



# **Spilling the Beans on the Cat's Pajamas: Popular Expressions-What They Mean and How We Got Them**

*Judy Parkinson*

[Download now](#)

[Read Online](#) 

# Spilling the Beans on the Cat's Pajamas: Popular Expressions-What They Mean and How We Got Them

*Judy Parkinson*

## **Spilling the Beans on the Cat's Pajamas: Popular Expressions-What They Mean and How We Got Them** Judy Parkinson

"Make no bones about it"--here's a "grand slam" for anyone seeking the meanings of catch phrases and quotes that enrich our everyday speech. It "rounds up the usual suspects"--hundreds of expressions that keep our language flourishing--and makes them easy to find in an A-to-Z format. If "all goes according to plan," you'll soon know:

The expressions "all that glitters is not gold" and "apple of the eye" have each been in use for more than 1,000 years. "To bark up the wrong tree" comes from the sport of raccoon hunting. "The big enchilada" was used to describe someone on the infamous Watergate tapes. "Flavor of the month" was a generic advertising phrase of the mid-1940s used to describe new ice cream flavors. "Baker's dozen" is 13, one more than the standard dozen, and goes back to medieval times, when Henry III called for the severe punishment of any bakers caught shortchanging customers. English bakers developed the habit of including an extra loaf of bread when asked for a dozen to ensure that they wouldn't be condemned. "Drop of a hat" alludes to the frontier practice of dropping a hat as a signal for a boxing or wrestling match to begin, usually the only formality observed. "Sleep tight" dates back to when beds were made of rope and straw. Before going to sleep at night, people would have to pull the ropes tight, as they would have loosened during the course of the previous night's sleep.

With this clever book on hand, you'll never have to "throw in the towel" during a battle of wits. Make this and all of the Blackboard Books(tm) a permanent fixture on your shelf, and you'll have instant access to a breadth of knowledge. Whether you need homework help or want to win that trivia game, this series is the trusted source for fun facts.

## **Spilling the Beans on the Cat's Pajamas: Popular Expressions-What They Mean and How We Got Them Details**

Date : Published September 30th 2010 by Reader's Digest (first published September 10th 2009)

ISBN : 9781606521717

Author : Judy Parkinson

Format : Hardcover 174 pages

Genre : Nonfiction, Humanities, Language, Reference

 [Download Spilling the Beans on the Cat's Pajamas: Popular E ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online Spilling the Beans on the Cat's Pajamas: Popular ...pdf](#)

**Download and Read Free Online Spilling the Beans on the Cat's Pajamas: Popular Expressions-What They Mean and How We Got Them Judy Parkinson**



# **From Reader Review Spilling the Beans on the Cat's Pajamas: Popular Expressions-What They Mean and How We Got Them for online ebook**

## **Charlotte says**

Interesting, but somehow not very eloquently written. Some of the explanations of the proverbs are hard to understand and make little sense in their shortened-to-two-or-three-sentences descriptions.

---

## **Mike Shultz says**

I love this kind of stuff and enjoyed many of the explanations and origins for the popular expressions. However, the selection wasn't the best. A lot were so obvious that they didn't need explanation: "zip it", "back to square one", etc. I think you can guess where those came from (and you'd be right). Furthermore, for far too many, it said that the origins are unknown, or at best gave pretty bogus sounding theories. If you're going to write a book on this, pick ones you can find the answers to.

---

## **Karielle at Books à la Mode says**

Blurb: Strike while the iron's hot and bone up on the origins of your favorite expressions. Cat got your tongue? Well, for Pete's sake, use this collection of colorful expressions to enrich your everyday speech. This book spills the beans on our best-loved euphemisms and most curious sayings, explaining their fascinating origins and the remarkable stories that surround them. It rounds up the usual suspects -- the catch phrases, quotations, and expressions that keep our language flourishing -- and makes them easy to find in a convenient A-to-Z format.

Did you know that...

- \* The expressions all that glitters is not gold and apple of the eye have each been in use for more than a thousand years?
- \* To bark up the wrong tree comes from the sport of raccoon hunting?
- \* Embarrassed parents can thank the songwriter Cole Porter for the euphemism the birds and the bees?

What Stephanie Thought: What an absolute delight! You don't know how ecstatic I was to be able to review Spilling the Beans on the Cat's Pajamas by Judy Parkinson. I love word reference books like these -- read them on a train, a bus, whatever, and be able to enjoy it all the way through! The alphabetical listing was so facile; I could look up my favorite euphemisms and scan through the book to catch interesting words, and since there were no chapters like most reference books, I could be satisfied with reading about just one phrase, and move on to the next. Maybe it's because of my love for the English language, or maybe it's just because I'm such a curious person, but it was so fascinating to learn about common, everyday phrases I normally say without a second thought. Each article would list the definition of the expression, it's origin, and sometimes even a direct quotation from the said source. In honor of the book, I'll give you excerpts on the two title expressions, as well as my all-time favorite :)

Spill the Beans

The expression beans "to let on," to tell all -- perhaps prematurely, to an eager audience, to give away a secret, or "to let the cat out of the bag" (which is evidently, a whole nother story).

There are various explanations for the derivation, one of the most colorful being that it may have originated at the turn of the twentieth century as a euphemism for vomiting, because beans represent basic food.

Another possibility is that the phrase comes from the ancient Greek voting practices, where black and white beans were used to represent agreement and disagreement with the issue being voted on. Each voter put one bean into a pot or helmet and the result was revealed by spilling the beans.

The Cat's Pajamas

This colloquialism first surfaced in the 1920s to describe something or someone superlatively good or top-notch and has retained its meaning for almost a hundred years.

Alternative sources suggest that the phrase may come from an early nineteenth-century English tailor E. B. Katz, who apparently made the finest silk pajamas, though there is little evidence to prove this is true.

Cute as a Button

To be charming, pretty, or attractive in a dainty way, almost always with the connotation of being small.

This often used simile sounds odd when you think about it. After all, how is it that a button is cute? That's debatable. Some say the "button" referred to here is not the kind you find on a shirt but actually the flower bud on a bachelor's button. Others insist the phrase refers to the button quail, and adorable little gray, fluffy bird.

Definitely one of the most entertaining reference books I've had the privilege of picking up. Totally recommend it!

Where Stephanie Got It: FSB Media for review.

Radical Rating: 9 hearts- One of my all-time favorites! ♥♥♥♥♥♥♥♥♥♥

---

## **Helen says**

My sister gave me this pretty little book for Christmas, which was great because it's not the type of book I would usually think about buying for myself. The title might leave you wondering exactly what this book is about, but the subtitle helps to explain: Popular Expressions - What They Mean and Where We Got Them.

The book looks at some of the well-known phrases and proverbs which appear in the English language and explains what they mean and how they originated. Do you know what 'to shoot the moon' means, for example, or why we give someone 'the third degree'? Why do we 'steal someone else's thunder' and why do we 'go to the Land of Nod' when we fall asleep?

The phrases appear in alphabetical order. I was a bit disappointed by some of the entries which are little more than a straight definition of the phrase or proverb, but the majority were interesting and I learned a lot of fascinating little facts. Some of them such as 'ballpark figure' and 'take a rain check' have American origins. Others stem from Ancient Greece or Rome. There are others that come from the Bible, some that are derived from Aesop's fables and some that were made famous by Shakespeare. A few of the phrases have no definite origins and in these cases the author tells us that the definitions she's providing are merely speculation.

This is not really a book you would read from cover to cover in one sitting; it's perfect for dipping in and out, reading a few entries at a time. It's strangely addictive though as the entries are temptingly short (usually no more than two or three paragraphs). I'd recommend it to anyone with a love for the English language. It's a

perfect book to buy as a gift too, as it even has a special page at the front where you can write your 'to' and 'from'!

---

### **Maud says**

3.5 stars.

Some expressions were really interesting, others not so. It's not a book I would recommend if you want to learn expressions, not all mentioned are used that much. But if you are interested in this kind of subject, it is a fun and quick little read!

---

### **Robert Hepple says**

A book about common euphemistic phrases, listing many such with their accepted meaning, or meanings if usage has changed over the years, together with some information about origins and earliest known use. It makes mostly amusing, and occasionally macabre reading as they are common phrases that most of us are aware of without always knowing the background. I was surprised by some of the information. For example 'Cold enough to freeze the balls off a brass monkey' has nothing to do with monkey testicles, whilst 'Letting the cat out of the bag' has a totally different origin to what I had previously been lead to believe, at least according to Judy Parkinson. The origin of 'Saves by the bell' gave me the shivers. An enjoyable read for anyone who reads a lot of trivia.

---

### **Brad Peterson says**

A lot of fun for those who find etymology interesting.

---

### **Leo says**

This book contains a vast array of English expression and their meaning and origin. As always with books of these kind, some are really interesting while other you do not really care you. Languages are infinite and we tend to use the same words over and over again ergo this is not a book to really learn much English (chances are you'll end up using from now on three expression you learn from this book and no more) but to get to know how it got there. Me being a language geek, I enjoy learning that expression that didn't make any sense, actually has a logic behind it. It's also funny to relate them to Spanish, my mother tongue; some are very similar and it's nice to know that languages can be very different but also very very similar, because in the end, we are all humans and we do think alike.

This a read-one-a-day book, otherwise you'll get really tired of it soon.

---

## **Angela says**

Interesting book, I learned a lot about the etymology of phrases.

---

## **Freda Mans-Labianca says**

I have a love for language, especially sayings and expressions. It is interesting to learn the root of some of those famous quips. That is exactly what this book does, and it does it very well.

I have to admit, there was not one I didn't hear at one point in my life. Though I had gotten some mixed up. I always knew of the Gift Horse, but I thought you kicked a gift horse in the mouth not looked a gift horse in the mouth. If I hadn't read this book I would still be saying it wrong.

I highly recommend this book to all you language enthusiasts out there. This is a real gem!

---

## **Magpie says**

Sharon 2018

---

## **Phil says**

A bit of a nothing book - no doubt easily put together from plenty of existing sources with some reasonable illustrations. The explanations are interesting enough, although some seem fanciful and many I already knew.

My favourite snippets that I didn't already know ....

"To Come up to Scratch"

In the days of prize fighting, under London Prize Ring Rules, introduced in 1839, a round ended when a fighter was knocked down. After 30 seconds rest each fighter then had 8 seconds to return to a point in the middle of the ring marked by a scratch. If one couldn't manage that, he hadn't "come up to scratch" and was declared the loser.

"The curate's egg"

Now means something that's both good and bad in parts, but was originally an egg that was bad, fed to a new curate by the Bishop which the curate ate saying it was good because he was too mild-mannered to say it was off. So originally something bad that was claimed to be good out of politeness.

"Hoist by his own Petard"

Of course comes from Hamlet, but a petard in 1600 was a newly invented explosive device: a metal bell-shaped grenade filled with gunpowder and used to blow up barricades and walls. Sometimes the fuse went off too early and the engineer was thus blown up (of lifted off his feet, or hoist) by his own bomb. Also, interestingly, the word Petard comes from the latin "petare" which means to fart, so make of that what you will

"Put a sock in it"

this phrase harks back to the early days of the gramophone, which was just a metal horn and thus no volume controls. Therefore the only way to reduce the volume from a gramophone was to literally, put a sock in it (the horn). I loved this one, it was my favourite in the whole book.

"To be on Skid Row"

From the early days of logging in North America and Canada - a skid row was a row of tree trunks laid on the slopes leading down to the river. The later trees could then be felled on here and they'd slide down to the river themselves without extra labour ready for transportation - because it sounds like a street, Skid Row was taken to mean the lowest of the low, the place where everything tramples on top of you.

So, as I say, not a lot to it and one of those books that's pretty easily put together for publishers, but an interesting read as a bathroom book though.

---

### **Erikka says**

Needed citations and sources. Some of them seem not well researched. Also, if you leave out biblical, Shakespearean, and nautical phrases, this book would be a pamphlet. Take out boxing and wrestling and you have about a notecard worth of info.

---

### **Keri-Lynn says**

Mostly read is more accurate as I haven't quite finished this book. I am, however, close and with a book like this which consists of a paragraph or two per subject, nothing will be drastically different by the time I finish. I have thoroughly enjoyed this book's explanations for some of our more common phrases in English. Note - it's English phrases, not American ones, but at least 95% of the phrases in the book are familiar to me so any English/American speaker can enjoy the history of some of our odder, or here-to-fore inexplicable sayings. Many started out as sensible comments but we're so far removed from a rural, agrarian past and from some historical events that the original meaning of some sayings has been long since lost. Plenty of research went into the book with original written statements cited, and I was pleased with the effort made to track down the origins.

---

### **JG (The Introverted Reader) says**

Have you ever wondered exactly where some of our more common phrases come from? Judy Parkinson sets out to give a brief definition and history of some colorful, common English sayings.

I found this book interesting and I learned a lot. For example, "Put a sock in it!" comes from the days of the old gramophones. They didn't have volume controls, so to turn the record player down, owners would put a sock inside the bell the sound emerged from.

While I did enjoy learning the meaning behind some of these sayings, I have to say that the definitions were a bit dry. Take this definition of "shoot the moon": "This is an expression meaning to leave without paying one's bills or rent, or to remove swiftly one's household goods under cover of night to avoid their seizure by a



landlord or creditor." This seemed like a good place to have a little fun or lighten the tone, but instead it felt more like a scholarly work. This is a short little book at 169 pages, so I wasn't expecting the scholarly tone.

This is an interesting look at some of the origins of our language, and I recommend it for those curious about such things. Christmas is coming up, and I think this would make a good stocking stuffer if you have any lovers of language in your life.

Thanks to the publicist for sending me a copy for review.

---