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John Ayto is a lexicographer and writer who lives in London. He edited the 17th edition of Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase & Fable, and co-authored (with Ian Crofton) Brewer's Britain and Ireland. His other authorial credits include The Oxford Dictionary of Slang, The Bloomsbury More

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HALL OF FAME TOP 1000 REVIEWER. 5.0 out of 5 stars Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase and Fable - The world's only reference book that entertains as well. Reviewed in the United Kingdom on 21 January 2011.

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Originally published in 1870, a colorful reference has been updated to include the newest coinages and complements the entries with informative articles on

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'This is, in fact, not what you were looking for; but it's much more interesting' Terry Pratchett Much loved for its wit and wisdom since 1870, Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase and Fable takes you on a captivating adventure through its trademark blend of language, culture, myth and legend. Nowhere else could the histories of the guillotine and Guinness stout sit so comfortably alongside the KGB and the Keystone Kops. Brewer's is a catalogue of curiosities and absurdities that, over almost 150 years in print, has acquired near-mythical status. Edited by Susie Dent, this new edition includes a brand new Collection of Curious Words and many new and updated entries. Its pages brim with esoteric and entertaining oddities - everything from curious customs to the world of newspapers and political alliances of yesteryear - all seen through the distinctive Brewer lens. This twentieth edition of Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase and Fable encapsulates all the charm and wit that characterise its predecessors and maintains the standards of scholarship and eclecticism that have long been its hallmark. Whether you're a committed Brewerphile or a newcomer to its pages of fascinating entries, this edition will draw you in and keep you glued to its rich mix of eccentric nuggets. As Susie Dent explains in the foreword, Brewer's "is unlike any other reference book that exists, anywhere."

Provides definitions of typical phrases and words and explains their historical origins.

In this book: Much loved for its wit and wisdom since 1870, Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase and Fable takes you on a captivating adventure through its trademark blend of language, culture, myth and legend. Edited by Susie Dent, this new edition contains an intriguing supplement of Brewer's Gems-facts, fables and curiosities from Brewer collections of the past. Its pages brim with esoteric and entertaining entries - everything from curious customs to the world of newspapers and political alliances of yesteryear - all seen through the distinctive Brewer lens. This nineteenth edition of Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase and Fable encapsulates all the charm and wit that characterise its predecessors and maintains the standards of scholarship and eclecticism that have long been its hallmark. This unique edition has been thoroughly updated with over 100 new and revised entries -think crowdsourcing, cyberpunk, iPad and mash-up - guaranteed to delight, entertain and inspire in the best Brewer's tradition. Also included are twenty special entries that encapsulate the enticing spirit of the dictionary. Discover Brewer's take on angels, heraldry, pub signs and recluses and delve into the lexicographical world of the eggcorn. Whether you're a committed Brewerphile or a newcomer to its pages of fascinating entries, this edition will draw you in and keep you glued to its rich mix of eccentric nuggets. As Susie Dent explains in the foreword, Brewer's 'is not a straightforward dictionary, nor is it an encyclopaedia. It is, in fact, unlike any other reference book that exists, anywhere.'

Completely updated for the twenty-first century, this reference presents definitions and origins of thousands of words, idioms, catchphrases, slogans, nicknames, and events from TV, literature, music, comic strips, and computer games.

For over a hundred years 'Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase and Fable' has been one of

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the best-known and best-loved works of reference in the English language. But the book has not stood still for a hundred years. Although it is solidly based on the prodigious learning of Ebenezer Cobham Brewer, who first compiled it in 1870, this useful volume has always kept up with the times and with English as a world-wide language. Each revision has seen the judicious addition of new phrases to Brewer's firm foundation. The ephemeral has always been avoided but every phrase that has stood the test of time and become established in general use is included with both explanation and source. The present revised edition has about 300 new entries, while many of those already existing have been expanded and modified with the aim of increasing their interest and informativeness. New developments in scholarship have also been noted and have been treated with the familiar disarming quirkiness. With suggestions coming to the author from correspondents all over the world, more of those special "oddities" have been included.

This work explains the origins of the familiar and the unfamiliar in everyday speech and literature, including the colloquial and the proverbial. It embraces archaeology, history, religion, the arts, science, mythology and characters from fiction.

The 16th edition of this classic reference offers information about thousands of phrases and expressions which are not dealt with in conventional dictionaries. There are entries on people and events from mythology, the Bible, literature and history. Altogether, there are 18,500 main entries and thousands of sub-entries, and this edition contains 700 new entries, including contemporary phrases and expressions, and historic and fictional characters. Major new thematic entries deal with subjects such as hurricane names and mispronounced words. There is also enhanced coverage of present-day idiomatic expressions, including the full monty, all dressed up and nowhere to go, back to the drawing board and couch potato.

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