

Author of the #1 *New York Times* Bestselling
Eats, Shoots & Leaves

LYNNE TRUSS



Talk to the Hand

#?*!

The Utter Bloody Rudeness of the
World Today, or Six Good Reasons to
Stay Home and Bolt the Door

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From Reader Review Talk to the Hand: The Utter Bloody Rudeness of the World Today, or Six Good Reasons to Stay Home and Bolt the Door for online ebook

Melanie says

I enjoyed this book quite a bit, but I don't think I'd recommend it to anyone under the age of 30. In fact, I might not even recommend it to anyone under the age of 45, and even then, only if the person is slightly cranky and curmudgeonly. Personally, I found the jokes hilarious in their overwrought-ness and flair for the disgruntled dramatic. Truss explores people today, our culture of rudeness, and how badly misbehaved we all are (Except for me. I'm great. It's everyone else who is the problem. Talk to the hand).

Trudy says

Punctuation maven Lynne Truss (author of *Eats, Shoots & Leaves*) takes a stab at rudeness, ubiquitous in society today. Her book is very funny in spots and deadly serious in others, becoming a bit of a diatribe at times, but Truss is dead on in targeting this pervasive problem. If you mourn the disappearance of *please*, *thank you*, *you're welcome*, *excuse me*, and *I'm sorry*, and often wonder why parents tolerate outrageous public behavior in their little darlings, this book is for you!

Benjamin Duffy says

Wow, I can't remember being this disappointed with a book...well, I was going to say "in a long time," but I might more accurately say "ever." In terms of disparity between my expectations and the reality, this is the most disappointing book I've ever read. I give it one star, and a glance over my reviews will demonstrate that I almost never do that.

I read, and loved, Truss's previous work, *Eats, Shoots & Leaves: The Zero Tolerance Approach to Punctuation*. It was funny, erudite, and most importantly, it was self-righteous and self-important in exactly the right places and right amounts. That it dealt with a topic dear to my heart (the gradual erosion of literacy through shoddy grammar and punctuation) only made it more enjoyable for me.

So when I sat down to read *Talk to the Hand*, I expected something similar: a humorous yet fiery diatribe, rich with research and examples, only in this case railing against the decline of personal manners rather than grammar. What I got was a crotchety, unfunny whine-fest that continually tried to extrapolate bad manners into low overall moral character. She takes the flamethrower to entire armies of strawmen in this book, as I've simply never met anyone as rude as some of her examples. Her stories about eight-year old kids cussing out their parents in public sound exactly like the "what is our country coming to" chain e-mails I used to get forwarded to me by my fifty-something aunts and cousins years ago, and they ring horribly false. In addition, she lets some rather ugly biases slip with blithe references to "shaven-headed bling bling gangstas" and such.

Worst of all, this wasn't even a fun read. Unlike her last book, which was so stuffed with content that the pages flew by, this one dragged and was amazingly repetitive. Honestly, I was a little worried when I found

myself fighting the temptation to skim the end of the introduction, thinking "OK, I get it, I get it, I get it..." This book felt like a 20-page magazine article stretched into a 200-page book. And Truss's decision to sanitize the word *fuck* into *Eff* (e.g. Eff this, Eff you, you Effing such-and-such) was jarring, off-putting, and made large stretches of the book just plain annoying to slog through. All in all, this was a grumpy, miserable, spittle-flecked little book, and I can't discourage you strongly enough from picking it up. Stick to the book with the pandas on the cover.

Sasha says

Best buck I ever spent! Literally, this book cost me a dollar at Family Dollar in Providence (hurry and get a copy!). As I was flipping through it out of curiosity, a few things caught my eye so I figured that for a dollar I couldn't really go wrong.

This book has it all. It is hilarious, laugh out loud funny--mainly, I believe, because the author is British and Brits have such a way with words. It's also insightful, revealing, and thought-provoking. I found myself at once relieved to hear from someone who was bugged by the same things as myself, and depressed at the current prevalent disregard for common decency.

Warning There is quite a little bit of swearing, and a plethora of "Eff Off" quotes and references. Sadly, it is necessary in the context of the book. I did feel it got slightly out of hand, but for the most part it gave me even more pause to think and reflect on myself and the societal psyche.

This book also gave me a new word: solipsistic.

What it really boils down to is that there is a difference between "etiquette" and "courtesy" and there are MORAL implications to manners. Here is my favorite paragraph of the book:

"Manners never were enforceable, in any case. Indeed, for many philosophers, this is regarded as their chief value: that they are voluntary. In 1912, the jurist John Fletcher Moulton claimed in a landmark speech that the greatness of a nation resided not in its obedience to laws, but in its abiding by conventions that were not obligatory. 'Obedience to the unenforceable' was the phrase that was picked up by other writers--and it leads us to the most important aspect of manners: their philosophical elusiveness. Is there a clear moral dimension to manners? Can you equate civility and virtue? My own answer would be yes, despite all the famous counter-examples of blood-stained dictators who had exquisite table manners and never used their mobile phone in a crowded train compartment to order mass executions. It seems to me that, just as the loss of punctuation signalled the vast and under-acknowledged problem of illiteracy, so the collapse of manners stands for a vast and under-acknowledged problem of social immorality. Manners are based on an ideal of empathy, of imagining the impact of one's own actions on others. They involve doing something for the sake of other people that is not obligatory and attracts no reward. In the current climate of unrestrained solipsistic and aggressive self-interest, you can equate good manners not only with virtue but with positive heroism."

Kwoomac says

From the author of Eats, Shoots & Leaves: The Zero Tolerance Approach to Punctuation This was her follow up. It was okay but there really wasn't enough material for a whole book. Should've just been a clever(if occasionally whiny) article. So rather than a review, I'm just going to share my own thoughts on rudeness, society, and other things.

In my neighborhood, there is a small business whose name is based on that lovely saying, "Talk to the hand." Think a bakery called 'Talk to the Flan' or a deli 'Talk to the Ham' Why? Why would a business owner want to give the impression that she was rude and didn't care about her customers? We'll see how long she lasts, although I t's been at least two years now.

In my mother's high school yearbook, there was a section under each grad's picture where they got to list their pet peeves. I'm hoping there was more than that but I don't remember anything else. My sibs and I loved reading the ridiculous things that bothered these old fogies. We were probably 8-9-10ish at the time. Now I'm embarrassed to admit, I often start conversations with, "Know what my pet peeve is?" It's probably a pet peeve of my friends that I do this. Who's the old fogie now!

I was at the grocery store and the ringer upper and the bagger were having a conversation as if I weren't standing right there. (pet peeve). They were talking about how hot some famous guy was. They then went on to describe what they would do with said hot guy if they got their hands on him. Nice. Since I was standing right there, I figured I was included in this conversation so I asked the if they knew whether the guy was nice. What? They looked at me with confused faces. Speaking more slowly as this was obviously a difficult concept for either to grasp, I asked again if he was a nice person how did he treat women? After an awkward pause, they went back to their fantasies. Oh well, I tried.

"Click it or ticket." I hate seeing these signs on the highway. Surely they could come up with a nicer way to remind people to wear their seatbelts.

That's it for now.

Tom Hooker says

This is a 200 page rant (the author acknowledges this) against the death of courtesy in our society. And she's right She talks about such discourtesies as talking on cell phones in restaurants, movie theaters, etc. She talks about having conversations interrupted when the other participant in the conversation takes a call on her cell. She talks about the overall rude behavior of clerks, waiters, cashiers, etc. Other subjects include the modern trend of companies to foist their work off onto the customer (if the customer wants to talk to someone about a problem or question, the customer must first wade through levels of telephone automated attendant messages in order to FIND someone human to talk to). And, she talks about the "Universal Eff-Off Reflex." She hits the nail on the head. My primary complaint is that she belabors each point, so the reader gets tired after a while. She should have shortened her discussion on each subject (she could have added more subjects to maintain the book length.)

Roxanne says

In essence, Truss rants about rudeness for the same reasons that she does about punctuation: that the lack of good manners and the escalation of rude behavior both signals and contributes to the downfall of society. She makes a good argument for just being nicer to each other, for pity's sake.

Truss covers all varieties of rudeness, from drivers who cut you off on the highway and give you the finger, to loud cell phone conversations on the train, to the endless automated menus you get when you call your bank, to retail clerks who can't be bothered to be pleasant, let alone helpful. She also covers the "Universal Eff Off Reflex", by which any person's response to any sort of criticism is to tell the other person to "Eff Off", rather than considering whether maybe just maybe oneself might have been at fault.

Truss talks about how in modern society we've lost all the social niceties that characterized, say, upper class Victorians, and in a way that's a good thing, because a lot of those "manners" were there to exclude and mark out the lower class people who didn't belong. However, nothing has really replaced those old rules--we don't have a new set of social values to act on. Everybody has their own set of rules they think are correct, and everybody's set of rules is different, and everybody thinks they're right and everyone else is wrong. Everyone disagrees about what constitutes "good manners". Also, Truss argues that people are becoming less aware of each other, and less aware that other people deserve respect, and so don't notice or care when they are rude.

One thing I liked was the following list, which Truss describes as "**twenty (mostly lapsed) reasons to show special politeness to other people that have nothing to do with class**":

1. they are older
2. they know more than you do
3. they know less than you do
4. they got here first
5. they have educational qualifications in the subject under discussion
6. you are in their house
7. they once helped you financially
8. they have been good to you all your life
9. they are less fortunate than you
10. they have achieved status in the wider world
11. you are serving them in a shop
12. they are in the right
13. they are your boss
14. they work for you
15. they are a policeman/teacher/doctor/judge
16. they are in need
17. they are doing you a favor
18. they paid for the tickets
19. you phoned them, not the other way around
20. they have a menial job

For me personally, I am courteous in the vast majority of situations on that list just by instinct. Clearly my mama raised me right. It comes as a shock to me that (for example) someone would not be polite to a person

who had been kind to them all their life. I have always been horrified to hear stories of people being rude to someone while in that person's house, or after that person had bought the tickets, or to someone who's doing them a favor. I think one of the scariest aspects of those situations is that the rude person has no idea that he's being rude, and it's rude to tell him so, and he'd tell you to Eff Off if you did, so in essence you're helpless. I find that really horrifying. I think it's really sad that Trus needed to make a list of these reasons to be polite to others. I thought it was an interesting and useful list, and that we can all use some reminding to be kind to the people on that list.

Truss is remarkably funny and sharp in her writing. As in her earlier book, she is also extremely British, and focuses on the British specifics of the problem, but I'm okay with that because most of what she writes is completely applicable to Americans as well, and also because it's such fun to read her.

Ben Goodridge says

I guess it was too much to ask that a book about the rise of cultural rudeness wouldn't get preachy here and there. It takes a pretty thick skin to go forth into modern society these days; as social observation, the book is pretty good, but as advice, some finger-wagging is bound to be inevitable. It might be literally impossible to write about etiquette without placing yourself higher on the social scale than those you want to inform.

Outrage is addictive, as anyone who watches a family member fall prey to Fox News will tell you. If you want to feed that addiction by feeling constantly alienated by some aspect of modern society, well, there are plenty of people out there willing to be rude to you. And it apparently doesn't even have to be personal.

"Them damn kids with their cell phones..." ...are just as likely to be texting Mom to tell her that they're going to be late, rather than indulging in what we see as the endless banality of adolescence. I hold the door open for people and I don't particularly care whether they thank me for it or not, because it's not about creating a tidy little interaction to satisfy some social necessity; it's about not letting a heavy door swing shut in someone's face.

I could accept her crusade against poor punctuation because I'm a stickler for grammar myself, but now she seems to be taking the show on the road. The book does acknowledge some of these flaws, but it doesn't offer any solutions to them. As observation, this book gets five stars; as a solution, it gets one, so it averages out to about three.

Asser Mattar says

Very entertaining and thought provoking. I bought this book from a place that sells used books in Maryland four years ago, but I couldn't manage to read it until this week. The writer complains how people have become too rude in the British society. My dear Miss Truss, thank God you don't live in this region, you wouldn't have survived a couple of hours since your arrival at Cairo Airport.

Jafar says

The Queen of Apostrophe turns into Ms. Manners, even though she swears that this book is not a manners manual. She also swears that she's not some grumpy old woman. She just wants to rant about how eff-ing

rude everyone has become. For a book that complains about rudeness, there's plenty of F-word for you in this book.

Turss attempts at some humor in this book, but to be fair to her, I don't think her main point was being funny. A lot of people seem to be disappointed that this book is not as ha ha funny as *Eats, Shoots & Leaves*. This is a serious book about a serious subject. I think Truss has a good point that politeness is not just some useless code of conduct, but it actually serves a useful and necessary social purpose.

Stacy says

The book was funny, and really made me think about how far common courteous has sunk. It was good, with lots of food for thought.

Kathy says

From a blog post I wrote in 2005:

I adored Lynn Truss' first book, *Eat, Shoots & Leaves*. It was a great rant against the deterioration of our grammar skills. As someone who cringes every time she sees people use 'loose' instead of 'lose', 'you're' instead of 'your' or 'irregardless' in any fashion I found myself agreeing with every word of that text.

Truss' new book, *Talk to the Hand - The Utter Bloody Rudeness of the World Today, or Six Good Reasons to Stay Home and Bolt the Door*, is another rant. The topic is how good manners seem to be leaving our society. She talks about cell phone use, the commonality of being told to eff off, the declining use of 'please' and 'thank you' and a myriad of other examples of civility becoming a thing of the past.

Truss is really quite witty and, though I found a few chapters a bit overdone, this was another book where I found myself agreeing wholeheartedly with the message.

Laura says

Yuck. What a whiner.

Ivonne Rovira says

I blame myself. Or as author Lynne Truss would have it, I blame my Effing self. I should have been wise to the kind of book *Talk to the Hand: #?*! The Utter Bloody Rudeness of the World Today, or Six Good Reasons to Stay Home and Bolt the Door* would prove to be: the lament of the agéd against the young. But somehow I never even saw it coming.

Talk to the Hand rapidly degenerates into a diatribe against Generations X, Y and the Millenials.

Point out bad manners to anyone younger than thirty-five, and you risk a lash-back reflex response of shocking disproportion. "Excuse me, I think your child dropped with sweet wrapper." "Why don't you Eff Off, you fat cow," comes the automatic reply. A man on a London bus recently told off a gang of boys, and was set on fire. Another was stabbed to death when he objected to someone throwing food at his girlfriend. How many of us dare to cry, "Get off that skateboard, you hooligan!" in such a moral climate?

The problem here is that, as Judith Martin (a.k.a. "Miss Manners") points out in her own etiquette guides, calling people out on their rude behavior is, in itself, rude. (There are other, more satisfactory and effective ways to protect one's self from bad behavior.) But Truss never once acknowledges that ironic conundrum.

In fairness, Truss can see her own crotchetiness — on rare occasion.

If one takes the view that modern-day manners are superior to the cheerful spit-and-stamp of olden times, a paradox begins to emerge: while standards have been set ever higher, people have become all the more concerned that standards are actually dropping. Basically, people have been complaining about the state of manners since at least the fifteenth century."

Actually, Truss' observation is incorrect. When I was still in high school, my younger brother brought to my attention a lament about how the young were feckless, rude and disrespectful of their elders and betters. The writer bemoaning this new generation lived in Ancient Egypt.

People diagnosed with OCD know in their heads that they shouldn't be washing their hands at every turn, but they can't make themselves stop. But, as with someone with OCD, although Truss seems to know in her heart that every generation of senior citizens vilify the young, she can't manage to make herself stop. If anything, she revs up the invective even more with each ensuing chapter.

In the chapter, "The First Good Reason: Was That so Hard to Say?", Truss asks, "Should we get out more? Or is going out the problem, and we should actually stay in?" The answer is neither. Truss should instead read Judith Martin's *Miss Manners' Guide for the Turn-of-the-Millennium*. Then she can be free to get out more — but not till then.

Naturally, I would never recommend Martin's *Star-Spangled Manners: In Which Miss Manners Defends American Etiquette to Miss Truss*. After all, wouldn't implying that American manners outclassed Truss' own British ones be rude?

Angie says

Author Truss brought us "Eats, Shoots, and Leaves" and now brings us "Talk to the Hand.." Respect, courtesy, kindness, and consideration are discussed here. Current society all over the world is generally rude, impatient, lax, condescending, and disrespectful (I think we are all aware of this, but if we are, then why is this problem still so prevalent?). My favorite lines include:

- "...the individual personality wastes no time bolstering its defenses"
- "... it's become fashionable never to look up to anyone, it has become nastily acceptable to look down."
- "make the right noises and you get the reward."

I come away from reading this book to think before speaking and be aware of how I come off.

I agree with the author, "no problem" is not the nicest answer, nor proper answer to when someone says

"thank you." "You're welcome" is. I think society (me included) needs to soften our language, intonation, and be aware if we come off as a jerk. And if we think about it and think that "yeah that totally sounded 'jerky,'" then we need to tell that person, "I am sorry that I came off that way and what I meant to say was....." This shows deference and courtesy to the other person. A sincere apology does not make one inferior (although many people think this). Instead, a sincere sorry says you care about the other person and want to show them that you care so much, you admit you were wrong. All people need to read this!!!! (especially those in the service industry!!!!)

Joy says

I loved this book! I'll write a proper review soon! Fantastic read!

One of my favorite parts of this book is the authors list of reasons to show special politeness to other people that have nothing to do with class. Here's the list -

- 1 they are older
- 2 they know more than you do
- 3 they know less than you do
- 4 they got here first
- 5 they have educational qualifications in the subject under consideration
- 6 you are in their house
- 7 they once helped you financially
- 8 they have been good to you all your life
- 9 they are less fortunate than you
- 10 they have achieved status in the wider world
- 11 you are serving them in a shop
- 12 they are in the right
- 13 they are your boss
- 14 they work for you
- 15 they are a policeman/teacher/Doctor/judge
- 16 they are in need
- 17 they are doing you a favor
- 18 they paid for the tickets
- 19 you phoned them, not the other way around
- 20 they have a menial job

Words to live by, I say!

A lot of the book is really funny too. I agree with a lot of her pet peeves. I think most people will enjoy this book! I recommend it highly and I plan to read other books by Lynne Truss.

Alicia says

After witnessing a congressman shout out "You lie" to a sitting US president on the news, a rapper rudely interrupt another singer's acceptance award, various sports figures acting childishly, this book is a breath of

fresh air. It confirms that not all of us in today's society accept the common rudeness so commonly displayed in this day and age.

This book is also a fun read, much like Ms. Truss' "Eats, Shoots & Leaves". It's a fast read and not easily put down! Though it's not a "manners" book, it does contain much common sense on how we should treat other people. Something that should be so common but unfortunately is not: "Treat others as you'd like to be treated" is the main theme of this book.

Michael says

Lynne Truss's "Talk to the Hand: The Utter Bloody Rudeness of the World Today, or Six Good Reasons to Stay Home and Bolt the Door" is a thoughtful, and at times, sarcastic and caustic, look at the decline of good manners in western society. As she states near the end of the book, "Rudeness is bad. Manners are good." She argues, quite forcibly, that by showing good manners people are giving respect toward others. Even some empathy factors in how we conduct ourselves in society. There is a moral responsibility to be civil to others, whether or not we know them. She also points there is a personal accountability that should be considered and that people make excuses for their ill-mannered, and criminal, behavior. You might find yourself agreeing with Ms. Truss if you're indignant about the lack of manners in present-day society. She writes with wit and humor to get her points across. And to show my manners, I say "thank you" to Ms. Truss for taking the time to write this book.

E says

I loved Truss's first book. Her outrage at the misuse of apostrophes was appealing but also beguiling because it was so over-the-top with tongue placed firmly in cheek. This book, however, was validating (though not funny) when it was right, but worrisome when it became too far-sweeping and crotchety about social classes.

Everyone loves to feel justified in their outrage after feeling disrespected by strangers or the general public, but attacking entire classes of people (the workers, the fans, those rotten teenagers) and defending those at the top (the rich, the famous, your "elders," and the customers at the cash register) risks sounding too nostalgic for the Victorian era of servants. I agree with her thesis that there is a sad tolerance for "the utter bloody rudeness of everyday life" and not enough reverence for the value of trying to be polite for politeness' sake, but I don't agree with all of her reasons for it. When she bashes rude clerks and aggressive pedestrians who readily scream "You rich bitch!" she elicits sympathy. She then loses it when she defends the victims as belonging to a class that should be utterly immune to this unjust behavior brought about by the rabble and blames egalitarianism for what rich folks now must suffer. "Are rich people actually that bad?" she asks.

No, not most of them. But anyone who has worked as a lowly clerk or assistant at a "private box" or "gentleman's club" can testify that yes, some upper class people are still convinced despite egalitarianism that they are allowed to behave selfishly in the presence of someone they consider less successful - and thus, less important - than themselves. You see it frequently, whether they are exploding without restraint at a teacher or cook whose job is difficult enough without their extra emotion, or simply making a driver wait for hours as they stay overtime at an event without any regard for the family of the person waiting on them.

When she adds how abhorrent it is that some older people are actually called by (GASP!) their first names by

the younger generation, I wonder if she's secretly wishing to return to the days of "thou" and "you," when hierarchies could REALLY be emphasized.

To me, the solution is not in proving that this new populist rudeness is tossed upon the undeserving but that it should not be enacted toward anyone by anyone. Despite Truss's claims to the contrary, the class-based past in which the servile were expected to kowtow and the rich were allowed to behave as they wished WAS INDEED awful. Her point should be that yes, the egalitarian movement has led to both sides acting without consideration, but the goal should be respect for everyone regardless of status. That's the definition of egalitarianism, after all.

Elizabeth says

You know, it's very easy to read Lynne Truss--she writes smooth and amusing prose, and you're halfway through the book before you realize that it isn't going ANYWHERE.

If this woman hadn't already written a bestseller that actually gives reasonable advice I don't *really* think any editor would have considered publishing this grouchy and extended rant about nothing. Half of it doesn't even have to do with politeness (her supposed topic), or lack thereof, but about the author's personal dislikes of the noise of apple chewing (or whatever). I totally agree with her on many occasions, but honestly, who wants to hear MY extended rants about personal space? Hers are just as tedious and fame doesn't really make them any more worth reading.

The shred of advice she gives--let's all try to be a little more polite--is well taken. But it didn't need over two hundred pages to say it and I can't imagine anyone's going to pay any attention.

yrs. sincerely,

grumpy woman who already knew where to put her apostrophes
