

Introducing NEW SPELLING 90.

Laurence Fennelly

A rational modern spelling for English using the existing letters.

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Publication History

New Spelling. 1st edition 1910, 6th edition 1948

New Spelling 90. A modern revision of the 1948 edition in non-technical language.

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The Need

Since the introduction of compulsory education 120 years ago, there have been constant reports by public authorities lamenting the low standard of reading attained by many schoolchildren. Recent similar reports are therefore no new thing. Social conditions and bad teaching methods are variously given as reasons for this state of affairs, but the primary reason is quite simple - English spelling is too difficult, too illogical.

Successful learning occurs most easily when a student can discern a principle or law underlying what he is learning. But English spelling has few usable laws, and a child has in effect to learn each word separately. So, when it comes to writing, even educated native English speakers will cheerily admit to an inability to spell. Such admissions would be unheard of in other countries.

To remedy this, the Simplified Spelling Society set out at the beginning of this century to produce a spelling system which was consistent and logical, and valid for all dialects and pronunciations.

History

Proposals for spelling reform date back to Shakespeare's time but they were mostly made by individuals. In 1908 the Simplified Spelling Society was formed by leading academics of the day, including Walter Skeat, author of the famous Anglo-Saxon Dictionary. Throughout the years the membership has continued to include many distinguished scholars.

The Society's proposals were circulated privately until 1940, when a complete, fully-researched version was published as the 5th edition of *New Spelling*. It is noteworthy for having what was, at that time, the only complete statistical analysis of English spelling. The 6th edition, with minor revisions, appeared in 1948.

In 1991 a new booklet, *New Spelling 90*, appeared. It is a revision of the 1948 edition, making a small number of important changes in substance, but its text is entirely new and has been written in non-technical language. It is designed for widespread distribution, and no specialist knowledge of linguistics is needed to appreciate its message.

New Spelling 90 is intended to start a national debate on spelling reform, not to be the last word on the subject. Therefore comments and suggestions are welcomed from all readers.

New Spelling 90

A brief guide

a	fat, father	b	bib
ae	maed	c	see <i>k, s</i>
e	set	ch	cherch
ee	feet	d	dog
i	fit, piti	f	fat, foto
y	by, byt	g	got
o	lot	h	hat
oe	hoe, roep	j	job, aej, brij
u	but, muther	k	kik
ue	nue	l	lip
oo	good, moon	m	man
au	lau, taut	n	nod
ou	out, hous	ng	singer, finger
oi	oil, boi	p	pot
er	merjer, tern	qu	kwik
or	stori	r	run
		s	see, faes
obscure vowel		sh	shiver, naeshun
- see book		t	top
		th	thin, then
		v	vat
Word Signs		w	wil, kwaent
the		wh	wich <i>or</i> which
be		x	fiks
he, she, me, we		y	yung, yoo
so		z	zip, vizit
to		zh	vizhen
-ful (suffix)			
re- (prefix)			

Example

A passage of English in New Spelling 90 may look strange and off-putting to the new reader but, with increasing familiarity, it will be noticed that surprisingly little practice is actually needed to be able to read it satisfactorily.

Below you will find a passage in New Spelling 90. It is not an easy one. It is an excerpt from H G Wells' *The Star*, first published in New Spelling in 1942. Wells was a member of the Society and pleased to give his permission for this version.

We hope you will find it interesting, though not prophetic!

The Star

bie H G Wells

It woz on the ferst dae ov the nue yeer that the anounsment woz maed, aulmoest simultaeneusli from three obzervatoris, that the moeshen ov the planet Neptune, the outermoest ov aul the planets that w(h)eel about the sun, had bekum veri eratik. A retardaeshen in its velositi had been suspected in Desember. Then a faent, remoet spek ov lyt woz diskuverd in the reejen ov the perterbd planet. At ferst this did not kauz eni veri graet eksytment. Syentifik peepl, houeever, found the intelijens remarkabl enuf, eeven befor it bekaem noen that the nue bodi woz rapidli groeing larjer and bryter, and that its moeshen woz kwyt diferent from the orderli proegres ov the planets.

On the therd dae ov the nue yeer the nuesaepaper reeders ov too hemisfeers wer maed awaer for the ferst tym ov the reel importens ov this unuezhueal aparishen in the hevens. "A Planetari Kolizhen" wun London paeper heded the nues, and proklaemd that this straenj planet wood probabli kolyd with Neptune. The leeder-ryters enlarjd upon the topik. So that in moest ov the kapitals ov the werld, on Janueari 3rd, thaer woz an ekspektaeshen, houeever vaeg, ov sum iminent fenomenen in the sky; and az the nyt foloed the sunset round the gloeb, thouzends ov men ternd thaer ys skywerd to see - the oeld familier stars just az thae had aulwaez been.

Until it woz daun in London and the stars oeverhed had groen pael. The winter's daun it woz, a sikli, filtering akuemuclaeshen ov daelyt, and the lyt ov gas and kandls shon yeloe in the windoes to shoe w(h)aer peepl wer astur. But the yauning poleesman sau the thing, the bizi krouds in the markets stopt agaep, werkmnen goeing to thaer werk betymz, milkmen, Disipaeshen goeing hoem jaeded and pael, hoemles wanderers, and, in the kuntri, laeberers trujing afeeld, poechers slinking hoem, and oever the duski kwikening kuntri it kood be seen - and out at see by seemen woching for the dae - a graet w(h)yt star, kum sudenli into the westwerd sky!

Bryter it woz than eni star in our skys; bryter than the eevning star at its brytest. It still gloed out w(h)yt and larj, noe meer twinkling spot of lyt but a smaul, round, kleeer shyning disk, an our after the dae had kum. And w(h)aer syens haz not reecht, men staerd and feerd, teling wun anuther ov the wors and pestilenses that ar forshadoed by theez fyri syns in the hevens.

And in a hundred obzervatoris thaer had been suprest eksytment, ryzing aulmoest to shouting pich, az the too remoet bodis had rusht together, and a huring too and froe, to gather foetoeografik aparaetus and spektroskoop, and this aplyens and that, to rekord this novel, astonishing syt, the destrukshen ov a werld.