



What is English?: And Why Should We Care?

Tim William Machan

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What is English? Can we be as certain as we usually are when we say something is *not English*? To find some answers Tim Machan explores the language's present and past, and looks ahead to its futures among the one and a half billion people who speak it. His search is fascinating and important, for definitions of English have influenced education and law in many countries and helped shape the identities of those who live in them.

Finding an account that fits the constantly changing varieties of English is, Tim Machan finds, anything but simple. But he rises to the challenge, grappling with its elusive essence through episodes in its history. He looks at the ambitions of Caxton, the preoccupations of Johnson, and the eloquence of Churchill, tussles with the jargons of contemporary business, and pursues his object from rural America to James Cook's Australia. He examines creoles, pidgins, and dialects, and takes apart competing histories showing their assumptions and prejudices. Finally he reveals the stable category *English*, resting paradoxically within its constantly mutating forms and varieties.

This is a book for everyone interested in English and the role of language in society and culture.

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