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Word Fugitives

Barbara Wallraff



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Despite the many thousands of dictionary words at our disposal, our language can be dismayingly inadequate. How many times have you searched for a word that means just what you want it to but failed to find anything suitable anywhere? Most of us, it turns out, lead lives rife with experiences, people, and things that have no names.

At least, they lacked names until now. *Word Fugitives* comes to the rescue, supplying hundreds of inspired words coined or redefined to meet everyday needs. For instance, wouldn't it be handy to have a word for the momentary confusion people experience when they hear a cell phone ringing and wonder whether it's theirs? (How about *fauxcellarm, phonundrum,* or *pandephonium*?)

Or what about a word for offspring who are adults? (Try *unchildren* or *offsprung*.) Or a word for the irrational fear when you're throwing a party that no one will show up? (That might be guestlessness, empty-fest syndrome, or fete-alism.)

This mind- and vocabulary-expanding book grew out -- way out -- of Barbara Wallraff's popular column in *The Atlantic Monthly*. Brimming with irresistible diversions and pop quizzes; illuminated by contributions and commentary from authors, linguists, and leading language authorities; and enlivened by pleas for help from people whose words have yet to be found, *Word Fugitives* will captivate and inspire anyone who ever struggles to describe the world that he or she, or they, or thon (*thon*? see page 141) lives in.

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