
McVey Gill, Mary, and Brenda Wegmann. *The Red-Hot Book of Spanish Slang and Idioms: 5,000 Expressions to Spice Up Your Spanish.*

New York: McGraw-Hill, 2006. ISBN: 13-978-0-07-143301-3.

The Red-Hot Book of Spanish Slang and Idioms is the latest offering by the Gill and Wegmann team, authors of the popular *Streetwise Spanish*. Unlike that collection of colloquialisms, which contextualizes idiomatic phrases and slang in

dialogues, describes them in brief essays, and offers the students review exercises and activities, the *Red-Hot Book* is a straightforward dictionary of slang.

The Red-Hot Book of Spanish Slang and Idioms is divided into two sections: a Spanish-English dictionary, and an English-Spanish dictionary. A typical entry in the Spanish-English dictionary includes the Spanish word/expression, a literal translation into English in parentheses, the actual definition in English, the countries or regions in which the term is used, an example of the use, and a translation of that example into English. For example, the entry *Hecho(-a) polvo* is first literally translated—(*made into dust*), and then defined as *worn out, exhausted*. The dictionary notes that this phrase is commonly used in El Salvador, the Southern Cone, and Spain, and then offers the following example of its use: *¡Tanto trabajo! Estoy hecha polvo. So much work! I'm beat*. The dictionary is clearly intended for intermediate and advanced students of Spanish, not the casual traveler: the entries do not offer any guide to pronunciation or to verb conjugation.

The “Red-Hot” in the title is a warning to the squeamish or straitlaced. This dictionary, which promises to “Spice Up Your Spanish,” offers an ample number of merely colloquial entries (the English section, for example, includes *if you snooze, you lose; to leave in the lurch; and right off the bat*), but also covers the gamut of vulgar expressions and bathroom talk (though only dipping into drug terminology). As the authors state in the *Preface*, they have made no attempt to “sanitize the language,” but they have clearly marked possible offenders with the word “vulgar” in parentheses.

The entries provide other useful information aside from the possible *vulgar* notation. The English entry *Holy smoke!* is described as “a bit old-fashioned,” while for the Spanish entry *¡Estás como lo recetó el doctor!* the authors note that it “can be a street compliment.” Many entries also refer the student to other, similar terms. For example, in the English entry *to be nuts* they suggest that the reader “see also: to be off one’s rocker, to have a screw loose, to lose one’s marbles.” Finally, the dictionary is illustrated with humorous drawings that illustrate some of the more colorful phrases.

Gill and Wegmann’s dictionary both entertains and instructs. It is ambitious in scope, well-researched, and clearly organized, and will appeal to instructors and students alike. Professors will find the detailed entries and the regional specificity useful as a resource and as a teaching aid, and students will be able to correctly translate all of those colloquial phrases they want to use in dialogues and compositions (finally! multiple translations of *he kicked the bucket* and *she stood me up*). The dictionary will also prove a valuable aid to understanding native speakers. *The Red-Hot Book of Spanish Slang and Idioms* would be a welcome addition to any student’s shelf of Spanish reference books (and would get more use than any other volume, I suspect), and I would certainly recommend that students buy a copy to take with them when they study abroad. In short, this text is a valuable resource for instructors and intermediate and advanced students.

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Publisher's Response

McGraw-Hill thanks Professor Paul for her favorable review of *The Red-Hot Book of Spanish Slang*. As she notes, this is more of a reference tool than the author's *Streetwise Spanish* text, also reviewed in this issue. However, the currency of the entries, the inclusion of literal translations, the liveliness of the example sentences, and the precision of the regional usage indicators, should make this a resource that will be too frequently browsed to gather dust on the shelf.

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