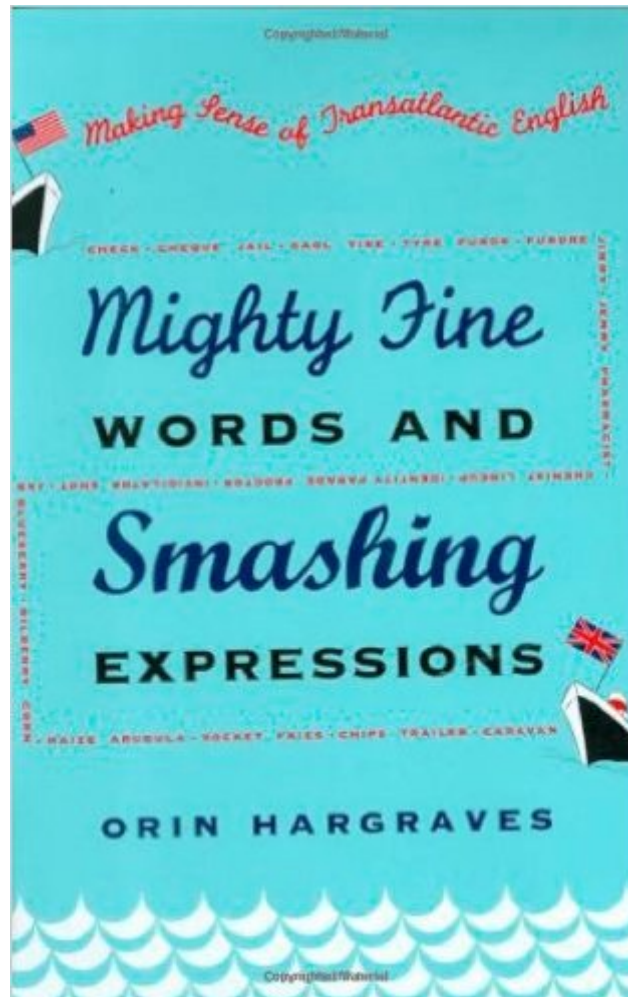


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Mighty Fine Words And Smashing Expressions: Making Sense Of Transatlantic English



Synopsis

Have you ever traveled to England, been offered a "fairycake," and not known how to respond? Have you ever had to explain the difference between a "sleeping policeman" and a "speed bump" to a visiting Brit? Are you sure you know the difference between a "chip" and a "crisp"? (Transatlantic English) is a practical and entertaining guide to the differences between American and British English. As if written from a point in the Atlantic ocean exactly between Britain and the U.S., this book catalogs the differences between the "two" languages by taking a culturally neutral stance - addressing the needs of both British and American readers and listeners. Not a collection of lists, the chapters of (Transatlantic English) are arranged around important and familiar topics, including Politics, Law, and Government; Business and Money; Medicine and Healthcare; Education; Food, Clothing, and Shelter; Profanity and Obscenity, making this book essential not only for word lovers, but also students abroad, business and casual travelers, and anyone confused by the differences in our common tongue. With (Transatlantic English) you won't be caught with your "knickers" down again.

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Customer Reviews

I received this book as a "welcome to America" gift and I have hardly taken my nose out of it since! It's just what I was looking for: the only book I know of that treats systematically the differences between British and American English, and I did look for something on this before coming here. The two introductory chapters, on the differences between spelling and grammar, are alone worth the

cost of admission: I have never seen this subject laid out so thoroughly, knowledgeably, and with such a sense of humour to boot! It is a great help to me as I try to negotiate various American institutions in real life, having done it only from a transatlantic distance before. I wish I'd had this book years ago, but as it is only just published, I guess that wasn't possible. The thematic chapters, which take up a large part of the book, are arranged to provide a great deal of related vocabulary in the same place and this has proved very helpful; for example, the summary descriptions of the American and British criminal justice systems, with all the pertinent terminology highlighted. I have even learned the odd fact about my own native (British) institutions, and understand what Chancery is at last! Don't miss the chapter on offensive language and the cross-cultural misunderstandings that may arise around this! I hardly stopped laughing. Recommend very highly, for any speaker of English who travels, reads, or talks between the US and UK and wants to get the definitive answers for just what the differences are between the top two dialects of the world's first language.

I bought this author's book on London and happened to notice that he wrote this one too, so I picked it up. Glad I did! It's really just what I needed for understanding the ins and outs of British English. Everything is treated by subject matter and I have found the book a real gold mine for trying to figure out just what people are talking about here (in London). The methodical presentation of spelling differences is really informative - it goes a lot deeper than I thought! The chapter on grammar is useful too, and I skipped some of the technical terminology but the examples of usage really told me what I needed to know. And I actually started hearing a lot of this stuff, as soon as I read about it. Spooky! Maybe people were using these constructions all along and I just blanked it out because I didn't really understand everything. All the chapters that treat different subject areas are also laid out well, and I found the one on health and healthcare really helpful in my job; it's mind-blowing how different the NHS is from US healthcare, you really have to learn a whole new vocabulary for dealing with it (I thought surgery was something a doctor did, not a place where he worked!). The chapter about swear words and other language you should avoid is a hoot! And really, the author's sense of humor comes through everywhere; I found myself chuckling all the way through it, at the same time I was learning. Thanks to this book, I can follow a cricket match or read an article about one and actually understand what they're talking about. Who knew that would ever happen? I really recommend this book strongly to any American who deals with, or wants to get better acquainted with British English; it would probably also be useful for Brits trying to understand Yanks.

I am a little disappointed that Mr. Hargraves has not addressed the question of the changes in the pronunciation of English over the centuries. According to linguist scholars that I studied, American English is more "conservative," has tended to change less since the 16th century, than British English has done. One example is the accentuation of 4+ syllable words, e.g., laboratory and formidable, where Americans (at least those whom I know) have kept the first syllable accentuation, while accentuation has moved--long since--to the second syllable in British English. I believe that vowel sounds have undergone more rapid change in the U.K., as well. Didn't some literary historians note that the pronunciation of present-day Appalachians is closest to that of English-speakers of Shakespeare's time than any other present-day speakers of English? Please feel free to correct me if I'm wrong. I studied linguistics long ago, and historians may have changed their minds. I am pleased that word meanings, expressions, and spellings were so thoroughly covered, but disappointed to find no reference to pronunciation, the area in which we might dispute the Brits' claims that we've destroyed the language. Interesting, isn't it?

Went to London armed with this baby loaned to me from a friend. Determined to find this book upon my return, I found it here. I purchased it and similar others. Next time I fly over the pond, I will be armed with Brit Lingo Book Arsenal of Verb-age via this stellar book.

I bought this book for two very specific reasons. 1) I went to high school with Mr. Hargraves, and 2) I married a British subject. What fun and how informative! I've been learning British vernacular first-hand, but it was fun to see how the various words and phrases have come to be. Orin's book provides excellent advice on seemingly innocuous phrases that might get you into trouble. Additionally, he provides scholarly information for writers who need to compose prose that sounds "native" and fully understandable to those living on the other side of the pond. If you plan on traveling in either direction, this book is for you!

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