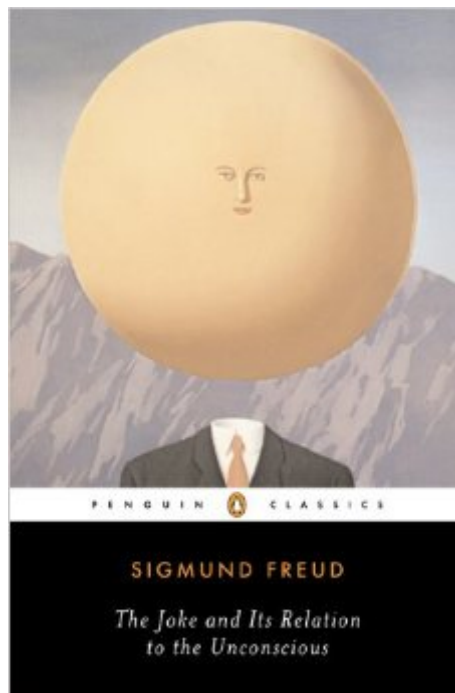


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# The Joke And Its Relation To The Unconscious (Penguin Classics)



## Synopsis

Why do we laugh? The answer, argued Freud in this groundbreaking study of humor, is that jokes, like dreams, satisfy our unconscious desires. *The Joke and Its Relation to the Unconscious* explains how jokes provide immense pleasure by releasing us from our inhibitions and allowing us to express sexual, aggressive, playful, or cynical instincts that would otherwise remain hidden. In elaborating this theory, Freud brings together a rich collection of puns, witticisms, one-liners, and anecdotes, which, as Freud shows, are a method of giving ourselves away. For more than seventy years, Penguin has been the leading publisher of classic literature in the English-speaking world. With more than 1,700 titles, Penguin Classics represents a global bookshelf of the best works throughout history and across genres and disciplines. Readers trust the series to provide authoritative texts enhanced by introductions and notes by distinguished scholars and contemporary authors, as well as up-to-date translations by award-winning translators.

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## Customer Reviews

This book is about several traditional types of meaning-based jokes. It was Freud's earliest attempt to publish a book on his theory of the unconscious, and one Freudian scholar (Tomas Geyskens) even believes, unrealistically, that this text is the best example of Freud's theory of sublimation in art. Every basic class of jokes is included here, although not properly identified according to their actual type. Freud even includes a sophisticated kind in which ambiguous language is used as a

means of indirect communication. But these indirection jokes, like all others, are analyzed by theorists today as "incongruity resolution." According to this erroneous view humor lies in our mere satisfaction in discovering just what is going on in a joke, in particular as it "resolves," partially or fully. That theory holds that what is mainly funny is the process itself of getting the joke. This is a false theory that certainly must be abandoned, especially considering the better alternative that I have devised. There are in fact two classes of linguistic jokes, which the authoritative theorists lump together as one. One is merely a glorified pun or witticism, while that which thinly veils a foible in double meaning, should be known as an indirection, or "irony" joke. Freud illustrates the joke of indirection in the example about the doctor, in that passage where he explains "double meaning proper." That notion describes well the kind of ambiguity that is used both in indirect communication and in a glorified witticism. But he also discloses, unknowingly, a third class, citing the one about a foolish café customer who hasn't paid his bill and tries to return a piece of cake to pay for his drink because he "hadn't eaten" the cake.

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