

Brit Wit

The perfect riposte for every social occasion



Edited by
Susie Jones

BRIT WIT

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Winston Churchill was recently voted the Greatest Briton of all time in a BBC poll. But was he the wittiest? Make up your own mind as *Brit Wit* explores the many facets of the great British sense of humour so peculiar to this island and often unfathomable to those off it. Interspersed with cutting contributions from 'traditional' wits such as Samuel Johnson are ribald ripostes from modern sources – comedians, television presenters and yes, even women. All of them unique, but all of them witty and typically British through their subtlety or cynicism. That is not to say that only the Brits have ever raised a wry smile. It was with great regret that Groucho Marx ('I never forget a face – but in your case I'll make an exception') and Dorothy Parker ('She runs the gamut of emotions from A to B', of Katharine Hepburn) had to stay out of this book!

So here you have it – the world with a pinch of salt. A Small Islander's guide to life, the universe and everything. Wow your friends, cow your enemies, and force yourself to see the funny side in a world that takes itself too seriously and not seriously enough. After all, as W. Somerset Maugham once observed, 'She had a pretty gift for quotation, which is a serviceable substitute for wit'.

Susie Jones

Contents

Quotes and Quotations.....	11
Insults.....	14
Ripostes.....	24
Work and Money.....	26
Advice.....	50
Politics.....	56
Sport.....	67
Foreigners.....	77
Religion.....	89
Vices and Virtues.....	100
Writing, Publishing and Media.....	109
England and the English.....	121
Countryside and the City.....	131
Old Age.....	139
Science and Technology.....	148
Youth and Education.....	157
Eating and Drinking.....	167
Love, Marriage and Sex.....	186
Families and Friends.....	224
Culture.....	243
Life.....	252
Animals.....	263
Death.....	271
Fashion and Beauty.....	279

Brit Wit

Quotes and Quotations

Find enough clever things to say, and you're a Prime Minister; write them down and you're a Shakespeare.

George Bernard Shaw, dramatist, literary critic and socialist spokesman (1856-1950)



It is better to be quotable than to be honest.

Tom Stoppard, playwright



She had a pretty gift for quotation, which is a serviceable substitute for wit.

W(illiam) Somerset Maugham, writer (1874-1965)



Brit Wit

It is a good thing for an uneducated man to read books of quotations.

Winston Churchill, politician and statesman (1874-1965)



A widely-read man never quotes accurately... misquotation is the pride and privilege of the learned.

Hesketh Pearson, actor, director and biographer (1887-1964)



The nicest thing about quotes is that they give us a nodding acquaintance with the originator which is often socially impressive.

Kenneth Williams, actor and comic (1926-1988)



You cram these words into mine ears against the stomach of my sense .

William Shakespeare, poet and playwright (1564-1616), *The Tempest*

Quotes and Quotations

Few of the many wise apothegms which have been uttered have prevented a single foolish action.

Thomas Babington Macaulay, historian and author (1800-1859)



A facility for quotation covers the absence of original thought.

Dorothy L. Sayers, writer and theologian (1893-1957)



I pick my favourite quotations and store them in my mind as ready armour, offensive or defensive, amid the struggle of this turbulent existence.

Robert Burns, poet (1759-1796)

Insults

I fart in your general direction.

French soldier in *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*



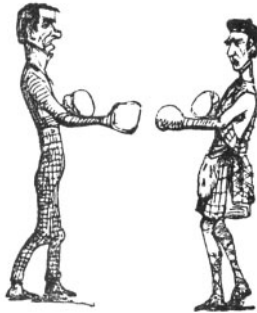
Your brain is like the four-headed man-eating haddock-fish beast of Aberdeen. It doesn't exist.

Blackadder



What a tiresome affected sod.

Noel Coward, actor, dramatist and playwright (1899-1973) on Oscar Wilde



Insults

Unreconstructed wankers.

Tony Blair, Prime Minister on the Scottish media, 1997



How tartly that gentleman looks! I never can
see him but I am heart-burned an hour after.

William Shakespeare, *Much Ado About Nothing*



The haste of a fool is the slowest thing in the
world.

Thomas Shadwell, dramatist and poet (c.1642-1692)

Brit Wit

A stupid man's report of what a clever man says can never be accurate, because he unconsciously translates what he hears into something he can understand.

Bertrand Russell, author, mathematician and philosopher (1872-1970)



He is morally insensitive and aesthetically disgusting.

George Orwell, author (1903-1950) on Rudyard Kipling



O, she is the antidote to desire.

William Congreve, playwright (1670-1729), *The Way of the World*, 1700

Insults

A man who looks like a sexually confused, ageing hairdresser: the Teasy Weasy of Fleet Street.

Richard Littlejohn, journalist on Peregrine Worsthorne



Thou eunuch of language... thou pimp of gender... murderous accoucheur of infant learning... thou pickle-herring in the puppet show of nonsense.

Robert Burns on a critic



He owes his celebrity merely to his antiquity.

Lord Byron, poet (1788-1824) on Geoffrey Chaucer

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Sir, you are like a pin, but without either its head or its point.

Douglas Jerrold, dramatist and writer (1803-1857)



You look wise. Pray correct that error.

Charles Lamb, essayist and poet (1764-1833)



He can't see a belt without hitting below it.

Margot Asquith, author (1864-1945) on David Lloyd George

Insults

So boring you fall asleep halfway through her name.

Alan Bennett, dramatist, on Arianna Stassinopoulos



Is it always his desire to give his imitation of a semi-house-trained polecat?

Michael Foot, politician and journalist on Norman Tebbit



When they circumcised Herbert Samuel they threw away the wrong bit.

David Lloyd George, statesman (1863-1945)

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Her face could launch a thousand dredgers.

Jack de Manio, radio broadcaster (1914-1988) on Glenda Jackson



Lord Sandwich: Sir, you will die either of the
pox or on the gallows

John Wilkes: Depending on whether I
embrace your mistress or your principles



'Tis such fools as you that makes the world
full of ill-favour'd children.

William Shakespeare, *As You Like It*