THE PENGUIN

WORDMASTER DICTIONARY

MARTIN H. MANSER AND

NIGEL D. TURTON

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PENGUIN BOOKS

To David Loy and Yusandra

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Penguin Reference Books
The Penguin Wordmaster Dictionary

MARTIN H. MANSER was born in Bromley, Kent, and was educated at Manchester Grammar School and Eltham College. He received a B.A. (Hons.) in linguistics at the conclusion of his studies at the universities of York and Regensburg and then went on to gain an M.Phil. for research into the influence of English on modern German.

A developing interest in lexicography led him to take up a post as a reference-book editor. Since 1980 he has worked freelance, compiling and editing a wide range of English-language dictionaries with contemporary appeal. He has also written Bible study material and is involved in a local church in his home town of Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire. For relaxation he enjoys spending time with his wife and two children.

NIGEL D. TURTON was born in London in 1949 and attended Alleyn's School, Dulwich. An early interest in languages took him to the University of Leeds, from which he graduated in 1970. After lecturing for several years and gaining a further degree in linguistics, he accepted a teaching appointment at the National University of Singapore, returning to England in 1981 to a research post in lexicography at the University of Birmingham. He now lives in Yorkshire and divides his time between lecturing and writing.

PREFACE

I think there are few people (apart from lexicographers) who would describe a dictionary as leisure reading. Dictionaries are traditionally meant to solve your lexical problems—to check on a spelling, or a meaning, or (if you're a Scrabbler) to establish whether a word exists at all. It is a close encounter of the briefest kind: you open the book, find the word, check the point, and close the book. Most of a dictionary, therefore, remains forever unread—which is a shame, for there is nothing more fascinating than the biography of the words of your language. But the average dictionary is not for browsing.

The *Penguin Wordmaster Dictionary*, however, is no average dictionary. It has all the usual features of a work of this size, of course; but it also contains elements from other kinds of word-book, such as the thesaurus, the usage guide, the teaching lexicon, and the historical survey. It is difficult to know what to call it. 'Dictionary' comes closest, but that leaves out half of what is going on.

What makes this book so different is the way the editors have used expository panels throughout the work—panels which present a point of usage, the history of a word, an area of vocabulary, or the nuances of a definition. When you look a word up, you get a bonus, in the form of a panel. It makes you stop and read on, learning more than you bargained for. It's a novel and interesting idea, and one which is bound to prove attractive both to mother-tongue users and to foreign students of English.

The home user will surely be fascinated by the panels on the origins of words. Why on earth do we say that something is a *shambles*? What's the origin of *barmy*, *pantechnicon*, *quiz*, and *white elephant*? Why do we say *between the devil and the deep blue sea* (it's nothing to do with Satan)? Most dictionaries give only a brief and dry reference to the shape of a word in an earlier state of the language: this one goes further, into the meaning and social background as well. These etymologies have blood in their veins.

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The foreign student will find the panel lists of words and idioms particularly helpful. Look at the various uses of *hang* and *hell*, for example, or the collections of phrases based on a single theme, such as parts of the body (see the panel at *toe*) or clothing (see the panel at *sock*). I can imagine these lists being much appreciated in classroom discussions of English idioms, especially as a great deal of care has been taken to make the examples of usage contemporary and convincing.

This is a dictionary to be read, as well as used. The test, quite simply, is to open it, at any page, and see if you can stop yourself browsing. I couldn't.

David Crystal

HOW TO USE THE DICTIONARY

☐ **ORDER OF ENTRIES.** All main entries in the dictionary are in alphabetical order. Where words have the same spelling but a different history, they are shown as separate entries, with small raised numbers.

> **tear**[1] (tɪə) *n* one of the drops of salty liquid that lubricate the eye and which are shed during times of grief, etc. **in tears** weeping: *I found her in tears.* **teardrop** *n* a tear. **tearful** *adj* shedding, about to shed, or accompanied by tears: *a tearful goodbye.* **tear-gas** *n* any substance which causes the eyes to be blinded with floods of tears. **tear-jerker** *n* a sentimental story, film, etc., that is intended to provoke tears or sadness. < Old English *tēar*.
>
> **tear**[2] (tɛə) *vb* **tore; torn; tearing 1** pull violently apart or into pieces: *She tore the letter up.* **2** seize or remove violently: *He tore the book from my grasp.* **3** make (a hole or opening in) by tearing: *Its claws tore holes in his sleeve.* **4** be easily torn: *The advantage of this fabric is it won't tear.* **5** rush or hurry. **tearaway** *n* (*informal*) a wild or reckless young person. < Old English *teran*.

☐ **IRREGULAR PARTS.** Plurals of nouns, comparatives (*-er*) and superlatives (*-est*) of adjectives and adverbs, and inflected forms of verbs are shown if they are irregular or where there might be doubt about the spelling. With verbs, where two parts are shown, the first is the past tense and past participle, the second is the present participle. Where three parts are shown, the first is the past tense, the second is the past participle and the third is the present participle.

> **shelf** (ʃɛlf) *n, pl* **shelves 1** a thin, flat, long, narrow board fastened horizontally to the wall, in a cupboard, etc., to display or store things on. **2** something resembling this; ledge. **on the shelf** no longer of use or sought after; esp. of an

> **send** (sɛnd) *vb* **sent; sending 1** cause to be conveyed by a means of communication: *send a letter.* **2** bring to a particular condition: *It sent him crazy.* **3** pass on (a message or request) for delivery. **4** direct; request: *send out for groceries.*

> **fat** (fæt) *adj* **fatter; fattest 1** containing much fat. **2** too plump. **3** thick: *a fat book.* **4** substantial: *fat profits.* • *n* an oily substance in animal tissue and plant seeds; this substance used in cooking. **fatness** *n* < Old English *fæt*

> **run** (rʌn) *vb* **ran; run; running 1** (of a person or animal) move quickly. **2** cover (a distance) by running: *I ran two miles this morning.* **3** move on or as if on wheels, castors, or runners. **4** (of water) flow. **5** (of a machine) operate or function:

☐ **DEFINITIONS AND EXAMPLES.** Definitions are numbered; examples are included to reflect natural English usage.

> **delicate** ([illegible]) **1** subtle or fine in quality or structure. **2** subtly pleasant in effect on the senses: delicate colours; delicate taste. **3** extremely frail or sensitive: delicate plants; delicate health. **4** calling for careful treatment: a delicate situation. **5** precise; sensitive to the touch: delicate mechanism.

☐ **PRONUNCIATIONS.** Pronunciations are given in the intern...ionally recognized phonetic alphabet of the International Phonetic Association, and represent the standard speech of British English.

p	as in	pan
b	as in	bed
t	as in	tea
d	as in	dig
k	as in	keep
x	as in	loch
g	as in	go
tʃ	as in	cheese
dʒ	as in	jam
f	as in	for
v	as in	van
θ	as in	thin
ð	as in	these
s	as in	sit
z	as in	zero
ʃ	as in	ship
ʒ	as in	treasure
h	as in	hat
m	as in	man
n	as in	no
ŋ	as in	sing
l	as in	lie
r	as in	red
j	as in	yes
w	as in	win

æ	as in	bad
ɑː	as in	father
ã	as in	vol-au-vent
iː	as in	see
ɪ	as in	it
ɛ	as in	get
ɒ	as in	hot
ɔː	as in	saw
ʊ	as in	push
uː	as in	zoo
ʌ	as in	up
ɜː	as in	bird
ə	as in	driver
aɪ	as in	try
aʊ	as in	now
eɪ	as in	may
ɛə	as in	dare
ɪə	as in	here
əʊ	as in	no
ɔɪ	as in	boy
ʊə	as in	cure

ˈ	before a syllable with main stress as in sister
ˌ	before a syllable with secondary stress as in celebrate
.	under *l*, *m*, *n*, *r* to show that the sound is pronounced as a syllable as in bottle

□ **STYLE MARKERS.** Some of the words and definitions are marked to show that their use is restricted to particular situations or that they are used only by certain people.

> **adduce** (əˈdjuːs) *vb* (*formal*) offer as evidence, a reason, etc. < Latin *adducere* to lead to.

> [illegible] *stressed* ˈɪntuː) *prep* **1** to the [illegible]: get into the car. **2** to a condition, [illegible] occupation that is mentioned: [illegible] translate into Spanish; go into [illegible] **3** against: He drove into a wall. **4** [illegible] to the middle of: far into the [illegible] used to show division: 4 into 12 goes [illegible] (*informal*) interested in; involved [illegible] heavily into jazz. < Old English. [illegible]

□ **UNDEFINED WORDS.** Words whose meaning can easily be worked out, because they are made up of the base word and an ending, are not defined. Such words follow the definition of the base word.

> **racy** (ˈreɪsɪ) *adj* **1** [illegible] vigorous. **2** suggestive or risqué. **racily** *adv* **raciness** *n* < race.

□ **ETYMOLOGIES.** A concise history of each word is shown at the end of its entry after the symbol <.

> **ferrous** (ˈferəs) *adj* of or containing iron. < Latin *ferrum* iron.

□ **CROSS-REFERENCES.** At the end of many entries are cross-references to where further information may be found or to a panel.

> **abode**[1] (əˈbəʊd) *n* (*formal*) a home; dwelling-place. < SEE ABIDE.

> **acrobat** (ˈækrəˌbæt) *n* a person who performs gymnastic feats. **acrobatic** *adj* **acrobatics** *pl n* **1** acrobatic feats. **2** any activity requiring agility and skill: verbal acrobatics. SEE PANEL.
> **acronym** (ˈækrəˌnɪm) *n* a word formed from the initial letters of other words. < Greek *akros* extreme + *onyma* name. SEE PANEL AT **RADAR**.

☐ **FEATURE PANELS.** Most pages feature one or more panels. These focus on a particular word, commenting on its usage, history, etc.

> **salary**
>
> Salary, 'the monthly sum received by an employee for his or her services', derives from the Latin word *salarium*, the part of a Roman soldier's pay that he was given for the purchase of salt (Latin *sal*). This provides an explanation of the expression not worth one's salt. A worker who is not worth his salt is one who doesn't deserve the salary he receives.

ABBREVIATIONS AND SYMBOLS

abbrev	abbreviation	*interj*	interjection
adj	adjective	*n*	noun
adv	adverb	*NZ*	New Zealand English
Brit	British English	*pl*	plural
c.	circa	*prep*	preposition
conj	conjunction	*pron*	pronoun
def.	definition	*US*	American English
defs.	definitions	*vb*	verb
esp.	especially	●	introduces a new part of speech
fem.	feminine	<	introduces an etymology

ENGLISH THROUGH THE AGES

Estimates as to the number of English users in the world today vary considerably. The figures range from a conservative 700 million up to as many as 2 billion, almost two-fifths of the world's population. The problem of calculation is fraught with difficulties. For example, are those who have learned English as a second or foreign language to be counted? If so, how fluent must they be before they are included in the reckoning?

Whatever the figure that we settle on, and one billion plus would seem to be a reasonable approximation, one thing is certain. English today is the international language *par excellence*, and fluency in English provides a passport to the ever-expanding anglophone world.

Old English

Behind the rise of English to become the world's first global tongue is a story of unparalleled fascination. The tale begins in the middle of the 5th century with the invasion of England by three Germanic tribes, the Angles, Saxons, and Jutes, rowing across from what is today northern Germany and southern Denmark. Setting the stage for the invasion was the withdrawal in 410 AD of the occupying Roman forces, who were now needed closer to home. No sooner had their country been returned to them than the native Celts again found themselves under attack. Having lived in subjection for the previous four hundred years, they were able to offer the new enemy little resistance. Most were either killed or driven back into Cornwall, Wales, Cumberland, Scotland, and Ireland. In the 7th century some managed to escape to Brittany where Breton, a descendant variety of Celtic, may still be heard.

Linguistic fossils of the pre-Anglo-Saxon period are encountered mostly in place-names. For example, the Latin word for 'camp', *castra*, is perpetuated in names such as *Doncaster*, *Winchester*, and *Cirencester*, while the Celtic word for 'water' is echoed in the names of the *Esk*, *Usk*, *Axe*, and *Exe*. However, most of the place-names we use today are of Anglo-Saxon origin.

The language spoken by the English, as the country's new wave of settlers began to call themselves, was a variety of Germanic. Like most of the languages spoken in

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Europe and as far east as India, this had evolved from Indo-European, a tongue spoken some five to six thousand years ago by peoples living in the region of the Black Sea. Where Indo-European came from and, for that matter, how language itself began, remain a mystery.

Severed from their European counterparts, the newcomers gradually acquired a new, basically agrarian identity. More to the point, their language slowly developed features which made it quite distinct from other Germanic varieties. Within two hundred years of the first landings, English—nowadays referred to as Old English or Anglo-Saxon—had begun to emerge.

Old English bears very little resemblance to the English of today. Grammatically, it was akin to Modern German. Nouns and adjectives, for example, had a number of different declensions, as well as gender and case inflections. As for its vocabulary, this was almost exclusively Germanic. Unlike Modern English, Old English was a highly homogeneous tongue, with just a handful of Latin words that had been absorbed before the westward migration.

The relative purity of Old English was short-lived. From the end of the 8th century the country found itself yet again under attack, this time from marauding Danes and Norwegians. The initial raids were a precursor to armed hosts set upon conquest. Successive victories led to widespread settlement, culminating in 1016 with the enthronement of Canute as the English king. Predictably, a number of Old Norse words and expressions entered the language during this stormy period.

However, since Old Norse and Old English were ultimately of the same Germanic family, the overall effect of these Scandinavian introductions was unremarkable. Of greater influence was the reintroduction of Christianity to England in 597 AD and the conversion of the English in the decades that followed. The language of the church was Latin and a great number of Latin words, ecclesiastical and secular alike, were absorbed into English at this time.

With Latin came the Roman alphabet, a writing system that, with slight adaptations, was successfully applied to the vernacular. At the beginning of the 8th century the first texts written in Old English began to appear. Nowadays these documents are intelligible only to

scholars. As an example, here is a short extract from a prose piece written under the auspices of King Alfred (849–899) and based upon West Saxon, the prestigious dialect of the day. It comes from an account of a voyage by a Scandinavian explorer named Ohthere.

> Hē sǣde ðæt Norðmanna land wǣre swȳþe lang ond swȳðe smæl. Eal þæt his man āþeroððe ettan oððe erian mæg, þæt līð wið ðā sǣ; ond þæt is þēah on sumum stōwum swȳðe clūdig; ond licgað wilde mōras wiðēastan ond wiðuppon emnlange þǣm bȳnum lande.

> He said that the land of the Norsemen was very long and very narrow. All of it that a man can either graze (cattle on) or plough, that part lies next to the sea; and that is nevertheless in some parts very rocky; and wild moors lie to the east, above and alongside the cultivated land.

Middle English

Had their own country been more hospitable, the Norsemen might well have been less tempted by the rich farming lands to be won abroad. One such prize was Normandy, to which they gave their name. Following their invasion and settlement of this region in the 9th century, the Norsemen or 'Normans' adopted many Gallic ways, including the local language. The result of the assimilation was that when their descendants invaded England in 1066, they brought with them a predominantly French culture and tongue.

More than any previous event, it was the Norman Conquest that splintered the homogeneity of English. For the next two hundred years, Norman French (Old French with a strong Germanic element) was the language of England's ruling classes. It was used for administrative and business purposes, and until as late as 1362 remained the language of the law. During these centuries the various regional dialects of English continued to be spoken, but chiefly by the peasant masses in their wattle-and-daub huts. As a medium of written expression English fell into disuse.

The re-emergence of English at the beginning of the 14th century was the outcome of sweeping changes both at home and abroad. Neither William nor his successors had regarded England as their true home. However, in the

year 1204 Normandy was won back by France. Suddenly the Anglo-Normans were forced to stop looking upon England as a sort of backward colony and their attitudes towards the English became adjusted accordingly. At the same time the social gulf between lord and villein had begun to close with the disintegration of the feudal manor and the ascendancy of a predominantly English yeoman-farmer and commercial class. Many of the latter were attracted to London, the cultural, political, industrial, and commercial centre, which drew its population from all over the country. Within the educated sector of this linguistic melting-pot there developed a new form of English, an offshoot of the East Midland dialect. The prestige enjoyed by this new variety grew in leaps and bounds. Before long it had asserted itself as England's standard language and formed the basis of English as we know it today.

As a result of these developments and the integration of the two races that ensued, French was gradually displaced. However, the influence of French on Middle English was profound. Not only were vast numbers of French words absorbed into the language, but the process of grammatical simplification, already apparent towards the end of the Old English period, showed increased acceleration. Additionally, the Norman scribes made considerable orthographic changes.

All this meant that the English used by Chaucer was very different from that of King Alfred's day, as was the culture that it expressed. Unlike Old English, the language of this period is recognizably English. Its relative modernity can be glimpsed in the following extract from Chaucer's 'General Prologue' to *The Canterbury Tales*, written about 1387.

> A Knyght ther was, and that a worthy man,
> That fro the tyme that he first bigan
> To riden out, he loved chivalrie,
> Trouthe and honour, fredom and curteisie.
> Ful worthy was he in his lordes werre,
> And therto hadde he riden, no man ferre,
> As wel in cristendom as in hethenesse,
> And evere honoured for his worthynesse.

Early Modern English

The period of Middle English stretches approximately from 1150, when the Norman influence first took a hold on

the language, to the time when it had let go, about 1450. The advent of Modern English is generally associated with the arrival in Britain of the Renaissance at the beginning of the 16th century. The Renaissance or 'rebirth of learning' brought about a revival of interest in the cultures and languages of ancient Greece and Rome. As a result, English received a whole storehouse of words from Latin and a sizable number from Greek. So strong was the Latin penetration that existing English words were on occasion refashioned in accordance with their Latin roots. Such was the case with, for example, *receipt* and *debt*. In Middle English these had been written *receite* and *dette*. Suddenly, under the influence of the Latin *recipere* and *debitum*, a *p* and *b* were added.

Increased contact with the countries of Europe during the 16th and 17th centuries helped to further increase the vocabulary. Sources worthy of mention include Italy and France, and to a lesser degree, Spain, Portugal, and the Netherlands. However, in comparison with the all-pervading influence of Latin, these contributions were relatively small.

In addition to the widening of vocabulary, the English of this period is marked grammatically by a further reduction of inflections and in pronunciation by the culmination of the 'Great Vowel Shift'. The effect of the latter was to provide the long vowels of Middle English with their modern pronunciations. For example, Middle English *hous* and *mice*, pronounced (hu:s) and (mi:s), received the diphthongs with which they are pronounced today. It was an unfortunate coincidence that printing was introduced into England in 1476 while this shift in pronunciation was still under way. As a result, late Middle English spellings became fossilized in print at the very time when their equivalent pronunciations were marching on.

By the turn of the 18th century English had become, to all intents and purposes, the English we use today, so that writers of the time present the modern reader with very few difficulties. The following example is from one of Jonathan Swift's letters to Stella (Esther Johnson), dated 9 September 1710.

> I got here last Thursday, after five days traveling, weary the first, almost dead the second, tolerable the third, and well enough the rest; and am now glad of the fatigue, which has served for exercise; and I am

at present well enough. The Whigs were ravished to see me, and would lay hold on me as a twig while they are drowning, and the great men making me their clumsy apologies, &c. But my lord treasurer received me with a great deal of coldness, which has enraged me so, I am almost vowing revenge.

English today

Over the last three hundred years the vocabulary has continued to expand. On the one hand, many new words have been fashioned from existing words and word elements. The major word-formation processes by which the language has fed upon itself include compounding (e.g. *greenhouse*, *teacup*), affixation (e.g. *multinational*, *privatize*, *deprivatize*), conversion (e.g. *film*, *audition* used as verbs), shortening (e.g. *taxi*, *phone*), and back formation (e.g. *burgle* from *burglar*, *edit* from *editor*).

The area of vocabulary that has undergone by far the most rapid expansion—virtually an explosion—is that of science and technology. Vast numbers of new words have been needed for the names of new disciplines, concepts, objects, substances, qualities, processes, and units, and the classics have again provided an invaluable source. While some of the new words are direct borrowings, most have been produced by word-formation processes operating on Latin and Greek roots. Meanwhile the core of the vocabulary has continued to increase through world-wide borrowing and assimilation.

By far the most important chapter in the recent history of English, however, has been its establishment overseas. Beginning in the 17th century, relatively small boatloads of native speakers left British shores in search of a new life in a new land. As a consequence there are today well over 300 million people in various parts of the world using English as their mother tongue. However, the geographical distribution of native speakers does not by itself explain why English today has more users than any other language. There are many involved reasons for this, but only one that stands out as crucial, namely, the role of English as the international language of science and technology, and the influence of science and technology upon a country's economic fate.

Nigel Turton

LANDMARKS IN THE HISTORY OF ENGLISH

Roman invasion 43 AD

Roman withdrawal 410 AD

Invasion by Angles, Saxons, and Jutes in the 5th century AD

Arrival of St Augustine 597 AD

OLD ENGLISH
700–1100

First Old English written texts appear at the beginning of the 8th century

Viking raids commence towards the end of the 8th century

Canute enthroned 1016

Norman Conquest 1066

MIDDLE ENGLISH
1150–1450

Normandy won back by France 1204

Re-emergence of English at the beginning of the 14th century

Introduction of printing 1476

EARLY MODERN ENGLISH
1500–1700

Arrival of the Renaissance at the beginning of the 16th century

Landing of the first permanent English settlers in America in the 17th century

MODERN ENGLISH
1700–today

Boom in world trade and travel in the 18th century and the establishment of British colonies

Rapid growth of science and technology since the 19th century

English in the 20th century becomes the most widely spoken language in the world

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