

Eats, Shoots and Leaves: The Zero Tolerance Approach to Punctuation by Lynne Truss

[A Must For Anyone With An Emotional Relationship With Punctuation](#)

You dont need to be a grammar nerd to enjoy this one...Who knew grammar could be so much fun? -Newsweek

We all know the basics of punctuation. Or do we? A look at most neighborhood signage tells a different story. Through sloppy usage and low standards on the internet, in email, and now text messages, we have made proper punctuation an endangered species. In Eats, Shoots & Leaves, former editor Lynne Truss dares to say, in her delightfully urbane, witty, and very English way, that it is time to look at our commas and semicolons and see them as the wonderful and necessary things they are. This is a book for people who love punctuation and get upset when it is mishandled. From the invention of the question mark in the time of Charlemagne to George Orwell shunning the semicolon, this lively history makes a powerful case for the preservation of a system of printing conventions that is much too subtle to be mucked about with.

A bit behind on my reading list, I finally got around to reading Eats, Shoots and Leaves (2003) by Lynne Truss. Truss, a UK writer, manages to combine the emotive aspect of punctuation with a historical perspective resulting in a British bestseller. I didnt even know people got emotional about punctuation.

Personally, I thought any country that could get so worked up about commas and exclamation points had to be a little daft to start with. However, my own sentimental attachment to the lowly, unappreciated semicolon kept me reading. I found myself thrown in with the likes of Virginia Woolf and George Bernard Shaw; not too shabby. Truss takes us down a pathway filled with humor, history and histrionics. Along the way, we learn a lot about punctuation, its origins and its purpose. One of the most important aspects is that the function of punctuation is to meet the needs of contemporary communication. Who knew? I thought that it was just an excuse for my high school English teacher to torture me. This is important because changes are occurring as I write. It has only been a moment since the typewriter was void of the exclamation point (remember back-spacing the apostrophe?). Now text-speak has impacted communication in the 21st century as much as Morse code did in the 20th.

There is still a place for the die-hard grammaphiles who cant even accept the use of a Yobs comma for breath, but serves absolutely no grammatical function; and for those of us who cant bring ourselves to sprinkle our writing with asterisks. However, I like the smiley :) and the not so smiley faces :(I use in e-mail. It flows so much better that its counterpart you suck does.

The author even reminds us that the age of computers has removed those double spaces after a full stop (periods to you and me). Remember, it is a British reference book; make no mistake. Some of the subtleties are lost on cro magnon Americans. But, I say, ugg, go for it.

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