

Press Release



Divided by a Common Language

by Christopher Davies

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About the Book

Don't *drop a clanger* — make a big faux pas — when traveling in the U.K.! Some experts estimate that roughly four thousand words have one meaning in Britain and another meaning in the United States. From pubs to politics, television to travel, *Divided by a Common Language* (Houghton Mifflin, September 7, 2005) explains thousands of different idioms, expressions, word spellings, and definitions.

For instance, one *rents* a car in the U.S., but *hires* one in the U.K.; we eat *takeout* food, but they call it *takeaway*; I'll buy you a *beer* in the States, but you'll buy me a *pint* in Britain; my American grandma will knit you a *sweater*, but your British gran will make you a *woolly*.

This informative compendium is an outstanding cultural reference for both Anglophiles and American culture buffs and an ideal companion for international travelers to help them understand and be understood in the U.K. and the U.S. Helpful lists include:

- **Strange-sounding foods you may encounter in Britain (pages 29-30)**

What will be on your plate if you order *bangers and mash* or *spotted dick*?

- **Hints to remember before shopping for clothes in the U.K. (pages 38-39)**

What should you wear if the invitation says *dinner jacket*? Why would you take your *mac* out in the rain?

- **British car terminology (pages 60-63)**

Make sure you know the *bonnet* from the *boot* in advance of your first drive on the left side of the road.

• Words and terms to avoid (pages 101-107)

A Briton who calls your apartment *homely* means it as a compliment — and the American who announces *I'm stuffed* after a meal is not trying to be vulgar.

Whether you fancy a quick skim or a careful read, *Divided by a Common Language* helps suss out the differences between British and American English so you can *swot up* on customs, manners, and practical details of daily life on both sides of the pond. *Cheers!*

About the Author

Christopher Davies was born and raised in England and spent several years living in Australia and New Zealand. In 1980 Davies came to the United States; the unfamiliar expressions and pronunciations he encountered in American English led him to write this book. He lives in Sarasota, Florida.

What Not to Say

from *Divided by a Common Language*

With a little effort, Britons and Americans can usually understand each other very well. However, a few words and expressions have quite different meanings in the U.K. and the U.S.

What Not to Say in the U.S.

Give me a tinkle	Could sound vulgar. Try "Give me a call" instead.
Knock me up	A vulgar expression. Try "Wake me up."
Keep your pecker up	Also vulgar. Try "Keep smiling."
Lay the table	Use instead "Set the table."
Pot plant	Means marijuana in the U.S. Try "house plant."

What Not to Say in the U.K.:

Bummer	Use instead "disappointing."
Get a bang out of	Possibly vulgar. Use "Get a kick out of."
I'm stuffed	Possibly vulgar. Use "I'm full."
Pants	Refers to undergarments. Use "trousers" instead.
Tramp	Use only if you mean a hobo. In the U.K., "tramp" is never used to refer to a woman regarded as promiscuous.

Tips for the Tourist

from *Divided by a Common Language*

A few things to know while on holiday (or vacation) in the U.K. or the U.S.

In the U.S., say:

In the U.K., say:

At a Hotel

baggage cart
crib
comforter
dresser
elevator
first floor
front desk
garbage can
toll-free number

trolley
cot
eiderdown
chest of drawers
lift
ground floor
reception
dustbin
Freefone number

Transportation

gasoline
rent a car
license plate
interstate/freeway
pedestrian crosswalk
divided highway
traffic circle/rotary
traffic jam
yellow light
parking lot
fender bender
railroad
car (on a train)
track (at a train station)
layover
one-way ticket
roundtrip ticket
coach

petrol
hire a car
number plate
motorway
zebra crossing
dual carriageway
roundabout
tailback
amber light
car park
prang
railway
carriage
platform
stopover
single ticket
return ticket
second class

Dining Out

appetizer
entrée
dessert
check
grilled
napkin
silverware
takeout

starter
main course
sweet/pudding
bill
broiled
serviette
cutlery
takeaway

Shopping

register
salesperson
sales tax
shopping cart
drugstore/pharmacy
acetaminophen/Tylenol
bobby pin
diaper
business suit
extra-large clothing
off-the-rack
pantyhose
sneakers
turtleneck
undershirt

till
shop assistant
value added tax (VAT)
shopping trolley
chemist
paracetamol
flat hairpin
nappy
lounge suit
outsize
off-the-peg
tights
trainers
polo-neck
vest

Food and Drink

cilantro
cookie
corned beef
eggplant
French fries
granola
half-and-half
hot dog
pickle
potato chips
raisins
romaine lettuce
shrimp
zucchini
bartender
straight up

coriander
biscuit
salt beef
aubergine
chips
muesli
single cream
frankfurter
pickled gherkin
crisps
sultanas
cos lettuce
prawns
courgette
barman
neat

Some Other Words with Different Meanings

from *Divided by a Common Language*

Word/Expression	American Meaning	British Meaning
cordial	liqueur	concentrated fruit juice
cranky	irritable	eccentric
dresser	chest of drawers	china cabinet
homely	ugly	cozy/unpretentious
loft	open, elevated space	attic
mean	nasty	stingy
outhouse	outdoor toilet	shed near a house
pumps	ladies' dress shoes	canvas sneakers
ratty	shabby	irritable
rubber	condom (informal)	eraser
skivvies	underwear	a skivvy is a maid
slot machine	gambling machine	vending machine
social security	government retirement pension	welfare
twister	tornado	swindler
wash up	wash oneself	wash the dishes
yard	lawn around a house	paved area