The Oxford Companion to the English Language

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Language is the life blood of a culture, and to be interested in culture is in some sense to be interested in language, in the shapes and sounds of words, in the history of reading, writing, and speech, in the endless variety of dialects and slangs, in the incessant creativity of the human mind as it reaches out to others. It is surprising then that until now there has been no major one-volume reference devoted to the most widely dispersed and influential language of our time: the English language.
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have influenced the shape or study of the language; extended articles on everything from psycholinguistics to sign language to tragedy; coverage of every nation in which a significant part of the population speaks English as well as virtually every regional dialect and pidgin (from Gullah and Scouse
to Cockney and Tok Pisin). In addition, the Companion provides bibliographies for the larger entries, generous cross-referencing, etymologies for headwords, a chronology of English from Roman times to 1990, and an index of people who appear in entries or bibliographies. And like all Oxford Companions, this volume is packed with delightful surprises. We learn, for instance, that the first Professor of Rhetoric at Harvard later became President (John Quincy Adams); that "slogan" originally meant "war cry"; that the keyboard arrangement QWERTY became popular not because it was efficient
but the opposite (it slows down the fingers and keeps them from jamming the keys); that "mbenzi" is Swahili for "rich person" (i.e., one who owns a Mercedes Benz); and that in Scotland, "to dree yir ain weird" means "to follow your own star."
From Scrabble to Websters to TESOL to Gibraltar, the thirty-five hundred entries here offer more information on a wider variety of topics than any other reference on the English language. Featuring the work of nearly a hundred scholars from around the world, this unique volume is the ideal shelf-mate to *The Oxford Companion to English Literature*. It will captivate everyone who loves language.

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cool,i need it

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A useful reference book if it can be bought cheap - otherwise borrow it. Authoritative and interesting.