



Spellbound: The Surprising Origins and Astonishing Secrets of English Spelling

James Essinger

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Welcome to the illogical, idiosyncratic, outrageous linguistic phenomenon known as the English language. The story of how this ragtag collection of words evolved is a winding tale replete with intriguing accidents and bizarre twists of fate. In this eye-opening, fabulously entertaining book, James Essinger unlocks the mysteries that have confounded linguists and scholars for millennia.

From the sophisticated writing systems of the ancient Sumerians through the tongue twisters of Middle English, the popular National Spelling Bee, and the mobile phone text-messaging of today, **Spellbound** chronicles the fascinating history of English spelling, including insights about the vast number of words English has borrowed from other languages (“orange,” “vanilla,” and “ketchup,” to name a few), and how their meanings differ from country to country. Featuring a lively cast of characters ranging from the fictional to the historically noteworthy (Chaucer, Samuel Johnson, Noah Webster, Shakespeare, Bill Gates), this affectionate tribute to English spelling shows why our whimsical, capricious common language continues to hold us spellbound.

From the Trade Paperback edition.

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