



The Story of English: How an Obscure Dialect Became the World's Most-Spoken Language

Joseph Piercy

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The fascinating story of how the English language has developed over the last 15 centuries

Illustrating the compelling history of how the relatively obscure dialects spoken by tribes from what are now Denmark, the Low Countries, and northern Germany became the most widely spoken language in the world, this history also explores how that language evolved during the last two millennia. Chronologically ordered and divided into six main sections covering pre-Roman and Latin influences, the ascent of Old English, and the succession of Middle English, Early Modern, and then Late Modern English to today's global language, this fascinating book also explores such factors as the history of the printing press, the works of Chaucer, the evolution of *The American Dictionary of the English Language*—commonly known as *Webster's*—and the magisterial *Oxford English Dictionary*, to the use of slang in today's speech and the coming of electronic messaging: language for a postmodern world. This is the perfect gift for any lover not just of English, but of the history and development of language.

The Story of English: How an Obscure Dialect Became the World's Most-Spoken Language Details

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From Reader Review The Story of English: How an Obscure Dialect Became the World's Most-Spoken Language for online ebook

Giovanna says

Fascinating subject matter and I certainly learned a lot, but the book has a handful of errors that were quite off-putting. It's brevity is both a positive and a negative point - giving a great sweeping overview, but never quite digging deep enough.

Jo Everett says

What I liked about Piercy's 'The Story of English' is that it narrates a comprehensive journey from the beginnings of the English Language to possibilities of its future in a way that was accessible to all. I learnt a fair amount and reminded myself of some forgotten facts, and it will assist me in my current studies. For those who are looking for a more technical or deeper explanation of the journey of the English Language you won't necessarily find it in this book, but if what you're wanting is an easy to read guide with some insight into the way languages work then Piercy's book is for you.

An informative and interesting read that will challenge, but not too much.

Calenmarwen says

An interesting summary of the history of the English language

James Rye says

I liked this book, and although I used to teach the subject to undergraduates for over 10 years, I managed to learn a few new things from it. It achieved what it set out to do - provide an enjoyable and informative broad survey.

The strength of the book for me is the summaries of key literary figures (and occasional works) that the author provides along the way.

My main minor criticism is that more space is given to people and general events than to language. Although language is discussed, in my view it needed more detail and more explanation. For example, in my view, two of the most important things to happen in the story of the English language are the loss of Old English inflections and the move from grammatical to natural gender, and yet these important happenings receive little attention.

Despite this criticism, I can recommend this book, especially to the general reader who wants to get an overview of the field.

Chris says

Okay, I guess I meant to read this book *The Story of English* but I'm glad I spotted this other *Story of English* in the library and mistook it for the one I was originally looking for. Otherwise, maybe I wouldn't have learned that the *Ormulum* was important for standardizing Middle English, or that the *Domesday Book* is a list of taxes, but has the Scandinavian word for judgement (*domme*) in its title. Kind of like *A Little History of the World* except about the English language.

Katheryn Thompson says

(Secret) Santa bought it for me as a bit of fun but I found it really interesting, and good if you want an overview of the English language - if you're interested in it but don't know where to start. It then allows you to do more research into the parts you found the most fascinating. It's a light and enjoyable read (and shocked the person who bought it for me as a laugh).

Ellie says

What you would expect from a £2 book from *The Works*. Snippets of very interesting facts between sloppily written book reviews.

Charlotte Jones says

This book, its full title being *The Story of English: How an Obscure Dialect Became the World's Most-Spoken Language*, does exactly what it says on the cover. Piercy goes through the evolution of the English language from 40BC to nowadays, giving historical influences and other interesting facts about how a language develops over time.

I think this book would be great for anyone interested in the history of the English language who doesn't know much about it as this book gives a great overview of everything and is written in such a way that makes it very accessible to a beginner. However, if you know quite a lot about language, maybe this would be the book for you because, at only 192 pages, it doesn't go very in-depth into any of the subjects.

Overall, I enjoyed reading this educational non-fiction book and it has definitely made me interested in reading more about the English language and the history of language in general. I would recommend this book, but as I said, it is pretty surface level at times so if you already have some knowledge about this topic, this book probably wouldn't be the best for you.

Kerry says

Wide in scope, a good taster for the topic

Katie says

Interesting highlights from our literary history, solely focused on British males' influence.

Kate says

Some very interesting little anecdotes about the evolution of English. I can understand how hardcore linguists probably were frustrated by the style of this book, but for the amateur linguists, it's a nice easy read.

Nikki says

As you might be able to tell from my status updates, I was very unimpressed by this. It's badly edited, for one thing -- apparently, the Romans sent an army comprised of 40,000 centurions to Britain. I *think* Piercy meant "legionaries". Piercy also wasn't terribly clear on the plot of Beowulf, and the king in Beowulf is apparently called "Hroogar".

Also, he's apparently not a man given to critical thinking: 'There is a tendency to view the word 'Empire' in a negative light, but in truth the Roman occupation had a civilising effect on the early Britons. Prior to Roman rule, the Celtic tribes were disparate and insular (and, I assume, fighting each other).' One, you *assume*?! How about you try doing your fucking research? Two, oh my god, the *stink* of colonialism coming off this! The Romans, civilised? Gee, what about slavery, decimation, gladiators, crucifixion? Go read *The Spartacus War* (Barry Strauss) or *The Colosseum* (Mary Beard & Keith Hopkins) and come back and tell me the Romans are civilised.

Needless to say, I gave up on this.

Gareth says

A reasonable read. Some errors which are unforgivable detract from the more interesting bits.

Russio says

This was a secret Santa present. Muchos gracias Santa! A very interesting read telling the story of how English came into existence and how influences on it have changed and moulded it over the years. A book that filled in some gaps for me and cleared up some questions. Most thrillingly, it comprehensively debunks the idea of a proper/Queen's English as a class-ridden and retrograde anachronism. My friend Tony would have approved wholeheartedly. Very readable for the non-specialist as well as those inside the words business.

John says

Not a bad book, but I feel it may disappoint folks looking for something linguistically-focused, as it's primarily historical. Moreover, I could see readers complaining it's "slight" as it covers highlights.
