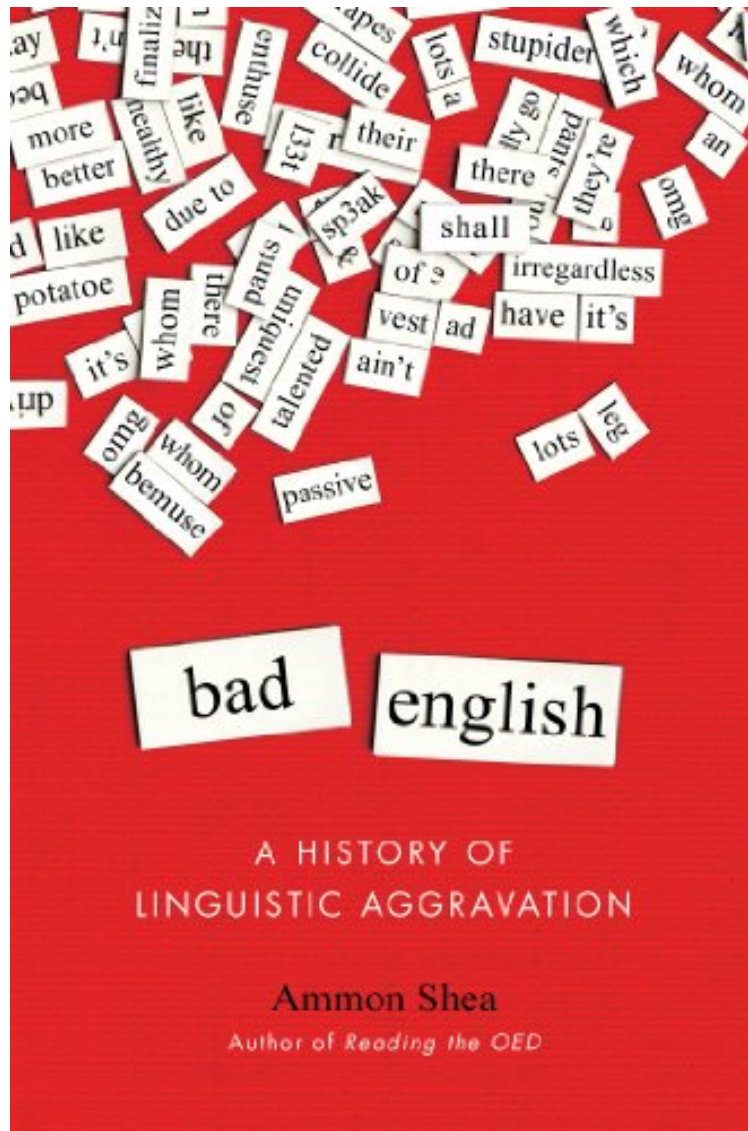


(Read now) Bad English: A History of Linguistic Aggravation

Bad English: A History of Linguistic Aggravation

Ammon Shea

**Download PDF | ePub | DOC | audiobook | ebooks*



DOWNLOAD



+

READ ONLINE

#760580 in Books 2014-06-03 2014-06-03Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 8.50 x .94 x 5.881, .85 #File Name: 0399165576272 pages | File size: 60.Mb

Ammon Shea : Bad English: A History of Linguistic Aggravation before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Bad English: A History of Linguistic Aggravation:

26 of 27 people found the following review helpful. A fun debunking of "proper" speechBy John E. MackThere are two schools of thought among lexicographers and grammarians -- prescriptivists and descriptivists. The prescriptivists think that their profession includes guidance on speaking and writing "proper" English. The descriptivists believe that their job is just to describe how English is actually used. Most lexicographers and grammarians are a little bit of both. Shea tilts very much toward the descriptivist end of the spectrum -- I can only think of one place where he finds a

usage to be improper. Along the way, he debunks prescriptivist claims about the improper or unhistorical nature of many words and word usages, such as "ain't," "compact," dangling prepositions, split infinitives, inappropriate apostrophes, etc. His researches into word history are learned and extraordinary, and effectively demolish claims that certain disfavored usages are new or unattested in good authors. Furthermore, the book is a fun read. He uses humor to demonstrate that staid and proper grammarians do not know what they are talking about. His central thesis seems to be that there is no one such thing as "good English." One could wish for a little more reflection from Shea, however. Like anything which evolves over time, language changes because more useful locutions drive out older, less useful ones. How does this happen, and why? Linguist evolution requires two things -- a certain degree of stability of usage, or people could not understand each other at all, and a certain degree of change, or language could not adapt to new conditions. It seems to me that Shea underplays the role of the former. Language serves many functions, but surely the most important of them is intelligibility. Change words and usage too fast and people cannot understand each other: indeed, one of the tactics used by "in groups" is to modify language in ways sufficiently radically that they cannot be understood by the general public. How much "incorrect" usage -- i.e. linguistic change -- can a language tolerate before it becomes another language? Why does language change? Is there an overall pattern to linguistic change, or are its changes purely arbitrary? Shea touches on such questions, but does so lightly and in passing. It would be beneficial if he would write another, more philosophical, book that address these deeper questions. Still, a very good book and an excellent introduction to issues confronting language and its usages.

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful.
 "Nothing is either good or bad but thinking makes it so" By John R Grater
 This is a book that should be read by all English teachers and anyone who likes language. The author gives many examples of "bad English" usage that were the whim of one or more language critics that were unaware of the history of the word. Some examples of "bad English" actually predate "good English". Despite the facts, some readers will remain uncomfortable with some usage, but he reminds us that a living language is constantly changing---otherwise we would still be speaking Old English. As Shakespeare wrote, "Nothing is either good or bad but thinking makes it so."
 5 of 5 people found the following review helpful.
 I really enjoyed Shea's explanations
 By ekaresky
 Fascinating book that is written in clear and precise terms that explain the origin, history, and development of a word and the idiosyncrasies of it's usage within a society. I really enjoyed Shea's explanations, critiques, and rationales for word usage. The introduction gives one a picture into the points and goals of the author. As a student of colloquial and modern language usage I am appreciative of Shea's scholarship and understanding of his subject. The book is a welcome addition to my library.

The author of *Reading the OED* presents an eye-opening look at language mistakes and how they came to be accepted as correct or not. English is a glorious mess of a language, cobbled together from a wide variety of sources and syntaxes, and changing over time with popular usage. Many of the words and usages we embrace as standard and correct today were at first considered slang, impolite, or just plain wrong. Whether you consider yourself a stickler, a nitpicker, or a rule-breaker in the know, *Bad English* is sure to enlighten, enrage, and perhaps even inspire. Filled with historic and contemporary examples, the book chronicles the long and entertaining history of language mistakes, and features some of our most common words and phrases, including: *Decimate*, *Hopefully*, *Enormity*, *That/which*, *Enervate/energize*, *Bemuse/amuse*, *Literally/figuratively*, *Aint*, *Irregardless*, *Socialist*, *OMG*, *Stupider*, *Lively*, surprising, funny, and delightfully readable, this is a book that will settle arguments among word lovers and its sure to start a few, too.

"Language is funny, and so is Ammon Shea. His excellent new book tours our irrational prejudices about language, showing that an appreciation for the quirks and ironies of language history can put our understanding on a firmer basis and restore our sense of humor." David Skinner, author of *The Story of Ain't*
 "On the playground of language, there is no more mischievous laddie than Ammon Shea. I plan to use his new book to split the lip of the next insufferable language prig who saunters into my office to accuse me of bad English." Roy Peter Clark, author of *The Glamour of Grammar* and *How to Write Short*
 In *Bad English*, Ammon Shea wastes no time challenging widely held beliefs about just what English is bad. His subtitle, *A History of Linguistic Aggravation*, gets in an opening jab at sticklers like me, who know that irritate means annoy while aggravate means make worse. Shea, having read the OED to write *Reading the OED*, is well qualified to tell us we probably don't know as much as we think we do.
 Washington Post
 Praise for *Reading the OED*: "Oddly inspiring...Shea has walked the wildwood of our gnarled, ancient speech and returned singing incomprehensible sounds in a language that turns out to be our own." Nicholson Baker, *New York Times Book*
 "Delicious...a lively lexicon." O, *The Oprah Magazine*
 "Readworthy." William Safire, *The New York Times Magazine*
 Shea, an avid collector of words, displays an assortment for our pleasure as he wends his way through the alphabet. The *Boston Globe*
 About the Author
 Ammon Shea is the author of *Reading the OED: One Man, One Year*, 21,730 Pages along with *Depraved English*, *Insulting English*, and *The Phone Book*. A dictionary collector, he has worked as a consulting editor of American dictionaries at Oxford University Press. He has also contributed to the "On Language" column in Sunday's *New York Times* and has reviewed language books for the *New York Times Book*.

He lives in Brooklyn, New York. From the Trade Paperback edition.