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# The Stories of English

## The Stories of English David Crystal

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"Simply the best introductory history of the English language family that we have. The plan of the book is ingenious, the writing lively, the exposition clear, and the scholarly standard uncompromisingly high."  
—J. M. COETZEE, winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature

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### Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurThe groundbreaking history of the English language, fusing chronological with anecdotal and etymological accounts of individual word-histories, to create not one story, but many stories. The English language is now accepted as the global lingua franca of the modern age, spoken or written in by over a quarter of the human race. But how did it evolve? How did a language spoken originally by a few thousand Anglo-Saxons become one used by more than 1,500 million? What developments can be seen as we move from Beowulf to Chaucer to Shakespeare to Dickens and the present day? A host of fascinating questions are answered in *The Stories of English*, a groundbreaking history of the language by David Crystal, the world-renowned writer and commentator on English. Many books have been written

about English, but they have all focused on a single variety: the educated, printed language called standard English. David Crystal turns the history of English on its head and instead provides a startlingly original view of where the richness, creativity and diversity of the language truly lies in the accents and dialects of nonstandard English users all over the world. Whatever their regional, social or ethnic background, each group has a story worth telling, whether it is in Scotland or Somerset, South Africa or Singapore.

Interweaved within this central chronological story are accounts of uses of dialect around the world as well as in literary classics from *The Canterbury Tales* to *The Lord of the Rings*. For the first time, regional speech and writing is placed center stage, giving a sense of the social realities behind the development of English.

This significant shift in perspective enables the reader to understand for the first time the importance of everyday, previously marginalized, voices in our language and provides an argument too for the way English should be taught in the future. Presentation de l'auteur The groundbreaking history of the English language, fusing chronological with anecdotal and etymological accounts of individual word-histories, to create not one story, but many stories. The English language is now accepted as the global lingua franca of the modern age, spoken or written in by over a quarter of the human race. But how did it evolve? How did a language spoken originally by a few thousand Anglo-Saxons become one used by more than 1,500 million? What developments can be seen as we move from *Beowulf* to Chaucer to Shakespeare to Dickens and the present day? A host of fascinating questions are answered in *The Stories of English*, a groundbreaking history of the language by David Crystal, the world-renowned writer and commentator on English. Many books have been written about English, but they have all focused on a single variety: the educated, printed language called standard English. David Crystal turns the history of English on its head and instead provides a startlingly original view of where the richness, creativity and diversity of the language truly lies in the accents and dialects of nonstandard English users all over the world. Whatever their regional, social or ethnic background, each group has a story worth telling, whether it is in Scotland or Somerset, South Africa or Singapore. Interweaved within this central chronological story are accounts of uses of dialect around the world as well as in literary classics from *The Canterbury Tales* to *The Lord of the Rings*. For the first time, regional speech and writing is placed center stage, giving a sense of the social realities behind the development of English. This significant shift in perspective enables the reader to understand for the first time the importance of everyday, previously marginalized, voices in our language and provides an argument too for the way English should be taught in the future. Biographie de l'auteur David Crystal is honorary professor of linguistics at the University of Wales, Bangor, and the editor of *The Penguin Encyclopedia*.