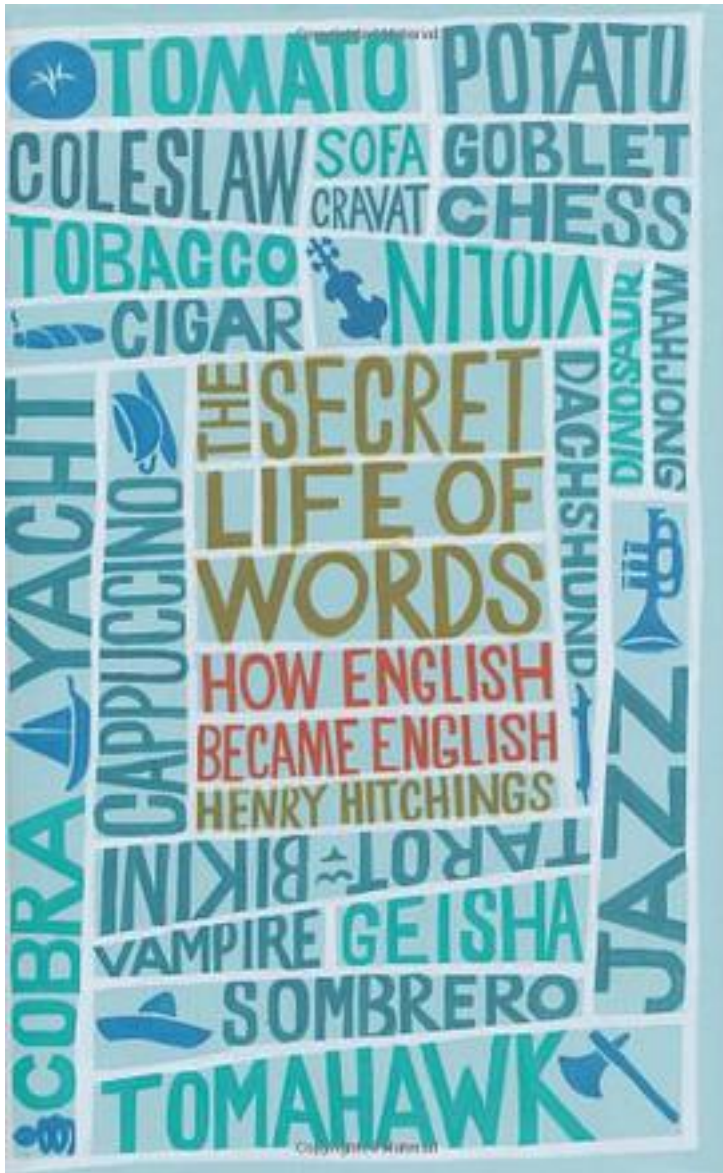


The Secret Life of Words



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著者:Henry Hitchings

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AN "ECONOMIST" BOOK OF THE YEAR "The Secret Life of Words" is a wide-ranging account of the transplanted, stolen, bastardized words we've come to know as the English language. It's a history of English as a whole, and of the thousands of individual words, from more than 350 foreign tongues, that trickled in gradually over hundreds of years of trade, colonization, and diplomacy. Henry Hitchings narrates the story from the Norman Conquest to the present day, chronicling the English language as a living archive of human experience. A SAMPLE OF THE THOUSANDS OF STORIES BEHIND THE WORDS: - Alcatraz Island was named by a Spanish explorer who arrived in 1775 to find the island covered with pelicans, or "alcatrazes." And "alcatrazes"? The word goes back to the Arabic "al-qadus," which was a bucket used in irrigation that resembled the bucket beaks of pelicans. - What does a walnut have to do with walls? The word comes from the Old English walhnutu, meaning foreign nut. They were originally grown in Italy and imported, and the northern Europeans named them to distinguish them from the native hazelnut. - A crayfish is not a fish. The name comes from the old French word "crevice," through the Old German "crebiz" and the modern French "ecrevisse." The "fish" part is just the result of a mishearing. "The Secret Life of Words" is a wide-ranging chronicle of how words witness history, reflect social change, and remind us of our past. Henry Hitchings was born in 1974. He is the author of "Defining the World" and has contributed to many newspapers and magazines. An "Economist" Best Book of the Year Words are essential to our everyday lives. An average person spends his or her day enveloped in conversations, e-mails, phone calls, text messages, directions, headlines, and more. But how often do we stop to think about the origins of the words we use? Have you ever thought about which words in English have been borrowed from Arabic, Dutch, or Portuguese? Try "admiral," "landscape," and "marmalade," just for starters. "The Secret Life of Words" is a wide-ranging account not only of the history of English language and vocabulary, but also of how words witness history, reflect social change, and remind us of our past. Henry Hitchings delves into the insatiable, ever-changing English language and reveals how and why it has absorbed words from more than 350 other languages--many originating from the most unlikely of places, such as "shampoo" from Hindi and "kiosk" from Turkish. From the Norman Conquest to the present day, Hitchings narrates the story of English as a living archive of our human experience. He uncovers the secrets behind everyday words and explores the surprising origins of our most commonplace expressions. "The Secret Life of Words" is a rich, lively celebration of the language and vocabulary that we too often take for granted. "This historical tour of the English lexicon considers words as etymological 'fossils of past dreams and traumas,' revealing the preoccupations of the ages that produced them. The nineteenth century's 'cult of fine feelings' gave currency to 'sensibility' and 'physiognomy'; 'popery' and 'libertine' sprang from the religious skepticism of the sixteen-hundreds. Many such relics began as imports: centuries of Anglophone empire-building have occasioned borrowings from some three hundred and fifty languages, including Arabic ('sash') and Sanskrit ('pundit'). The chapters are loosely focused on different themes, but trade is a constant thread: 'tycoon' comes from taikun, a Japanese honorific picked up on Commodore Matthew Perry's eighteen-fifties mission to open the ports of Japan. Hitchings offers a rich array of anecdotes and extracts."--"The New Yorker" "Many will know that the word 'muscle' comes from the Latin for 'mouse' (rippling under the skin, so to speak). But what about 'chagrin', derived from the Turkish for roughened leather, or scaly sharkskin. Or 'lens' which comes from the Latin 'lentil' or 'window' meaning 'eye of wind' in old Norse? Looked at closely, the language comes apart in images, like those strange paintings by Giuseppe Arcimboldo where heads are made of fruit and vegetables. Not that Henry Hitchings's book is about verbal surrealism. That is an extra pleasure in a book which is

really about the way the English language has roamed the world helping itself liberally to words, absorbing them, forgetting where they came from, and moving on with an ever-growing load of exotics, crossbreeds and subtly shaded near-synonyms. It is also about migrations within the language's own borders, about upward and downward mobility, about words losing their roots, turning up in new surroundings, or lying in wait, like 'duvet' which was mentioned by Samuel Johnson, for their moment . . . At every stage, the book is about people and ideas on the move, about invasion, refugees, immigrants, traders, colonists and explorers. This is a huge subject and one that is almost bound to provoke question-marks and explosions in the margins--soon forgotten in the book's sheer sweep and scale . . . The author's zest and grasp are wonderful. He makes you want to check out everything . . . Whatever is hybrid, fluid and unpoliced about English delights him."--"The Economist ""There's not a word in English that isn't furred-up history, resonating to some degree with its notorious unfairness and spin. Indeed, to peer into words is to discover dioramas of vanished worlds with model people busily framing meaning to suit their own purposes. I have never read a book that so perfectly reveals those hidden worlds as Henry Hitchings's "The Secret Life of Words: How English Became English." The book follows the 'pedigree and career' of the English language through history, exposing its debt to invasions, to threats from abroad, and to an island people's dealings with the world beyond its shores. In doing this, Hitchings lays bare the general spirit of acquis

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語言和文化歷史評論家，生於1974年，畢業於牛津與倫敦大學。著有《約翰遜的字典》、《真的不用讀完一本書》。他也是《衛報》《金融時報》《新政治家》等報章雜誌的撰稿人。

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书评

圣诞节的时候在铜锣湾的诚品发现这本书，只是摆放的位置在英语学习的那一大类。的确，这本书里面有各式英文词汇，如果你在准备托福、GRE的考试，我认为这本书再好不过了——给你讲英文词汇的起源与历史，远比红宝书什么的来的带劲。然而，这并不是一本单单在讲...

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