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Witty clever retort

Form of humour This article is about the form of humor. For other uses, see Wit (disambiguation).

'The feast of reason, and the flow of soul,' - i.e. - the wits of the age, setting the table in a roar, by James Gillray (1797)

Wit is a form of intelligent humour, the ability to say or write things that are clever and usually funny.[1] Someone witty is a person who is skilled at making clever and funny remarks.[1][2] Forms of wit include the quip, repartee, and wisecrack.

Forms

As in the wit of Dorothy Parker's set, the Algonquin Round Table, witty remarks may be intentionally cruel (as in many epigrams), and perhaps more ingenious than funny. A quip is an observation or saying that has some wit but perhaps descends into sarcasm, or otherwise is short of a point, and a witticism also suggests the diminutive.

Repartee is the wit of the quick answer and capping comment: the snappy comeback and neat retort. (Wilde: "I wish I'd said that." Whistler: "You will, Oscar, you will".)[3] In poetry Wit in poetry is characteristic of metaphysical poetry as a style, and was prevalent in the time of English playwright Shakespeare, who admonished pretension with the phrase "Better a witty fool than a foolish wit".[4] It may combine word play with conceptual thinking, as a kind of verbal display requiring attention, without intending to be laugh-aloud funny; in fact wit can be a thin disguise for more poignant feelings that are being versified. English poet John Donne is the representative of this style of poetry.[5] Further meanings

More generally, one's wits are one's intellectual powers of all types. Native wit — meaning the wits with which one is born — is closely synonymous with common sense. To live by one's wits is to be an opportunist, but not always of the scrupulous kind. To have one's wits about one is to be alert and capable of quick reasoning. To be at the end of one's wits ("I'm at my wits' end") is to be immensely frustrated. See also Comedy portal Hartford Wits New Oxford Wits Oxford Wits Wit (play) Wit (film) References ^ a b "Wit". Merriam-Webster. Retrieved 2012-05-27. ^ "wit". Oxford Dictionaries. Retrieved 29 May 2015. ^ Monty Python: Oscar Wilde sketch ^ Salinger, Leo (1976). Shakespeare and the Traditions of Comedy. Cambridge University Press. pp. 245–6. ISBN 978-0-521-29113-2. ^ Daley, Koos (1990). The Triple Fool: A Critical Evaluation of Constantijn Huygens' Translations of John Donne, De Graaf. p. 58. ISBN 978-90-6004-405-6. Retrieved 6 October 2010. Bibliography D. W. Jefferson, "Tristram Shandy and the Tradition of Learned Wit" in Essays in Criticism, 1(1951), 225-49 Wikiquote has quotations related to: Wit Look up wit in Wiktionary, the free dictionary. Look up native wit in Wiktionary, the free dictionary. Retrieved from " 800K terms | 31M synonyms | 4.5M antonyms | 300K definitions Random word | Facebook | Twitter Find Definitions, Similar or Opposite words and terms in the best online thesaurus dictionary. © Thesaurus.plus We've all been there, minding our own business when someone has made a cruel jibe about our hair or our new outfit or something equally arbitrary. People laughed and we slunk away unable to think of how to reply. Then, when we're all alone it comes to us; the perfect retort to put that person back in their place. The only problem? It's two days later and that person doesn't even remember what happened. The French have a word for everything: We say "Damn, I wish I'd thought of that retort earlier", they simply say 'esprit de l'escalier'. We say that's strangely familiar; they say déjà vu. We say go to war; they say surrender. Join us for a look at 24 witty one-liners and comical comebacks that you'll be able to use in everyday situations. These retorts are to be used like bombs, for when just walking away doesn't cut it. Please note: You are completely within your rights to substitute every suggested retort for a classic and always-effective reply involving the opponent's mother. 24. Whatever Dude The Situation: Someone rude dismisses every point you've just spent the last ten minutes making with a roll of their eyes and a 'meh...whatever'. The Comeback: "Keep rolling your eyes, maybe you'll find your brain back there." 23. Mum Banter The Situation: Always be prepared. If you find yourself drawn into an argument with an idiot, you must be prepared for the inevitable and juvenile 'Mum' jokes that may come your way. Here's one of our favourites to add to your arsenal... The Comeback: "Your mum is so fat even Dora couldn't explore her." 22. The Proposal The Situation: One for the ladies; what to say when your fella gets down on one knee and utters those immortal words 'I've won the lottery'. Sorry, I meant these immortal words: 'Will you marry me?' The Comeback: "I will...if you'll still love me after we've had three kids, no sex life and I've plotted your death more than once." Alternative Comeback: "...Let me see the ring first." Next A Christmas present from my kids, this is not something I would probably have picked up on my own. But sitting down to read it, it turned out to be a pleasant enough way to pass a few hours. The retorts, rejoinders, put downs, come backs, and all other manner of off-the-cuff and premeditated bon mots, and the stories behind them, were for the most part well chosen.After a point, however, it becomes clear the the author is really impressed with his own scholarship, which puts a bit of a damper on A Christmas present from my kids, this is not something I would probably have picked up on my own. But sitting down to read it, it turned out to be a pleasant enough way to pass a few hours. 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At a 1912 dinner party in Blenheim Palace—the Churchill family estate—Lady Astor became annoyed at an inebriated Churchill, who was pontificating on some topic. Unable to take any more, she finally blurted out, Winston, if you were my husband, I'd put poison in your coffee. Without missing a beat, Churchill replied: Nancy, if you were my wife, I'd drink it. The second story also involves a London party and a female member of Parliament (M.P.), and once again a slightly inebriated Churchill. This time, it was Bessie Braddock, a socialist M.P. from Liverpool, who finally had enough. She reproached Churchill by charging, Winston, you're drunk! The Grand Old Man may have had one too many drinks, but he still had his wits about him, replying: You're right, Bessie. And you're ugly. But tomorrow morning, I'll be sober. Most people couldn't come up with better comebacks if they had a month to think about it. But Churchill was able to compose and deliver his words almost instantaneously. A truly great reply that defeats—or deflates—an opponent is called a retort, which the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) defines this way: A sharp or incisive reply, especially one by which the first speaker's statement or argument is in some way turned against himself. The word retort, which first appears in English in 1557, derives from the Latin word *retortus*, meaning to turn back. And this, of course, is exactly what a perfectly executed retort does: it turns back a personal attack, transforming a momentary threat into a personal triumph. Retorts do not occur in a vacuum, but in social interaction, and usually in response to some kind of critical remark. In a pressure-filled situation like this, some exceptional individuals are able to remain calm. But even more important, they're somehow able to use their wit and their verbal skills to formulate a reply that turns the tables on the aggressor. When most of us regular people are thrust into a similar situation, we don't perform nearly so well. Many of us crumble, or become tongue-tied. Or we just blurt out some epigram or other unsatisfying remark. Yes, we may eventually come up with a great reply, but it usually comes to our mind far too late, well after it was needed. The all-too-common phenomenon is captured by a wonderful French expression: *l'esprit de l'escalier* (the wit of the staircase). The concept of staircase wit, authored by the French writer Denis Diderot, refers to those devastatingly clever remarks that we're unable to produce when they're needed, but come to mind with perfect clarity moments later, as we're walking down the staircase and heading out the door. There is no similar expression in English, but the Germans have long had their own word for it: *Treppenwitz* (also staircase wit). The writer Heywood Broun certainly had this phenomenon in mind when he wrote: Repartee is what you wish you'd said. While most of history's great retorts are spread by admiring fans, some are told by the authors themselves, eager to share their moments of brilliance. Truman Capote was fond of regaling people with an anecdote about one of his finer moments. At the height of his popularity, he was drinking one evening with friends in a crowded Key West bar. Nearby sat a couple, both inebriated. The woman recognized Capote, walked over to his table, and gushingly asked him to autograph a paper napkin. The woman's husband, angry at his wife's display of interest in another man, staggered over to Capote's table and assumed an intimidating position directly in front of the diminutive writer. He then proceeded to unzip his trousers and, in Capote's own words, hauled out his equipment. As he did this, he bellowed in a drunken slur, Since you're autographing things, why don't you autograph this? It was a tense moment, and a hush fell over the room. The silence was a blessing, for it allowed all those within earshot to hear Capote's soft, high-pitched voice deliver the perfect emasculating reply: I don't know if I can autograph it, but perhaps I can initial it. A retort is a verbal counterpunch against someone who's taken the first shot. No matter how knee-bucking the first blow, an exceptional person can turn a match around, and even knock out an opponent. Perhaps the classic example in the history of wit is the story of a famous exchange between two eighteenth-century political rivals, John Montagu, also known as the Fourth Earl of Sandwich, and the reformist politician, John Wilkes. During a heated argument, Montagu sneered at Wilkes and said derisively, Upon my soul, Wilkes, I don't know whether you'll die upon the gallows, or of syphilis (some versions of the story say a vile disease and others the pox). 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