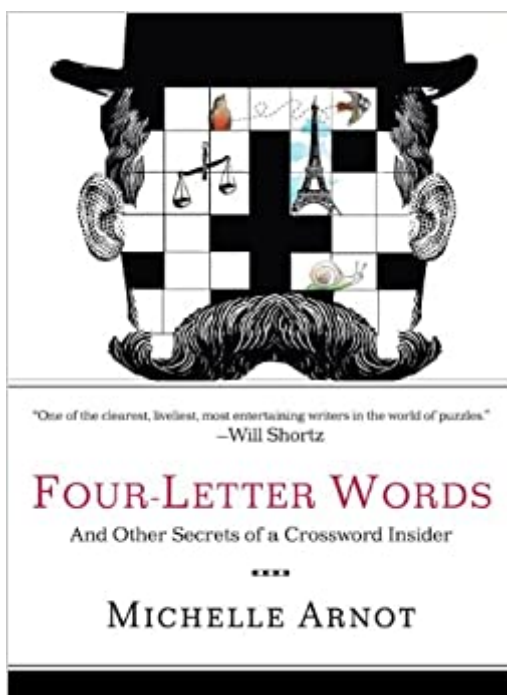


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# Four-Letter Words: And Other Secrets Of A Crossword Insider



## Synopsis

Crossword puzzle expert and champion Michelle Arnot has compiled this irresistibly fun and entertaining manual filled with fascinating facts, puzzle miscellany, and surefire tips for puzzle solving. For devoted daily puzzlers, casual solvers, and fearless crossword warriors alike, this book offers insights into the addictive world of crossword puzzles including: • Insider secrets, techniques, and tips • Obscure four-letter words for scoring big points • Advanced strategies of competitive puzzlers • Inside stories of eccentric players and all-time champions of the grids • Trivia, lore, and the lingo of crosswording

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Starred Review. While opening up a window into the unique world of those who write, edit, and obsessively solve crosswords, puzzle writer, editor and self-proclaimed "acrossionado" Arnot (*What's Gnu: History of the Crossword Puzzle*) opens up a chest of insider secrets and solving tips worth the price of admission themselves. The title refers not to profanity, but a stable of commonly occurring crossword answers-"repeaters" to the insider-that form the foundation of nearly every standard crossword-and are cleverly highlighted, with an accompanying clue, throughout the text, equipping her readers with old-pro tools while keeping up a fleet, at times manic examination of the puzzle's people and processes. Bouncing with little or no warning from topic to topic, Arnot comes across like a close friend finally given the green light to unload about a lifelong obsession. She wisely outlines her thoughts into chapter topics like geographical words, the occurrence of "E," proper names, 3-letter words and crossword variations. Crossword fans should tear through this like

a specimen from Monday's New York Times, but Arnot's enthusiasm alone could make anyone curious into a convert. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Veteran crossword-puzzle creator and editor Arnot uses four-letter words, the staple of the puzzle composer and solver, as a jumping-off point for a journey through the world of crosswords. The book is full of little-known (to most of us, anyway) nuggets of information: the first crossword puzzle appeared in a New York newspaper on Christmas Day 1913; there are strict rules for composing a puzzle (no more than one-sixth of the spaces can be black, for example); future publishing giant Simon & Schuster's very first book was a collection of crossword puzzles. The author also charts the evolution of the crossword puzzle, showing how certain words have been standbys since the beginning (they're called "repeaters" because they turn up in puzzles all the time), but their clues have changed over time "Omar, for example, is a proper-name repeater whose clue has evolved from World War II general (Bradley) to television actor (Epps). The book is like a crash course in crossword puzzles and should appeal equally to veteran solvers and novices. --David Pitt

Getting books on Kindle - where I read this - is always a leap into a sea of incompetence. How will the publishers mangle the text? Crazy formatting? Misspelled words? Weird paragraphs? Who knows, but it's usually something. One of the most puzzling of the publishers' attempts to transfer books to Kindle is that so many publishers seem not to understand the concept of a "paragraph." One gets the sense that the transfer is being supervised by people who have never seen (or rather, read) a printed book. This particular instance is notable for a fairly novel way to mangle paragraphs. Some of the paragraphs are indented, and some are not! I'd say it's about an 80-20 ratio or so. Was there some sort of Solomnic compromise in the editing room about whether to indent paragraphs? (For instance, "Unkeyed in crosswords" or "For decades, the dictionary" or "The fact that Erlenkotter's" begin paragraphs that are unindented.) The strange formatting is distracting and, particularly for a crossword book, annoying. And as usual, there are a few of those sui generis Kindle typos, "buriedthere

There is a world of difference between "Four Letter Words" and the usual crossword puzzle dictionaries and how-to guides. As the author herself writes, in order to construct a puzzle, "brain power and a sense of humor are essential." In writing this useful and tremendously entertaining book, Michelle Arnot shows she has both. Although Arnot explains which words correspond to

which clues, she also includes crossword puzzle history and first-person encounters with famous puzzlers, most not usually known for their prowess with a pen and copy of The New York Times. For prospective parents who dream of seeing their offspring's names in the Times puzzle, Arnot supplies a choice of vowel-rich four letter name like Emma, Demi, Desi or, best of all, Oona. Or name your dog Asta or Fala. There are also chapters on three-letter words and four-letter words starting with E: eBay, Este, erne, Erie, elan, etc.).

Ms. Arnot's writing is clear, concise and entertaining. This book is a must-read for crossword solvers of all stripes. Her wit and flow are assets to be envied.

Fun and educational!

is our appreciation for Michelle Arnot's "Four-Letter Words: And Other Secrets of a Crossword Insider". This guide is truly a must for beginners as well as experienced puzzlers. Arnot is as witty and clever as one might hope every crossword will turn out to be. "Four-Letter Words" would be a wonderful addition for any puzzler's bedside table as it is not only very informative and useful, it makes for delightful reading. Why people should do crossword puzzles is a subject for the gerontologists and will not be debated here. Suffice to say you may know, as I do, some folks who could benefit from the practice and perhaps don't have all the crossword skills that the more experienced puzzlers have by now internalized. Arnot lays it all out in such an engaging way that by the end of the book one will have learned more than enough to fold the NY Times back to the puzzle page, put on the readers and amaze your friends! Once you have gleaned some of Arnot's vast knowledge the answer to every puzzler's question, "How smart am I?" will be "Pretty darn smart!"

Maybe I will improve as a crossword solver.

Not just for crossword puzzle mavens, any one who loves words will find this erudite and effervescent book hard to put down.

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