



Balderdash & Piffle

Alex Games

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Discover the fascinating stories behind the words and phrases we use every day. English is now the world's most popular second language, understood by over 700 million people across the globe. Its use is amazingly broad: not only is it the language of Chaucer and Shakespeare, but also of hip-hop, international business and the internet (over 80% of home pages are in English). So where exactly do English words come from? They come from everywhere. English is a vast, rambling conglomeration of words and phrases from a huge variety of times and places, and every word has its own intriguing history. Balderdash & Piffle is a guidebook an entertaining look at what falls out of the chaotic family tree of English words when you uproot it and give it a damn good shake. Shaking the tree is writer, humourist and word-sleuth Alex Games. If you've ever wondered who first used cuppa in print, what language gave us shampoo, when we started saying window, where mingling comes from, what Shakespeare had to say about geeks and why berk is really, really rude, you'll find it all (and much more) inside. You'll also have the chance to do your own word-sleuthing, through the BBC Wordhunt appeal. Who knows if you have written evidence of a bouncy castle from before 1986, you could even re-write history

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