



# Origins of the Specious : Myths and Misconceptions of the English Language

Patricia T O`Conner, Stewart Kellerman



Do you cringe when a talking head pronounces niche as NITCH? Do you get bent out of shape when your teenager begins a sentence with and, or says octopuses instead of octopi? Do you think British spellings are more civilised than the American versions? Would you bet the bank that jeep got its start as a military term and SOS as an acronym for Save Our Ship? If you answered yes to any of those questions, you're myth-informed. Go stand in the corner-and read this book! In *Origins of the Specious*, word mavens Patricia T. OConner and Stewart Kellerman explode the misconceptions that have led generations of language lovers astray. They reveal why some of grammars best-known rules aren't-and never were-rules at all. They explain how Brits and Yanks wound up speaking the same language so differently, and why British English isn't necessarily purer. This playfully witty yet rigorously researched book sets the record straight about bogus word origins, politically correct fictions, phony francais, fake acronyms, and more. English is an endlessly entertaining, ever-changing language, and yesterdays blooper could be tomorrows bon mot-or vice versa! Here are some shockers: They was once commonly used for both singular and plural, much the way you is today. And an eighteenth-century female grammarian, of all people, is largely responsible for the all-purpose he. The authors take us wherever myths lurk, from the Queens English to street slang, from Miss Grundys admonitions to four-letter unmentionables. This eye-opening romp will be the toast of grammarphiles and the salvation of grammarphobes. Take our word for it.

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