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INTRODUCTION

Just in case you were wondering . . .

. . . a rhetorical question is a question that doesn't expect or require an answer, used for dramatic effect. Fowler's *Modern English Usage* elaborates by saying, 'The assumption is that only one answer is possible and that if the hearer is impelled to make it mentally himself it will impress him more than the speaker's statement.'

In other words, it is more effective to shrug your shoulders and ask, 'Is the Pope a Catholic?' (forcing your hearer to think, 'Yes, of course he is') than simply to say, 'The Pope is a Catholic' (which your hearer almost certainly knows already).

Rhetorical questions are all around us, from the Bible ('Can the leopard change his spots?') to the popular song ('Who will buy this wonderful morning?'). A handful of them are deep and meaningful ('What does a woman want?'); many more are anxious ('Will you still love me tomorrow?') or frivolous ('Has your mother sold her mangle?'). What they have in common is that someone,

somewhere, has thought them worth asking and – by definition – been left without a satisfactory response.

Answers to Rhetorical Questions attempts to deal with this problem in a sensible, no-nonsense way. After all, when it comes to the crunch, do you really *want* someone to compare you to a summer's day? How many beans do you *think* make five? Does your brother *need* a keeper?

The result is not the answer to questions of life, the universe and everything. It's a potpourri of quotations from Shakespeare and the Marx Brothers, advertisements for burgers and slogans for political campaigns, lines from action films and titles of love songs. Something for everyone, you might say.

Or, to put it another way, what's not to like?

CHAPTER ONE

Where's the fire?

Questions of health, safety and the law

What better way to begin than by establishing that we have filled in all the forms, ticked all the boxes and ensured that no one is going to come to any harm?

Is your journey really necessary?

This one is between you and your conscience – and is probably the only question in the book of which that can be said. While we are encouraged to travel by bike or by public transport to save on fossil fuels, carbon emissions and all the other evils attached to the private car, no one is (yet) officially saying that the planet would be a better place if we all stayed at home. But it can only be a matter of time.

Indeed, current estimates suggest that some 50 million US workers (or 40% of the employed population) could be based at home rather than the office for at least part of the working week. As yet, only about 2.5 million Americans call home their principal workplace, suggesting that a lot of commuting is unnecessary, assuming you're not worried about maintaining regular face-to-face contact with your professional associates.

Our other main reason for travelling is for leisure. A fulfilling leisure time is part of a balanced life and has many accepted benefits – improving physical and mental health, oiling the economy, developing personal

relationships, increasing environmental awareness, bolstering community cohesion, developing personal leadership skills and so on. If you give up any hobbies that involve a bit of travel, there may be a little less CO₂ in the air but society and you are likely to suffer in other ways. Home-based leisure activities such as Scrabble and crocheting are all very well, but they aren't going to do much for your leadership skills.

