

Mr McGREEVY'S  
ABSOLUTE  
HOWLERS





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Norman McGreevy

  
ALLEN & UNWIN

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Allen & Unwin  
83 Alexander Street  
Crows Nest NSW 2065  
Australia  
Phone: (61 2) 8425 0100  
Fax: (61 2) 9906 2218  
Email: [info@allenandunwin.com](mailto:info@allenandunwin.com)  
Web: [www.allenandunwin.com](http://www.allenandunwin.com)

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*Dear Reader,*

If you have picked up this book then I trust we are kindred spirits, bound together by our collective outrage at the ways in which the youth of today are mangling the English language; chewing up words and spitting them out until, like a cashmere cardigan after it's been through the spin cycle, their beauty and power are diminished.

Be warned, your complicity in reading this book may see you accused of pedantry. Perhaps even cruelty. Old fashioned fuddy-duddiness. Be brave in the face of such taunts. I for one am proud to be a curmudgeon. I never vote for anyone. I vote against. I believe we have to save the earth from evangelical environmentalists and dubious politicians who like bananas start off green, turn yellow and then become rotten.

Nothing on TV, except documentaries about the eating habits of the common earwig, even remotely interests me, health food makes me sick, my favourite animal is bacon and the sight of any actor spouting serious opinions, on any topic, I find so completely laughable I have to go and lie down.

And so it is with curmudgeonly pride that I say we must stand united in our righteous protection of literary correctness. For if we allow this state of affairs to continue we will lose not only our future but our past.

It is outrageous, for example, that little Johnny in 5G should think that 'Germany's William the Second had a chimp on his shoulder and therefore had to ride his horse with one hand' or that Catherine in 6A should truly believe 'Joan of Arc was Noah's sister'. This sort of thing, although inadvertently and deeply

humorous, can not go unchecked.

And then there is the smut. When asked what he did in his summer holidays, Jack wrote: 'While rowing up river I slumped over the whores in a state of physical exhaustion.' This boy is not yet even out of long shorts.

I blame the well-known fact that students can't read, write or spell on an education system where sharing feelings is more important than learning to achieve. A fellow curmudgeon I know likes to say that reading most of his students' English essays feels like watching somebody use a Stradivarius to pound nails. I couldn't agree more. In fact I only wish I'd said it myself.

I also blame television, of course. The influence of soap operas and movie gangsters is apparent in students' use of informal language in their essays, referring to Charles V as 'Philip's

dad' or reporting that Luther had 'bad-mouthed' the Pope and the Gestapo 'did over' those who 'bad-mouthed' Hitler.

But it doesn't stop there. What about this new fangled business of text messaging. Cul8r. Do these children read anything that isn't on a screen? Is it any wonder Mary thinks 'the appendix is a part of a book for which nobody ever found a use'?

I can offer only one consolation to soothe the blisters of our torment. Humour. The only good that can come of the murder of proper English language usage is laughter. And you will laugh my friends.

This leads me to one of the problems with the collection of Howlers you hold in your hand. The reader may be tempted to read too many of them at one sitting. This is a mistake. It can be done, but it leaves the reader limp with

laughter, much like over-exercising, and it's really not worth doing, just for the sake of saying you have done it. Take it easy. Spread it out over the course of a week. Assimilate the benefits little by little. I'd recommend carrying it with you, dipping into it, and turning down the page corners, for a quick pick me up.

While I am sure many of the Howlers in this collection have been cut and polished over the years, and many may doubt the authenticity of some of the more fanciful, there has been no need for invention. Indeed, any attempt at invention soon stands out from their natural and uncontrived feel. There is a great feeling of satisfaction to know that you have produced a book that is guaranteed to bring laughter and amusement, and now even better health, to so many people. This compilation, *Mr McGreevy's Absolute Howlers*, drawn from many thousands of

Howlers in exam papers and student essays, takes the very best to show that this well established tradition is very much alive and well. As for the preservation of the fine traditions of correct punctuation, sentence structure, and factual accuracy, we can only hope and pray for a turnaround in this alarming trend towards casual and sloppy language.

As you start out on your crusade, fear not the cries of the unrighteous—‘Why are you always such a terrible curmudgeon? Go out and have some fun, get a life’ or more pointedly ‘Shut up, and don’t ever come to my house again, you miserable old bastard’. Forgive them, for they know not what they do. Ignoramuses.

*Norman McGreevy*  
September 2006







# School Days

He closed his eyes in a gesture of despair; he contorted his face, praying for strength, and then lifted his leg, aiming towards the horizon.



He was a man of about 35 years of age, looked twenty and was forty.

Pails and bowels were  
flung all over the plaice.



Walking along the country lane,  
with my feet in the stirrups.



The dream in every newlywed  
couple's head is to marry.

If he is not checked at the right  
age he will gradually develop  
into a vandal, and it will not be  
long before he is a magistrate.



If a tree falls in the dessert,  
does it make a sound?



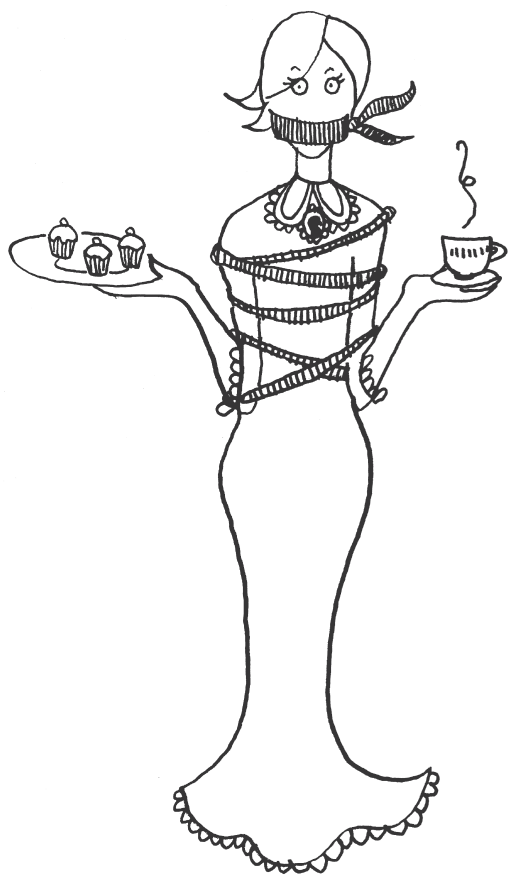
All the crew were taken  
into custody.

Upstairs, on the front of  
the house, is the bathroom.

This comprises of one bath,  
sink unit and toilet with enough  
room to tuck one's toes in.



People were running all over  
the place, the boys in shorts and  
the girls in hysterics.



We had a longer holiday  
than usual this year because  
the school was closed  
for altercations.



Girls were typically sent to  
finishing school where the  
point was to finish them off.



A hostage is a lady  
who entertains visitors.

All teachers at our school  
are certified.



A polygon is a man  
who has many wives.



The headmaster caned me  
only on rear occasions.

Writing of the school's old boys  
in an essay on the war:  
Those that did not go to the war  
married, but the stronger ones  
started a football team.



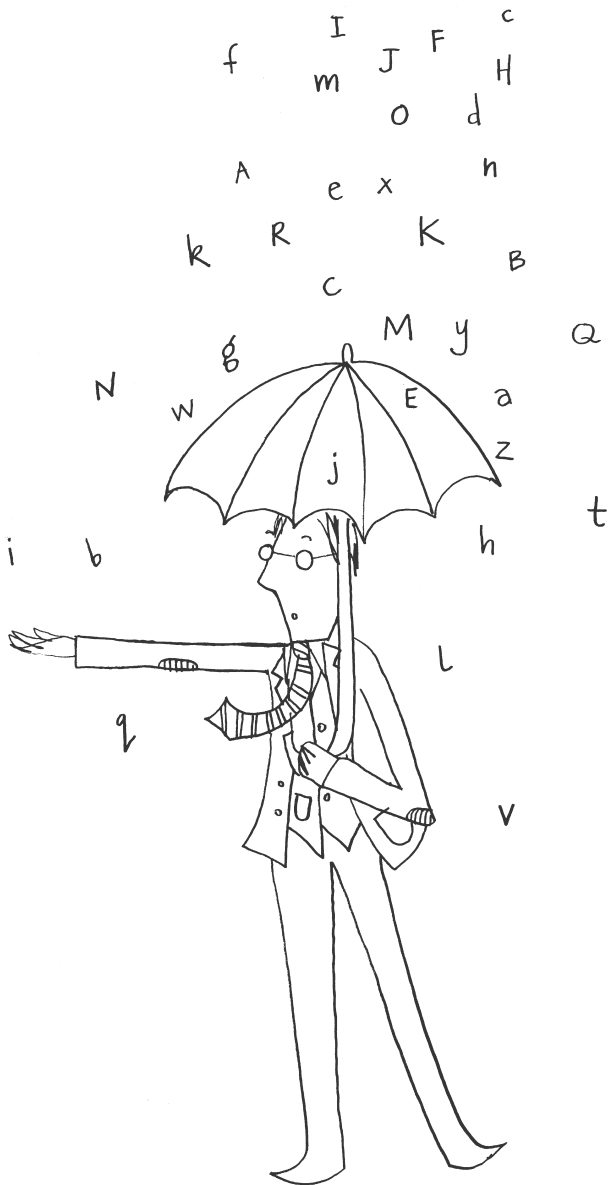
Our school is ventilated  
by hot currants.



A school teacher leads  
a sedimentary life.



# Books & Words & Stuff



A fairy tale is something that  
never happened a long time ago.



She worked herself up into an  
inarticulate comma.



Lady Jane Grey said she was  
content with her books, so she  
was beheaded.

The word trousers is an uncommon noun because it is singular at the top and plural at the bottom.



The appendix is a part of a book for which nobody ever found a use.



Ovid wrote a poem called  
the 'Medea' which was  
lost fortunately.



Writing at the same time  
as Shakespeare was  
Miguel Cervantes. He was  
Donkey Hote.



Polonius was a mythical sausage.

Shakespeare married Anne Hathaway, but he mostly lived at Windsor with his merry wives. This is quite usual with actors.



Achilles appears in ‘The Illiad’, by Homer. Homer also wrote the ‘Oddity’, in which Penelope was the last hardship that Ulysses endured on his journey.

Homer wrote the 'Oddity'.  
Actually, Homer was not written  
by Homer but by another man  
of that name.



Voltaire invented electricity and  
also wrote a book called 'Candy'.



John Milton wrote 'Paradise  
Lost'. Then his wife died and he  
wrote 'Paradise Regained'.

An epitaph is a short  
sarcastic poem.



Poetry is when every line starts  
with a capital letter and doesn't  
reach the right side of the page.



Lord Byron wrote epics and swam  
the Hellespont. In between he  
made love drastically.

In Ibsen's 'Ghosts', Oswald dies  
of congenial syphilis.



The brave knight was  
swallowed up by the awful  
abbess that yawned all of a  
sudden in front of him.



Shakespeare lived in Windsor  
with his merry wives, writing  
tragedies, comedies and errors.

A relative pronoun is a family pronoun, such as 'mother', 'brother', 'uncle'.



Letters in sloping type are in hysterics.



Emphasis in reading is putting more distress in one place than another.

An abstract noun is one that  
cannot be heard, seen,  
touched, or smelt.



Brutus was a tragic hero in spite  
of dying in the end.



In conclusion we may say that  
Shylock was greedy, malicious,  
and indeed, entirely viscous.





# Geography

A consonant is a large piece of  
land surrounded by water.



A glazier is a man who runs  
down mountains.



The general direction of the  
Alps is straight up.

The Wholey Roman Empire  
amazed many when it was  
found in Germany.



The population of Sydney  
is a bit too thick.



Britain has a temporary climate.



In some rocks there are  
to be found the fossil  
footprints of fishes.



The Andes are a race of people  
living in North America.

The principal exports of Sweden  
are hired girls.



The Dutch people use water  
power to drive their windmills.



Coal is decayed vegetarians.

The climate of the island  
is wet but embracing.



A Native American calls his  
wife a squaw and his children  
squawkers.



# History



King Arthur lived in the  
Age of Shivery.



My favorite myth was Jason  
and the Huguenots.



Socrates died from an  
overdose of wedlock.

In the Olympic games, Greeks  
ran races, jumped, hurled the  
biscuits, and threw the java.



The Persians outnumbered  
the Greeks because they had  
more men.



The wife of a duke is a dukky.

Helen of Troy launched a  
thousand ships with her face.



Alexander the Great conquered  
Persia, Egypt and Japan. Sadly  
he died with no hairs.

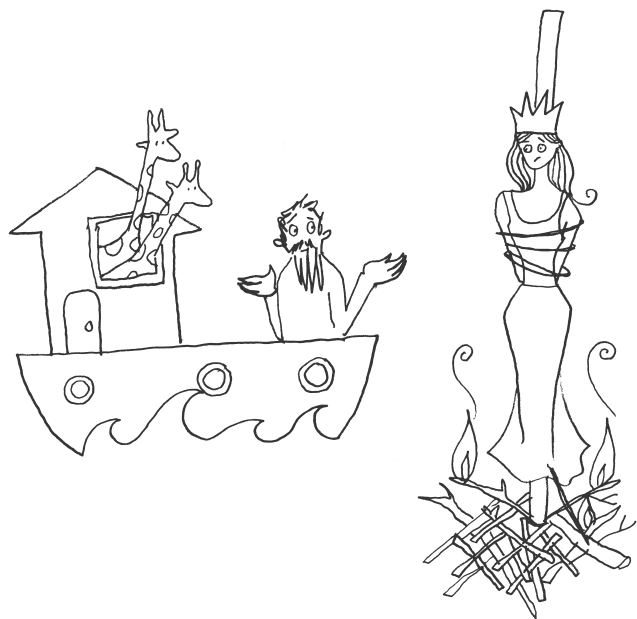
Another Greek myth was Jason  
and the Golden Fleas.



The Epicureans and the  
Synthetics believed 'If you can't  
play with it, why bother?



Joan of Arc was burnt  
to a steak.



Queen Elizabeth never married,  
she had a peaceful reign.



Magna Carta provided that  
no man should be hanged twice  
for the same offence.



Joan of Arc was  
Noah's sister.

When Elizabeth exposed herself  
before her troops, they all  
shouted, 'hurrah'.

Then her navy went out and  
defeated the Spanish Armadillo.



Medieval people were violent.  
Murder during this period  
was nothing. Everybody  
killed somebody.

During the Middle Ages  
the Surfs were dentured  
and bonded to the ground.



Two hundred years of rule by  
the Tarts explains why Russia  
became so backward.

The Turks manicured  
the pilgrims.



Victims of the Black Death  
grew boobs on their necks.



The King wore a scarlet robe  
trimmed with vermin.



Ivan the Terrible started life  
as a child, a fact that troubled  
his later personality.



Arrested witches were torched  
until they told a story. The worst  
of this could be the rack or  
burning with hot porkers. Some  
women were made to endure  
the ducking stool.

In the middle of the 18th  
century, all the morons  
moved to Utah.



The German Emperor's lower  
passage was blocked by  
the English.



The War of the Spanish  
Succession ended in a drawl.

The British used mostly Aztec  
troops to do their fighting  
at Gallipoli.



Germany's William the Second  
had a chimp on his shoulder  
and therefore had to ride his  
horse with one hand.

In 1937 Lenin revolted Russia  
after the Germans sent him  
home in a soiled train.



Clive committed suicide three  
times and the third time they  
sent him to India.

Louis XVI was gelatined to death.



The French Revolution was  
caused by overcharging taxis.



Henry VIII by his own efforts  
increased the population of  
England by 40 000.

Hitler's instrumentality of  
terror was the Gespacho.



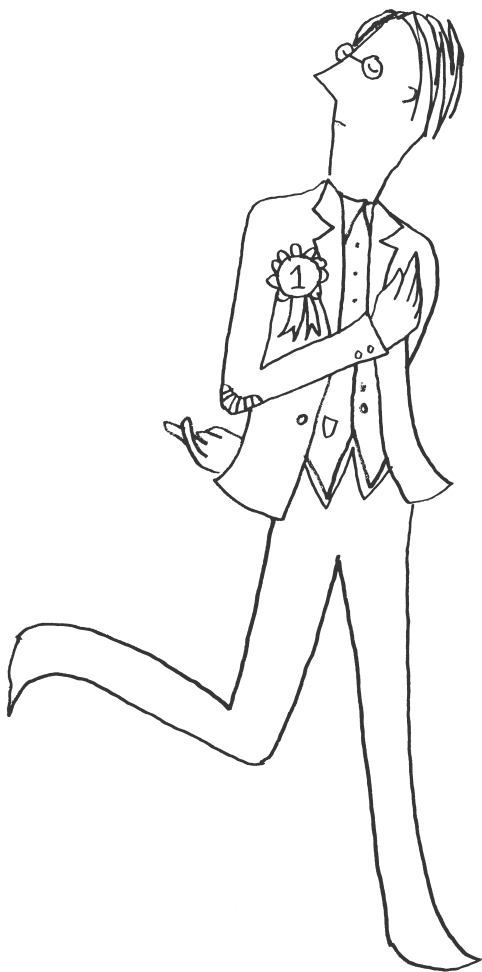
When things didn't go as  
planned, Stalin used the  
peasants as escape goats.



Hitler committed suicide  
in his bunk.



# Politics



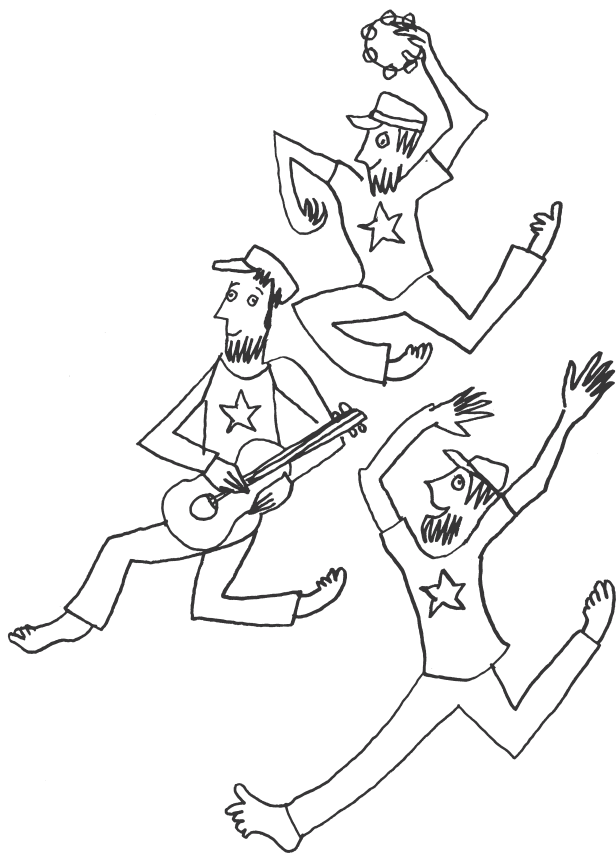
When Caesar was assassinated,  
he is reported to have said ‘Me  
too, Brutus!’



King John ground the people  
down under heavy taxis.



Karl Marx's Communist Fiesta  
was very important.



Machiavelli who was often unemployed, wrote 'The Prince' to get a job with Richard Nixon.



Laissez-faire meant  
'let the farmers pay the taxes'.



A caucus is a sort of big parrot  
that has been taught to swear.

President Carter faced the  
'Iran Hostess Crisis'.



The USSR and the USA became  
global in power, but Europe  
remained incontinent.



When Gorbachev became top  
Russian the USSR shifted to a  
new planet of existence.





# Animals

Sharks were infesting the area,  
and one of them was  
a non-swimmer.



A Mayor is a he horse.



Benjamin Franklin discovered  
electricity by rubbing two cats  
backwards and declared,  
'A horse divided against  
itself cannot stand.'

An armadillo is an  
ornamental shrub.



To keep milk from turning sour:  
keep it in the cow.



Marsupials are  
poached animals.

The home of the swallow  
is the stomach.



Anthroapologists have proved  
that when animals were not  
available the people ate  
nuts and barrys.



Herrings go about  
the sea in shawls.



A monkey has a  
reprehensible tail.



Frogs have webbed feet for  
swimming but, like ducks,  
these are fine to walk on.



Men are mammals and  
women are femammals.

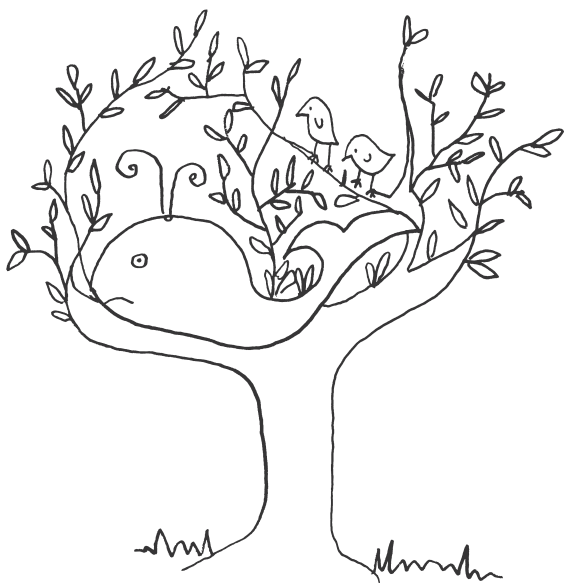
The hydra gets its food by  
descending upon its prey and  
pushing it into its mouth  
with its testicles.



The adder is a poisonous snack.



An octogenarian is an animal  
which has eight young at birth.



One horsepower is the amount  
of energy it takes to drag a horse  
500 feet in one second.



The largest mammals are to be  
found in the sea because there is  
nowhere else to put them.



# Science & Medicine



Some of the patients were  
plastered, and some were hanging  
from the ceiling.



For fractures: to see if the  
limb is broken, wiggle it  
gently back and forth.



For snakebites: bleed the wound  
and rape the victim in a  
blanket for shock.

If anyone should faint put her  
head between the knees of the  
nearest medical man.



Later on the doctor gave him  
piles to relief him his pain.



Although the patient had  
never been fatally ill before,  
he woke up dead.

A circle is a figure with 0  
corners and only one side.



A phlegmatic person is one who  
has chronic bronchitis.



The liver is an infernal organ.



Nuclear activity causes  
distortions in the jeans of women.

A city purifies its water  
supply by filtering the water and  
forcing it through an aviator.



A major discovery was made by  
Mary Leaky, who found a circle  
of rocks that broke wind.



Nets are holes surrounded  
by pieces of string.

Crude oil is a vicious substance.



The Scientific Revolution  
developed a suppository of  
knowledge which greatly  
helped later generations.



If you cross XY and XX chro-  
mosomes, you get XX (female),  
YY (male) and XY (undecided).

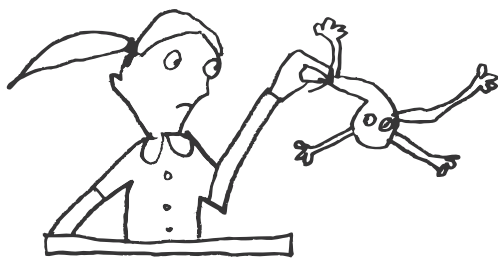
An advantage of an organism  
having both sexual and asexual  
reproduction in its life-cycle:  
twice as much reproducing.



Al Chemy was a man who  
discovered chemistry.



If teeth are not cleaned,  
plague is the result.



Vacuums are nothings. We only  
mention them to let them know  
we know they are there.



In biology today,  
we digested a frog.



To germinate is to become  
a naturalised German.

The earth makes a resolution  
every 24 hours.



Rainbows are just to look at,  
not to really understand.



Pine is an example of a  
carnivorous tree.



Clouds are high flying fogs.

Clouds just keep circling the  
earth around and around.  
And around. There is not  
much else to do.



Methane, a greenhouse gas,  
comes from the burning  
of trees and cows.



Parallel lines never meet unless  
you bend one or both of them.





# Music

S.O.S. is a musical term  
meaning 'same only softer'.



I know what a sextet is,  
but I'd rather not say.



When not working in the  
church, Bach composed pieces  
on a spinster in his home.

Refrain means don't do it. A  
refrain in music is the part you  
better not try to sing.



Stradivarius is an imaginary  
prehistoric animal.

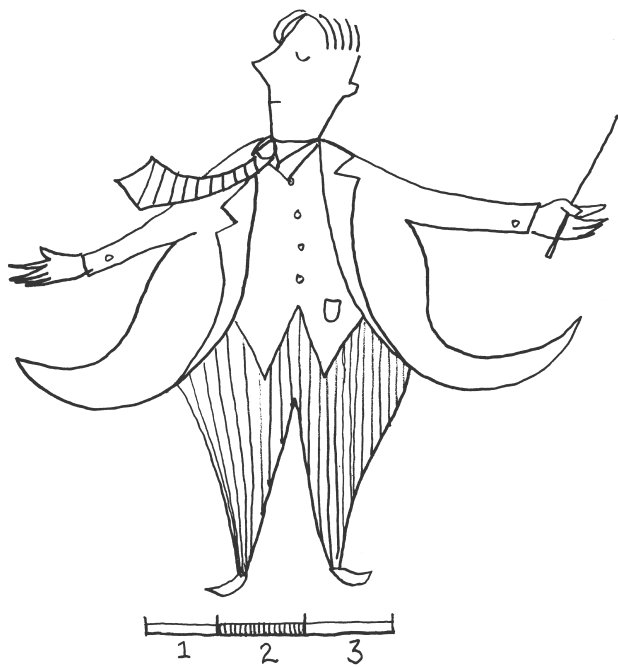
**John Sebastian Bach died from  
1750 to the present.**



**Anyone who can read all the  
instrument notes at the same  
time gets to be the conductor.**



**Handel was half German half  
Italian and half English.  
He was very large.**



You should always say celli  
when you mean there are two  
or more cellos.



When electric currents go  
through them, guitars  
start making sounds.  
So would anybody.

**Question: What are kettle drums  
called? Answer: Kettle drums.**



**Question: Is the saxophone  
a brass or a woodwind  
instrument? Answer: Yes.**



**One semibreve equals two  
minions and one crochet  
four semi-skews.**



# Religion



The masculine of vixen is vicar.



Peat was made out of moses.



The result of the Reformation  
was that the people could  
choose either to be  
Catholics or pugilists.

The Jews were a proud people,  
but always had trouble with  
unsympathetic Genitals.



Zorroastrologism was  
founded by Zorro. This was  
a duelist religion.



The seventh commandment is  
‘Thou shall not admit adultery’.

One of the opossums was  
St Mathew he was also a taximan.



One of Jacobs sons, Joseph,  
gave refuse to the Israelites.



Solomon was very fond of  
animals because he had  
300 porcupines.



Solomon had 300 wives  
and 700 cucumbers.



David was a Hebrew king  
skilled at playing the liar.  
He fought with the Philatelists,  
a race of people who lived  
in Biblical times.



The Papal Bull was a mad bull  
kept by the Pope in the Inquisi-  
tion to trample on Protestants.

Greek religion was polyphonic.

Featured were gods such as

Herod, Mars, and Juice.



The entire city of Constantinople  
rose up with a tremendous ejac-  
ulation every time the Christian  
Emperor Constantine came.



The Philistines are islands  
in the Pacific.

The message came to Abraham  
that he should bear a son, and  
Sarah, who was listening behind  
the door, laughed.



A republican is a sinner  
mentioned in the bible.



Paraffin is the next order  
of angels above seraphims.

God's Own Country is Heaven.



Everyone was pleased when  
Jesus healed the paralytic man,  
except Simon who had to pay to  
have the roof mended.



The chief missile of the Church  
of England is the Prayer Book.

The end of the World will  
mark a turning point  
in everyone's life.



Moses received the Ten  
Commandments on two  
stones, and these he impressed  
upon the people.



As the creator cools it hardens.

The natives of Macedonia  
did not believe in Paul,  
so he got stoned.



Pompeii was destroyed by an  
overflow of saliva from  
the Vatican.



Judyism had one big God  
named 'Yahoo'.



An angry Martin Luther nailed  
ninety five theocrats to  
a church door.

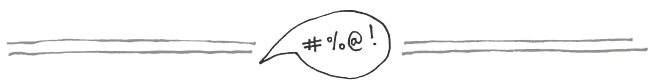


Oliver Cromwell had a large red  
nose, but under it were deeply  
religious feelings.



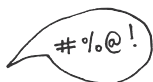
Possession by spirits means  
feeling like the devil.





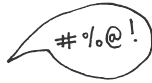
R-Rated

As he walked through  
his room he heard the sound  
of heavy breeding.



When the wedding was over  
the bridegroom clasped his  
loved one tight in his arms,  
while the little organ began  
to swell and fill the room.

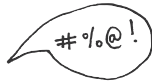
While rowing up river I  
slumped over the whores in a  
state of physical exhaustion.



Promiscuous behaviour leaves  
them with a problem behind.

She took me indoors  
and called her husband;  
he was very practical  
and gave me a nightdress  
and some hot soup, and  
told me to lie down  
in his bed.

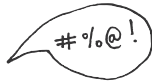
In the Middle Ages  
people lived in mud huts with  
rough mating on the floor.



The nineteenth century  
was when people stopped  
reproducing by hand and  
started reproducing  
by machine.

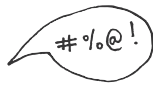


Madame Pompadour gained  
in power while being  
placed under the king.



Merchants appeared and roamed  
from town to town exposing  
themselves and organizing big  
fairies in the countryside.

These peace-loving animals start  
their life as small, furry balls,  
and they grow up and with any  
luck will find a mate, and have  
small, furry balls themselves.



The Mona Liza was the most  
beautiful woman ever to be  
laid on canvas.

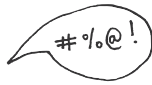
I secretly entered the boat  
with a feeling of suspiciousness.  
I hid myself under the bed of a  
woman. Doing all this without  
the consent of the woman,  
I managed to overcome my  
nervousness by introducing  
myself to her in the dark, and  
gained full advantage of it.

A wife should be understanding  
and loving and bare  
with her husband.



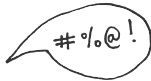
A census taker is a man who  
goes from house to house  
increasing the population.

Gonads are a tribe of  
wandering desert people.



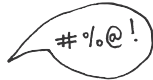
Roman girls who did not marry  
could become Vestigal Virgins,  
a group of women who were  
dedicated to burning  
the internal flame.

She lay there semi-naked,  
semi-conscious, and  
semi-hopeful.



A gelding is a stallion who has  
his tonsils taken out so he would  
have more time to himself.

Early Egyptian women often wore a garment called a calasiris. It was a sheer dress which started beneath the breasts which hung to the floor.



Adolescence is the stage between puberty and adultery.