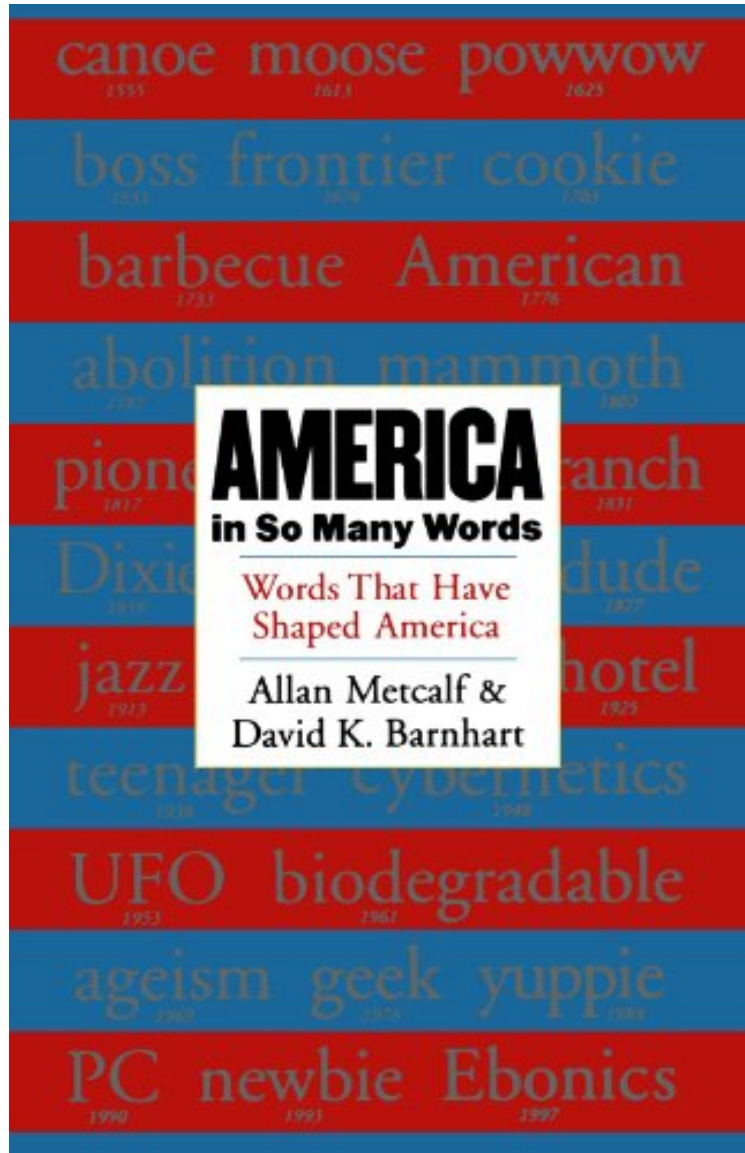


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America in So Many Words: Words That Have Shaped America

David K. Barnhart, Allan A. Metcalf
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David K. Barnhart, Allan A. Metcalf : America in So Many Words: Words That Have Shaped America before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised America in So Many Words: Words That Have Shaped America:

9 of 9 people found the following review helpful. An Interesting Perspective On US History By A Customer This book gives the historical background of over three hundred words that are in some way uniquely American-born. Boring, you say? Never! The entries are arranged chronologically and include some words that you might suspect

(underground railroad, motel) and quite a few that may surprise you (hello, bathtub, bug). Each entry provides a fascinating look at the people and times that led to the development of the word. An index lets you look up specific words. 4 of 11 people found the following review helpful. A sleep inducer...By Jerry Guild I found this book about as exciting as reading last week's weather report. I waded through it but finally gave up a little from the end. Language and the derivation of words and phrases is an interesting and colorful subject; but little was found in this book. There is much more to producing a good book than collecting up a bunch of stuff and sticking it between a couple of covers. Don't waste your "coin" (not covered by the way) as you'll forget what's in it as soon as you read it.

This book presents a unique historical view of American English. It chronicles year by year the contributions Americans have made to the vocabulary of English and the words Americans have embraced through the evolution of the nation. For important years from the settlement of Jamestown until 1750, and for every year from 1750 through 1998, a prominent word is analyzed and discussed in its historical context. The result is a fascinating survey of American linguistic culture through past centuries. The authors -- both lifelong students of American English -- bring great depth of understanding to these key words that have made America, and American English, what they are today.

.com Did you know that the word "juke" (as in "jukebox") comes from the West African language Wolof and means "to make mischief"? Or that the slang expression "bogus" reaches as far back as 1797, when it signified a counterfeit coin? Like the country from which it emerged, American English is a vital multicultural stew of sources and influences. Word by word and year by year, America in So Many Words traces the origins and historical context of America's distinctive additions to the English language, from "canoe" (1555) all the way to "Ebonics" (1997). "O.K.," for instance, appeared in 1838 as part of a Boston fad for abbreviations--in this case, the humorously misspelled "all correct." "Rock and roll," America's equally famous contribution to the world lexicon, was first popularized in 1951 by disc jockey Alan Freed--his way to sidestep a prohibition against playing African American music for white audiences. A fascinating reference you'll read from cover to cover, America in So Many Words beautifully illustrates the ways in which history and vocabulary converge. From Library Journal From skunk and canoe in the 16th century to virtual reality and soccer mom in the late 20th century, this year-by-year review highlights words that have had an indelible American origin or meaning. Barnhart and Metcalf, two longtime lexicographers, have selected one particularly significant word for each year and, through anecdotes and historical details, discuss its roots, development, and importance. In 1864, for example, a deadline was an actual line drawn in the dirt to restrict Civil War prisoners ("If you cross this line, you're dead"). The 1891 term country club is juxtaposed with sweatshop in 1892 and connected by the apt little poem: "The golf links lie so near the mill/ That almost every day/ The laboring children can look out/ And see the men at play." Teenager appeared in 1938, followed by DJs, rock'n'roll, and fast food in the 1950s. This entertaining cultural history is recommended for general collections. ?Ilse Heidmann, San Marcos, Tex. Copyright 1997 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Booklist This highly selective etymological dictionary of more than 300 of "the best and the brightest" American words was compiled by two longtime students of American English--Barnhart, a lexicographer, and Metcalf, a college professor of English. Arrangement is chronological. The words chosen--a representative one for selected years from 1555 (canoe) to 1748 (buck), and one for each year from 1750 to 1998--are discussed in historical context, sometimes updated with contemporary quotations and with additional words similar to or connected to the key word or phrase. For example, the entry sexism and ageism (1969) mentions other -isms, and Watergate (1972) mentions other -gate terms. Black-and-white illustrations accompany some entries. The introduction has a note on sources, which include titles such as The Dictionary of American Regional English, The Random House Historical Dictionary of American Slang, and the periodical Barnhart Dictionary Companion, as well as standard English-language dictionaries. The entries are organized into six chapters, from "The English in America: 1497^1750" to "Nearing the Millennium: 1945^1998." Words are assigned to the year in which they were "newly coined or newly prominent." Entries range in length from half a page to just over a whole page. Some examples of entries from the first chapter are turkey (1607), New England (1616), public school (1636), and ice cream (1744). The concluding chapter features rock and roll (1951), fast food (1954), soccer mom (1996), Ebonics (1997), and millennium bug (1998). An index by word brings together all keywords and words discussed in the text, and an index by date lists each year from 1555 and its keyword. Most of the words and phrases found here also appear in other dictionaries of American English, but this book puts a new spin on their definitions. It should appeal to both browsers and reference personnel in high-school, public, and academic libraries. It supplements more scholarly works, such as those listed in the source notes in the introduction.