



Ambrose Bierce's Write It Right: The Celebrated Cynic's Language Peeves Deciphered, Appraised, and Annotated for 21st-Century Readers

Jan Freeman

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In 1893, Ambrose Bierce declared "I am for preserving the ancient, primitive distinction between right and wrong." In *Write it Right*, originally published in 1909, Bierce turned this considerable zeal on the English language. The result revealed that the satirical author of *The Devil's Dictionary* had a keen ear for the vernacular--and that he *hated* it. This slim volume of his 300 or so reviled words and expressions contains many we use today with no hesitation at all. (Of "electrocution" he says, "To one having even an elementary knowledge of Latin grammar this word is no less than disgusting, and the thing meant by it is felt to be altogether too good for the word's inventor.") Jan Freeman, author of the weekly column "The Word" for the Boston Globe, annotates Bierce's rulings with style, humor, and in-depth research, revealing what Bierce got right--and what he didn't--and giving insight into how the language has changed over the past century. *Write it Right*, with its incisive wit and insight into the history of American English, is the perfect gift for word curmudgeons everywhere.

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