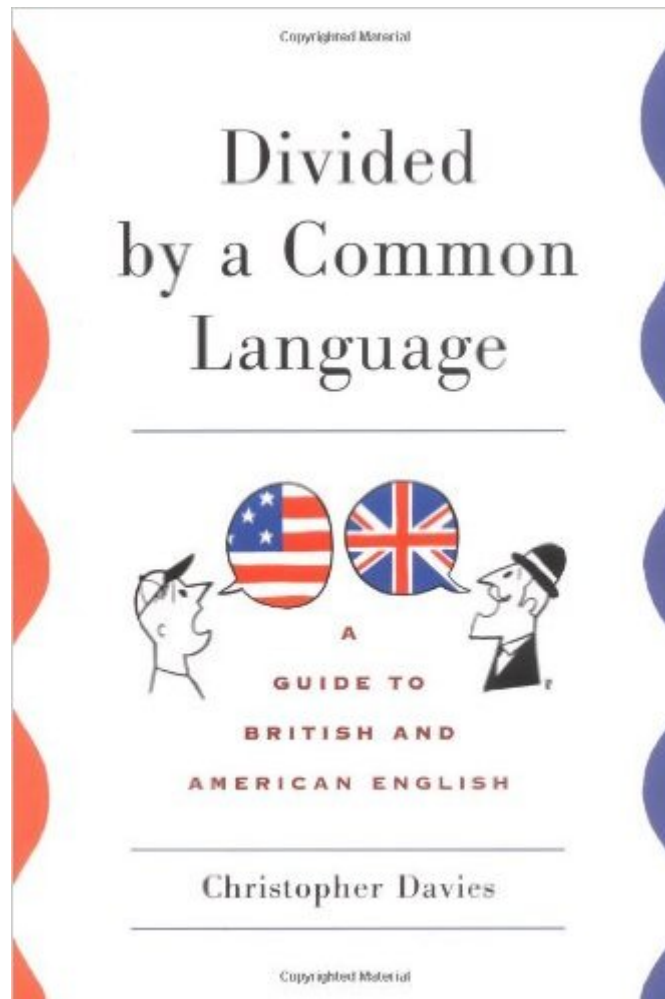


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# Divided By A Common Language: A Guide To British And American English



## Synopsis

Puzzled by signs warning you to mind the gap in the London Underground? Wondering what will be on your plate if you order toad in the hole from the menu of a London café? In *Divided by a Common Language*, Christopher Davies explains these expressions and discusses the many differences in pronunciation, spelling, and vocabulary between British and American English. He compares the customs, manners, and practical details of daily life in the United Kingdom and the United States, and American readers will enjoy his account of American culture as seen through an Englishman's eyes. Davies tops it off with an amusing list of expressions that sound innocent enough in one country but make quite the opposite impression in the other. Two comprehensive glossaries help travelers translate from one variety of English to the other, and additional lists explain the distinctive words of Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa. *Divided by a Common Language* is the ideal travel companion for British visitors to the United States and American visitors to the United Kingdom. It is also the perfect book for Britons interested in American culture and Americans enjoying British novels, movies, and television at home.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Any American who wants to get past what you can learn about British words and phrases in a dictionary will benefit from this book. *Divided by a Common Language* helped me overcome long-term misunderstandings about what I had been reading in English books. Some British words have an ordinary meaning in American English that is quite different from their British meaning. For

example, the British "marrow" is a "large zucchini." For decades, I have been expecting to find beef marrow on my plate in England because of that misreading. I also thought that the British "paraffin" meant a petroleum-based wax as it does in the U.S., whereas it means "kerosene" in the U.K. In reading about someone going for paraffin in novels, I have been wondering what on earth they were going to make with all that wax. If you read this book, you will probably find your own examples of where you thought you knew what was going on . . . but really didn't. I suggest that you start with the British/American Lexicon to learn the most words with the least effort. The book also has a useful section on British and American phrases, that should help you avoid inadvertently saying what will be perceived as vulgarities across the pond. For example, refer to "retrieving and returning baseballs" rather than "shagging flies" (make your own guess as to what that means, but it isn't nice). In the vein of the potential for humorous miscommunications, there are a number of cartoons that show what John Bull and Uncle Sam are thinking about when the same word or phrase is said. "My wife loves pot plants, Sam" conjures up John Bull thinking about potted flowers while Uncle Sam imagines a garden full of marijuana plants. I found four weaknesses in the book that you should be aware of.

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