
WORD
Wealth

Word Wealth

Ward S. Miller

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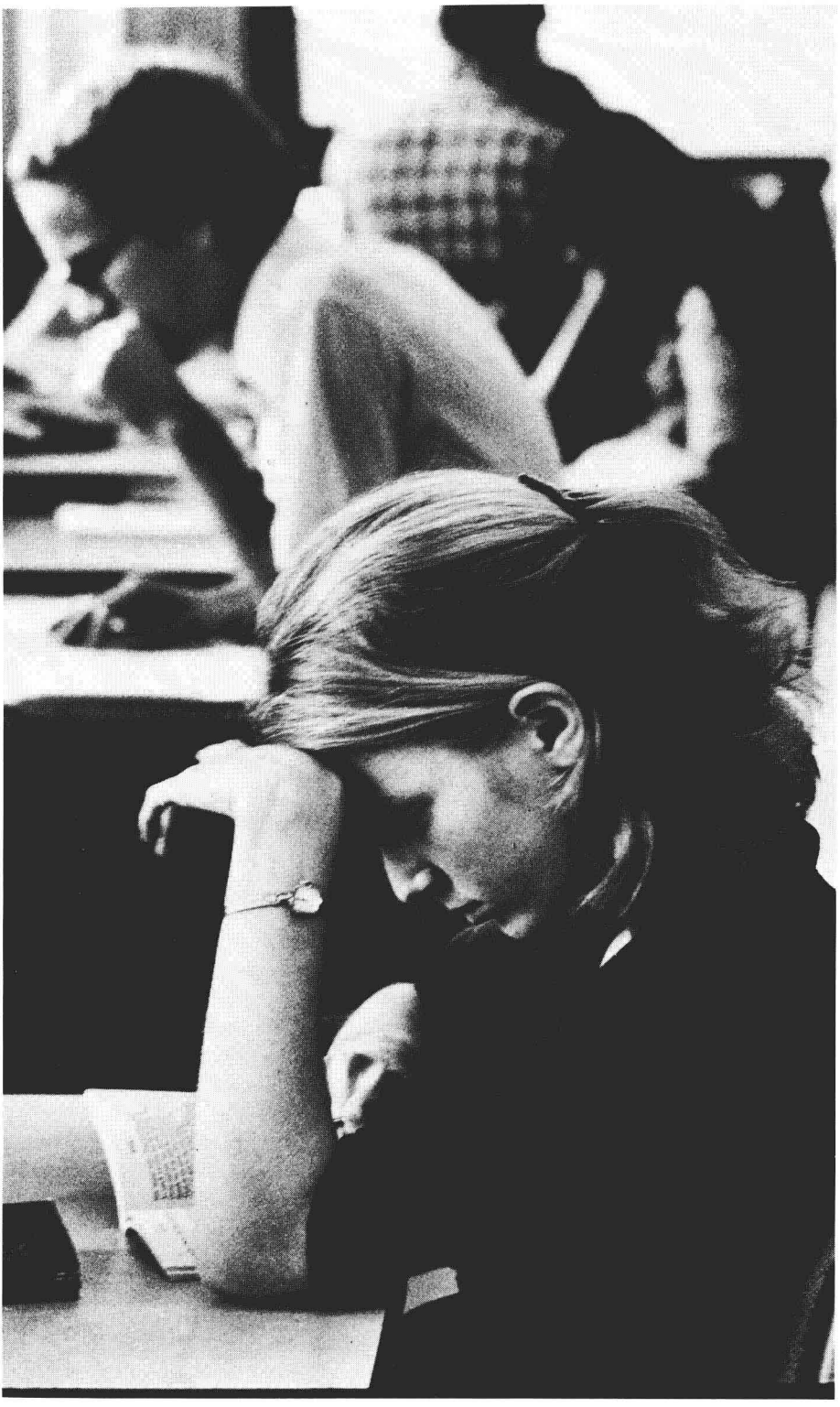

to the student

THE ROLE OF WORDS TODAY

A word count of President Woodrow Wilson's published works shows that he used more than 175,000 different words, whereas William Shakespeare wrote the world's most widely produced plays with a vocabulary of 25,000. The difference between the two figures gives a reliable indication of the expanded role of words in the twentieth century.

There is still no greater playwright in English than Shakespeare. At the same time, knowledge in a hundred areas of which even the scholars of Shakespeare's plays were scarcely conscious has steadily increased. Dictionaries have expanded from a few hundred pages in the seventeenth century to the 3,194 pages and more than 600,000 word entries of Webster's Second Edition of the *New International Dictionary*, including proper names and abbreviations. This Second Edition claims to be the largest dictionary ever compiled. Yet it contains only a fraction of the estimated four million words that are said to exist.

Woodrow Wilson was a college professor of history and political science before he became President. By the standard rule of three to one, his recognition vocabulary may have been more than 500,000, unless one assumes that in his voluminous writings he used most of the words he knew. In his specialized field he probably did, and he certainly had a well-educated layperson's command of many other fields, including the sciences.

Today, even if President Wilson had been a scientist, he would find hundreds of unfamiliar scientific terms in the newspapers and popular magazines. The areas that offer a host of new words include space science, nuclear physics, electronics, medicine, and all of the social sciences. The whole field of computerization is new, with its binary arithmetic and other manifold ramifications. Great advances have occurred in numerous other fields, from astronomy to zoology, including even the well-established subjects of literature and history.

Were President Wilson to return to earth today, would he know what a transistor is? An astronaut? A space walk? A tranquilizer? An antibiotic? Or a catalytic converter? Nuclear fission, nuclear fusion, supersonic speeds, penicillin, DNA, synthetic rubber, jet propulsion, extrasensory perception, hallucinogens, and even nylon (as well as a dozen other synthetic fabrics) would be mysterious and largely unintelligible. Indeed, Woodrow Wilson would scarcely know what a closed-in car or a freeway is, and he would wonder what happened to the millions of Model-T Fords that once roamed the rough primitive highways of the country at speeds of 30–40 miles per hour.

Woodrow Wilson would have one major advantage that most young people today do not have, however. He studied Latin and Greek. In so doing, he became acquainted with most of the roots, prefixes, and other word elements from which almost every new word in the arts and the sciences is derived. He would know, for example, that *television* means seeing something at a great distance. He would

suspect that *supersonic* means beyond (the speed of) sound and that an *astronaut* is literally a star sailor.

Like Woodrow Wilson, Shakespeare studied Latin and Greek. He thus enjoyed the advantages such study gives to an understanding of English words. He did not go to college, but he must have had much more than the "little Latin and less Greek" that Ben Jonson credited him with. He used several hundred Latin- and Greek-derived words in his plays at a time when relatively few were in common use. In Shakespeare's time, the English language fell far short of the adequacy it has gradually attained.

Clearly, systematic training in vocabulary and word elements was never more essential than it is right now. It would be easy to demonstrate that word study is *more important than any other aspect* of English courses, especially if it includes the nearly 300 most commonly used roots and prefixes. One researcher found that fifteen of these prefixes account for 82 percent of those found in over 4,000 words containing prefixes in a 20,000-word sample.*

Intelligent young people learn many new words readily enough just by wide reading. They learn new words, too, by watching news and documentary programs of many kinds on television. Still, with Scholastic Aptitude Tests and other such examinations to face, the natural or incidental accumulation of word knowledge is not enough. Something more intensive is essential, something that compensates for the lack of Latin and Greek. In fact, the reluctance of most students to look up the exact meanings of the new or half-familiar words they encounter makes the natural rate of gain far less effective than systematic, accelerated vocabulary work.**

Word Wealth thus provides most of the practical benefits of two years of Latin and perhaps a year of Greek. And it does this without the memorization of all the declensions and conjugations of these two languages. The aforementioned study of roots and prefixes, which grows primarily out of the study of Part Four, is, however, only one of the values that the book offers.

Two facts stand out, then. First, because of the vast influx of new words in almost every field, intensive vocabulary study has never been more necessary. Second, dedicated word study is the only way to compensate for the values that Latin and Greek once provided. Most of the new words that have come into general or technical use in the arts and sciences are derived from Latin and Greek word elements.

THE WORD WEALTH METHOD

The primary purpose of *Word Wealth* is to set up a variety of adventures in word study that are challenging, efficient, and carefully planned. These are organized in a series of forty units. They cover quite adequately

*This research by Russell G. Stauffer is reported in the *Journal of Educational Research* (February 1942), pp. 453–458.

**According to two investigators who made a scientific study of reading efficiency, students who received formal vocabulary instruction achieved greater accuracy in word recognition and, with it, more detailed, more accurate, and more orderly comprehension, with a clearer understanding of the various elements of meaning and their relationships, than those who lacked such formal word study.

the area of general recognition vocabulary between the words an elementary school graduate knows and those a college graduate does not need to know.

The forty units start with entry words in Part One that are generally shorter, more common in occurrence, and less complicated than those in Part Two. Part Two, in turn, offers less difficult words than Part Three. Part Four, however, ranges from the most familiar word elements to the most difficult.

Each entry word in the first three parts was carefully chosen because it is a word of general recognition vocabulary that is widely used. It may be familiar, but it has variant forms and synonyms that are usually not familiar. It has figurative as well as literal uses, and it may be applied to a variety of situations. Students need to be well acquainted with it.

Each unit of *Word Wealth* consists of a teaser pretest, a study guide, three or four practice sets, and a few exercises. A class or individual student should start with the first unit in Part One, or perhaps with Part Four. If a student or class scores 75 percent or above in the pretest, that student or class should go through the unit rapidly, with special emphasis on the supplementary words and synonyms. The student or class should then do the second practice set, go over the study guide again, and take the final test. Thus, even a superior class will do well to cover every unit, even though the easy ones are gone through rapidly.

There are three possible ways to study each entry. The first is to scrutinize the entry word itself—its exact meanings, the example sentences, and variant forms with their examples. Sometimes these variant forms have quite different meanings. Occasionally there are tricky shifts in spelling or pronunciation from what one would expect.

A second phase of word study involves the synonyms of an entry word, if it has any. In studying synonyms, one goes from the simple denotative meaning of a word to the connotative level, which often involves very fine discrimination between the word and its synonyms. Take *coerce, constrain, extort,* and *impel,* for example. If you *coerce* people, you *compel* them. Coercion implies harshness and lack of consideration. To *extort* a promise may imply violence or the threat of it. Thus, *extort* is a strong word, and it is often associated with criminal action to get money from someone, especially when the noun form *extortion* is used. *Constrain* and *impel* are used when mild pressures from within rather than from without are implied. Thus, *constrain* suggests that it is love, concern, or admiration for someone else that produces the inner pressure, whereas *impel* suggests that conscience or a sense of duty is the inner force. Words are known by the company they keep.

A third phase of word study is figurative. Many of the words are figurative in significance or may be used with figurative meanings. Usually these are nouns. *Zephyr,* in the first unit of Part One, may be used this way as the name of a ship or a plane. It suggests cool, refreshing lightness, but it does not connote enough force or violence to be given to a weapon. *Gobbledygook,* in the same unit, is a relatively new word invented to convey the sound and the meaning—to human ears—of the noise a turkey makes when it "talks." This word is used almost wholly in its figurative rather than its literal sense.

Occasionally antonyms are included in the units, and a class may add hundreds more especially by the use of negative prefixes, such as in- or un- in *plausible —implausible, coherent—incoherent, tenable—untenable,* etc.

Another rewarding aspect of word study is derivation or, figuratively, the

ancestry of words. Notes about word origins are thus an indispensable feature of a book such as this. Each note on derivation serves to give a word its proper character and thus helps one to remember it as well as to use it intelligently. Often, too, the root meaning of a word is very important in understanding its present usage.

Part Four launches a pupil into the world of word elements (roots and prefixes). In mastering these elements, a person attains immediate insight into the meanings of thousands of words, familiar and unfamiliar, technical and general, year after year, when one meets them. Each word element that one learns helps a person to understand every other word in which it appears. Thus, for example, the meaning of *precognition* is at once apparent if one knows that pre- means before or beforehand and that cogn- is knowing or knowledge.

Photo- (light) provides a good example of a word element that appears in a multitude of words. A college dictionary lists ninety. And the word element psych(o)-, another excellent example, is found in at least eighty words, among them

psyche
psychedelic
psychiatrist
psychic
psychoacoustics
psychoactive
psychoanalyze
psychobiology
psychochemical
psychodrama
psychodynamic(s)
psychogenesis
psychograph
psychokinesis
psychologize
psychology
psychometric(s)
psychometry
psychoneurosis
psychopathology
psychosis
psychosomatic
psychosurgery
psychotherapy
psychotoxic

In each of the word containing this element, psych(o)- means mind or mental. A person who studied Part Four will know -genic, -graph-, -meter, -therapy, and several other of the word roots that appear in the psych(o)- and in the photo- words.

Word Wealth achieves a hearteningly strategic simplicity by focusing on some 600 entry words and upwards of 300 word elements. If one adds to each entry word all the variant forms plus all the synonyms and related words introduced, the total number of words presented in a unit runs close to 100 or about 3,000 for the thirty word units in Parts One, Two, and Three. If one adds to this figure the variant forms of the entry words, the synonyms, the negative forms, and the related words not actually included in the units, the total number of words introduced and derivable runs to 300 or more per unit, and 8,000–10,000 for the thirty units.

If one then adds to these the words presented in the study guides of Part Four, together with all of the variant forms that could be listed and also the negative forms, the total per unit will be much larger than the total for Parts One, Two, and Three. A survey of a college-size dictionary indicates a total of at least 1,000 words that begin with one of the number prefixes in Unit Six of Part Four, for example. The total for the prefixes in one of the earlier units must be considerably more than 1,000. Thus, the total number of words derivable from both the prefixes and the stems in Part Four could hardly be fewer than 10,000.

A certain amount of repetition occurs, and this serves as learning reinforcement. Nevertheless, it appears from these estimates that the number of words presented or derivable from the 600 entry words and the 300 prefixes and roots in *Word Wealth* could hardly be below 15,000 and may well run to more than 20,000.

WORDS: THEIR NATURE AND DEVELOPMENT

What is the nature and origin of the bewildering profusion of words and word elements that make up the English language? How did they get their meanings, and why have some of these meanings changed over the years?

The story is a long one, with conflicting or possibly complementary theories. The fact is that hundreds of languages exist, and each has a different word for a given object. A word like *brother* in English cannot be traced back with certainty to its beginning, but it is interesting to compare six forms of the word in three ancient and three modern languages:

Ancient Languages:

Sanskrit (India): *bhrat(a)r* Greek: *phrater* Latin: *frater*

Modern Languages:

German: *bruder* Italian: *fratello* French: *frère*

To a linguist, the six forms are more alike than they appear at first glance, and the differences are explainable by certain laws of language change that are quite regular and quite universal.

Because of the similarities among them, it was discovered that all six of these languages and dozens of others in Europe, the Americas, and Western Asia belong to what is called the Indo-European family of languages. These, in turn, trace their lineage back to an ancient language known as Primitive Indo–European. Linguists have been able to reconstruct this early language from a comparative study of the languages derived from it.

Experts do not agree on where the Primitive Europeans lived. A study of plant and animal names and of words for climatic and geographical features seems to indicate that it was part of what is now the Ukraine. As these people spread out, each tribe lost contact with the others and gradually drifted into its own ways of speaking the common language. Changes in pronunciation crept in. Each tribe created new words as it needed them and adopted different ways of using the old ones. These differences created dialects that diverged until the various tribes could communicate only through interpreters.

Several of these tribes, including the Angles and the Saxons, lived in the forests of Germany and Scandinavia. They spoke the Indo-European language that we now call Primitive Germanic. As these peoples drifted farther apart and lost contact with each other, they evolved separate languages from which Dutch, German, English, and the Scandinavian languages (except Finnish) have descended. This divergence came about in much the same way that the Romance languages of Southern Europe descended and diverged from Latin.

During the fifth and sixth centuries A.D., bands of Angles, Saxons, and Jutes began to invade and to conquer the island area now called England. They drove the Celtic inhabitants gradually northward into the mountains of what is now Scotland and westward into Wales. Bands of Danes and others also came in, but the Angles and Saxons became dominant. It was their language, now known as Old English or Anglo-Saxon, that became the foundation of modern English. This language absorbed quite a few words, however, especially place names, from the Latin of the Romans. At about the time of Christ, Rome had conquered what is now England,

making it a Roman province.

Old English was really a branch or dialect of German, and many of our everyday words in English are still very much like the modern German words that have descended from the same parent language.

In 1066, after several centuries of Anglo-Saxon rule in England, an army of Norman-French adventurers under William the Conqueror crossed the English Channel to invade England. Winning the Battle of Hastings against the Anglo-Saxon defenders, the Normans assumed control of the country. French was the native language of the new ruling class, but the Anglo-Saxons clung tenaciously to their Germanic tongue.

Gradually, the Normans and the Anglo-Saxons intermarried and learned each other's language. English again emerged as the language of the country, but with the incorporation of thousands of French words and spellings. Meanwhile, through the churches and universities, many more Latin words came into English. Latin continued to be the language of learning in Europe and in England, however, well into the seventeenth century.

As time passed, English continued to grow in vocabulary and flexibility. The Renaissance, the rise of science, the exploration of the New World, and British ascendancy on the seas all added new words. Later, the rise of the British Empire and the expansion of the United States accelerated the process. Modern English has thus become what is probably the richest language in the world. In the United States, the importation of innumerable new words from every country represented in our population has expanded the language steadily.

Despite the very close ties that exist between our country and Great Britain, the American language has diverged in many minor ways from the English of England in pronunciation, inflection, and vocabulary. In England, for instance, a truck is a *lorry,* and crackers are *wafers.* Radio is still the *wireless,* television is the *telly,* a hardware store is the *ironmonger's,* and a drugstore or pharmacy is an *apothecary's* shop. Many more such differences exist, largely because old words have acquired new meanings or new words have gained popularity in one country but not in the other.

Enter semantics

As long as a language is alive, it changes steadily, giving new meanings to old words, adding new words, and discarding words that for one reason or another have lost their usefulness. *Astronaut* is a new word; *rheumatism* is an example of an obsolescent word that has been replaced by *arthritis; cavalry* is a word that has changed its meaning in the past fifty years from warriors on horseback to motor-driven troops and vehicles.

The word *semantics* is an example of the process that it studies. Whereas it once could be defined as the study of changes in the meaning of words, it is now the science of meaning in a much broader sense, dealing with the nature of words, the "meaning of meaning," and the sometimes incautious or unscrupulous ways in which words are used "by knaves to make a trap for fools."

The basic principles one needs to keep in mind about the nature of words and the insights of semantics may be summarized as follows:

1. *A word is not an object or a thing.* It is simply a sound or a group of sounds, represented by a pattern of written or printed symbols that bring to mind an object,

a quality, a situation, a feeling, or an idea. The sounds and the symbols have come to be inseparably associated with the object, called the *referent,* and with each other. The same object will be represented in each of a thousand other languages by a different group of sounds and written symbols. Yet many persons become attached to words as such, or to one special pattern of words. They should learn to distinguish more clearly between the object, quality, situation, feeling, or idea that a word denotes (or connotes) and the word as such.

2. *A word is hard to define* because it often has numerous meanings or shades of meaning. Even a simple word like *chair* may denote any one of a hundred different objects, from a broken kindergarten chair to an elaborately upholstered lounge chair. It is difficult to discover precisely what the essence of *chair*-ness really is. If *chair* is hard to define, however, what about *hope, courage,* or *imagination*? At best, words are terribly elusive as well as illusive, especially abstract words.

3. *Many words have more than one level of meaning.* In addition to the referent, or the literal level of the object, two or three levels of abstraction may also exist. The word *litany,* for example, has at least four of these levels.

a. One specific prayer to be used by a priest and an audience responsively. This is the literal level—*the* litany of a specific church body.

b. Any prayer of this type, with priest and worshipers taking alternate parts—a litany.

c. Any joint leader-audience repetition that is a prescribed ceremony or ritual. It does not have to be an act of cooperative worship, but something that resembles such a ceremony. The cheering at a football game is a kind of litany, or worship ceremony, in a figurative "temple" devoted to sports. The fans tend to make their sport a form of worship.

d. Any scene that has distinctive elements of a litany—a figurative leader and a mechanical response of some kind: "The litany of the machines goes on."

Alfred H. S. Korzybski was a pioneer in the field of semantics. He elaborately analyzed the levels of meaning, using what he called a Structural Differential to illustrate the process of abstraction. Semanticist Samuel I. Hayakawa went on to describe the levels more simply, using a ladder as his symbol.

4. *Words belong to families and have ancestors.* Most words display some of the traits of their families and ancestors. These traits complicate and modify their meaning. The word *subsistence* carries the idea of something standing under or supporting a person, for example. Similarly, *moral* comes from the Latin word *mores* (customs), and this ancestry contributes to its modern meaning of what is right or ethical.

5. *Words are connotative as well as denotative.* Both kinds of meaning are important, denotations for accuracy and connotations for the affective power that they have. The denotative meaning of *lake,* for example, is merely an inland body of standing water. The connotations include swimming, boating, fishing, blueness, storms, and romantic associations, with perhaps a hundred private associative or imaginative meanings.

6. *Words need to be used with great care,* especially words that stand for abstract qualities, represent value judgments, or have great affective power. Affective language has its place in literary efforts and in oratory, but it does a disservice if it obscures one's vision or vitiates one's judgment. This principle is important in practical affairs. If someone says, "Joe ran his father's car off the road and damaged

it badly," the person is presumably making a simple statement of fact. But to say "Joe is a reckless driver" is to offer a value judgment or a clear statement of opinion that often is not well founded. It is wiser and fairer to state facts, wherever possible, rather than opinions.

7. *Words are alive*. English is not a dead language like Latin. It is a living language in which each word grows and changes. The definitions in a dictionary or in this book set up guidelines, not limits, and are not intended to discourage creativity. If one takes undue liberties with the established meanings of words, that person will fail to communicate what he or she has to say. Yet it is possible to use old words in new ways if one does so judiciously. The purpose of this book is to help students understand more clearly what they read. They will communicate more accurately, not by using words no one understands, but by using the most appropriate words responsibly, intelligently, and creatively.

Pronunciation Key

ā	as in fate, age	**ŏ**	as in hot, box
ă	as in fat, map	**ȯ**	as in dog, law, fought
â	as in dare, air	**ô**	as in more, roar, door, four
ä	as in father, pa, barn	**oi**	as in oil, boy
ē	as in be, equal	**ou**	as in out, loud
ĕ	as in bet, ebb	**o͞o**	as in too, rule
ê	as in mere, near	**o͝o**	as in book, put
ī	as in bite, ice, ride	**ŭ**	as in fun, up
ĭ	as in bit, if	**û**	as in fur, term
ō	as in note, boat, low		

ə stands for the sound of: **a** in ago, Senate; **e** in open, hopeless, fairness; **i** in peril, trellis; **o** in lemon; **u** in minus, argument; **ou** in famous; **ai** in mountain; **oi** in tortoise.

b	as in bed (bĕd), tub (tŭb)
ch	as in chill (chĭl), batch (băch)
d	as in deed (dēd)
f	as in fate (fāt), huff (hŭf)
g	as in get (gĕt), leg (lĕg)
h	as in hop (hŏp)
hw	for "wh" as in what (hwŏt), wheel (hwēl)
j	as in jam (jăm), job (jŏb); and for "g" in gentle (jĕn′təl) and range (rānj)
k	as in kin (kĭn), smoke (smōk); for "c" in coal (kōl); and for "ck" in rack (răk)
l	as in let (lĕt), bell (bĕl)
m	as in men (mĕn), him (hĭm)
n	as in not (nŏt), ran (răn)
ng	as in song (sȯng); and for "n" in think (thĭngk)
p	as in pup (pŭp)
r	as in ride (rīd), very (vĕr′ē)
r	as in fur (fû*r*), tar (tä*r*) (This *r* is not pronounced in some sections of the country.)
s	as in sod (sŏd), must (mŭst); and for "c" in cent (sĕnt), price (prīs)
sh	as in she (shē), rush (rŭsh)
t	as in tea (tē), hot (hŏt)
th	as in thin (thĭn), bath (băth), breath (brĕth)
t͟h	as in then (t͟hĕn), bathe (bāt͟h), breathe (brēt͟h)
v	as in vat (văt), dove (dŭv); and for "f" in of (ŏv)
w	as in we (wē)
y	as in yet (yĕt)
z	as in zero (zêr′ō), buzz (bŭz); and for "s" in wise (wīz)
zh	for "s" as in usual (yo͞o′zho͞o-əl), vision (vĭzh′ən); also for some "g's" as in mirage (mə räzh′)

contents

part one

part two

part three

part four