

English is Tough Stuff

What with many of our readers being from a not quite RP English upbringing [linguistically speaking] I couldn't resist including this little contribution from one of our readers.

Multi-national personnel at North Atlantic Treaty Organisation headquarters near Paris found English to be an easy language... until they tried to pronounce it. To help them deal with an array of accents, the verses below were devised. After trying them, a Frenchman said he'd prefer six months hard labour than reading six lines aloud. Try them yourself [Author Unknown].

Dearest creature in creation,
Study English pronunciation.
I will teach you in my verse
Sounds like corpse, corps, horse, and worse.

Billet does not rhyme with ballet,
Bouquet, wallet, mallet, chalet.
Blood and flood are not like food,
Nor is mould like should and would.

I will keep you, Suzy, busy,
Make your head with heat grow dizzy.
Tear in eye, your dress will tear.
So shall I! Oh hear my prayer.

Viscous, viscount, load and broad,
Toward, to forward, to reward.
And your pronunciation's OK
When you correctly say croquet,

Just compare heart, beard, and heard,
Dies and diet, lord and word,
Sword and sward, retain and Britain.
(Mind the latter, how it's written.)

Rounded, wounded, grieve and sieve,
Friend and fiend, alive and live.
Ivy, privy, famous; clamour
And enamour rhyme with hammer.

Now I surely will not plague you
With such words as plague and ague.
But be careful how you speak:
Say break and steak, but bleak and streak;

River, rival, tomb, bomb, comb,
Doll and roll and some and home.
Stranger does not rhyme with anger,
Neither does devour with clangour.

Cloven, oven, how and low,
Script, receipt, show, poem, and toe.
Hear me say, devoid of trickery,
Daughter, laughter, and Terpsichore,

Souls but foul, haunt but aunt,
Font, front, wont, want, grand, and grant,
Shoes, goes, does. Now first say finger,
And then singer, ginger, linger,

Typhoid, measles, topsails, aisles,
Exiles, similes, and reviles;
Scholar, vicar, and cigar,
Solar, mica, war and far;

Real, zeal, mauve, gauze, gouge and gauge,
Marriage, foliage, mirage, and age.
Query does not rhyme with very,
Nor does fury sound like bury.

One, anemone, Balmoral,
Kitchen, lichen, laundry, laurel;
Gertrude, German, wind and mind,
Scene, Melpomene, mankind.

Dost, lost, post and doth, cloth, loth.
Job, nob, bosom, transom, oath.
Though the differences seem little,
We say actual but victual.

Refer does not rhyme with deafer.
Foeffler does, and zephyr, heifer.
Mint, pint, senate and sedate;
Dull, bull, and George ate late.

Scenic, Arabic, Pacific,
Science, conscience, scientific.
Liberty, library, heave and heaven,
Rachel, ache, moustache, eleven.

We say hallowed, but allowed,
People, leopard, towed, but vowed.
Mark the differences, moreover,
Between mover, cover, clover;

Leeches, breeches, wise, precise,
Chalice, but police and lice;
Camel, constable, unstable,
Principle, disciple, label.

Petal, panel, and canal,
Wait, surprise, plait, promise, pal.
Worm and storm, chaise, chaos, chair,
Senator, spectator, mayor.

Tour, but our and succour, four.
Gas, alas, and Arkansas.
Sea, idea, Korea, area,
Psalm, Maria, but malaria.

Youth, south, southern, cleanse and clean.
Doctrine, turpentine, marine.
Compare alien with Italian,
Dandelion and battalion.

Sally with ally, yea, ye,
Eye, I, ay, aye, whey, and key.
Say aver, but ever, fever,
Neither, leisure, skein, deceiver.

Heron, granary, canary.
Crevice and device and aerie.
Face, but preface, not efface.
Phlegm, phlegmatic, ass, glass, bass.

Large, but target, gin, give, verging,
Ought, out, joust and scour, scouring.
Ear, but earn and wear and tear
Do not rhyme with here but ere.

Seven is right, but so is even,
Hyphen, roughen, nephew Stephen,
Monkey, donkey, Turk and jerk,
Ask, grasp, wasp, and cork and work.

Pronunciation -- think of Psyche!
Is a paling stout and spikey?
Won't it make you lose your wits,
Writing groats and saying grits?

It's a dark abyss or tunnel:
Strewn with stones, stowed, solace, gunwale,
Islington and Isle of Wight,
Housewife, verdict and indict.

Finally, which rhymes with enough --
Though, through, plough, or dough, or cough?
Hiccough has the sound of cup.
My advice is to give up!!!

Well that certainly makes you think doesn't it! [maybe].....