



# Words in Time and Place: Exploring Language Through the Historical Thesaurus of the Oxford English Dictionary

*David Crystal*

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## **Words in Time and Place: Exploring Language Through the Historical Thesaurus of the Oxford English Dictionary** David Crystal

Did you know that the English language has over 150 words for the adjective 'drunk' developed over 1,000 years? Be prepared to learn words you have never heard before, find out fascinating facts behind everyday words, and be surprised at how lively and varied the English language can be. Published to critical acclaim in 2009, the Historical Thesaurus of the Oxford English Dictionary is the first comprehensive thesaurus in the world to arrange words by meaning in order of first recorded use. Using its unique perspective on how the English language has developed, Words in Time and Place takes 15 themes and explores the language in these areas over time - explaining when new words appeared, where they came from, and what such changes say about times in which they emerged. The themes chosen are varied, universal topics and show the semantic range of the thesaurus and what it can tell us about the words used in areas of everyday life. Learn about the different words for dying and money, or types of pop music, as well as words for a privy, oaths, and words for being drunk. Written by the world's leading expert on the English language, David Crystal, the book carries his trademark style of engaging yet authoritative writing. Each chapter features an introduction to the language of that topic, followed by a timeline of vocabulary taken from the historical thesaurus showing all the synonyms arranged in chronological order. The timelines are annotated with additional quotations, facts, and social and historical context to give a clear sense of how words entered the English language, when, and in which context they were used. Words in Time and Place showcases the unique and excellent resource that is the Historical Thesaurus and reveals the linguistic treasures to be found within. This fascinating book will appeal to anyone with an interest in words and in the development of the English language.

## **Words in Time and Place: Exploring Language Through the Historical Thesaurus of the Oxford English Dictionary Details**

Date : Published October 1st 2014 by Oxford University Press, USA (first published September 9th 2014)

ISBN : 9780199680474

Author : David Crystal

Format : Hardcover 288 pages

Genre : Nonfiction, Humanities, Language, Linguistics, History, Reference

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## **From Reader Review Words in Time and Place: Exploring Language Through the Historical Thesaurus of the Oxford English Dictionary for online ebook**

### **JG says**

This is an amazing and very interesting book, though not to devour it as if it was a thriller, at least not for me.

The author has made an impressive job, researching and gathering the work of linguists, lexicographers and other language specialists who have been following the evolution of the English Language.

This is what the book is about, telling us how different words (and its meaning) have metamorphosed (Yes, I think this is the right word to describe the process) over the years and centuries using a variety of styles, slangs and metaphors. These witty euphemisms has been borrowed from different sources along the way, like new and popular books, speeches, folk culture, plays and so on.

The author lists several of these euphemisms for words like dead, darling, money, drunk, prostitute, etc. It is not the diversity of "synonyms" and expressions what makes this book interesting, but the detectivesque history behind each one.

I think this is the kind of book that one wants to relish slowly and return to it once in a while as reference and amusement. And why not to enjoy it with a good scrabble game?

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### **Sally Hannoush says**

This is great for authors who write Historical Fiction. The terminology is very useful for research. I also found it fun for my own personal entertainment. I get annoyed when I read books set in a different time period without proper use of vocabulary. The book explains the difference of words in different time periods and how the meaning changes or doesn't over time. I enjoyed seeing where words or phrases come from and how it compares. (I did not read every page because it is too long and -in my opinion- not meant to be read like a novel.)

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### **Ashley Steiner says**

I received this book for free from Netgalley in exchange for an honest review. This does not affect my opinion of the book or the content of my review.

To be honest, I thought this would be a much might lighter read. Instead of highlighting or explaining major language shifts across the eras, this goes into the nitty, gritty details. Which is great, but I didn't get as much out of this as someone who is a true linguist or perhaps a historical fiction writer would. Nevertheless, I did appreciate this just wasn't a historical thesaurus. Words in Time and Place not only provides a definition of a word (e.g. Old/Middle English) but also provides historical and social context. All in all, this should be a reference book on any historical or fantasy fiction writer's desk.

## **R.I. says**

A fascinating read. Anyone who is a lover of words will enjoy this work. As a writer, I found this book to be not only informative, but inspiring and beautiful, as well. If words and their origins interest you, this book will knock your socks off.

\*FTC Disclosure: I received an advanced copy of this book from the publisher in exchange for my honest review, and the opinions in this review are my own.

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## **Nikki says**

I'm surprised at other people actually reading this cover to cover in only a couple of sittings: for me it was much more the type of book that you dip in and out of. A curiosity, but not something deeply riveting. Trivia, I suppose. I did find Crystal's introduction to the whole book and to each chapter interesting, but the lists and lists of words are rather hard to just sit and read, for me -- it'd be like reading a dictionary or thesaurus for fun; it can be interesting to look up particular things, but I don't know anyone (as far as I'm aware!) who'll sit and read straight through.

For me, it was particularly interesting because it puts some Old/Middle English expressions in a better context than the simple translating dictionaries ever did, and makes some surprising links between the years and other languages. Though I think if he'd gone to Anglo-Saxon poetry, he'd have found some more fun ones for his section on death: I'm fond of 'sweordum answefed' (put to sleep by swords), which caused some consternation in class when we were trying to translate it.

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## **La La - Everyone's Crazy Aunt says**

As a logophile I could not put this book down. I opened up the Netgalley document intending to only casually peruse the contents and ended up reading the entire book in two sittings. Word synonyms (both words and phrases) were grouped together for easy reference, and the origin facts about the words and phrases were well researched. This book would be invaluable for writers and a joyful experience for all word lovers. I will be reviewing this book on my personal blog at a later date. I was approved for this eARC on Netgalley in return for an honest review.

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## **Lili says**

I received this book from Netgalley in exchange for a review.

Oh my goodness this book is deliciously dense! I love studying etymology, often I hear a word and find myself tracing its origin, reveling at how language has evolved over time. If that is your kind of thing then chances are you will find yourself buried in this gem as well. One thing I can say really surprised me was finding out how many words for drunk there are, I found myself giggling at some of the rather colorful descriptions. Definitely a book that will be right at home with my other thematically appropriate books.

## Jasmina says

*// Received from publisher*

It took me a while to get through this book - not because I didn't like it, but because it was heavy. It had some great aspect to it, but it felt like an encyclopaedia most of the time which was rather tiresome. It's definitely a really good reference book, but I feel like it's a bit much to sit down and *read* it. Nonetheless, I still really recommend this to everyone who wants to improve their language skills!

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## Biblio Files (takingadayoff) says

For me, the moment was in about 1970. A cowboy on a TV show that took place in the Wild West was saddling up to join in the chase for a desperado. As he jumped on his horse, the sheriff shouted for him to double back yonder and head the culprit off at the pass. "Right on!" the cowboy responded, riding off in a cloud of dust.

Even as a youngster, I knew that wasn't right. The Historical Thesaurus of the Oxford English Dictionary could have prevented such a glaring anachronism. In his new book, *Words in Time and Place*, linguist David Crystal has chosen fifteen entries from the newly released HTOED and shows how the words used to talk about money and death and being drunk and twelve other subjects have changed over the centuries.

While guiding us through the chronological entries, Crystal describes how linguists, etymologists, lexicographers, and taxonomists have turned a vast amount of detective work and research into an amazingly comprehensive record of how English has changed over its life. But this is only a record of written language and we don't really know how much that differed from spoken language. Also, many of the citations Crystal mentions from the Historical Thesaurus are single instances of the use of a word. It's hard to know whether a single written usage was a lucky capturing of a more commonly used spoken phrase, or just a writer making up a word for the occasion, as Lewis Carroll liked to do (e.g. *bandersnatch*, *snively*).

*Words in Time and Place* is a great browsing book, and every few pages, it seems there's an entry that sparks more questions about how language was used, how language changes, and how linguists record and analyze usage.

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