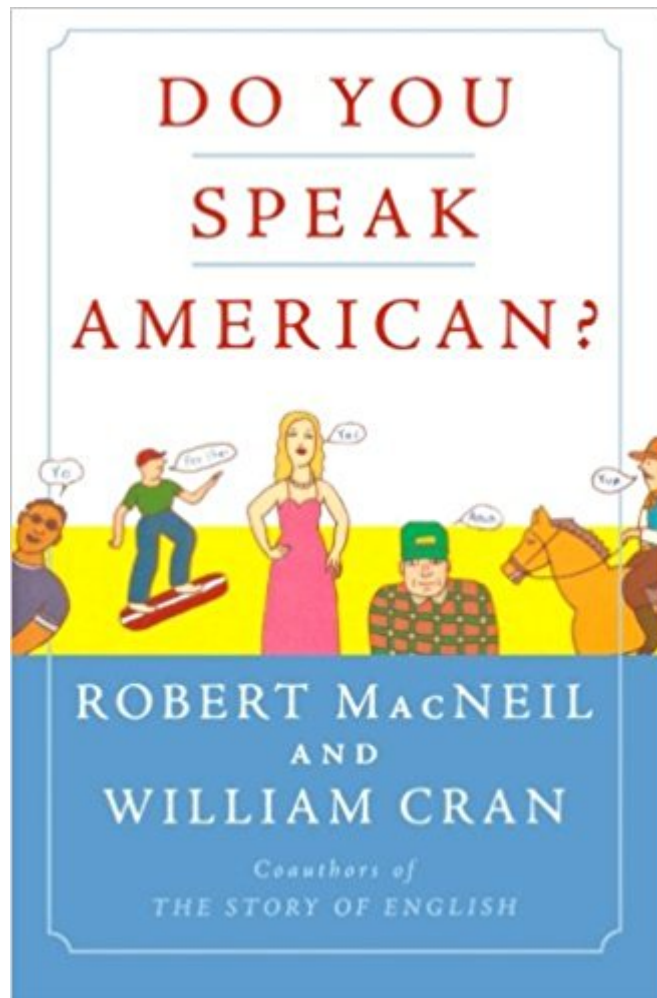




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# Do You Speak American?



## Synopsis

Is the growing influence of Spanish threatening to displace English in the United States? Are America's grammatical standards in serious decline? Has the media saturation of our culture homogenized our speech? These and other questions catapulted Robert MacNeil and William Cran, coauthors of the language classic *The Story of English*, on a journey that took them around the country in search of answers. *Do You Speak American?*, the companion volume to a PBS special, is the tale of the surprising discoveries they made while interviewing a host of native speakers and observing everyday verbal interactions across the country. Examining the histories and controversies surrounding both written and spoken American English, MacNeil and Cran address highly emotional anxieties and assumptions about our language-and offer some unpredictable responses. With insight and wit, MacNeil and Cran bring us a compelling follow-up to *The Story of English* that is at once a celebration and a potent study of our singular language.

## Book Information

Paperback: 240 pages

Publisher: Mariner Books; 1 edition (November 14, 2005)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0156032880

ISBN-13: 978-0156032889

Product Dimensions: 5.2 x 0.6 x 8 inches

Shipping Weight: 12 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.2 out of 5 stars 20 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #125,238 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #55 in Books > Reference >

Words, Language & Grammar > Phonetics & Phonics #144 in Books > Textbooks >

Communication & Journalism > Speech #219 in Books > Reference > Words, Language & Grammar > Speech

## Customer Reviews

The English language is not a thing but a process, not an archaic institution but an experiment that is constantly evolving and re-invigorating itself. According to language experts MacNeil and Cran, no one should understand this better than Americans who, steeped in a culture of diversity, are uniquely equipped to appreciate the exciting, colorful and democratic nature of language. Although not all Americans appreciate this vibrancy-many prominent linguists are found bemoaning the state of English, horrified that people still do not understand the difference between who and whom-the

evidence of an ever-changing language is indisputable, from the New York Times printing the word "sleazoid" in a column to the Oxford English Dictionary adding "blogger" to its latest edition. To better understand the diversity of American English, the authors embark on a fascinating journey across the United States, studying the conversations of Boston natives and rural Texans, inner-city blacks and valley-girl teenagers. The result is an exhilarating celebration of the ways that Americans express themselves and a testament to the indestructible power of language, whether one is using "correct" grammar or not. Traditional linguists might not approve of the way modern Americans are talking, but they will never be able to stop the English language from moving forward and, as this book successfully proves, there is nothing more American than that. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Adult/High School "Immigration, migration, class distinction, and mass media are among the tectonic forces shaping and reshaping the language we don't speak with anything approaching universality around North America. The authors take readers on an accessible, energetic, and insightful trip along the Eastern seaboard, down South, out to California, and to some cities in between in the company of several academic linguistics folks who offer explanations that readers don't necessarily see coming. Black English and the role of Spanish in contemporary America each get separate chapters. Americanisms like "beatnik," regionalisms like "pop," and localisms like "yinz" are admired as gems our constantly evolving language continues to press into being, and how American language is passed between generations "or fails to pass" is brought to light. Teens who already love language will take to this book with enthusiasm. Students who aren't in the habit of thinking critically about why we talk the way we do can be introduced to it through the pieces most relevant to them. And there's something relevant to everyone here, whether you talk with or without "r"s or sound just like the kids a thousand miles down the road." Francisca Goldsmith, Berkeley Public Library, CA Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

This help me write my essay for my linguistic class which i ace in

I read this book for a graduate class on sociolinguistics in the United States. It was more interesting than other linguistics books; I would say that it is a good read for a casual reader as well. It has some unique insights that do make you think about the way language and dialect is perceived in

America.

I wish there were more examples of regional dialects presented. The maps were helpful as were the references that were cited.

excellent

An overall good read, if a bit dated. The author can at times seem awfully "square" - particularly, when describing certainly slang - but makes up for it in earnest objectivity.

ok

Good book.

I am not a linguist, but I was raised by one. As a result of hearing different languages and different language dialects throughout my life, I have a love of listening to the various dialects of America (and other countries), which is why I picked up this book. I loved the way it was written, both with an educational tone and with a certain humor. Being the average, curious American had an advantage when reading through the pages, since the topics covered were widespread. They would have to be, since the book is meant to be a companion to the PBS show and is not very long. I would imagine that serious linguists who are looking for a very deep look into American dialects in general or for something on specific American dialects probably won't find new information here, while those wanting to casually dip into the subject will find themselves happily reading to the end. I will happily hold out this book to anyone who is curious about American English because I think that a better understanding of language and dialect help us better understand the cultures we aren't always exposed to and bring us to a deeper understanding of those around us. Maybe some day there will be a time when a well educated man won't have to lose his southern accent to be accepted as one of the top in his field. Until then, we can pass around the knowledge within these pages and help people understand the links between dialect and our automatic responses to language itself.

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