



The Secret Life of Words: How English Became English

Henry Hitchings

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Words are essential to our everyday lives. An average person spends his or her day enveloped in conversations, e-mails, phone calls, text messages, directions, headlines, and more. But how often do we stop to think about the origins of the words we use? Have you ever thought about which words in English have been borrowed from Arabic, Dutch, or Portuguese? Try *admiral*, *landscape*, and *marmalade*, just for starters.

The Secret Life of Words is a wide-ranging account not only of the history of English language and vocabulary, but also of how words witness history, reflect social change, and remind us of our past. Henry Hitchings delves into the insatiable, ever-changing English language and reveals how and why it has absorbed words from more than 350 other languages—many originating from the most unlikely of places, such as *shampoo* from Hindi and *kiosk* from Turkish. From the Norman Conquest to the present day, Hitchings narrates the story of English as a living archive of our human experience. He uncovers the secrets behind everyday words and explores the surprising origins of our most commonplace expressions. *The Secret Life of Words* is a rich, lively celebration of the language and vocabulary that we too often take for granted.

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