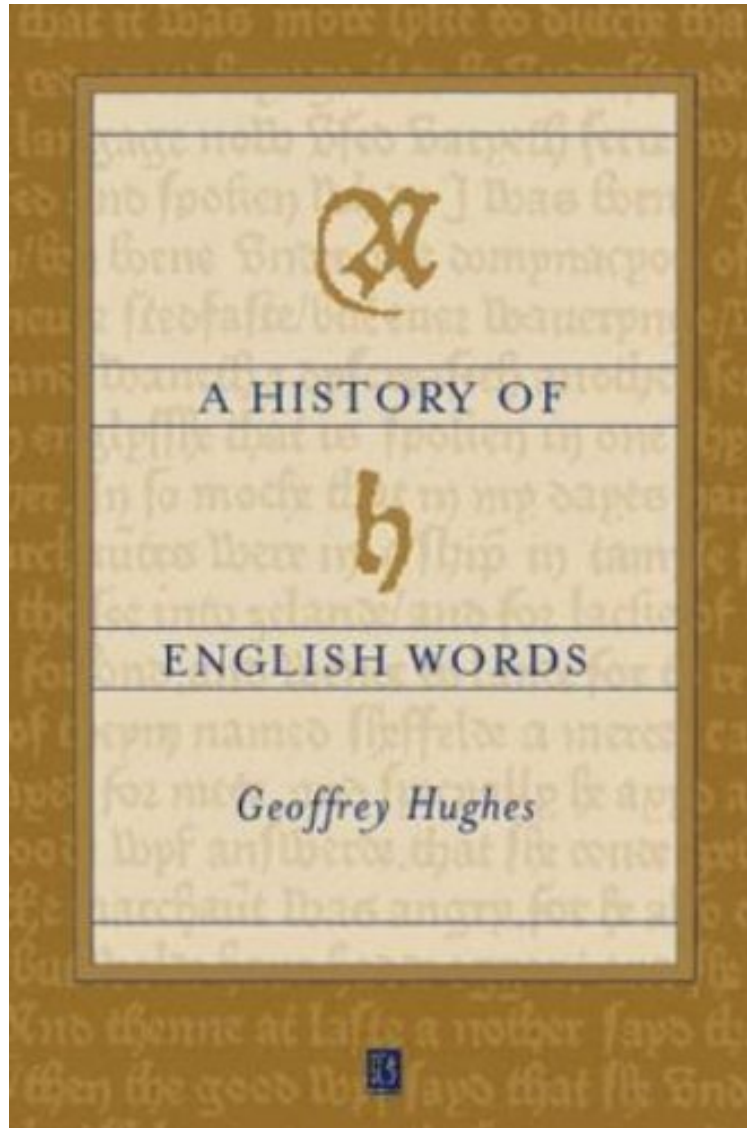


(Download pdf) A History of English Words

A History of English Words

Geoffrey Hughes

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0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. so what ever happened to "swive"By lyn eadeabsolutely delicious journey through the formation of English. I've read it twice, and it is full of tabs marking the most fascinating bits! perhaps not for beginners, but it's a good place to start .8 of 8 people found the following review helpful. An informative accessible overview of the English lexiconBy Bill BrunoThe book gives a good history of the English lexicon with a level of restraint in the use of linguistic technical terms that makes the work accessible. Particularly

interesting is the analysis of why the different subjects that words covered correlated with their source. For example, much of the language of power and law (felony, court, etc.) comes from the Norman French reflecting that the ruling class of England spoke that for a few centuries. The book covers the burgeoning of the lexicon during the Renaissance, the attempt to standardize English with the creation of the first dictionaries and contemporary trends in the development of English words. It is also particularly useful on why words from different sources were used in literature looking, for example, at Chaucer's use of Anglo-Saxon words for some characters and French loan words for others or how the shifting mores of various times in English history affected what words were morally acceptable. It also covers controversies over what words are "proper" English. There was a controversy in the Renaissance over the large amount of foreign words coming into the English language. Another example is Samuel Johnson's (compiler of an important early dictionary) opposition to words of French extraction. One minor quibble is that a section of why English lost its inflections would have been relevant as it would have prefaced the part of the discussion of the Renaissance period in which new words were created by conversion (words changing grammatical role, for example, a noun being used as a verb). Note that this isn't general history of the English language, just the lexicon. Those looking for changes in phonology and grammar will have to look elsewhere. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. An excellent history By Neal J. King This was an entertaining book, giving a detailed and plausible explanation of the sources of lexical additions and dynamics of pronunciation changes. It is slightly marred by numerous typographical and spelling errors throughout the text. In a second edition, someone should go over this and root these out!

This book traces the remarkable reconfigurations that English lexis has undergone in the past millennium. The vocabulary is studied as an indicator of social change, a symbol reflecting different social dynamics between speech communities, on models of dominance, cohabitation, colonialism and globalisation. Comprehensive guide to the evolution of the English vocabulary. Well known passages from literature are used to illustrate the variety of English words. Accessible discussion of Latin, Greek, Germanic and Norman-French languages. Contains original research into the make-up of the current lexical core of English.

"Do not misprize this book by dipping into it; begin respectfully at the beginning and follow the signs, all the way from ancient kings to modern cabbages, through a long cultural tale that documents the words of Saxons and saints, soldiers and scholars, poets and politicians, admen, journalists, junkies and all that jazz. The compelling power of it is in the detail, and all the details are delightful." Walter Nash, University of Nottingham "Geoffrey Hughes's book deals authoritatively with the origin and history of groups of English words from the eighth century to the end of the twentieth and also with the emergence of the first English dictionaries and of all the major ones that have been published since the early seventeenth century. It is packed with tables displaying the dates of first records, and the interconnections of all types of vocabulary from the most technical to the most colloquial. It will be of particular interest to members of the general public, to students embarking on an investigation of our language in the UK, the USA and other English-speaking countries, and to learners of the language elsewhere in the world." Robert Burchfield, Editor of A Supplement to the OED, four volumes 1972-86 "This book has many useful things for the language teacher, of which three stand out: First: it offers insights into our language - its history, where its words come from and how they evolved. Second: it provides information on language syllabus topics; for example, register, word formation and roots. The third thing is enjoyment. I have read this book straight through twice, and dipped into various sections of it many times - it is as entertaining as it is informative. Hughes' writing has the lightness of touch and imagination that come from long and profound engagement with his subject. There is vast learning, lightly worn, in this book." Modern English Teacher "Sociolinguists will find the work a useful departure point for research and teaching, particularly where it deals with areas outside their current expertise, and students and generalists will find it a good read and highly informative throughout." Elizabeth Falsberg, English, University of Washington. From the Back Cover Why does English have so many words? Where have they all come from? Why do we now have different vocabularies for various activities? In A History of English Words, Geoffrey Hughes answers these questions in a comprehensive study of the evolution of English vocabulary which covers words as diverse as anti-establishmentarianism to OK, and runagate to Monicagate. His arguments are supported and illuminated through use of numerous maps, word-fields and facsimiles of texts. This book traces the remarkable reconfigurations that the stock of English words has undergone in the past millennium. From its origins as a pure Germanic language, it acquired in the medieval period a double-layered structure as Norman-French became the 'upstairs' language of power and Anglo-Saxon that of the populace. Subsequent influxes from Latin and Greek in the Renaissance added a third layer, so that every semantic area of the language now has three terms from these sources, as in ask, question and interrogate. The vocabulary is studied as an indicator of social change and as a symbol reflecting different social dynamics between speech communities, on models of dominance, cohabitation, colonialism and globalization. Sections are devoted to the lexical interchange of imperialism, the effects of America's global dominance on the core groups of the words we use, and politically correct language. About the Author Geoffrey Hughes is Professor of the History of the English Language at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, South Africa. A graduate of Oxford University, he has held

academic and research posts at Cape Town, Harvard and Turin. His main interests are in historical semantics and sociolinguistics on which he has written over twenty papers and two books, *Words in Time* (Blackwell, 1988) and *Swearing* (Blackwell, 1991). He is a consultant for the Collins Dictionaries on South African English and has been editor of the journal *English Studies in Africa*.