



Shades Of Meaning: Reflections On The Use, Misuse, And Abuse Of English

Samuel R Levin

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Much as we speak of junk food, junk bonds, and junk mail to describe commodities that lack substance or fail in their functions, Samuel Levin argues that we are currently beset by a new category of “junkspeak.” Motivated by a psychological desire to sound more sophisticated, people everywhere are filling their speech and writing with linguistic *faux pas* that hinder effective communication. *Shades of Meaning* is a handy guide to words and expressions that are frequently misused by even the most articulate and intelligent users of English. Levin brings to bear an enormous learning in describing not only the distinctions among frequently misused terms but also the linguistic roots of those distinctions and the psychological factors that motivate our errors. The book contains an alphabetized list of articles, most of which explain the subtle semantic distinctions between pairs of words that are often confused. Levin examines word pairs such as illumine/illuminate, partly/partially, unsatisfied/dissatisfied, flaunt/flout, and continual/continuous. Through the use of concise and witty examples, Levin makes these subtle differences clear. Other articles treat grammar and syntax that trip up even the most skilled writers and speakers. In addition, Levin introduces relevant aspects of etymology and the historical development of the language. *Shades of Meaning* is a small gem that will take its place in the library of classic reference works.

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Clarine Davidson:

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