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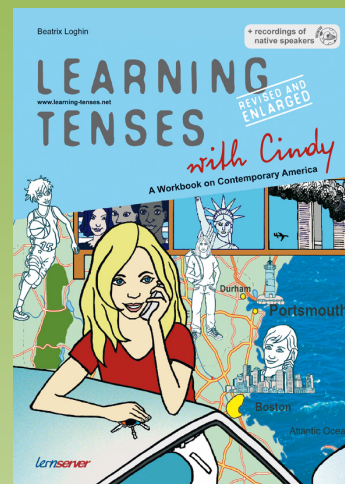
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Learning Tenses with Cindy - Revised and Enlarged

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LEARNING TENSES WITH CINDY

by Beatrix Loghin
Oberstufenkolleg Bielefeld
4th Edition

Dedicated to Hartmut von Hentig:

Die Menschen stärken,
die Sachen klären

IMPRESSUM

„Learning Tenses with Cindy“, REVISED AND ENLARGED

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A Brief Introduction to American English

by Dr. Peter Bischoff, M.A. (Brandeis), AOR a.D.

1

History

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Learning Tenses with Cindy is a soap opera firmly rooted in a contemporary American context. Its scenes are set in a New England city on the Atlantic Ocean: Portsmouth, New Hampshire. The English you read and hear is sometimes slightly different from British English that you are being taught in school. In order to help you better understand some specifics of written and spoken American English and their differences from British English, we are offering you a brief introduction to American English. This introduction is meant for both teachers and students to acquaint themselves with the most widely used variety of English as it is spoken and written all over the world. While reading an American text may be not any too difficult for you, understanding American English as when heard in personal contact, in a movie, song or other media, might well be, though. Since listening comprehension plays such an important part in social communication, *Cindy* is also available in a spoken version. The annotations for the written text are confined to items relating to the English language in the United States and American culture.

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American English is one of many varieties of English such as Australian English, Indian English, and African English. Ever since the second half of the 20th century, American English has attained a dominant status among all other varieties of English.

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American English pronunciation is by far more homogeneous than that of British English, which, aside from the officially accepted standard of BBC, Oxford or the Queen's English, has as many pronunciation variants and dialects as there are shires in the country or, as the famous essayist Bill Bryson writes, "as there are hills and valleys." Due to its general uniformity, American English can be roughly divided into three different speech variants: New England, southern, and General American English, sometimes called Network English. We can safely dispense here with a detailed presentation of the southern and New England variants of American speech, not least because the speakers on the *Cindy* audio recordings (see learning-tenses.net/audio) all display a General American accent rather than a characteristic New England speech; which is quite in line with the disappearance of regional speechways caused by the growing influence of Network American English. Hence we concentrate on General American English, which differs considerably from British English in respect of pronunciation, vocabulary, spelling, and morphology.

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The Colonial Lag

American English started out as a colonial language. Like other colonial languages (e.g. French in Canada, Dutch in South Africa, and German in some small pockets in Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Texas), English in America has preserved older speechways from the time of first colonization. Hence the conservative quality of American English.

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When the first English settlers came to America in the 17th century, they brought with them the language spoken in the shire or county from which they came. The small regional differences in pronunciation notwithstanding, theirs was an earlier form of English called Early Modern English or Elizabethan English such as it was used by the poets and writers of the time (e.g. William Shakespeare and John Milton) as well as in such influential religious texts as *The Book of Common Prayer* (1549) and the *Authorized or King James Version of the Bible* (1611).

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1 The English language was exported to America in 1607 by the first English colonists in Virginia and in 1621 by
the Puritan refugees who arrived in Massachusetts on the *Mayflower*. What would in 1653 become Portsmouth
in New Hampshire was settled as early as 1630 as *Mason House*. In 1642, the New Hampshire settlements
joined the Massachusetts Bay Company until their separation from it in 1679. If you look at a map of New
5 Hampshire, you will find many cities and towns that were named after places in England: Durham, Hampton,
Exeter, Dover, Manchester, etc.

The English language in America began to take a different course of development from that of the mother
country. Over the next three hundred years, the difference between British and American English became ever
more noticeable. Small wonder, then, that G.B. Shaw has been credited with the witty remark: "America and
10 England are two countries divided by a common language."

American English has its origins in Elizabethan or Early Modern English that the first 17th-century settlers
spoke and wrote. Like other European languages used overseas, American English has retained a "colonial
lag," a tendency to preserve features that the mother country lost from the 18th century onward. Traces of
15 such a "colonial lag" can be found in pronunciation, vocabulary, spelling, and morphology, that is the internal
structure and form of words.

The most striking feature of American English is the letter *r*, which is pronounced in all environments: *dormitory*,
doctor, *semester*. Also, American English has retained the flat vowel *a* /æ/ in words like *ask*, *grass*, *class*,
20 and *dance*. Likewise, the written letter *o*, pronounced as a short vowel in stressed syllables and monosyllabic
words, has retained its Elizabethan pronunciation as /a/, as in *college*, *poverty*, *hobby*, *dollar*, *novel*, *mom*,
job, *hot*, *got*, *adopt*. Elizabethan words like *fall* and *guess* are still alive in American English, where British
English has replaced them by *autumn* and *think*. The same goes for the adjectives *sick* and *mad* in their
original meaning of *ill* and *angry*. Another example of the closeness of American to Elizabethan English may
25 be adduced from morphology. So the past participle form of *get* is *gotten*, and the verbs *dive* and *sneak* are
irregularly inflected in the past and past participle forms as *dove*, *diven* or *dived* and *snuck*, *sneaked* or *snuck*.
Furthermore, the Elizabethan form of the present subjunctive without *should* has been retained in American
English after verbs indicating a wish or command, e.g. *they required (that) she do the job*; *I recommend (that)*
he be elected president; *he insisted (that) this not be done*.

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An Innovative Language

35 Much as such examples of the "colonial lag" might lead one to regard American English as more conservative
than British English, the English language in America could tap fresh sources from both a new environment
and a growing nation of immigrants with various mother tongues. Thus American English, from its beginnings
in the 17th century through today, has proved the most innovative variety of Englishes and the only one to have
been keeping up with the times. Hence we have such American words as *typewriter*, *telephone*, *interphone*,
40 *teleplay*, *automobile*, *airbag*, *airline*, *air conditioning*, *record* (for phonograph), *record changer*, *department*
store, *walkie-talkie*, *computerese*, *graduate*, *highjack*, and *know-how*, not to mention the verb *eventuate*, which
is bound to puzzle anyone not conversant with the inventiveness of American English, which becomes also
apparent in turning the adverb and adjective *overnight* into a verb, a verb like *stand* into *standee* for a person
who has to stand because there is no vacant seat, giving the word *buddy* an extra touch of familiarity by adding
45 the suffix *-roo* as in *buddyroo*, or shortening *acclimatize* to *acclamite* and the British *advert* (short for both
advertise and *advertisement*) modestly to *ad* as a noun only. Also, American English has no problem in forming
such nouns as *normalcy* and *candidacy* for British English *normality* and *candidature*. If there is one American
English word to have found entrance into almost all languages worldwide, it is *OK* (with such reduplications as
oke, *okey-doke*, *okey-dokey*), spelled with as many variants as it is used in various classes of words. Or take
50 *dis*, used as a verb and a noun, which originated in Black American English as a clipped form of *disrespect*

and has become the German loanword *dissen* with an entry in the *Duden*. The interjection *wow!* can be used as a noun for a remarkable, successful, and exciting thing or person. As far as pronunciation goes, *Atta boy!* is a fine example of how an interjection meant to give encouragement or approval makes *That's a boy!*, through twofold elision and an American-specific flapping of *t*, sound /'ædboɪ/.

One of the most striking features of American English, next to a predilection for onomatopœa or echoisms (e.g. *phooey* from German *pfui*, *yackety-yak* as a reduplication of *yak-yak* or using the sound that a bird or dog makes for an electronic device such as *tweeter* and *woofer*) is its figurativeness. For example, if things are complete, they are *hook, line, and sinker*, everything a fisherman needs for fishing. Or when a student *plays hooky*, he or she stays away from school without permission. By comparison, the British *skive off* for *play truant* falls far behind imaginatively. The phrase comes from the Dutch word *hoeckje* for playing hide-and-seek. Or take *playing footsies*, meaning an amorous play with the end parts of two persons' legs. While British English has the figurative *getting knotted* for "getting married," American English can tap two sources for the same event: *getting spliced* (from the field of carpentry) and *getting hitched*, a Westernism alluding to the practice of hitching the reins of a horse to the hitching rail in front of a store or saloon. Similarly, *hitchhiker* and *hitchin' a ride* evoke the image of a *hiker* (American English for a walker in the mountains or countryside) who hitches onto a motor vehicle so as to be given a free ride in tow, as it were. Staying with cars, if you *take a backseat* to another person, you are willing to accept a less important position.

Turns of speech and expressions that originated in the American West have become a natural part of the English language wherever it is spoken. Whether we use *savvy* as a noun or verb for "knowledge or understanding," or *cinch* as a noun or verb when we mean "a sure thing or make sure of," and *round up* the few friends we still have, or whether we *beat someone to the draw* in a *showdown* at *high noon*, *hightail it* to warmer climes in hopes our plans will *pan out*, we consciously or unconsciously use words and phrases that grew out of America's westering experience.

Contact with Indians and a New Environment

The linguistic inventiveness of American English can be traced back to the early English settlers who were faced with a new social and natural environment. As early as their first language contact with Indian dialects, the colonists of Virginia and New England adopted Algonquian words from various spheres of the natural world: words for animals like *opossum*, *raccoon*, *skunk*, *chipmunk*, and *moose*; words for trees like *hickory* and *locust*; words for vegetables like *squash*, *pecan* and *persimmon*; and words for foods like *hominy*, *succotash* and *pone*. From Indian social life the colonists borrowed *wigwam*, *toboggan*, *moccasin*, *mackinaw*, and *tomahawk*. Translations from Algonquian found their way into American English, too: *medicine man*, *war paint*, *pipe of peace*, *bury the hatchet*, *go on the warpath*.

Aside from words and expressions adopted from the American Indian, there were topographical, botanical, and zoological phenomena that had to be given new English names: *bluff*, *draw*, *gap*, *foothill*, *clearing*, and *underbrush*. Hitherto unknown animals were named by a descriptive process: *rattlesnake*, *mockingbird*, *cattfish*, *bullfrog*, and *potato bug*. The new mode of life on the *frontier* (the word is pronounced /frʌn'ti:r/ after the French *frontière* used by the French-Canadian *coureurs de bois*) brought new words into the language: *back country*, *backwoodsman*, *squatter*, *log cabin*, *popcorn*, *snowshoe* and *snowplow*. If you look at a map of the United States, you will find many states, rivers, and cities whose names are of Indian origin. For instance, states like *Massachusetts*, *Kansas*, and *Iowa* are named for Indian tribes; rivers and cities have descriptive Indian names like *Mississippi* (big river) and *Chicago* (garlic field). If you look at a map of New Hampshire, you will find a rare Indian name for a city (*Nashua*), but quite a few for rivers (*Merrimack*, *Connecticut*) and lakes (*Winnepesaukee*, *Winnisquam*, *Sunapee*). You will also notice that in American English *River* has a postposition as in *Hudson River*, where in British English it is the other way around, as in *River Thames*.

1 **A Linguistic Melting Pot and Salad Bowl**

From its Elizabethan beginnings, American English evolved into Modern English as did British English in the British Isles. But there was a big difference in that America was open to non-English-speaking immigrants who enriched the English language, while England could look back on the long history of a language that was an imported product. The birth of English and its formative period of growth up until the Great Vowel Shift of around 1500 a.D. was marked by foreign invasions. It was the West Germanic tribes of the Jutes, Angles, and Frisians who gave birth to Old English when they invaded the British Isles in 449 a.D. From the 9th to the 11th centuries, the Old Norse-speaking Vikings raided and plundered sporadically the northern parts of England. They also set up permanent homes in what was called Danelaw. The Norsemen's contribution to the English language was a milestone in its development, as was the Norman conquest of 1066, which added to the language its French heritage. With Britain's rise to a world empire, English was exported to its colonies in the four corners of the world, to Africa, Australia, and America.

It was only natural for American English, which was at the time of the Revolution identical with British English, to sever its ties with the mother country. Along with political independence from the mother country, leading American politicians like Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin advocated a linguistic separation from England and were taken to task by such pundits as Samuel Johnson and David Hume for coining words like *belittle* (Jefferson), *pejorate* and *colonize* (Franklin). Granted, this was the age of neoclassicism with its ideals of set rules and linguistic purity. Nonetheless, the disparaging criticism leveled by the English intellectual élite at the English language in the lost colonies has continued up to the present day. Though early English deprecators sneered at such American coinages as *notify*, *maximize*, *minimize*, etc., some travelers to America reacted positively to the consistency of spoken American English in comparison with the many dialects in England, which made communication between them quite an obstacle.

It was the country school teacher and lawyer Noah Webster (1758-1843), an American patriot through and through, who played an instrumental part in codifying American English. He wrote: "As an independent nation, our honour requires us to have a system of our own, in language as well as in government." His first successful publication was *The American Spelling Book* (1783), in which he listed words divided into their syllables in tables that identified the position of the stress or "accent." Such characteristic American spellings of words like *color*, *favor*, *theater* and *center* did at first not appeal to him, but by the time his three-volume *American Dictionary of the English Language* (1828) came out, he had decided to modernize such British spellings as *centre*, *musick*, and *risque* to *center*, *music*, and *risk*. Moreover, he introduced (or made possible) exemplary American spellings like *wagon*, *defense*, *plow*, *ax*, *tire* (for *tyre*), and, likewise deservedly, he cut the unnecessary and illogical British doubling of the consonant *l* in unaccented syllables. So we spell in American English *traveler*, *traveling*, but *rebellng* and *propelling*.

American English is spoken more slowly and with less variety in tone than British English. It also differs from British English in that due emphasis is given to each syllable in a word. This phenomenon can be traced back to Noah Webster's *Spelling Book* and, in its wake, the characteristic American institution of the *spelling bee*, a spelling contest in which a word is loudly spelled, each syllable pronounced by itself, and adding to it the preceding one until the word is complete.

American English developed along the lines of both a *Melting Pot* and a *Salad Bowl*. Now a sovereign nation with a growing number of immigrants not only from the British Isles but from other non-English-speaking countries, the mobility of and intercourse among the new Americans made for a linguistic uniformity in pronunciation, syntax, and morphology, though not necessarily in vocabulary. Such uniformity was part and parcel of a larger process of Americanization, which *meltd* people of different nations into Americans. At the same time, there began a diversity of the language, above all in respect of vocabulary, that made it a *Salad Bowl* so peculiar to a nation of immigrants.

Major Foreign Contributions in Historical Perspective

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The following brief survey of the *Salad Bowl* richness of American English is arranged in a more or less chronological order of the languages that, along with their respective speakers, contributed to the language. Beginning with Dutch and French, the German and Yiddish contributions will be presented before the more significant and, in a way, older impact that Spanish and Black English had on American English.

5

DUTCH

In 1621, the Dutch West India Company founded New Netherland at what was to become the present state of New York. Dutch settlers founded Nieuw Amsterdam on the island of Manhattan in 1625. When the British seized the Dutch town in 1662, they renamed it New York. The Dutch past in the state of New York is still present in the names of the *Catskill Mountains*, of a city like *Amsterdam* and of the New York City boroughs *Brooklyn* and *The Bronx* as well as the city quarter *Haarlem*. Be it also called to mind that the infamous penitentiary *Sing Sing* in Ossingsing is situated in a town that the Dutch named Sintsing after a Delaware word meaning "at the small stones." A few Dutch words have enriched American English: *boss*, *younker*, *snoop*, *sleigh*, *waffle*, *coleslaw*, *cookie* and *Santa Claus*.

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FRENCH-CANADIAN

From early on, English speakers in North America found themselves in contact with the French, who vied with England for territorial and political domination in the New World. As early as the 17th century, the St. Lawrence River brought French Jesuit missionaries, explorers, and *voyageurs* (trappers and traders for the fur companies) to the Great Lakes and beyond. They were the first white men to penetrate into and build settlements in the Mississippi Valley. It was only after 1763, when France had to cede to Britain its possessions in Canada and when the young United States acquired a huge French territory by the *Louisiana Purchase* of 1803 that the English language could spread over the North American continent. The former French presence in America, however, can be traced in names of cities such as *Detroit*, *St. Louis*, *Terre Haute*, *New Orleans*, *Baton Rouge*, three states (*Louisiana*, *Maine*, *Vermont*), and Indian tribes (*Gros Ventres*, *Nez Perce*). The French historical and cultural legacy is still present in names for geographical features such as *ravine*, *crevasse*, *butte*, *rapids*, *bayou*, *levee*, *portage* and *prairie*. The early French-Canadian trappers (*coureurs de bois*) displayed a certain sense of humor when they named the *Teton* range of mountains in northwest Wyoming after the French word for "female breast." They also contributed to the language the verb and noun *cache* from French *cacher* (conceal) for a place in which stores of food or supplies are hidden. Furthermore, there is *depot* for a railroad or bus station and *bureau* for either a chest of drawers or an agency providing services or a government department or subdivision of such. Tellingly, and under the impression of the recent separation of the American colonies from the mother country, the United States chose for its new monetary system the unit of the *dollar*, borrowed from a German word, and looked to France for its decimal division into the *cent* (*centième* = one-hundredth) and the *dime* (*dixième* = tenth). It should be noted that American English makes a point of pronouncing French-derived words such as *ballet*, *buffet*, *debut*, and *garage* with a stress on the last syllable, where British English stresses the first, thus making these words sound anything but French.

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GERMAN and YIDDISH

The American monetary unit of the *dollar* owes its name to Thomas Jefferson, who decided in 1782 to use that appellation for the new American currency. The word stems from the German *thaler*, mined in Joachimsthal in the Erzgebirge, and is therefore correctly pronounced as /ˈdalər/. Which brings us to other German borrowings in American English.

45

In 1683, the first German emigrants, Mennonites from the lower Rhine area, settled at Germantown, Pennsylvania. Over the next three hundred years, many German words and even syntactical structures

50

1 became part of American English: *kindergarden*, *wurst*, *sauerkraut*, *hamburger*, *frankfurter*, *spiel*, *songfest*,
Liederkrantz, *Turnverein*, *turner*, and *wisenheimer*. Even such seemingly genuine American words as *bum* and
hoodlum are derived from German *bummeln* and Swiss German *hudilump*. The adjective *fresh* for “impudent
or sexually bold” comes from German *frech*, and *dumb*, meaning *stupid*, is derived from German *dumm*. Even
5 *kaffeeklatsch* or *coffee klatch* have added a touch of *gemütlichkeit* to American social life. Typical German
syntax can be found in such Americanisms as *the dog wants out*; *she looks out the window*; *let it be*; *no*
way; *can be*; *will do*; *what gives?* and in the exclamation *And how!* Aside from such words as *festschrift*,
weltanschauung, *weltschmerz*, *schadenfreude* and *angst*, a quite recent newcomer to American English is
uber like in *uber-cool* or *uberbaby*.

10 While Jewish newcomers from German-speaking countries brought their native German to the United States,
it was Yiddish-speaking immigrants from Russia and Poland who enriched American English with a language
quite close to German. Among the Yiddish words that became part of American English are: *kibitzer* and the
verb *kibitz*, *gonef* (thief), *fin* (a five-dollar bill), *schmaltz* and *schmaltzy*, *schlep* as a noun and verb, *schmooze*,
schmuck, *shtick* and *schlemiel*. Yiddish syntax has left its trace in expressions like *give a look*; *he knows from*
15 *nothing*; *I'm telling you* and in the two imperatives *scram!* and *get lost!*

SPANISH

The influence of Spanish on American English is omnipresent in the southwestern states of the U.S. that were
20 once part of Spain's empire. Many Spanish loanwords, many of them filtered through Mexican Spanish and
Indian Nahuatl, refer to specific geographical features such as *sierra*, *canyon*, *mesa*, *arroyo*, to plants like
alamo, *saguaro*, *ocotillo*, *alfalfa*, *chaparral* and to animals like *armadillo*, *burro*, *lobo*, *coyote*. Though it was
Spaniards who, in 1565, founded the oldest city in what was to become the United States, Saint Augustine in
northeastern Florida, Spanish words spread over the southwestern U.S.A. with the first Spanish explorers and
25 missionaries in the Southwest. They brought with them American loanwords for natural features and founded
settlements and missions and gave them Spanish names, for instance Santa Fé in c. 1609 and Yerba Buena
in 1776, which was named San Francisco in 1846 when the U.S. naval force took the city during the Mexican-
American War. In the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (1848), Mexico, which had gained political independence
from Spain in 1821, had to cede to the United States most of its present-day Southwest. Since the cattle
30 industry was introduced to this region by the Spaniards and Mexicans, the majority of words referring to the
work of the American cowboy are of Spanish origin. Some of these words have entered the world of popular
culture in books, movies, advertising, and the fashion industry.

The range cattle industry in North America originated in Spanish Mexico. The earliest Texas cowboys learned
35 their trade from the Mexican *vaquero* (Spanish for cowherd), which was corrupted to *buckaroo*, another word
for *cowboy*. The Mexican *rancho* became a *ranch*, the rope got a partner in *lasso* and *lariat*, a wild horse was
called *mustang*, a thunderstorm *tornado*. The pen for animals was called *corral* after Spanish *corro*, a circlce.
Then there is the *wrangler* (from Spanish *caballerango*= one who cares for horses), the youngest cowboy who
was in charge of the horses. Now it has become a brand name for jeans. The string of extra horses is a *remuda*
40 (Spanish for replacement), now the name of a string of motels. In the Southwest, a few Spanish words have
become part of everyday General American English: *adios!* for *goodbye*, *paisano* for *comrade* or *pal*, *Chicano*
for a U.S. citizen or inhabitant, and *barrio* for a Spanish-speaking quarter inhabited by Chicanos.

BLACK AMERICAN ENGLISH

Of all the foreign language contributions to American English reviewed here, Black American English has been
the oldest and most influential linguistic force in white America's popular culture, above all in music, and in the
country's respective countercultures from the Beatniks to the *hippies* to the *rappers* of today. During the entire
20th century and into the present one, each new generation of young people grew up on American music, both
50 in the United States and outside of it. The development in musical styles (from *barrelhouse*, *honky-tonk*, *jive* and

jazz to the blues, R&B, Rock 'n' Roll, hip hop, and Rap) and in dance fashions (from the cakewalk and jitterbug to Charleston, boogie-woogie, fox trot to break dancing) has been a Black American affair. It is a plain fact that young people in Germany and worldwide come into out-of-school contact with English primarily through the music they hear and the *Denglish* lingo they use in their peer group, which is by and large influenced by Black American English. While their parents' generation grew up with rock'n'roll, dancing to the rhythm roaring out of the juke box, and digged the sounds of soul and mo-town music, and knowing the meanings of groovy, far-out, out of sight, uptight, too much and do your own thing, present-day German youths know the meanings of cool for something very good, excellent, or pleasing, bad for good, ugly for beautiful, and mean for excellent, and perhaps kill for affect strongly, fascinate.

The Black music of hip hop and rap has become a universal message uniting young folks in a common cause for human understanding and peace. Take, for instance, the following text from the rapper Common's LP *Like Water for Chocolate* from 2000, the track called "The 6th Sense":

How many souls hip hop has affected/ How many dead folks this art resurrected/
 How many nations this culture connected/ Who am I to judge one's perspective?
 Though some of that shit y'all pop to it, I ain't relating/ If I don't like it/ That don't
 mean I'm hating/ I just want to innovate and stimulate minds/ Travel the world and
 penetrate the times/ Escape through rhythms/ In search of peace and wisdom/ Raps
 are smoke signals/ Letting the streets know I'm with 'em/ For now I appreciate this
 moment in time/ Ball players and actors be knowing my rhymes.

Typical Black English words and grammatical structure aside, the text is an optimistic message, expressing the self-assertion of a black American and his distrust of mainstream popular culture.

Black American English can be neither properly understood nor adequately evaluated without a minimal knowledge of its rootage in the sorry experience of Blacks in America. The inversion of adjectives like *bad* and *ugly* to their opposite meanings can be traced back to the history of Blacks in the United States, which is marked by the stages of slavery, social oppression, discrimination, and a seeming equality with the dominant white society. It was a long way from the slave spirituals' finding solace in God and Louis Armstrong's bluesy "I don't know why I'm so black and blue" to the self-assurance of black composers and singers from the 1960s onward. Since early slavery times, Blacks have had to find a covert code language that helped them endure their lot and survive in a hostile environment. So they turned words not only into their opposite meanings but used words in their double meanings. This explains the covert sexuality in much of Black American English and its use in music. The name of the jazz musician "Jelly Roll" Morton is a case in point. Quite a few texts for boogie-woogie (an old Black term for syphilis) and rock 'n' roll (a double name for sexual intercourse) display a sexual double entendre. Such double meanings go back to the coded language of an oppressed minority whose communication had to be hidden from the white society. At the same time, Black English tended to be subversive in its speakers' desire to survive and attain freedom from social and political oppression. The motto was to say "Yes, Massa," while thinking and eventually doing the opposite of what was ordered. Small wonder, then, if young disaffected whites rebelling against what they consider a hypocritical mainstream society, turn to the language and underground lingo of a discriminated-against minority, acting out of both a defense mechanism and a sign of allegiance to the Black cause. This goes for both the small intellectual group of the beatniks and the nationwide hippie movement of the 1960s.

Historically, the contribution of Black to American English is sadly bound up with the institution of slavery. Chronologically, this contribution was the first foreign one and followed right in the wake of the arrival of the first English settlers in Virginia. In 1619, the first African slaves were sold by Dutch slavers to John Rolfe in Jamestown, two years before the Puritan pilgrims arrived in Massachusetts. These slaves and the millions that followed them on the middle passage from the Slave Coast in West Africa for the next two centuries and a half brought with them their African West coast dialects admixed with the pidgin English they had picked up in their home lands.

1 Most of Black English has become part of American English via the Black subculture, its music and customs. There is *goober* (from Kongo *nguba*) for *peanut*, and *gumbo* (a Bantu name for okra) for a soup thickened with unripe okra pods, usually made with tomatoes, vegetables, and chicken, ham, or seafood. Then there is the verb *tote*, a typical Southernism for *carry*, which stems from Kongo *tota* (=pick up). *Voodoo* and *zombie* are of West African origin, as is the *hoochy-coochie* man who practices *voodoo*. The Black subculture with its music
5 contributed to American English *honky-tonk* for a cheap bar, *juke box* (*juke* was the name for a brothel), and *cat* for a *hip* or *hep* person *digging* the latest style in *jive* music. Many words that don't need mentioning here are taken from the criminal world of prostitution and drug trafficking. Among words that have entered General American English are: *chick* (for a *girl*), *square* (for a person who supports popular mainstream values), *nitty-gritty* (for *brass tacks*), and expressions such as *Yeah, man!*, *having a ball*, *be with it*, *something else*, and *let your hair down*.
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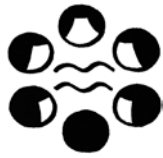
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