



## Words Words Words

By David Crystal

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### Words Words Words By David Crystal

"Lexicography is not just an exercise in linguistic accounting," writes preeminent English language scholar David Crystal in this exceptionally lively and erudite little book. "It is a voyage of lexical exploration and discovery."

In *Words, Words, Words*, Crystal takes readers on a fascinating linguistic adventure, exploring the English language in all its oddity, complexity, and ever-changing beauty. Traveling from word origins and word evolution to wordgangs, wordrisks, wordplay, wordgames and beyond, Crystal shares his immense knowledge of, and equally immense delight in, language. He celebrates new words, old words, words that "snarl" and words that "purr," elegant words and taboo words, plain English words and convoluted gobbledegook, eponyms and antonyms, spoonerisms and malapropisms, and a host of other written and spoken forms and variations.

*Words, Words, Words* offers invaluable insight on such subjects as

- how to estimate the size of your vocabulary
- the functions of jargon
- when clichés are necessary
- the value of slang words ("the chief use of slang/is to show you're one of the gang")
- how to create your own "semantic field"
- dialect humor
- how to become a word detective
- how to keep a record of your child's words
- and much more!

With illuminating sidebars featuring everything from common word origins and sample definitions from the dictionaries of Samuel Johnson and Ambrose Bierce to a passage from Finnegans Wake and the winning entries of The Guardian Text Message Poetry Competition, *Words, Words, Words* will both satisfy and spark the curiosity of anyone who has ever been intrigued, befuddled, or awed by words and myriad ways we use them.

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## Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

The latest contribution from prolific linguist Crystal (*The Stories of English*) offers a cornucopia of interesting takes on "the universe of words." Crystal briefly visits many aspects of language: baby names, place names, how languages change, how to estimate the size of your vocabulary and the interaction between languages. He also touches on the history of words and how language changes with interesting, straightforward explanations that belie the author's enormous knowledge of lexicology, but represent well his intense, personal love for it: "Everyone has their own linguistic story to tell ... this book is part of my story, a cross-section of my lexical autobiography." Witty literary references are sprinkled throughout the book, along with some surprisingly vulgar sections; even the table of contents and the index are fascinating linguistic exercises. Conversational but easy to reference, this text will be useful to any semi-serious practitioner of the English language.

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From [Booklist](#)

In 33 chapters, prolific professor Crystal celebrates words, covering their form, meaning, and evolution. Arguing that we are all, in fact, wordsmiths, Crystal makes his point by noting that their own vocabularies are far larger than most people realize. Although most people would guess that they use from 5,000 to 20,000 words, it is unusual to find anyone with an active vocabulary of less than 35,000 words, according to Crystal. He goes on to describe how we learn new words, the creation of dictionaries, the origins of words, and the borrowings from foreign languages (more than 350) that form part of the modern English vocabulary. Other chapters cover spelling, pronunciation, dialect, slang, and word games and wordplay. A final section, "Becoming a Word Detective," is a collection of online and print sources on etymology, among other topics. Crystal covers a lot of ground in short, well-paced chapters that never fail to offer something for word lovers--a 2004 survey, for example, found that *mother* topped the list of the most beautiful words in the English language. *Joanne Wilkinson*

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Review

"A hugely enjoyable book. Crystal's genuine enthusiasm for both the everyday phenomena of language and its curiosities and his evident urge to communicate that enthusiasm come through on every page."

Times Higher Education Supplement

## Users Review

**From reader reviews:**

**Debbie Brown:**

Have you spare time to get a day? What do you do when you have more or little spare time? Yeah, you can choose the suitable activity to get spend your time. Any person spent their very own spare time to take a stroll, shopping, or went to the particular Mall. How about open or maybe read a book eligible Words Words Words? Maybe it is to become best activity for you. You understand beside you can spend your time along with your favorite's book, you can wiser than before. Do you agree with it has the opinion or you have different opinion?

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