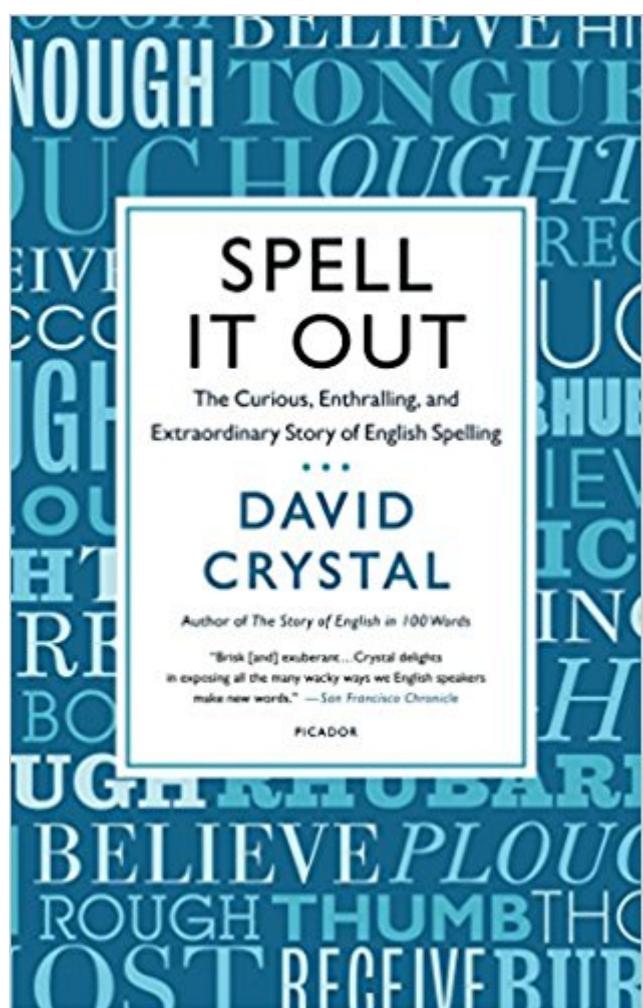


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Spell It Out: The Curious, Enthralling, And Extraordinary Story Of English Spelling



Synopsis

THE FASCINATING AND SURPRISING HISTORY OF ENGLISH SPELLING FROM DAVID CRYSTAL, EVERYONE'S FAVORITE EXPERT LOGOPHILEWith The Story of English in 100 Words, David Crystal took us on a tour through the history of our language. Now, with Spell It Out, he takes on the task of answering all the questions about how we spell: "Why is English spelling so difficult?" Or "Why are good spellers so proud of their achievement that when they see a misspelling they condemn the writer as sloppy, lazy, or uneducated?" In thirty-seven short, engaging and informative chapters, Crystal takes readers on a history of English spelling, starting with the Roman missionaries' sixth century introduction of the Roman alphabet and ending with where the language might be going. He looks individually at each letter in the alphabet and its origins. He considers the question of vowels and how people developed a way to tell whether or not it was long or short. He looks at influences from other cultures, and explains how English speakers understood that the "o" in "hopping" was a short vowel, rather than the long vowel of "hoping". If you've ever asked yourself questions like "Why do the words "their", "there" and "they're" sound alike, but mean very different things?" or "How can we tell the difference between "charge" the verb and "charge" the noun?" David Crystal's Spell It Out will spell it all out for you.

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Customer Reviews

Crystal makes a compelling case that spelling can be an adventure. This whirlwind review of the history of English spelling contains helpful tips for average readers and teachers, with small gems of

discovery every few pages. The development of our language was influenced by everything from efficiency to fashion, such as the sixteenth-century love of Latin spelling. His brisk approach takes about as many chapters as there are English sounds—“a bit more than 26—which are the root of several spelling variations. Writers’ knotty and convoluted efforts to bring order to this hodgepodge are often doomed, as the myriad exceptions to “i before e” demonstrate. Although his book is not exactly a love letter to the vagaries of English, linguist Crystal (The Story of English in 100 Words, 2012) maintains an affectionate tone of indulgence, similar to how a doting relative would treat a wayward nephew. For as Crystal shows, spelling is a cultural legacy as human—and therefore as prone to mischief—as anything else we create.

--Bridget Thoreson --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

“The best word book to come down the pike in many a moon...An ingenious idea, and only David Crystal could have pulled it off.” Patricia T. O’Conner and Stewart Kellerman, authors of *Origins of the Specious: Myths and Misconceptions of the English Language* and bloggers at Grammaphobia.com, on *The Story of English in 100 Words* “Brisk [and] exuberant...Crystal delights in exposing all the many wacky ways we English speakers make new words.” San Francisco Chronicle on *The Story of English in 100 Words*

Quite a good book. I’ve been interested in the history and development of the English language for quite a while, and have read a few other books about it. This is really a different and unique take on the subject. It was actually kind of a page-turner, hard to put down. Which seems a little odd for a book of this genre, but there is a sense of suspense: what crazy thing are the scribes going to do next to deal with yet another new word that has shown up, the spelling for which was already taken by an older word.

This book is a true gem! It is that even for kids and other who have learned to “hate language studies.” There are solid and well written explanations for WHY English spelling turned out like we have it today. What a fascinating journey it took! Ancient monks were involved--and modern scholars are involved. And folks, it is truly READABLE--something that can’t be said truthfully for some modern books that try to “explain why we spell and talk like we do.” Thanks .com for carrying it--and at such an affordable price!

This book is quite good. One thing I learned is that sometimes early scribes used various spellings

of homophones intentionally. I am making up an example to illustrate, but, in a way, it is useful to spell "by", "bye" and "buy" differently. At once we can see which word it is.

David Crystal makes even a dry topic interesting: in this case, spelling. Captivating and informative for anyone interested in knowing why English words are not spelled like they're pronounced; or, pronounced like they're spelled. I thought I knew most of the reasons, but I didn't. The information imparted should make for stimulating and challenging conversation.

This is a pretty good popularization and simplification. Crystal is himself a linguist and edited an academic text on the subject. His book uses a lightweight, hit-the-highlights approach that will give the general reader the basic ideas. Perhaps it oversimplifies -- to the point of being not quite "entralling," as the subtitle promises -- but then I may have more historical bent than most.

Lists and explains all the ways English spelling has been influenced down through its historical development. Each chapter presents another facet that had an impact on the spelling. It also gives clues to future changes in spelling, especially the influence of the internet since it is the frequency of use that brings validity to the way a word is spelled

The 'History of the English Language' is a worthy, if deep read, and perhaps not as expected as a help in guiding non-native English students to master the problems but certainly a fount of knowledge for the group of would-be EL tutors in which I place myself. For those native English speakers dedicated to improve their understanding of the language it is worth following the writings of this author.

This book has really made me aware of how I conceive of the written word, and how much of my pronunciation comes from how I think words are spelled. It's also been very helpful as my toddler learns to read. highly recommended.

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