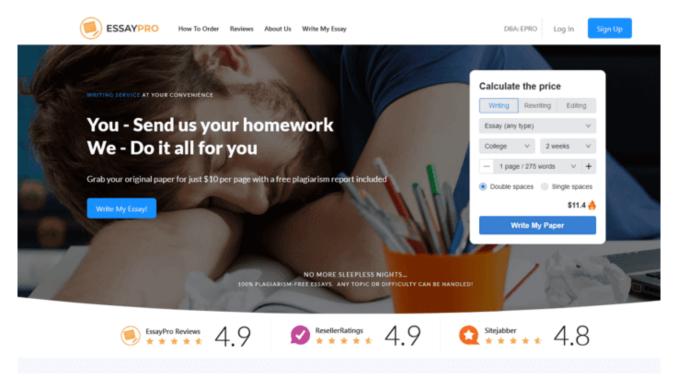
## Pun With Language: The Role of the Pun Throughout the History of the World



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"In his protest days, Gandhi walked everywhere. From the North of India to the South, Gandhi traveled it all, all without shoes. And he didn't brush his teeth, either, so his breath was pretty bad. Since he walked so far and did not eat much in the way of food, he got very thin and physically weak. All in all, he was a super-calloused, fragile mystic, vexed with halitosis!"
Have you heard jokes such as this before? Jokes that cause you to groan sooner than laugh, and to hurl random objects at the utterer? Perhaps you heard them at a party somewhere, or when you were with a friend. Or even in the workplace. Such jokes are everywhere, causing even the most good-humored person to groan in agony at the cheesiness of it all. Puns, the mainstream culture labels them, because to hear them is 'pun'ishment. But how did the concept of punmanship come about? And, more importantly, why do so many people take it upon themselves to tell these 'shaggy dog stories' despite such negative reinforcement (i.e. groans, thrown pillows, comments such

as "You are so not funny!", etc...)? The answers may surprise you.

An acquaintance of mine once said that "A pun is a lower form of humor, just like a bun is a lower form of bread." I think this sums up nicely the general conception of puns in modern times. Instead of patting ourselves on the back for a pun well done, we footnote the glorious tidbit of humor with the ever-insidious, "No pun intended." But good punmanship has not always found itself on the permanent hate list of joke aficionados.

As far back as Ancient Greece, and probably before, puns were made. The most famous pun from this time is the classic translation of Jesus' statement to Peter: "Thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build my church." To an English speaking audience, this would not seem out of the ordinary at all, just another passage from the Bible without a pun in sight. But when one considers the language of one of the original translations of the Bible, Greek, the circumstances become much clearer. In Greek, the name Peter translates as 'Petros,' while the term rock translates as 'petra.' So, when those words are translated into Greek within the full context of the sentence, the sentence itself reads: "Thou art Petros and upon this petra I will build my church.

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