



# Spelling Dearest: The Down and Dirty, Nitty-Gritty History of English Spelling

*Niall McLeod Waldman*

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Most people with any interest in the English language know that it has the worst alphabetic spelling system in the world. What they don't know in any great detail, however, is how this sorry situation came about. They don't know, for instance, that a 17th-century English schoolmaster named Edmund Coote had a major role. And they might be surprised at the parts played by greed, intentional complexity, and downright blunders. With this in mind, Niall McLeod Waldman has written *Spelling Dearest*. This book chronicles, in an irreverent and satirical way, the major happenings and minor annoyances that together form the history of English spelling. Starting with the Anglo-Saxon invasion of England in the fifth century, the book threads its way through such noted historical events as the Renaissance, the Great Vowel Shift, and the birth of the American dictionary. It shows the links spelling has with great individuals such as Noah Webster and Ben Franklin. And not-so-great individuals such as Angus McLaughlin, who once said about English spelling, "If it were any better, it would be rotten." Scattered throughout the book are illustrative charts, transcripts of famous documents, and comical caricatures of the key people involved in this intriguing history. *Spelling Dearest* is informative, insightful, outrageously contemptuous, and witty. It was written to appeal to anyone who enjoys the challenge of, or has been frustrated by, English spelling - which covers just about everyone who can read or write! A must-read for English language, history, or humor buffs.

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