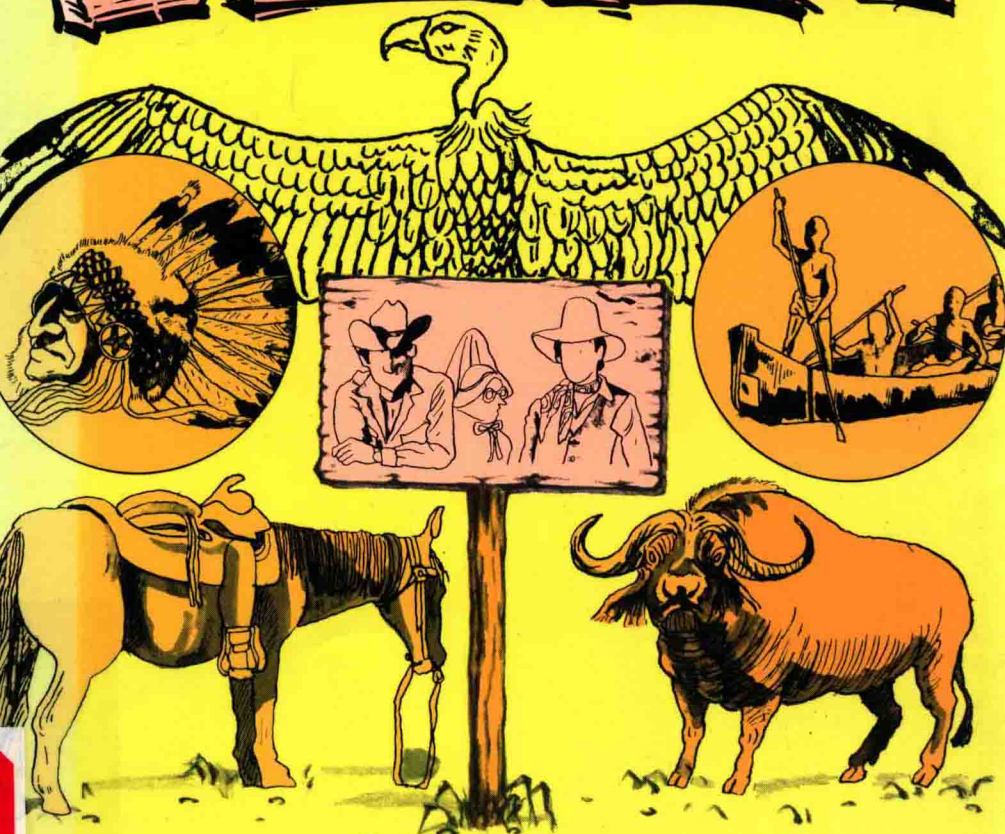


WORDS AND THEIR STORIES

VOA Special English



KINSEIDO

WORDS AND THEIR STORIES

Voice of America

Annotations

by

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WORDS AND THEIR STORIES

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WORDS AND THEIR STORIES

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は し が き

昨年の10月、6年ぶりでワシントン D.C.にある国際放送局 VOA を訪ねてみた。「アメリカの声」と言われる *Voice of America* の数多い番組の中で最も特色のあるのは Special English による国際放送であろう。この Special English というのは、単語 1,400 語を基準とし、スピードはふつうの放送の速さの約 2/3 (1分間 100 語) に制限したラジオ番組である。英語を母国語としない人たちのための VOA 独自の英語学習に最もよく適した番組である。

ワシントンの VOA の本部で、この Special English の番組の主任プロデューサーをしているフランク・ビアズレー (Frank Beardsley) 氏に会って、いろいろな話を聞いてきた。

VOA の最近の番組の中で、最も人気のあるのは、英語、特にアメリカ人がよく使うことばの由来を解説してくれる——Words and Their Stories という番組だそうだ。この番組は3年前に初めて放送され、その後回か再放送されている。

たった5分の短い番組だが、英語の社会・文化を背景とする単語や慣用句を一つずつ取り上げ、それにまつわる由来を要領よく説明してくれる。Hello, get, fix のような基本的な語いや、pay through the nose 「法外な値段を支払う (取られる)」とか chip on one's shoulder 「けんか腰」といった慣用句の使い方や由来などに関するものまでである。

どこの国のことばにも、その国独特の社会・文化背景を反映する言いまわしや慣用表現がある。「黒山の人だかり」(large crowds of people)、とか「目を白黒させてびっくりする」(be shocked) といった表現は、日本人の体質からきたことばと言えるだろう。英米で人が大勢集まっても、その髪の毛の色がまちまちだから、「黒山の人だかり」になるはずはない。

英語にも、英米人がともに使う一般的なイディオムもあれば、アメリカ独自の風物・産物・制度などから生れてきた表現も多い。例えば、アメリカ人の代名詞のように使われている Yankee ということばは、オランダからの移住民が使っていた Jan-kees ということばが訛ってできたと言われている。また bonanza ということばは、スペイン語からきた

もので、カリフォルニアのゴールド・ラッシュのころに good luck という意味で使われるようになった。Words and Their Stories はこのようなことばの背後にあるさまざまな話しを聞かせてくれるばかりでなく、その単語の使い方をとも説明してくれる、楽しくためになる番組である。

このたび、ビアズレー氏のご好意により、実際の放送に使用された原稿と録音テープを金星堂から英語教材として出版するのはこびとなった。なおテキスト編集にあたっては、放送原稿とアナウンサーの朗読テープとの多少のくいちがいをできる限り訂正した。本職のアナウンサーが読んでいるので、声の美しくさ、説得力のある朗読といった点で、ふつうの英語テキストにはないすぐれた録音テープをお聞かせできと思う。放送原稿の方も、一流の放送ジャーナリストの書きあげたもので、すぐれた内容と共に、簡潔でリズムカルなスタイル、ことばの選び方など、学ぶべき点が多々あるように思われる。

現在、第一線で活躍しているアメリカの放送ジャーナリストによる英語教材として活用していただければというのが、編者たちの心からなる願いである。

1981年 12月

編 注 者

CONTENTS

Hello	2
Yankee	4
Okay	6
Indian	8
Canoe	10
Tomahawk-Hatchet-Ax	14
Stump	16
To Play Possum	18
Over a Barrel	22
By the Grapevine	24
Corn, Clichés and Bromides	26
Tight-Fisted	30
To Pay through the Nose	32
The Eye and Its Phrases	34
Apple Pie Order	36
Stiff Upper Lip	38
From the Heart	40
Pain in the Neck	44
Chip on the Shoulder	46
Skeleton in the Closet	50
Dog Phrases	52

Holding the Bag	56
To Buffalo	60
Horse of Another Color	62
Bonanza	64
Weasel	66
To Break the Ice	68
To Eat Crow	70
Ax to Grind	72
Huh, Uh-Uh and Um	74
Sneaker	76
To Touch All Bases	78
Jinx and Hex	80
Ham Actor	84
To Talk through Your Hat	86
To Face the Music	90
Shilly-Shally	92
Bluestocking	94
Disc Jockey	98
The Last Straw	102



WORDS AND THEIR STORIES

VOA Special English

The word "hello" is probably more often than any other word in the English language in the United States—and elsewhere—used every day of the year. It is a word that has a long and interesting history. The first thing you hear when you pick up the phone is "hello," unless the caller is an Englishman who might say "Are you there?"

Where did the word come from? There are all sorts of ideas. Some say it came from the French "bonjour" and "bonsoir." This meaning may have arrived in England during the Norman Conquest in the year 1066.

"Hello" may have changed into other forms and the word "hi" was often heard in England in the 1300's during the days of the poet Geoffrey Chaucer. The word was changed to mean "greeting" and gave rise to the expression "hello" which was used by Shakespeare in his plays. "Hello" is still used today in many parts of the world.

Another story says the words "hallo" and "hullo" changed into "hello" in the 1600's. And during the 1800's it was used by the American West. You can find it in many old books.

The story goes, however, that the word "hello" is believed to be the first person to use the word "hello" in the late 1800's, soon after the invention of the telephone.

Hello

 1-A-i

The word “hello” is probably used more often than any other one in the English language. Everybody in the United States—and elsewhere—uses the word, again and again, every day of the week.

- 5 The first thing you hear when you pick up the phone is “hello” unless the caller is an Englishman, who might say. “Are you there?”

Where did the word come from? There are all sorts of ideas. Some say it came from the French, “ho” and “la”—“Ho, there!”

- 10 This greeting may have arrived in England during the Norman Conquest in the year 1066.

“Ho, there” slowly changed into other forms, and the word “hallo” was often heard in England in the 1300’s, during the days of the poet, Geoffrey Chaucer.

- 15 Two hundred years later, in Shakespeare’s time, “hallow” had become “halloo.” And later, sounds like “halloa,” “halloo” and “hollo” were often used by sailors and huntsmen. The sound “halloo” is still used today by fox hunters.

- As time passed, the sounds of “halloo” and “halloa” changed
20 into the sound “hullo.” And during the 1800’s this was how people greeted each other in America.

The American inventor, Thomas Alva Edison, is believed to be the first person to use the word “hello” in the late 1800’s, soon after the invention of the telephone.



At first, people had greeted each other on the telephone with the words “Are you there?” They were not sure if the new instrument could really carry voices.

Tom Edison, however, was a man of few words. He wasted no time. The first time he picked up the phone he did not ask ⁵ if anyone was there. He was sure someone was, and simply said, “Hello.”

From that time on—only about 100 years ago—the word “hullo” became “hello,” as it is heard today.

Strangely enough, when the first telephone system was put in ¹⁰ New Haven, Connecticut, in 1878, people did not say “hello” or “hullo” or even “halloo.” They answered the phone the way the sailors hail a ship, “Ahoy, ahoy there!” Thank God, that form of telephone greeting did not last long.

Of course, there are other ways Americans greet one another. ¹⁵ Not long ago, people often said, “How are you?” when they first met someone. This later became “hiyah.” Then, someone thought that two syllables were too much and “hiyah” became “hi.”

Answering a telephone call in America still presents problems, however. Telephone companies think that Thomas Edison’s ²⁰ short “hello,” is too long. Why waste time? the phone companies say. Simply pick up the phone, give your name, and start talking.

Yankee

1-A-ii

Today's word is "Yankee," a nickname for Americans. Where did the word come from? What does it mean? And how did it get into the language?

A number of people believe that the word "Yankee" comes from a Scottish word meaning sharp and clever. But most experts agree that the word "Yankee" came from Holland.

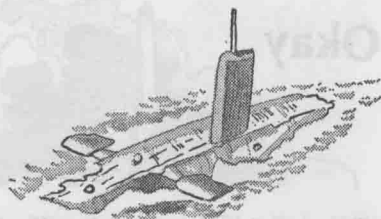
Many years ago, the Hollanders who made cheese were called Jan Kees by the Germans. Some of these Hollanders came to America in the early 1600's. They settled near the New England colonists. The Hollanders were great farmers. And they laughed at the colonists in the north who tried to build farms in the mountain rocks. And so, the Hollanders gave their own nickname "Jan Kees" to the New England colonists.

This explanation becomes more believable when one considers the name "Jan Kees." In the language of the Hollanders it was spelled J-A-N-K-E-E-S. It was pronounced "Yankees."

During the American Civil War the nickname "Yankee" took on a wider meaning. The soldiers in the northern states were called Yankees by the men of the southern army.

During World War One the nickname "Yankee" spread to Europe. The word was shortened to "Yank." And the words, "The Yanks Are Coming," brought tears and joy to the peoples of the Allied nations.

Today, the word "Yankee" is known throughout the world as




another name for an American.

Of course, one cannot talk about the word “Yankee” and not mention the word “Doodle” or “Yankee Doodle.” This word also has a story.

It is said that a British army doctor, Richard Shucksberg, wrote ⁵ “Yankee Doodle,” to poke fun at the colonial troops. The British army, always neat in its bright red uniforms, looked down on the rough colonial soldiers, who really were not soldiers at all, but farmers with clubs and old guns—angry farmers who rebelled against the high British taxes. ¹⁰

One day, British army colonel, Hugh Percy, set out to attack the colonial settlements of Lexington and Concord. Percy marched his men out of Boston to the tune of “Yankee Doodle.” At Concord, however, the rough colonial farmers defeated the British. The farmers, now true soldiers, marched with pride to Boston to the ¹⁵ tune of “Yankee Doodle.” Ever since that day in 1775, “Yankee Doodle” has become an American marching song.

Okay

 1-A-iii

Our word today is “okay.” It is known and used by millions of people all over the world. Still, language experts do not agree on where it came from.

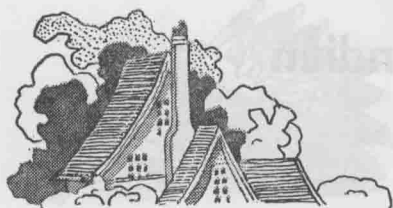
Some say it came from the American Indians. When Europeans
5 first came to the Americas they heard hundreds of different Indian languages. Most were fully developed.

One tribe especially had a well developed language. This was the Choctaw tribe. They were farmers and fishermen who lived in the rich Mississippi valley in what are now the states of Mississippi,
10 Louisiana and Alabama. When problems arose, Choctaw leaders discussed them with the tribal chief. They sat in a circle and listened to the wisdom of the chief.

He heard the different proposals, often raising and lowering his head in agreement, and saying, “Okeh,” meaning “It is so.”

15 The Indian languages have given many words to English. Twenty four—almost half of the American States—have Indian names—Oklahoma, the Dakotas, Idaho, Wisconsin, Ohio and Tennessee, to name a few. And the names of many rivers, streams, mountains, cities and towns are Indian.

20 Nevertheless, there are many who dispute the idea that the word “okay” came from the Indians. Some say that President Andrew Jackson first used the word. Others claim the word was invented by John Jacob Astor, a fur trader of the late 1700’s who became one of the world’s richest men. Still others say a poor



railroad clerk made up this word. His name was Obadiah Kelly and he put his initials, O.K., on each package people gave him to ship by train.

So it goes; each story sounds reasonable and official.

But perhaps the most believable explanation is that the word ⁵ "okay" was invented by a political organization in the 1800's.

Martin Van Buren was running for President. A group of people organized a club to support him. They called their political organization the "Okay Club." The letters "o" and "k" were taken from the name of Van Buren's home town, the place where ¹⁰ he was born, Old Kinderhook, New York.

There is one thing about the word "okay" that the experts do agree on: that the word is pure American and that it has spread to almost every country on earth.

There is something about the word that appeals to peoples of ¹⁵ every language. Yet, here in America it is used mostly in speech, not in serious writing. Serious writers would rather use such words as "agree," "assent," "approve," "confirm" and so on.

In recent times, the word "okay" has been given an official place in the English language. ²⁰

But it will be a long time before Americans will officially accept two expressions that come from "okay." These are "oke" and "okeydokey."

Indian

1-A-iv

Four hundred and eighty years ago, a man stood alone on the coast of Spain. He looked toward the west and said to himself, "The earth cannot be flat. If I sail westward, sooner or later, I shall hit land, India perhaps, and the queen will have a new and shorter route to the riches of that country."

Christopher Columbus sold his idea to Queen Isabella of Spain. She gave him men and three ships. And Columbus sailed westward for many weeks, through rough seas.

At last, he saw land: a group of islands now called the West Indies. Columbus was sure it was India, and he called the natives "Indos."

Stories of what Columbus found quickly spread across Europe. His word "Indos," became "Indians" to the English. And all the natives of the West Indies and Central America became known as "Indians."

Christopher Columbus made four trips to the New World. Yet, he died in Spain without knowing where he had been. He died believing he had sailed to India.

It was soon learned that Columbus had made a mistake. But the word "Indian" was well established in Europe.

The first settlers who arrived in North Carolina and Virginia in the early 1600's called the natives Indians. This name spread north as the colonies of Maryland, New York, Pennsylvania and New England were settled.



Today the word “Indian” is used to describe the descendants of the first peoples of North and South America. In the far north they are called Eskimos. And in the far south there are the Patagonians and the Fuegians.

Students and scholars have long known that the American Indians⁵ were not really Indians at all. And one scholar proposed a name that he believed would be better—Amerinds. He made up this name by joining American and Indian. This word is often used today by other scholars, but the general public has heard little of it.

Word experts say the name Indian may be wrong but we are¹⁰ stuck with it. It is too late to change it to Amerind. Most people would not accept the change. Besides, how could a movie of the old west be exciting if it concerned cowboys and Amerinds, instead of cowboys and Indians?