

1. Record Nr.	UNINA9910813096003321
Autore	Lerer Seth <1955->
Titolo	Inventing English : a portable history of the language // Seth Lerer ; cover design, Linda Secondari ; cover illustration, Martha Lewis
Pubbl/distr/stampa	New York, [New York] : , : Columbia University Press, , 2015 ©2015
ISBN	0-231-51076-4
Edizione	[Revised and expanded edition.]
Descrizione fisica	1 online resource (320 p.)
Disciplina	420.9
Soggetti	English language - History English language - Etymology English language - Old English, ca. 450-1100 English language - Middle English, 1100-1500 Linguistics
Lingua di pubblicazione	Inglese
Formato	Materiale a stampa
Livello bibliografico	Monografia
Note generali	Description based upon print version of record.
Nota di bibliografia	Includes bibliographical references and index.
Nota di contenuto	Introduction: finding English, finding us -- Caedmon learns to sing : Old English and the origins of poetry -- From Beowulf to Wulfstan : the language of Old English literature -- In this year : the politics of language and the end of Old English -- From kingdom to realm : middle English in a French world -- Lord of this language : Chaucer's English -- I is an Ille a millere as are ye : Middle English dialects -- The great vowel shift and the changing character of English -- Chancery, Caxton, and the making of English prose -- I do, I will : Shakespeare's English -- A universal hubbub wild : new words and worlds in early modern English -- Visible speech : the Orthoepists and the origins of standard English -- A harmless drudge : Samuel Johnson and the making of the dictionary -- Horrid, hooting stanzas : Lexicography and literature in American English -- Antses in the sugar : dialect and regionalism in American English -- Hello, dude : Mark Twain and the making of the American idiom -- Ready for the funk : African American English and its impact -- Pioneers through an untrodden forest : the Oxford English dictionary and its readers -- Listening to Private Ryan : war and language -- He speaks in your voice : everybody's English.

Why is there such a striking difference between English spelling and English pronunciation? How did our seemingly relatively simple grammar rules develop? What are the origins of regional dialect, literary language, and everyday speech, and what do they have to do with you? Seth Lerer's *Inventing English* is a masterful, engaging history of the English language from the age of Beowulf to the rap of Eminem. Many have written about the evolution of our grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary, but only Lerer situates these developments in the larger history of English, America, and literature. Lerer begins in the seventh century with the poet Caedmon learning to sing what would become the earliest poem in English. He then looks at the medieval scribes and poets who gave shape to Middle English. He finds the traces of the Great Vowel Shift in the spelling choices of letter writers of the fifteenth century and explores the achievements of Samuel Johnson's *Dictionary* of 1755 and *The Oxford English Dictionary* of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. He describes the differences between English and American usage and, through the example of Mark Twain, the link between regional dialect and race, class, and gender. Finally, he muses on the ways in which contact with foreign languages, popular culture, advertising, the Internet, and e-mail continue to shape English for future generations. Each concise chapter illuminates a moment of invention—a time when people discovered a new form of expression or changed the way they spoke or wrote. In conclusion, Lerer wonders whether globalization and technology have turned English into a world language and reflects on what has been preserved and what has been lost. A unique blend of historical and personal narrative, *Inventing English* is the surprising tale of a language that is as dynamic as the people to whom it belongs.

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