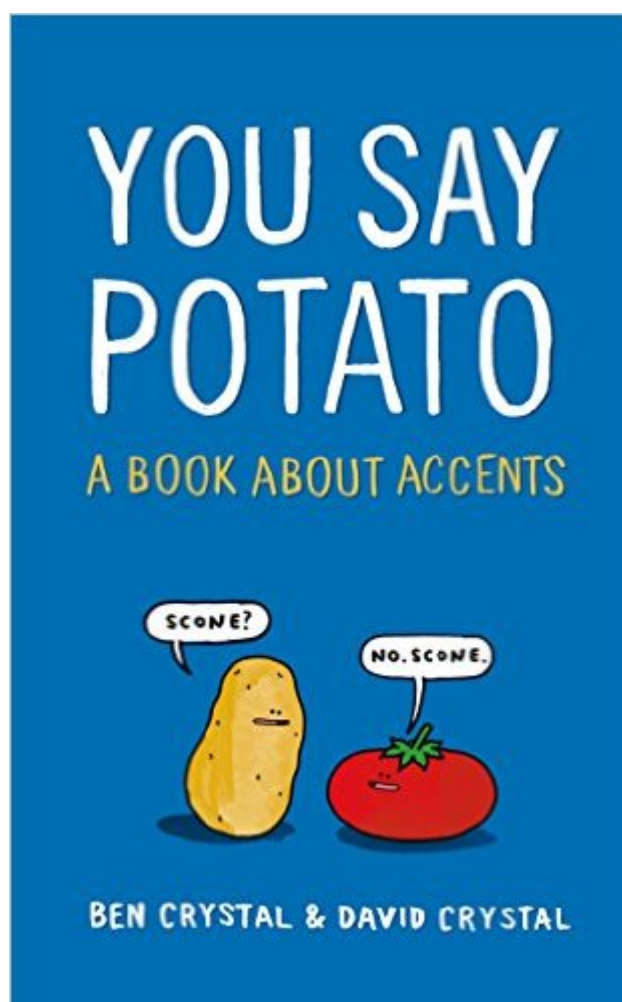


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You Say Potato



Synopsis

Some people say sconn, while others say schown. He says bath, while she says bahth. You say potayto. I say potahto Andâ "wait a second, no one says potahto. No one's ever said potahto. Have they? From reconstructing Shakespeare's accent to the rise and fall of Received Pronunciation, actor Ben Crystal and his linguist father David travel the world in search of the stories of spoken English. Everyone has an accent, though many of us think we don't. We all have our likes and dislikes about the way other people speak, and everyone has something to say about "correct" pronunciation. But how did all these accents come about, and why do people feel so strongly about them? Are regional accents dying out as English becomes a global language? And most importantly of all: what went wrong in Birmingham? Witty, authoritative, and jam-packed full of fascinating facts, *You Say Potato* is a celebration of the myriad ways in which the English language is spokenâ "and how our accents, in so many ways, speak louder than words.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

My undergraduate major was linguistics and, at 80, I still buy books in the field and read them eagerly. I enjoy doing accents, and grew up with a mother who was a Little Theater actress/director and taught several to me so we could have fun washing the after-supper dishes while conversing like stage Frenchwomen, Swedes, American Southern belles, etc. Among my linguistics book collection accents are generally ignored, so I thought the book might help plug the gap. Alas, it did not. Whenever Dr David Crystal contributed academic ideas to this book it became interesting--or at least MORE interesting than the narcissism of his actor son, Ben, who turned most of the book into a tedious, unamusing, autobiographical advertisement for himself as ACTOR, for TV programs I've

never watched, and more than a chapter on the nuances of the Birmingham way of talking--at least on the telly. There are a few errors and the 2 indexes were worthless. Instead of a useful index of accent regions (Yorkshire, London East End, Glasgow, Birmingham, etc.) actor Ben put in alpha lists of actors and TV shows/films. Thank goodness the print is large and the number of pages short. I can't bear throwing out a book, so I brought it to my church's book sale shelf. Perhaps someone else will like it better.

This is a delightfully written book, and it arrived here in California with amazing speed. I finished reading all of it in just one evening; I couldn't put it down. Especially interesting was the map displaying the names of the numerous regional accents in the U.K. -- a great eye-opener to an American such as me, who must travel 1,000 miles to encounter a noticeably different accent.

Another great Crystal-clear book. It is written in the form of a dialogue as you read a chapter by David Crystal followed by a chapter by Ben Crystal. This delightfully creative form of the book gives the impression of a live talk, and if you have encountered the authors before - you will almost "hear the accents". Ben Crystal's tongue-in-cheek footnotes add a similarly creative dimension to the book as a reproduction of a live talk as does his beautiful narrative. As usual, you will find David Crystal's writing insightful, detailed and at the same time reader-friendly. The different perspectives that come from the background of the authors as a linguist and an actor make the book a really successful collaboration. Volumes can be written about the fascinating variety of English accents (or any accent, for that matter). In this lovely little book you learn why the Birmingham accent has been getting a bad press, how to "sound blue" (!), how to resurrect an accent (or, sound like Shakespeare!) and much more. And as the title says, you say potato and add your accent to the record-breaking collection of "potatoes" on the innovative accent map along the likes of Stephen Fry and Jeremy Paxman <http://www.panmacmillan.com/book/bencrystal/yousaypotato>. I highly recommend the book to all accent hunters and lovers.

This is an entertaining book if you like discourse analysis and studyin (Mainly English) dialectical differences. There were parts where I was laughing at the two authors (a father and son team) and then going, "I didn't know that!" It will certainly stay in MY library and WILL get re-read.

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