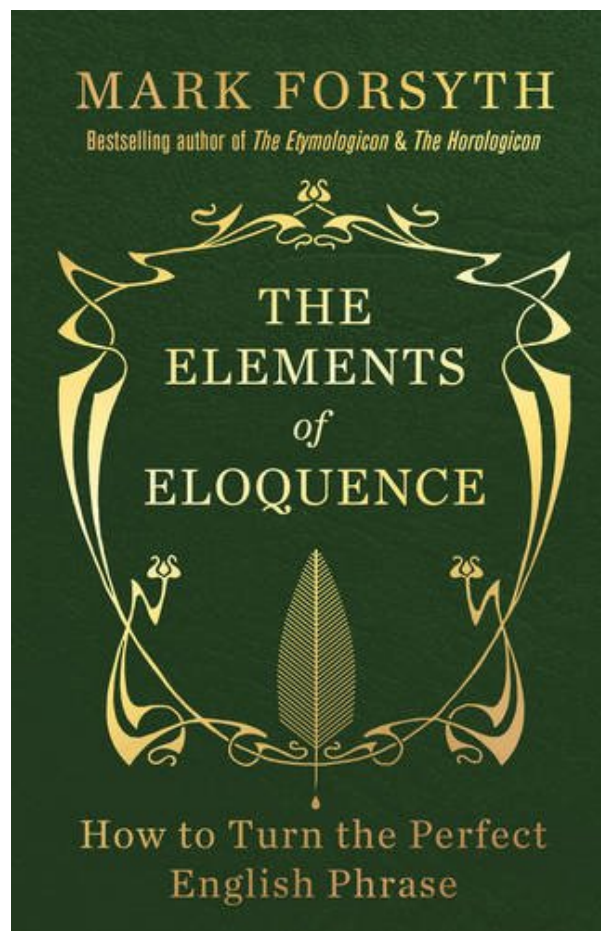
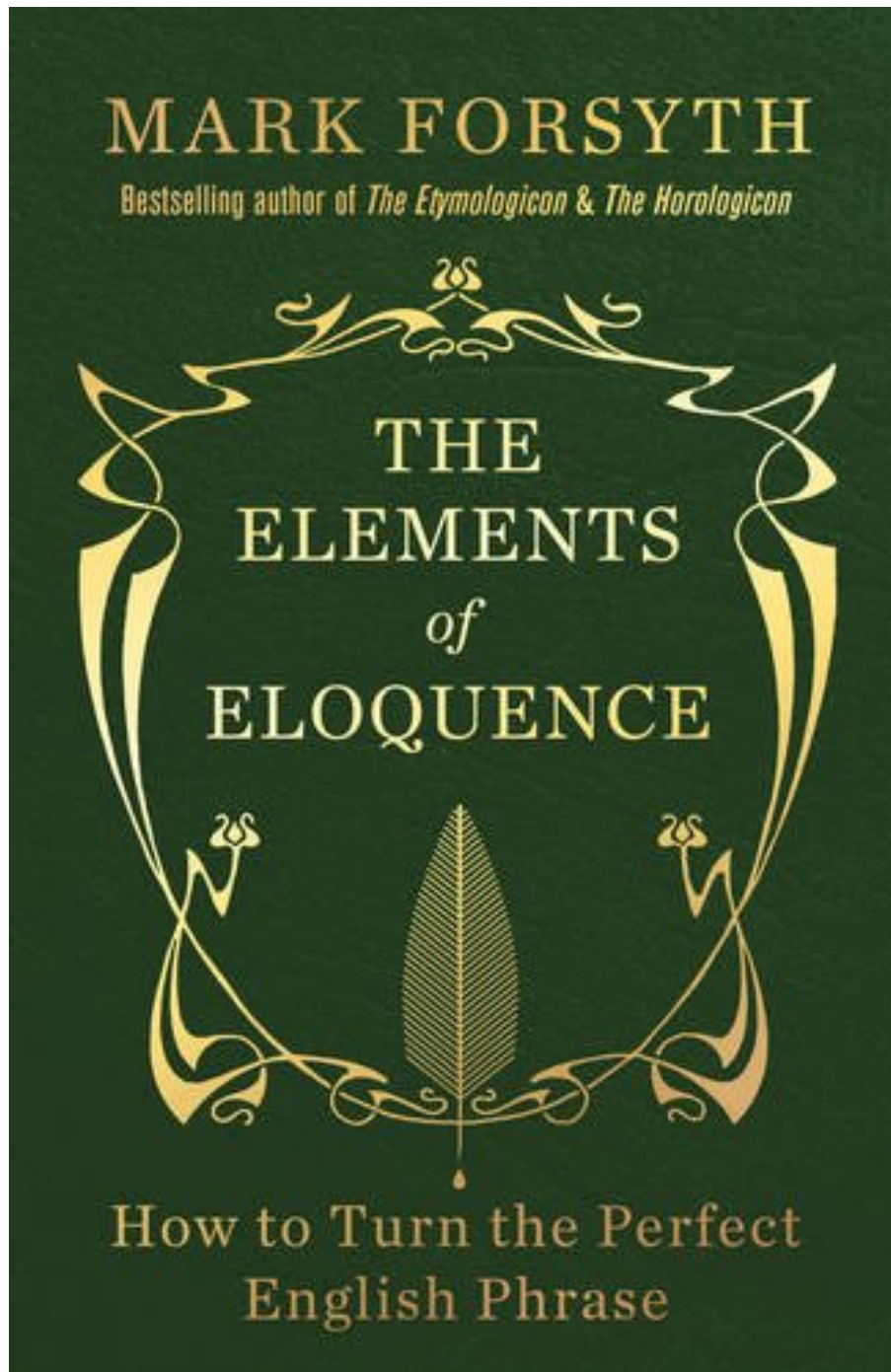


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Review

'An informative but highly entertaining journey through the figures of rhetoric ... Mark Forsyth wears his considerable knowledge lightly. He also writes beautifully.' David Marsh, Guardian 'Sparkling ... the book offers many pleasures ... I laughed out loud' Charles Moore, Daily Telegraph

About the Author

Mark Forsyth is a blogger and author who was given a copy of the Oxford English Dictionary as a christening present and has never looked back. In 2009 he started the Inky Fool blog in order to share his heaps of useless information with a verbose world. His books have made him one of the UK's best-known commentators on words. Follow Mark on Twitter @inkyfool.

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'An informative but highly entertaining journey through the figures of rhetoric ...Mark Forsyth wears his considerable knowledge lightly. He also writes beautifully.' David Marsh, Guardian In an age unhealthily obsessed with substance, this is a book on the importance of pure style, from the bestselling author of The Etymologicon and The Horologicon. From classic poetry to pop lyrics and from the King James Bible to advertising slogans, Mark Forsyth explains the secrets that make a phrase - such as 'Tiger, Tiger, burning bright', or 'To be or not to be' - memorable. In his inimitably entertaining and witty style he takes apart famous lines and shows how you too can write like Shakespeare or Oscar Wilde. Whether you're aiming for literary immortality or just an unforgettable one-liner, The Elements of Eloquence proves that you don't need to have anything to say - you simply need to say it well. 'Sparkling ...the book offers many pleasures ...I laughed out loud' Charles Moore, Daily Telegraph

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Most helpful customer reviews

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful.

Taking the mystery out of English

By philip

Ever get your hypotaxis mixed up with your peritaxis? Muddled over a merism? Puzzled by praise for prolepsis after you were taught never to start a sentence with a pronoun? If so, Mark Forsyth's the language anatomist for you.

Forsyth shows that great writing doesn't necessarily require genius, but understanding of technique and certain tricks, as taught in the figures of rhetoric, from the simple (and often overused) alliteration to zeugma. Citing passages from writers such as Shakespeare, John Donne, Coleridge, to Oscar Wilde and Dashiell Hammett to pop writers like Lennon and McCartney, Forsyth sheds clarity on memorable English.

The endurance of Shakespeare and a host of other classical writers is due, Forsyth says, to their practice of technique rather than bolts thrown by a muse.

Though one hates to quibble with an expert, I have a few, including the too-frequent use of “very”, even doubling the adverb at times and tripling it once: “very, very odd indeed”. “Very, very, very technically”. “Very precisely” The last one’s a true pleonasm, isn’t it? Precise is precise: how can something be very precise?

My biggest small quibble is his repeated use of the word “chap”, British English for man or boy. “A chap called George Puttenham ...”. “If they make a chap write as well as Shakespeare ...” “Pythagoras was a clever chap...”. “Jesus was more of an asyndeton chap ...” And this teeth-grinding bit of excess: “... describing the differences between chaps and chapesses.” Forsyth is an erudite chap but an editor could have taken the pencil to this show of over-cleverness.

“Elements of Eloquence” is a good read by someone who knows literature and the nuts and bolts of language, particularly rhetorical technique. It’s likely to spur further reading.

11 of 11 people found the following review helpful.

Entertaining review of a not so dry subject after all

By Phipedro

This is Forsyth's third book - and it seems to be back to the level of his first. It is beautifully pitched, using examples of the rhetorical devices being discussed - both from past writers and buried in Forsyth's own text - as illustrations. And it's funny. And he does still have that annoying ability to link his chapters so that you just have to read the next one...

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

Rhetorically Speaking, "What's not to love?"

By S. Jones

The Elements of Eloquence by Mark Forsyth

Rhetoric is the art of persuasion. While this book contains material that is educational, it is presented in an entertaining style that is witty and entertaining.

This book is divided into the following 39 chapters that each describe and give examples of figures of rhetoric.

- 1 Alliteration: the rhetorical device of repeating the sound of the first consonant in a series of multiple words.
- 2 Polypoton: the use of one word as different parts of speech or in different grammatical forms.
- 3 Antithesis: the use of two opposites for contrasting effect.
- 4 Merism: where a single thing is referred to by an enumeration of several of its parts, or a list of several synonyms for the same thing.
- 5 Blazon: "extended merism, the dismemberment of the loved one".
- 6 Synaesthesia: a device where one sense is described in terms of another.
- 7 Aposiopesis: a figure of speech wherein a sentence is deliberately broken off and left unfinished, the ending to be supplied by the imagination, giving an impression of unwillingness or inability to continue.
- 8 Hyperbaton: a figure of speech which describes an alteration of the logical order of the words in a sentence.
- 9 Anadiplosis: repetition of the last word of a preceding clause.
- 10 Periodic Sentences: are not complete grammatically before the final clause or phrase.
- 11 Hypotaxis and Parataxis: hypotaxis is a complex style of writing involving the use of a large number of subordinate clauses, while parataxis is the style of writing with short simple sentences.
- 12 Diacope: the close repetition of a word or phrase, separated by a word or words.
- 13 Rhetorical Questions: a device where a question is stated to make a point, without requiring any answer because it is intended to be obvious.
- 14 Hendiadys: a device used for emphasis, where an adjective-noun form is swapped for noun-and-noun.

- 15 Epistrophe: a device using the repetition of the same word or words at the end of successive phrases, clauses or sentences for emphasis.
- 16 Tricolon: a sentence is composed of three equal parts. Forsyth points to the national motto of France (Liberté, égalité, fraternité) as one of his many examples of the impact of this device.
- 17 Epizeuxis: the repetition of a word or phrase in immediate succession, for emphasis.
- 18 Syllepsis: a single word is used with two other parts of a sentence but must be understood differently in relation to each.
- 19 Isocolon: Forsyth's definition seems to state that a sentence is composed by two parts equivalent in structure, length and rhythm. Other sources suggest two or more parts, and relate tricolon which is mentioned in the earlier chapter.
- 20 Enallage: a "deliberate grammatical mistake".
- 21 Versification: the effect of a few different verse forms used, including examples of iambic pentameter.
- 22 Zeugma: a series of clauses which use the same verb.
- 23 Paradox: a statement that is logically false or impossible for emphasis or contrast.
- 24 Chiasmus: a symmetrical repetition of structure or wording.
- 25 Assonance: the repetition of a vowel sound.
- 26 The Fourteenth Rule: the rhetorical device of providing an unnecessarily specific number for something for emphasis.
- 27 Catachresis: a grammatically wrong use of words as a means of creative expression.
- 28 Litotes: emphasizes a point by denying the opposite.
- 29 Metonymy and Synecdoche: where something connected to the thing described, or a part of it, is used in place of the thing itself.
- 30 Transferred Epithets: where an adjective is applied to the wrong noun, for effect.
- 31 Pleonasm: the use of superfluous and unnecessary words in a sentence for emphasis.
- 32 Epanalepsis: repetition of a word or phrase at the beginning and end of a sentence or clause to emphasize circularity.
- 33 Personification: a description which imputes human actions or characteristics to an inanimate or non-human thing.
- 34 Hyperbole: the rhetorical device of exaggeration.
- 35 Adynaton: a hyperbole so extreme as to be a complete impossibility.
- 36 Prolepsis: the use of a pronoun at the start of a sentence, which reverses the normal order.
- 37 Congeries: a bewildering list of adjectives or nouns.
- 38 Scesis Onomatopoeia: sentences without a main verb.
- 39 Anaphora: starting each sentence with the same word.

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