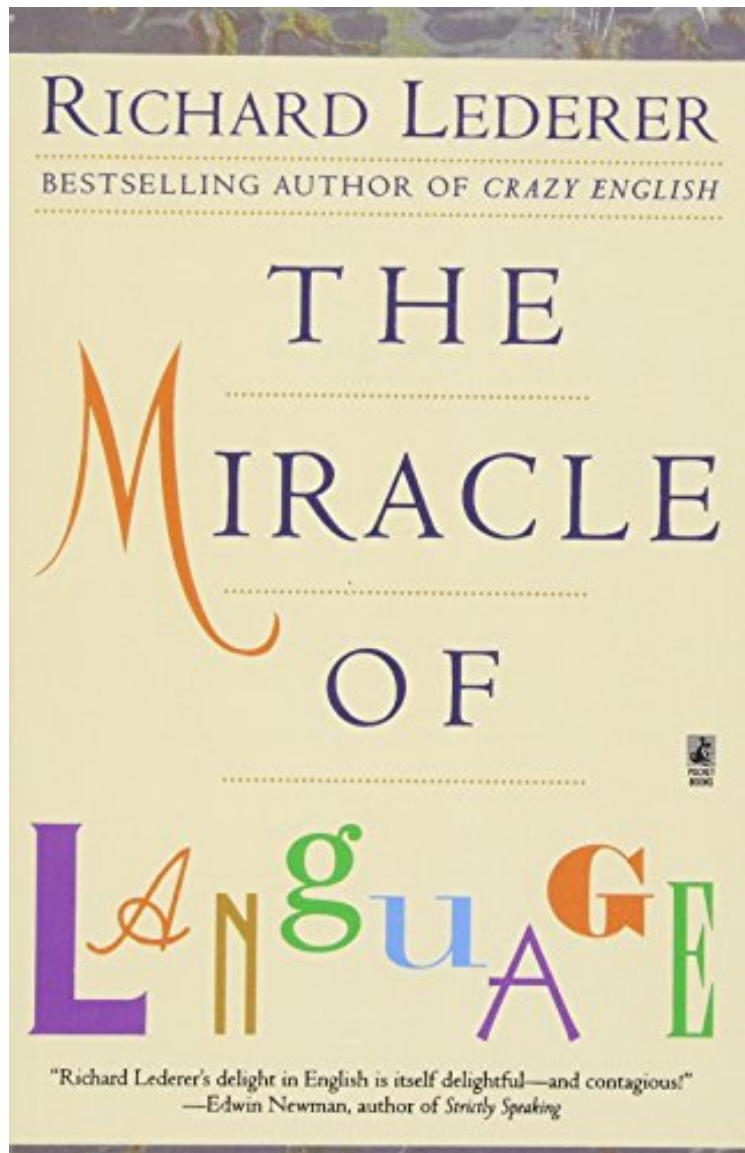


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## The Miracle of Language

*Richard Lederer*

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#1188558 in Books Pocket Books 1999-04-01 1999-04-01 Original language: English PDF # 1 8.25 x .80 x 5.311, .73 #File Name: 0671028111232 pages | File size: 57.Mb

**Richard Lederer : The Miracle of Language** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Miracle of Language:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By skinmd Love this author's insights and ideas. Very entertaining. 3 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Miracle of Language: The best of the original verbivore By John Williamson Author and prolific punster Richard Lederer was once asked which of his own works

was his personal favorite, and the answer was *The Miracle of Language*, in which the reader is treated to a collection of fascinating and enlightening essays. Dr. Lederer celebrates language as "incomparably the finest of our achievements" and passes along some eloquent testimony on the emancipating power of language in the lives of such people as Helen Keller, Richard Wright, Malcolm X, Anne Frank. The author identifies William Shakespeare as the most prolific word-maker who ever lived, a man credited with the first use of over 1,700 words, nearly eight percent of the different words that he used in his writing. Next is Samuel Johnson who, with his breakthrough dictionary, captured the majesty of English and gave it a dignity long overdue. Others include writers such as Ambrose Bierce, Lewis Carroll, Mark Twain, Emily Dickinson, T. S. Eliot, and George Orwell. There's a chapter on the beauty of using short words, that rounds out this a delightful and and highly edifying collection. "A large vocabulary is a great predictor of success, according to the Johnson O'Connor studies and others. I believe that it is also one sign of certain kind of intelligences. It's a matter of simple math. The more words you have, the better you can describe and live in this world. As Holmes said, 'Language is the skin of living thought.'" But Lederer is also no dry author, for there's an amazing amount of humor in many of his works. His interests include uncovering word origins, pointing out common grammatical errors and fallacies, and exploring palindromes, anagrams, and other forms of recreational wordplay. While attending Haverford College as a pre-med student years ago, Lederer soon discovered that he was more interested in language, and he switched his major to English, which was a good thing for all of us. Going on to Harvard Law School, he discovered that he was even more interested in the language itself than in the law cases which he was reading. He switched to a Master of Arts and Teaching program at Harvard, and that led to a teaching career in Concord, New Hampshire. Lederer earned a Ph.D in English and Linguistics at the University of New Hampshire, and was inspired to write books on language, starting with *Anguished English: An Anthology of Accidental Assaults Upon Our Language*. This was followed by *More Anguished English*, and then by *Fractured English*. The popularity of these books and the subsequent titles motivated him to leave his teaching position and pursue further writing and speaking opportunities... and we gained from reading his books on word play, language bloopers, puns and his frequent use of the oxymoron. Dr. Lederer is known as a "verbivore," a word that he coined in the 1980s. His interests include pointing out common grammatical errors and fallacies, uncovering word origins, and exploring palindromes, anagrams, and other forms of recreational wordplay. On top of that, he was Punster of the Year (P.O.T.Y.) in 1989. A few years ago he wrote *The Cunning Linguist*, a book in which he shows us the naughtier side of wordplay, revealing hundreds of hilarious, ingenious, unabashed, and adults-only puns, jokes, limericks, one-liners, and other adventures in humor. As the author says, this book is "300 pages of good, clean, dirty word play for appreciative punographers." I had to fully agree in my review of this book. More recently, author Lederer has released *Amazing Words: An Alphabetical Anthology of Alluring, Astonishing, Beguiling, Bewitching, Enchanting, Enthralling, Mesmerizing, Miraculous, Tantalizing, Tempting, and Transfixing Words*. Wordsmiths of all ages will appreciate what they find here, despite the author's hippopotomonstrosesquipedalian title (the word is in the book), which is made up of nineteen words and 166 characters. For this reader, it's another that has been added to my personal favorites. *The Miracle of Language* is one of those books that has had a special place on my bookshelf for years. My original copy was replaced some years ago, and even that copy is getting a bit dog-eared from frequent use. Next time I'll probably have to get *The Miracle of Language: Kindle Edition* so that it never gets lost. 10/20/2012 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Four Stars By Esther Otim It was what I expected the book to deliver.

Master verbalist Richard Lederer, America's "Wizard of Idiom" (Denver Post), presents a love letter to the most glorious of human achievements... Welcome to Richard Lederer's beguiling celebration of language -- of our ability to utter, write, and receive words. No purists need stop here. Mr. Lederer is no linguistic sheriff organizing posses to hunt down and string up language offenders. Instead, join him "In Praise of English," and discover why the tongue described in Shakespeare's day as "of small reach" has become the most widely spoken language in history: English never rejects a word because of race, creed, or national origin. Did you know that jukebox comes from Gullah and canoe from Haitian Creole? Many of our greatest writers have invented words and bequeathed new expressions to our everyday conversations. Can you imagine making up almost ten percent of our written vocabulary? Scholars now know that William Shakespeare did just that! He also points out the pitfalls and pratfalls of English. If a man mans a station, what does a woman do? In the "The Department of Redundancy Department," "Is English Prejudiced?" and other essays, Richard Lederer urges us not to abandon that which makes us human: the capacity to distinguish, discriminate, compare, and evaluate.

From Publishers Weekly In this collection of entertaining and enlightening essays--BOMC and QPB alternates selection in cloth--Lederer celebrates language as "incomparably the finest of our achievements." Copyright 1992 Reed Business Information, Inc. From School Library Journal YA--This latest collection by the noted verbalist sparkles like a gem. It is finely polished, well crafted, and certain to delight. Readers are invited to ponder if our mother tongue is indeed prejudiced. The misuse of redundant words and how new words are born are also explored. On a deeper level, beyond the wit and buoyancy, Lederer shows that words are not just used to engage but also to instruct. This

collection of essays is a treasure and should be cherished by all who open it.-Mary I. Quinn, Fairfax County Public Library, George Mason Regional, Annandale, VA Copyright 1992 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Kirkus's New England schoolmaster, columnist, and bestselling author Lederer (*Crazy English*, 1989) offers an enthusiastic new assemblage in tribute to language generally and the English kind in particular. Sounding in turn like D'Israeli the Elder on curiosities of literature, William Targ on bibliomania, H.L. Mencken on words, or William Lutz on doublespeak, Lederer compiles a scrapbook that preaches, naturally, to those who are devoted to the wonder of words aggregated. There are tributes to heroes of our tongue: Shakespeare, Johnson (with incursions by Bierce and other witty lexicographers), Lewis Carroll, Mark Twain, Emily Dickinson, T.S. Eliot, and George Orwell. In terms of one syllable, Lederer proves the power of short words. They can, he says, "make a straight point between two minds," which seems a little hard to do, but you get the line. English isn't perfect, however: It's sexist (queens do not rule queendoms), lacks certain utilitarian words (what will we call the decade that will follow the Nineties?), and lends itself to redundant repetition, too, as Lederer cheerfully illustrates and shows. He likes libraries and letter-writing (citing St. Paul as a great correspondent). There's even a lesson in versification and examples of favored writing from his prep-school students. The text concludes with a few hundred pithy comments on words by practitioners from Aristophanes to Wittgenstein. A golly-gee skimming of the manifest wonders of "the most glorious of all human inventions," not deep but easygoing enough to satisfy Lederer's legion of fans. -- Copyright 1991, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.