# THE CAMBRIDGE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom
One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA
477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre,
New Delhi – 110025, India
79 Anson Road, #06-04/06, Singapore 079906

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.
It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of
education, learning, and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781108423595
DOI: 10.1017/9781108528931



First published 2019
Reprinted 2020

Printed in the United Kingdom by TJ International Ltd. Padstow, Cornwall

*A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.*

ISBN 978-1-108-42359-5 Hardback
ISBN 978-1-108-43773-8 Paperback

Additional resources for this publication at www.cambridge.org/crystal.



# THE CAMBRIDGE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

THIRD EDITION

DAVID CRYSTAL

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# PREFACE

A book about the English language – or about any individual language – is a daring enterprise, for it has as many perceptive critics as there are fluent readers. The language as a whole belongs to no one, yet everyone owns a part of it, has an interest in it, and has an opinion about it. Moreover, whenever people begin to talk about their own language, they all have something to offer – favourite words or sayings, dialect anecdotes and observations, usage likes and dislikes. Individual linguistic memories, experiences, and abilities enable everyone to make a personal contribution to language chat. In a sense, we are all truly equal when we participate – even though this democratic vision is disturbed by the widely-shared perception that some (notably, those who have learned the terminology of language study) are more equal than others.

## The Stories of English

That is why the metaphor of 'the story' (as in 'the story of English') is somewhat misleading. There is no one 'story' of English. There are innumerable individual stories. And even if we look for broad narrative themes, there are several dimensions competing for our attention. For example, there is the structural story – the way the sounds, grammar, and vocabulary of the language have evolved. There is the social story – the way the language has come to serve a multiplicity of functions in society. There is the literary story – the way writers have evoked the power, range, and beauty of the language to express new orders of meaning. And there is the chronological story – apparently the most straightforward, though even here it is not possible to give a simple account, in terms of a beginning, middle, and end. There is no single beginning to the story of English, but several, with waves of Anglo-Saxon invaders arriving in various locations, and laying the foundations of later dialect difference. There is no single middle, but several, with the language diverging early on in England and Scotland, then much later taking different paths in Britain, North America, and elsewhere. And, as we observe the increasingly diverse directions in which English is currently moving around the world, there is certainly no single end.

## A Traveller's Guide

The biggest problem in compiling this book, accordingly, was what order to impose upon the mass of material which presents itself for inclusion. I have started with history, moved on to structure, and concluded with use. But it might have been otherwise, and I have written the six parts so that it is possible for readers to begin with any one of them and move in any direction. The same principle was applied to the structure of each part. While there is a certain logic of exposition in some topics (such as Part I, the history of English), there is none in others (such as Part V, the account of major regional or social varieties). In all cases, therefore, chapters, and sections within chapters, have been planned as self-contained entities, with relevant conceptual underpinning provided by the frequent use of cross-references.

The basic unit of organization in the book is the double-page spread. Sentences never cross turn-over pages, and the vast majority of topics are treated within the constraints of a single spread. I have tried to ensure that it will be possible for readers to dip into this book at any point, and find a coherent treatment of a topic in a single opening. There is too much in any language for the information to be assimilated in a continuous reading, and this is especially so in the case of English, with its lengthy history and vast range of use; and while some may wish to read this book 'from left to right', I suspect most will prefer to make more leisurely excursions over a period of time – more a casual stroll than a guided tour. The double-page spread approach is designed for that kind of traveller. Indeed, the metaphor of travelling is far more suitable for this book than the metaphor of story-telling.

## Treatment and Coverage

I have kept several criteria in mind while writing *CEEL* (pronounced 'seal', as we have come to call it). I have tried to find a balance between talking about the language and letting the language speak for itself. Most spreads distinguish between an expository overview and detailed examples (largely through the typographic convention of main text vs panels). Then within each spread, I have tried to provide examples of the wonder which can be found when we begin to look carefully at the language. All languages are fascinating, beautiful, full of surprises, moving, awesome, fun. I hope I have succeeded in provoking at least one of these responses on every page. I would be disappointed if, after any opening, a reader did not feel to some extent entertained, as well as informed.

Obviously it has all been a personal selection. The hardest part, in fact, was the choosing. Once I had decided on a topic for a spread, I would collect material relating to it from as many sources as I could find. I would write the opening perspective, and then look at all the material to find textual and pictorial illustrations. Invariably I had enough material to fill several spreads, and choosing what to put in and what to leave out was always painful. The moral is plain. There are several other possible encyclopedic worlds.

## Wider Horizons

In particular, there has not been space to go into the many applications of English language studies in proper detail. I touch upon some of these areas in Part VI, but the aim of that part is not to be comprehensive, but simply to illustrate the various directions that applied language studies can take. There are many other horizons which can only be approached by using systematic information about the language, but this book does not try to reach them. However, in view of its special place in the history of language study, I do try to reach out in the direction of literature as often as possible, and it is perhaps worth drawing attention to the way that literary examples are

dispersed throughout the book. I have always been strongly opposed to the great divide which traditionally separates 'lang' and 'lit'. It seemed to me that it would only reinforce that divide if I were to include a separate chapter called something like 'literary language', so I have not done so – a position which is discussed towards the end of §22. Many pages, accordingly, display a literary presence – sometimes by way of stylistic comment, often through extensive quotation.

## Acknowledgements

If an enterprise of this kind has succeeded, it is because its author has managed to balance on the shoulders of many others, without too often falling off. I owe a particular debt of gratitude to Professor Whitney Bolton, of Rutgers University, who read the whole text of the book and offered innumerable valuable comments and suggestions. I must thank Dr Andy Orchard and Professor David Burnley for their advice on several points in the Old and Middle English chapters. And a number of other scholars or organizations have helped me find the best illustration of a particular topic: these points of contact are acknowledged formally at the end of the book, but I would want to record personal thanks to Henry G. Burger, Lou Burnard, Kenneth Cameron, Jack Chambers, Vinod Dubey, Leslie Dunkling, Charles Jones, Kevin Kiernan, Edwin D. Lawson, Geoffrey Leech, Valerie Luckins, Angus McIntosh, Chrissie Maher, Chris Upward, Maggie Vance, and Lyn Wendon. Anne Rowlands helped me compile the indexes. It is perhaps unusual to thank a journal, but I have to acknowledge an enormous debt to *English Today*, and thus to its editor, Tom McArthur, for bringing together such a valuable collection of English-language material. For anyone who wishes to maintain a healthy English-language lifestyle, I prescribe the reading of *ET* three times a day after meals.

The book has been a real collaboration with in-house staff at Cambridge University Press, and involved many planning meetings both in Cambridge and Holyhead, over a period of some three years. It is therefore a real pleasure to acknowledge the roles of Geoff Staff and Clare Orchard, who managed and coordinated the project at Cambridge, Paula Granados and Anne Priestley, who carried out the picture research, and Carol-June Cassidy, who read the text from the point of view of American English. I have much enjoyed collaborating once again with Roger Walker, whose design experience will be evident on every page. I am especially grateful to Adrian du Plessis, director of Cambridge Reference, for his personal interest and encouragement from the earliest days of this project. And, in a different sense of in-house, I thank my wife, Hilary, whose editorial comments have greatly improved the clarity of the text, and whose role in relation to the book's planning and production has been so great that it defies any attempt at conventional expression.

David Crystal
*Holyhead, October 1994*

## Preface to the Paperback Edition

I have been delighted by the enthusiastic reception given to the appearance of *CEEL*, which has permitted the early production of a paperback edition. For this edition I have taken the opportunity of correcting a number of typographical errors which slipped through in the first printing, and have made a number of small textual modifications in response to points made by readers and reviewers. The only major authorial change affects §7, where I have brought the table of World English statistics up to date, using 1995 population estimates; this has also involved a rewriting of the associated commentary.

Several other changes have affected later sections of that chapter, largely as a consequence of the rapidly growing position of English throughout the world. Indeed, since the text of *CEEL* was completed, in 1994, this topic has attracted greatly increased media attention, with the millennium providing the excuse for fresh discussion of 'the future of English'. A related publication, *English as a Global Language* (Cambridge University Press, 1997, 2nd edn 2003), has enabled me to deal with this issue in proper depth, supplementing the historical story outlined in the first part of §7 with a fuller account of contemporary developments (such as the role of English on the Internet) than it has been possible to describe in the present book.

This preface gives me an opportunity to thank the many readers of the first edition who have sent in facts, comments, and anecdotes about the way English is used in various parts of the world. These are far too numerous and extensive to be easily included in a book like *CEEL*, but they have all been carefully filed, and it is my hope that before too long there will be an opportunity to use this information as part of an archive about the English language, whose absence (referred to at the end of the book) I continue to lament.

David Crystal
*Holyhead, February 1997*

## Preface to the Second Edition

The amount of revision for the new edition has been considerable, but can be easily summarized. Time-related tables, such as the table of statistics on World English usage and country population figures, have been updated to 2001. The rapid evolution of the Internet during the 1990s has required the addition of a separate 10-page section (§23), with consequent revision of later chapter numbers. Political events of the decade, such as in Hong Kong, have been addressed, and a number of dated illustrations have been replaced. The section giving details of further reading has been updated, and websites have been added to institutional addresses. Last but not least, with the turning of the millennium all references to 'this century', and the like, have been faithfully revised.

David Crystal
*Holyhead, September 2002*

## Preface to the Third Edition

A lot has happened in the 15 years since the second edition, though not all of the developments have been predictable. For instance, I was expecting to update the statistics on global English use – now including all countries, not just those where English is a first or second language – and I wasn't surprised to find it necessary to add extra pages on the growing cultural identities of 'new Englishes'. But who would ever have predicted that I would need new spreads on English in a post-Brexit Europe, or on changes in the oratorical style of American presidents?

I introduced the language of the Internet in my second edition, but the digital developments that sparked linguistic interest pre-2003 have been hugely overtaken by those that have taken place since, not least in relation to social media and online language play. Facebook, Twitter, Wikis, Second Life, WhatsApp, LOLcats, and Doggolingo name just some of the popular innovations that today need to be represented in any book that dares to call itself a language encyclopedia. They illustrate the emergence of new varieties of online discourse, often more radical than the first manifestations of electronically mediated communication, and making us rethink some of our traditional categories of linguistic description, especially in relation to text analysis. At the same time, the arrival of 'big data' has introduced a new climate into corpus linguistics, which has vastly grown since 2003, and motivated one of the largest revisions in this edition.

Other fields have grown too. This third edition has additional spreads on gender, with its new paradigms of enquiry, Internet graphology, and forensic linguistics. The first decade of the new millennium also saw the publication of the historical thesaurus of the *OED*, fresh interest in original pronunciation (especially in relation to Shakespeare), and the emergence of new forms of digital art. The field of linguistics broadened its scope, notably in cognitive linguistics and the various domains of online enquiry that provided the motivation for searchlinguistics. The ongoing revision of the *OED* necessitated a complete review of all the statistics relating to Shakespeare's vocabulary, and the new character of the *OED* and other dictionaries has caused a significant expansion to Part VI. That section also acknowledges the various ways in which popular interest in the language has been fostered in recent years by such organizations as the British Library.

All of this has added over fifty pages to the present edition. Most of the other pages have also been revised, some very much so, to take account of the various changes that have affected the language since 2003. Updating the visual context has been essential too: a new typeface has been used throughout, and about one-third of the illustrations in the book have been replaced. It never ceases to amaze me how quickly some illustrations can go out-of-date – most obviously, perhaps, in relation to technology. The mobile phones and computers of only fifteen years ago now look extremely clunky. This edition is also the first to be made available online, which has allowed me to make an audio recording of the historical illustrations and the examples of modern pronunciation, as well as adding links to additional material. Every spread has a link, either to an extra piece of writing by me or to a website.

I am grateful to Cambridge University Press for initiating a survey of second-edition users, whose feedback gave me several clear pointers about the topics most in need of revision. My thanks also to the team of people who worked on this new edition, especially my commissioning editor Rebecca Taylor, picture researcher Claire Eudall, page designer Zoe Naylor, and the other members of the in-house team: content managers Charlie Howell and Rosemary Crawley, content team lead Rachel Cox, design manager Stephanie Thelwell, Noel Robson from Creative Technical Support, and freelance copy-editor Chris Jackson. Geetha Williams and the typesetters at MPS Limited in Chennai did a grand job of turning my new-page briefs into elegant layouts. At home, Hilary Crystal managed the process of inputting revisions and, as ever, provided invaluable comments on my initial drafts. The result, I hope, is a book that will meet the needs and interests of a new generation of 21st-century English-language enthusiasts.

David Crystal
*Holyhead, April 2018*

## Frontispiece Caption

The British Library printed a series of postcards reflecting the history of the language and its varieties, in association with its exhibition *Evolving English: One Language, Many Voices* (12 November 2010–3 April 2011) (see p. 504). In their breadth of coverage they provide an appropriate frontispiece for the encyclopedia.

Introduction to the exhibition
*Summer is icumen in* (*c.* 1225–50); BL Harley MS.978 (see p. 36)
Merchant, from the Prologue to *The Canterbury Tales*, Geoffrey Chaucer (*c.* 1483) G.11586 (see p. 38)
Of Matrimonie, from the *Book of Common Prayer* (1549) BL C.25.1.14.(1.) (see p. 67)
Opening page of *A Table Alphabetical*, Robert Cawdrey (1604) Bodleian Library (see p. 76)
Title-page of the *King James Bible* (1611) BL C.35.1.13.(1.) (see p. 66)
Hornbook, wooden 'paddle' with printed alphabet and text, 14.5 x 8.5 cm (*c.* 1650) BL C.45.a.14 (see p. 270)
Letters W and X from *The Paragon of Alphabets* (1815) BL Ch.800/111.(7.) (see p. 276)
The Pronouns, from *The Infant's Grammar* (1824) BL 012806.ee.33.(9.) (see p. 230)
Frontispiece of the *Modern Flash Dictionary* by George Kent (1835) 1490.d.52 (see p. 194)
H-dropping, from *Punch* (27 October 1855) C.194.b.199 (see p. 90)
The Mouse's Tale or Tail, from *Alice's Adventures under Ground*, Lewis Carroll (*c.* 1852–4) BL Add.MS.46700 (see p. 283)
Poster for Naylor's Travelling Show (1879) BL Evan.462 (see p. 414)
*How to Write Love Letters and Romance with Your Girl Friend*, Nathan O. Njoku (1965) BL X.0909/588.(161.) (see p. 108)
Remaining items all British Library design

Cambridge University Press
978-1-108-42359-5 — The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language 3rd Edition
David Crystal
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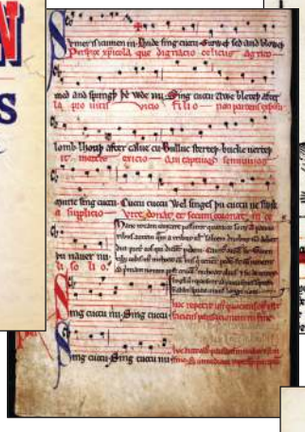

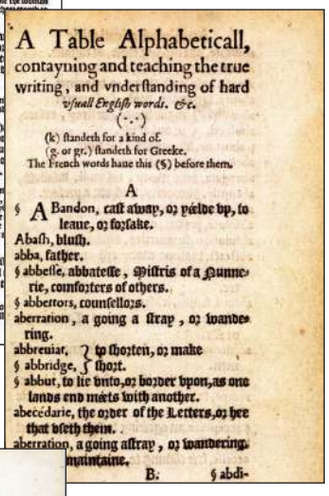


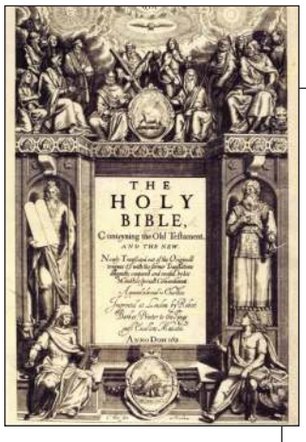


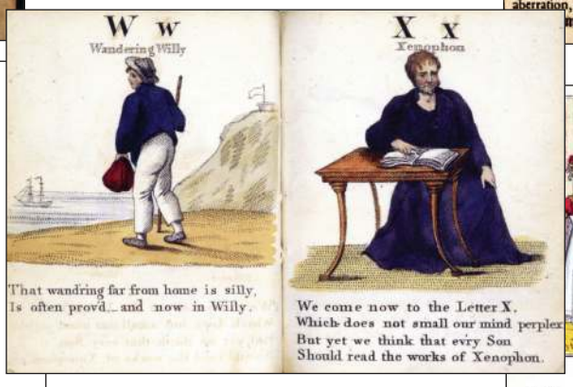



THE PRONOUNS.

At this moment a bustle was heard at the door
From a party of PRONOUNS, who came by the score.
And what do you think? Why I vow and declare
THEY would pass for the Nouns who already were there.
And THEIR boldness was such, as I live IT is true,