

Contents

Acknowledgements and Thanks	vii
Why I wrote this book	vii
A: Words and idioms	1
1 How many words are there in the English Language?	2
2 How many new words come into English every year?	4
3 Why is English vocabulary so varied?	6
4 Why do I hear two forms used in a sentence like <i>Talk among(st) yourselves?</i>	8
5 What's the difference between <i>a cup</i> and <i>a mug</i> ?	10
6 Why do people say <i>phonetic</i> and <i>grammatical</i> and not <i>phonetical</i> and <i>grammatic</i> ?	12
7 I hear people adding <i>-ish</i> to words a lot. What does it mean?	14
8 What should we call the meal in the middle of the day: <i>lunch</i> or <i>dinner</i> ?	16
9 Why is everyone these days saying <i>you're welcome</i> in response to thanks?	18
10 What does it mean when someone adds <i>at all</i> at the end of a question?	20
11 Why do English speakers sometimes use pidgin English, as in <i>long time no see</i> ?	22
12 Is it all right to say <i>she looks well in a black dress</i> rather than <i>looks good</i> ?	24
13 Why do people say the same thing twice, as in <i>it takes what it takes</i> ?	26
14 What is happening in new expressions like <i>well good</i> ?	28
B: Grammar	30
15 Can <i>a</i> be used before an uncountable noun?	31
16 Why is the article dropped before some nouns, as in <i>look what baby's doing</i> ?	33
17 Why do some teachers tell me I shouldn't begin a sentence with <i>and</i> ?	35
18 Why do we say <i>I am</i> , <i>am I</i> and <i>I'm not</i> , but <i>aren't I</i> instead of <i>amn't I</i> ?	37
19 Are the conjunctions <i>because</i> , <i>since</i> , <i>as</i> and <i>for</i> interchangeable?	39
20 Why do we see the past tense of some verbs spelled in two ways, such as <i>burned</i> and <i>burnt</i> ?	41
21 Why is <i>go</i> being used these days instead of <i>say</i> in reporting speech?	43
22 I've just seen a film called <i>Marley and Me</i> . Shouldn't it be <i>Marley and I</i> ?	45
23 Why do people say <i>whatever</i> on its own?	47
24 <i>What will be the result?</i> or <i>What will the result be?</i> Which should I use?	49

- 25 I keep coming across *Team GB*. Shouldn't it be *the GB Team*? 51
- 26 Why is *went* the past tense of *go*? (And *was* the past of *am* and *is*?) 53
- 27 Is there a difference between *I liked the story which you told* and *...that you told*? 55
- 28 Is the third person singular *-s* going to disappear? 57
- 29 Why is a possessive sometimes used before an *-ing* form, and sometimes not? 59

C: Pronunciation 61

- 30 Where did RP (Received Pronunciation) come from? 62
- 31 Have English accents changed in Britain in recent years? 64
- 32 What is this 'Estuary English' that I read about? 66
- 33 Why do some people say *afternoon* and some say *afternoon*? 68
- 34 Why do people drop the final *-g* when they say *good morning*? 70
- 35 Why am I hearing so many high rising tones on statements these days? 72

D: Spelling and punctuation 74

- 36 Why is English spelling so irregular? 75
- 37 Why is *encyclopaedia* sometimes spelled *encyclopedia*? 77
- 38 Why do we see a verb sometimes spelled with *-ise* and sometimes with *-ize*? 79
- 39 Should I write words with accents, like *cliché* and *naïve*? 81
- 40 Should I write *Past Perfect* or *past perfect* (and for other names of tenses)? 83
- 41 Why is there so much variation in the use of the apostrophe? 85
- 42 I've seen both *red, white and blue* and *red, white, and blue*. Which should I use? 87
- 43 Can I use an exclamation mark along with a question mark to add emphasis to a question, as in *What?! or What!?* 89
- 44 Are hyphens going out of fashion? 91

E: Genres 93

- 45 Why is Shakespeare difficult to read? 94
- 46 How has English changed in the last 400 years? 96
- 47 Has internet technology changed English? 98
- 48 Will text messaging harm learners' English? 100
- 49 Why are transcripts of spoken language so difficult to read? 102
- 50 Can I use grammar to identify online phishing? 104

Index 106