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The Cambridge Guide to English Usage By Pam Peters Bibliography

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Editorial Review

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The wry observation attributed to George Bernard Shaw that "England and America are two countries divided by a common language" finds support in *The Cambridge Guide to English Usage*. Author Peters, of Macquarie University in Australia, provides evidence that their common language also divides Canada and Australia from the other countries.

Within the A-Z arrangement of brief, to-the-point articles, entries on *catalogue* and *catalog*, *dived* and *dove*, *fitted* and *fit*, *freshman* and *fresher*, *titbit* and *tidbit* celebrate transatlantic differences, some rather subtle, others more pointed. Peters draws on a range of authorities for her judgments on usage. Those include large databases, such as the 140-million-word Cambridge International Corpus of American English, and other usage guides from throughout the English-speaking world. In line with the most recent of these other handbooks, as well as the irrefutable evidence of present usage, Peters takes a descriptive rather than prescriptive approach. Her analytical discussions of parts of speech, grammatical concepts and constructs, and the like explain the origins of rules but also provide contemporary and historical examples of how usage tempers some rules.

Like other manuals that explain the difference between a monologue and a soliloquy, the lack of meaningful difference between further and farther, the confused state between inquire and enquire, the divergence of salutary and salutatory from their common root, and recent introductions such as emoticons, Cambridge provides sound advice for those who want to understand the English language and use it effectively. More than other manuals, it describes the way in which some usages have a local habitation rather than global recognition.

Considering the abundance of peculiarities and challenges in English usage, *Cambridge* will strengthen even a library well stocked with other guides. It is a serious book for those serious about language. Those who also enjoy the playfulness of English will continue to appreciate the complementary *Penguin Dictionary of American English Usage and Style* (Penguin, 2000) and its sometimes witty examples. REVWR
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Review

"This should be on every library's reference desk. This is a most invaluable work, indeed."
GEOLINGUISTICS Vol. 30, Leonard R. N. Ashley

About the Author

Pam Peters is the Director of Macquarie University's Dictionary Research Centre. Her publications include *The Cambridge Australian English Style Guide*.

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