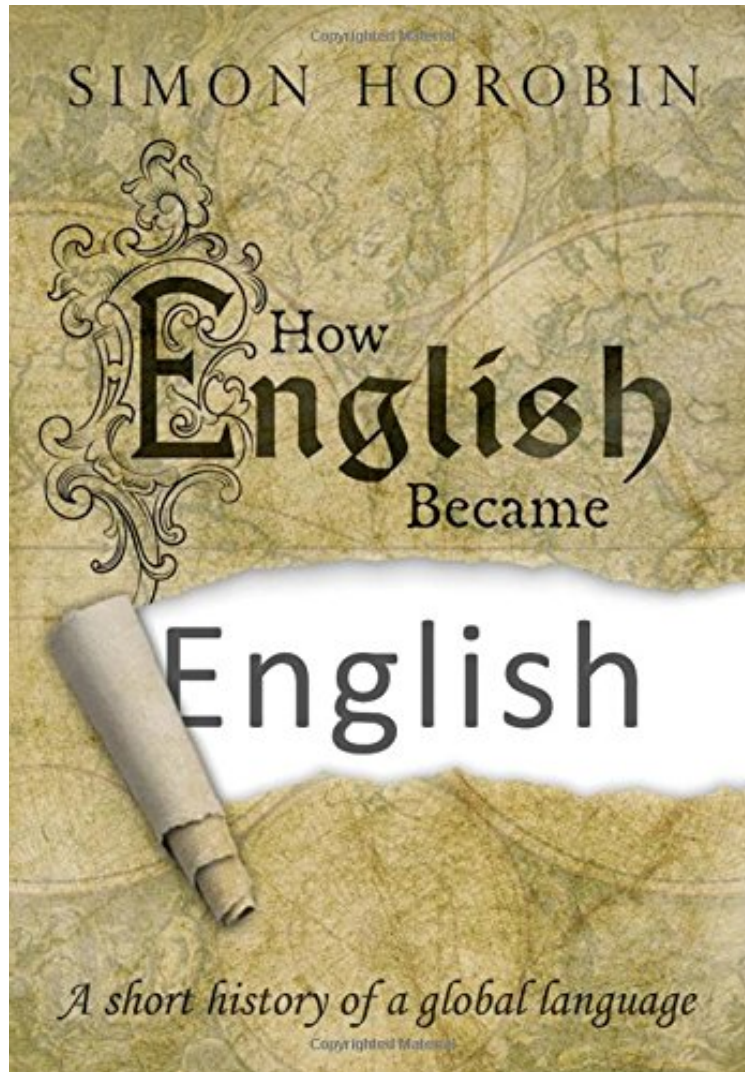


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How English Became English: A Short History of a Global Language

Simon Horobin

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Simon Horobin : How English Became English: A Short History of a Global Language before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised How English Became English: A Short History of a Global Language:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five StarsBy A Happy CustomerAwesome for high schoolers!5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. A remarkable amount of information about the past, present and future of our tongue, written with wit and knowledge.By lyndonbrechtI liked this book enough to read it twice. Horobin writes

with wit and knows the subject well. The book is short but chock full of information. Some underlying themes are important, including what English is really English, and who decides what is proper and what is not? Early he presents five different English versions of a passage from the New Testament (Luke 15: 11-16), including Old English, Early Modern English, recent Scots, Tok Pisin (a "pidgin" widely used in Papua New Guinea) and Modern English. The modern English is full words imported from other languages. Reading these is thought-provoking. Scots is not a dialect of English, although it's clearly a relative. Then there's English continually changing: in 2005 some Australians translated the Bible into social media texting, for lack of a better name, "In da beginning God cre8d da heavens to da earth." The British Isles have long been multilingual and English reflects some of this--Welsh, Irish, Pictish, Old Norse, Danish, Latin, Norman French. Horobin describes the intermingling tongues. There's discussion of vowel shift, of characteristics of Germanic roots, the breakdown of the old system of inflections. His tale of how Christianity brought the Latin alphabet is fascinating; the alphabet was not a perfect match for English sounds, so English added a couple of letters that lasted centuries. He makes the point that the French influencing English was Norman French, not the ancestor of today's standard French. There's much more. Horobin discusses the origin of some loan words, from wildly diverse sources; the origins and development of plurals and person; possessives; dictionaries and standardization (that would include Dr Johnson and America's Noah Webster); regional pronunciations; the rise of new Englishes such as Singlish (Singapore) and Spanglish (Spanish/ American English). Then there's RP, received pronunciation, which is more or less widely considered to be the correct English. Standard English has been shaped by language professionals and by social class, but says Horobin, fluency in Standard English offers access to jobs and such. Who decides what is correct ("ain't" for example is to this day a marker of illiteracy but has been used for centuries)? How do set rules for punctuation and all that? There have been repeated calls for an Academy to protect the language, along the lines of the French, but it has never gotten much traction. Dictionaries have gone from being statements of fixed meaning to archives of observed speech and usage. To sum it up: you'll learn a good deal of English language history, a lot about the issues and will be left with little certainty other than English is a vigorous language constantly developing and developing some variants in places such as Singapore and India. There's also change in the English homeland, with heavy Asian and Caribbean migration into Britain, just as English foodways now reflect an intricate culture, so the language will.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. GoodBy DarrenIngram_dot_com

It is not far-fetched to say that most English speakers do not know the real history of their own language. Britons especially! This book provides a readable, concise history about the global language which is English, something that is spoken by over a billion people worldwide, whether as a primary or secondary language. The history and development of English is fascinating and, of course, as a language it is always changing. It can be a truism to say that English people may have a poor understanding of their language. They certainly en masse fail to have an appreciation to its history and development. Foreigners can and frequently do have a better understanding of it, at least on a technical and often historical level. For those who have British as a mother tongue, it just is can be a standard, puzzled answer to any question concerning their language. Otherwise why the past tense of walk is walked, whereas the past tense of go is went? Now, English is far from a rigid, pure language. It borrows literally, quelle surprise, from many other languages. Many common-or-garden English words or phrases may appear English but they have been taken from foreign languages before being Anglicized and forming part of everyday speech. It is slightly unfortunate that this book can be heavy going, particularly to a reader who is not a linguist. This is a shame as even someone with English as a mother tongue may be struggling to keep up with this book. That said, it is still worth the effort. Reading this book gave the equivalent of many cartoon thought bubbles filled with exclamation marks. The author has done his homework and reveals many fine, top-rate observations. Why would an English speaker plump for *The little yellow book* but ignore *The yellow little book*? There is a reason yet most won't know it, despite knowing their preference. The book's low price is a steal for what you get and the hours of attentive, information-rich knowledge that it imparts. It might not change how you use English (perhaps it is too late for that) yet it may change how you appreciate and value the language.

The English Language is spoken by more than a billion people throughout the world. But where did English come from? And how has it evolved into the language used today? In *How English Became English* Simon Horobin investigates the evolution of the English language, examining how the language continues to adapt even today, as English continues to find new speakers and new uses. Engaging with contemporary concerns about correctness, Horobin considers whether such changes are improvements, or evidence of slipping standards. What is the future for the English Language? Will Standard English continue to hold sway, or are we witnessing its replacement by newly emerging Englishes?

"A happy mixture of scholarship, clear writing, and humor." --Kirkus s
"In this concise narrative of the history of the English language, Horobin analyzes historical context just enough to unfurl the object called 'English.'" --Library Journal, starred review
"... if you are serious about understanding the English language as it is, you should have this book in your hands and on your shelf." --The Baltimore Sun
"Any word lover or professional language manipulator

will find something surprising and worthwhile in this book." --Copyediting.com "In *How English Became English*, Simon Horobin examines both the history of this now global language as well as modern usage and controversies in a brief, layman's overview... [Horobin's] arguments are brilliantly presented... an interesting profile of the English language from many different angles." --Columbia Metropolitan

About the Author Simon Horobin is Professor of English Language and Literature at the University of Oxford and a Fellow of Magdalen College. He has written extensively on the history, structure, and uses of the English language. He is the author of *Does Spelling Matter?* (OUP, 2013) and a number of books on the history of English, and the language of Chaucer.