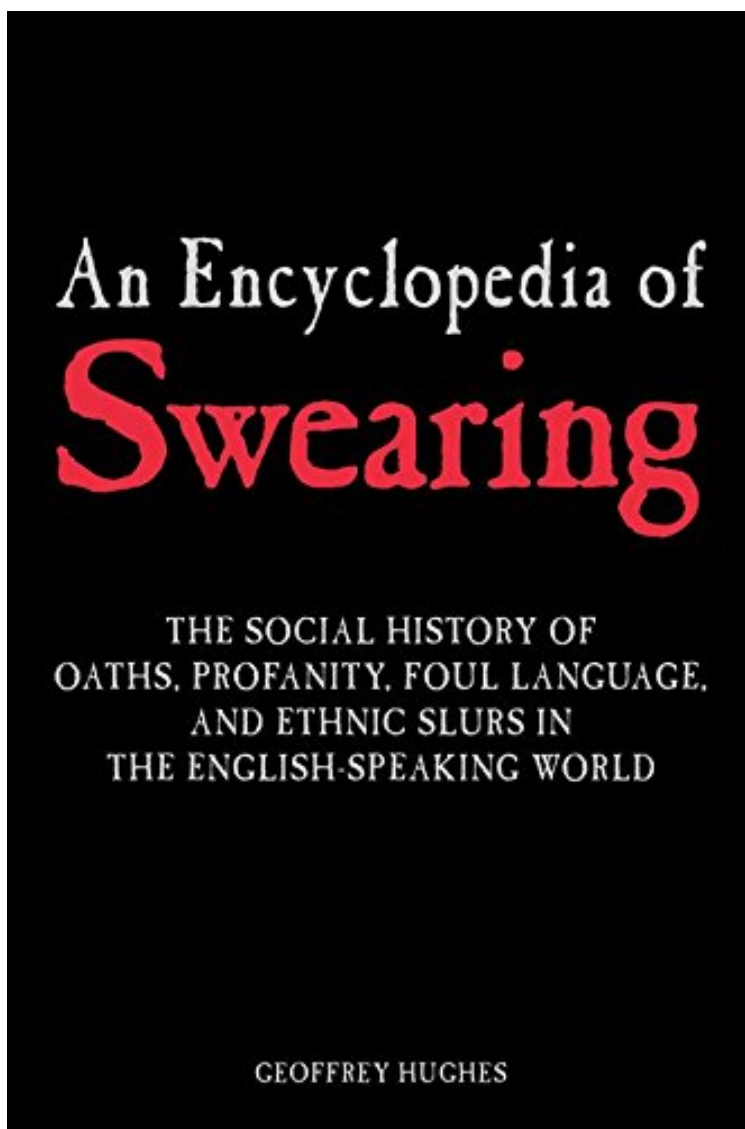



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An Encyclopedia of Swearing: The Social History of Oaths, Profanity, Foul Language, and Ethnic Slurs in the English-speaking World

Geoffrey Hughes

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Geoffrey Hughes : An Encyclopedia of Swearing: The Social History of Oaths, Profanity, Foul Language, and Ethnic Slurs in the English-speaking World before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised An Encyclopedia of Swearing: The Social History of Oaths, Profanity, Foul Language, and Ethnic Slurs in the English-speaking World:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. With its overlapping work "Swearing a social history of foul language etc" By Julian Richardson I have seen some comments making light of this work, It is not for the casual browser but a serious work on the development of the English language and the degeneration of many of our words and oaths into casual vernacular. With its overlapping work "Swearing a social history of foul language etc". It represents a major research into early literature and I was especially impressed with the analysis of Chaucer's works and Anglo Saxon. I think that dinner conversation with Geoffrey Hughes would last for some years with guest in rapt fascination. 8 of 9 people found the following review helpful. Many a high school and public lending library will also find it a compelling addition. By Midwest Book Review An Encyclopedia of Swearing: The Social History of Oaths, Profanity, Foul Language, And Ethnic Slurs in the English-speaking World provides college-level collections with a solid social history which covers all kinds of ethnic and language slurs around the world. From analysis of the instability of swearing terms to those which have evolved over time, and surveys of taboos and their usage, AN ENCYCLOPEDIA OF SWEARING does more than chart common and changing swear words: it documents their underlying social causes and impact and provides scholarly reference under each general swear word theme. Many a high school and public lending library will also find it a compelling addition, capable of reaching beyond the scholarly audience to general interest readers with a special concern for language history and evolution. Diane C. Donovan California Bookwatch

This is the only encyclopedia and social history of swearing and foul language in the English-speaking world. It covers the various social dynamics that generate swearing, foul language, and insults in the entire range of the English language. While the emphasis is on American and British English, the different major global varieties, such as Australian, Canadian, South African, and Caribbean English are also covered. A-Z entries cover the full range of swearing and foul language in English, including fascinating details on the history and origins of each term and the social context in which it found expression. Categories include blasphemy, obscenity, profanity, the categorization of women and races, and modal varieties, such as the ritual insults of Renaissance "flyting" and modern "sounding" or "playing the dozens." Entries cover the historical dimension of the language, from Anglo-Saxon heroic oaths and the surprising power of medieval profanity, to the strict censorship of the Renaissance and the vibrant, modern language of the streets. Social factors, such as stereotyping, xenophobia, and the dynamics of ethnic slurs, as well as age and gender differences in swearing are also addressed, along with the major taboo words and the complex and changing nature of religious, sexual, and racial taboos.

From Booklist History of Modern Colloquial English, published in 1920, included a half-page discussion about a slang term without ever mentioning it. The word? Bloody, a term considered so taboo at that time that it couldn't even be mentioned in a book on lexicography. More than 80 years later, one can barely escape hearing more-graphic taboo terms on cable television and in the movies or reading them in highbrow publications such as the New Yorker. Hughes, a South African English professor, has compiled a fascinating reference work on the history, sociology, and literary uses of foul language and profanity. Alphabetically arranged by topic, the work covers, in addition to terms themselves, a wide range of subjects and individuals: Ethnic insults; Hollywood; Medieval period; Political correctness; and Twain, Mark--to name only a few. The index provides access to words that are not entry headings. Engagingly written and diligently researched, the entries provide helpful information to both lay readers and scholars and include useful bibliographies. The work also offers superb ready-reference information on hard-to-find arcane information, for example, the first time a slang term for copulation was uttered on British television, major dictionaries that include or don't include profane terms, and the case name and citation number of the FCC decision about George Carlin's controversial "Filthy Words" broadcast in 1973. This work is highly recommended for academic and major public libraries. The steep price, however, may dissuade purchase by other libraries, especially if they already own the much more affordable (although now out-of-print) dictionary Wicked Words, by Hugh Rawson. Donald Altschiller Copyright copy; American Library Association. All rights reserved