

Our Strange Language

When the Englishe tongue we speak
Why is "break" not rhymed with "freak"?
Will you tell me why it's true
We say "sew" but likewise "few";
And the maker of a verse
Cannot cap his "horse" with "worse";
"Beard" sounds not the same as "heard";
"Cord" is different from "word".
Cow is "cow" but low is "low".
"Shoe" is never rhymed with "foe";
Think of "hose" and "dose" and "lose";
And think of "goose" and not of "choose";
"Doll" and "roll", "home" and "some";
And since "pay" is rhymed with "say",
Why not "paid" with "said", I pray?
We have "blood" and "food" and "good";
"Mould" is not pronounced like "could";
Wherefore "done" but "gone" and "lone"?
Is there any reason known?
And in short it seems to me
Sounds and letters disagree.

Source Unknown

Spellbound

It's true, I do not like to spell
Nor can I do it very well.
If "handle" is "le", why isn't "travel"?
Such mysteries I can't **unravel**.
There's also "pare" and "pair" and "pear",
Though which is which, I've ceased to **cair**.
I master demons such as "guide",
And "guard" with pardonable **pruide**.
But when it comes to "hear" and "here",
I can't decide which way to **stere**.
And then I'm faced with "hair" and "hare"
To plunge me further into **despare**.
Indeed it seems to me absurd
To grapple with the written **wurd** -
I'd better throw away the pen
And never, never write **agen**.

Margaret Fishback

VERSION 1

Let's face it: English is a crazy language. There is no egg in eggplant or ham in hamburger, neither apple nor pine in pineapple.

English muffins were not invented in England or french fries in France. Sweetmeats are candies, while sweetbreads, which aren't sweet, are meat.

We take English for granted. But if we explore its paradoxes, we find that quicksand can work slowly, boxing rings are square, and a guinea pig is neither from Guinea nor is it a pig. And why is it that writers write, but fingers don't **fing**, grocers don't **groce**, and hammers don't **ham**? If the plural of tooth is teeth, why isn't the plural of booth **beeth**? One goose, 2 geese. So, one moose, 2 meese? One index, two **indices**? Is cheese the plural of choose?

If teachers taught, why didn't preachers **praught**? If a vegetarian eats vegetables, what does a humanitarian eat?

In what language do people recite at a play and play at a recital? Ship by truck and send cargo by ship? Have noses that run and feet that smell? Park on driveways and drive on parkways?

How can a slim chance and a fat chance be the same, while a wise man and a wise guy are opposites? How can the weather be hot as hell one day and cold as hell another?

When a house burns up, it burns down. You fill in a form by filling it out and an alarm clock goes off by going on.

When the stars are out, they are visible, but when the lights are out, they are invisible. And why, when I wind up my watch, I start it, but when I wind up this essay, I end it?

Now I know why I flunked my English. It's not my fault; the silly language doesn't quite know whether it's coming or going.

VERSION 2

That Crazy English Language

Let's face it: English is a crazy language. There is no egg in eggplant nor ham in hamburger; neither apple nor pine in pineapple. English muffins weren't invented in England or French fries in France. Sweetmeats are candies while sweetbreads, which aren't sweet, are meat.

We take English for granted. But if we explore its paradoxes, we find that quicksand can work slowly, boxing rings are square, and a guinea pig is neither from Guinea nor is it a pig.

And why is it that writers write but fingers don't fing, grocers don't groce, and hammers don't ham? If the plural of *tooth* is *teeth*, why isn't the plural of *booth*, *beeth*? One *goose*, 2 *geese*. So one *moose*, 2 *meese*? One *index*, 2 *indices*?

Doesn't it seem crazy that you can make amends but not one amend, that you comb through annals of history but not a single annal? If you have a bunch of odds and ends and get rid of all but one of them, what do you call it?

If teachers taught, why didn't preachers *praught*? If a vegetarian eats vegetables, what does a humanitarian eat? If you wrote a letter, perhaps you *bote* your tongue?

Sometimes I think all the English speakers should be committed to an asylum for the verbally insane. In what language do people recite at a play and play at a recital? Ship by truck and send cargo by ship? Have noses that run and feet that smell? Park on drive-ways and drive on parkways?

How can a slim chance and a fat chance be the same, while a wise man and a wise guy are opposites? How can *overlook* and *oversee* be opposites, while *quite a lot* and *quite a few* are alike? How can the weather be hot as hell one day and cold as hell another?

Have you noticed that we talk about certain things only when they are absent? Have you ever seen a *horseful* carriage or a *strapful* gown? Met a sung hero or experienced *requited* love? Have you ever run into someone who was *combobulated*, *gruntled*, *ruly*, or *peccable*? And where are all those people who are spring chickens or who would actually hurt a fly?

You have to marvel at the unique lunacy of a language in which your house can burn up as it burns down, in which you fill in a form by filling it out, and in which an alarm clock goes off by going on.

English was invented by people, not computers, and it reflects the creativity of the human race (which, of course, isn't a race at all). That is why, when the stars are out, they are visible, but when the lights are out, they are invisible. And why, when I wind up my watch, I start it, but when I wind up the essay, I end it.