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ACCENTS & DIALECTS FOR STAGE AND SCREEN

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**AN INSTRUCTION MANUAL FOR 27
ACCENTS AND DIALECTS
COMMONLY USED
BY ENGLISH-SPEAKING ACTORS**

by

PAUL MEIER



PAUL MEIER Dialect Services
accents & dialects for stage and screen

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FOREWORD

Like many Brits, I grew up speaking more than one dialect. It was a necessary skill to be able to move up and down the class ladder by bending one's vowels this way and that. As the child of working-class parents who aspired to higher rungs on the ladder, I was never quite sure where I was supposed to fit in and learned early the British art of dialect shifting. This chameleon-like existence was further complicated by a move from Hampshire to London when I was twelve. In about two weeks flat, I had lost my country brogue and adopted the general South London sound when I was with my new school mates, reverting to the more upscale sound of my parents when at home.

And, in London, I heard accents and dialects from all over the country and all over the world! Being by now a bona fide chameleon, I was soon collecting dialects as fast as I could. I discovered theatre in high school, which provided a quasi-academic excuse for all this mimicry.

Later, at the Rose Bruford College of Speech and Drama, where I trained as an actor, Miss Greta Stevens introduced me to the joys of phonetics. She gave me a way of writing down all those accents and dialects I'd been collecting! In my final year at Bru's (as the school is affectionately known), I ignored all my studies in favor of Phonetics and sat the I.P.A. (International Phonetics Association) proficiency exam. The great Professor Gimson himself came down from University College, London, to administer it, dictating all kinds of weird and wonderful sounds for us to transcribe. The whole thing made perfect sense!

Later, when my son, Cameron (now vice president of Paul Meier Dialect Services and executive editor of IDEA), learned to talk, a zillion imaginary characters became part of our games as I morphed from Australian to Scottish to Kentucky to Madrid at his request. (By that time I was teaching dialects and dialect-coaching theatre, and I've been doing it ever since.)

So the dialects and accents in this book (with the obvious exception of my newest addition, Estuary) have been well tested for roughly half a century – in drama schools, in the theatre and in films, in England and America, as well as by my most demanding client, my son.

I hope you have as much fun with them as we did, and are successful in your quest to speak convincingly in accents and dialects other than the one you acquired by accident.

Paul Meier
April, 2020

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am indebted to a great many people in the small world of stage dialects. I owe special thanks to Eric Armstrong for his cover design, the animated demonstration of the IPA that you will find on my website, and the website itself; his work as a senior editor of the International Dialects of English Archive (IDEA); and for the myriad helpful suggestions he has made on many fronts.

Dylan Paul, webmaster for both IDEA and PaulMeier.com, deserves my most heartfelt thanks for his tireless efforts. In addition, I must thank Shawn Muller, webmaster emeritus and technical advisor of IDEA, without whom actors and their dialect coaches would not have the superb online resource they have enjoyed since 1998. My deepest gratitude also goes to the many associate editors of IDEA, who contributed many of the primary source recordings I cite in the following pages. Almost all of them are members of the Voice and Speech Trainers Association (VASTA), of which I am a proud and devoted member. I thank VASTA's several presidents and many board members who have built this small organization into a powerful network of voice and speech specialists.

Among the many whose generous assistance and advice I have drawn upon while preparing this book, I would like to single out the following: Gillian Lane-Plescia, founder of The Dialect Resource; Douglas N. Honorof, founder of Verberations and IDEA associate editor for New England; David Alan Stern, founder of Accent Dialect Specialists; Amy Stoller, founder of The Stoller System and IDEA associate editor for New York City; Lise Olson, dialect coach and instructor at the Birmingham School of Acting, and the IDEA associate editor for Northwest England; Robert Price, former dialect coach at Dublin's Abbey Theatre; Karina Lemmer, IDEA associate editor for South Africa, and her mentor, Professor Marth Munro, Lecturers at Tshwane University of Technology; Professor Doreen Feitelberg, Lecturer in Voice and Acting at Columbia College Theatre School; Karla Conrad for her formatting wizardry; renowned linguist and Shakespeare scholar David Crystal; Curt Ford, creator of American Voices and my Paul Meier Dialect Services ebooks; and Patricia Childs, a colleague of mine for nearly 20 years and IDEA associate editor for Tennessee, whose meticulous proofreading has contributed substantially to this book.

Finally, I want to thank my son, Cameron Meier, whose editing and proofreading has substantially shaped the book; and my wife, Marilyn Meier, whose love and support make all things possible.

I. BEFORE WE BEGIN

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ACTING IN A DIALECT OR AN ACCENT

For actors, the chief delight and most solemn duty is to “disappear” inside their character’s story, and to take on the character’s behaviors, value system, fears, and dreams. By this act of *mimesis*, actors hope to penetrate a truth not their own, and to reveal that truth to an audience. A hard job!

To see one’s own culture as one among many, and to don another as a cloak, is an immensely difficult but hugely rewarding task. Adopting the *linguistic* peculiarities of that culture is perhaps the biggest challenge. For the way characters speak reveals much: where they are from, where they have been, and who they want to be. And their speech changes moment to moment too (linguists call it *code switching*) depending on whom they are talking to, the mode of the moment, and so forth. When two sisters, although sharing almost identical backgrounds, sound quite different from each other, we learn that each of us has an *idiolect* – a personal way of speaking.

Does every role that actors play require them to modify their dialect/accent/idiolect, then? Perhaps so.

A word about terms: The terms *accent* and *dialect* are almost interchangeable; in popular parlance they mean much the same thing. But some distinctions may be useful. In its scholarly sense, a *dialect* is a legitimate variant of a language, telling us about the regional and caste/class origins of the speaker and more. We refer to the Lancashire *dialect* of English, or the Parisian *dialect* of French. A *dialect* has its own vocabulary and grammar, as well as its own distinctive pronunciation. We are all dialect speakers, then, even if we happen to use the prestige “standard” dialect of our own language. For it, too, is a dialect. An *accent*, on the other hand, is simply a feature or attribute of *dialect* or *language*, referring to its *pronunciation*.

Although the distinction quickly breaks down, I and my fellow North American dialect coaches find it useful to talk about English-language *dialects* in contrast with foreign-language *accents*. Though my British colleagues and the linguistic community use the terms differently, we find it useful to emphasize the difference between native speakers, who are speaking their *dialect*, and people for whom English is not their first language, who are speaking English in the *accent* of their first language. It is useful to consider the dynamic and unstable process of improving pronunciation and language usage. This process creates a different psychological state, I maintain, and should be conceptualized differently by the actor.

Though a *dialect* may have subtle, idiosyncratic variations in each speaker, it is generally more consistent and predictable than an *accent*. Accents may involve mispronunciations, hyper-corrections, and mistakes in stress, rhythm, etc.; and, of course, when we speak a language not our own, we may at first make all kinds of other mistakes too – in vocabulary, grammar, etc. But whether we call it acting in an *accent* or a *dialect*, doing it accurately, credibly, and without ostentation is partly a science, partly an art, and wholly challenging. I hope you enjoy investigating this fascinating process with me.

THE INTERNATIONAL PHONETIC ALPHABET

I have used the symbols of the International Phonetic Alphabet to represent in the text the sounds you hear me making in the recordings. While only a few of my readers may be familiar with this alphabet, I have found that simply seeing the sounds represented visually this way strongly reinforces what you are hearing; and, as its name implies, the IPA, among many phonetic systems, has been the international standard since the early twentieth century.

When I was a student at the Rose Bruford School of Speech and Drama in London, I had a wonderful phonetics teacher, Greta Stevens, who painstakingly demonstrated the sounds in class until her students “fixed” the sounds associated with each symbol. We also were able to purchase the huge, old 78 r.p.m. discs with Daniel Jones, the father of the system, speaking the cardinal vowels. Under Miss Stevens’ superb tutelage, I took my studies as far as I could, culminating in the rigorous proficiency examination administered by the International Phonetics Association. It is a testament to her skill that, among those gaining the IPA Certificate of Proficiency that year, 1968, I was the high scorer. My love of phonetics and its ability to record the way humans speak has never diminished.

Things have come a long way since 1968, and I now offer an online demonstration of the IPA, created by Professor Eric Armstrong, my colleague at Toronto’s York University. Eric created the animated charts while I voiced all the sounds. My students have found it a delightfully easy way to learn the alphabet, and I am sure you will too. Whenever you want to hear a sound in isolation, or to compare it with a similar sound, these charts are the best way we know for you to accomplish this. You will find them on my website at:

<https://www.paulmeier.com/ipacharts>

This unique interactive demonstration of the International Phonetic Alphabet is also available as a CD-ROM and as an app for both Apple mobile devices and Android. For all the variations and links to the iTunes app store and Google Play store, please visit:

<https://www.paulmeier.com/product/ipa-chart-cd>

THE INTERNATIONAL PHONETIC ALPHABET (revised to 2005)

CONSONANTS (PULMONIC)

© 2005 IPA

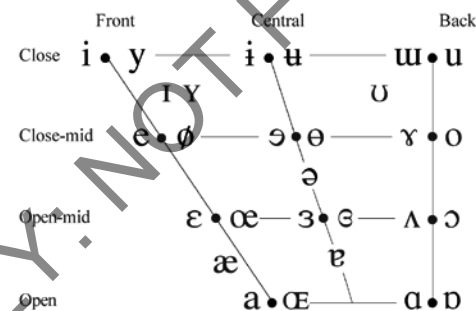
	Bilabial	Labiodental	Dental	Alveolar	Postalveolar	Retroflex	Palatal	Velar	Uvular	Pharyngeal	Glottal
Plosive	p b			t d		ʈ ɖ	c ɟ	k ɡ	q ɢ		ʔ
Nasal	m	ɱ		n		ɳ	ɲ	ŋ	ɴ		
Trill	ʙ			r					ʀ		
Tap or Flap		ⱱ		ɾ		ɽ					
Fricative	ɸ β	f v	θ ð	s z	ʃ ʒ	ʂ ʐ	ç ʝ	x ɣ	χ ʁ	ħ ʕ	h ɦ
Lateral fricative				ɬ ɮ							
Approximant		ʋ		ɹ		ɻ	j	ɰ			
Lateral approximant				l		ɭ	ʎ	ʟ			

Where symbols appear in pairs, the one to the right represents a voiced consonant. Shaded areas denote articulations judged impossible.

CONSONANTS (NON-PULMONIC)

Clicks	Voiced implosives	Ejectives
ɔ Bilabial	ɓ Bilabial	ʼ Examples:
ǀ Dental	ɗ Dental/alveolar	pʼ Bilabial
ǃ (Post)alveolar	f Palatal	tʼ Dental/alveolar
ǂ Palatoalveolar	ɡ Velar	kʼ Velar
ǁ Alveolar lateral	ɠ Uvular	sʼ Alveolar fricative

VOWELS



Where symbols appear in pairs, the one to the right represents a rounded vowel.

OTHER SYMBOLS

ɱ Voiceless labial-velar fricative	ɕ ʑ Alveolo-palatal fricatives
ɰ Voiced labial-velar approximant	ɺ Voiced alveolar lateral flap
ɥ Voiced labial-palatal approximant	ɧ Simultaneous ʃ and x
ħ Voiceless epiglottal fricative	
ʕ Voiced epiglottal fricative	Affricates and double articulations can be represented by two symbols joined by a tie bar if necessary.
ʡ Epiglottal plosive	

kp ts

DIACRITICS Diacritics may be placed above a symbol with a descender, e.g. ŋ̥

◌ ^h Voiceless	◌̤ Breathy voiced	◌̥ Dental
◌̥ Voiced	◌̤ Creaky voiced	◌̥ Apical
◌̥ Aspirated	◌̤ Linguolabial	◌̥ Laminal
◌̥ More rounded	◌̤ Labialized	◌̥ Nasalized
◌̥ Less rounded	◌̤ Palatalized	◌̥ Nasal release
◌̥ Advanced	◌̤ Velarized	◌̥ Lateral release
◌̥ Retracted	◌̤ Pharyngealized	◌̥ No audible release
◌̥ Centralized	◌̤ Velarized or pharyngealized	
◌̥ Mid-centralized	◌̤ Raised	◌̥ (ɹ̥ = voiced alveolar fricative)
◌̥ Syllabic	◌̤ Lowered	◌̥ (β̥ = voiced bilabial approximant)
◌̥ Non-syllabic	◌̤ Advanced Tongue Root	
◌̥ Rhoticity	◌̤ Retracted Tongue Root	

SUPRASEGMENTALS

ˈ Primary stress	
ˌ Secondary stress	
ː Long	fəʊnəˈtɪʃən
ˑ Half-long	eˑ
◌̥ Extra-short	ẽ
◌̥ Minor (foot) group	
◌̥ Major (intonation) group	
◌̥ Syllable break	.i.ækt
◌̥ Linking (absence of a break)	

TONES AND WORD ACCENTS

LEVEL	CONTOUR
ẽ or ˥ Extra high	˥ or ˧ Rising
é or ˦ High	˨ or ˧ Falling
ē or ˧ Mid	˨ or ˧ High rising
ẽ or ˩ Low	˨ or ˧ Low rising
ẽ or ˩ Extra low	˨ or ˧ Rising-falling
↓ Downstep	↗ Global rise
↑ Upstep	↘ Global fall

The chart above is reproduced courtesy of the International Phonetic Association.

THE INTERNATIONAL DIALECTS OF ENGLISH ARCHIVE

I once found myself on location in Hawaii, only three days after getting the call from the movie's producer, to coach the film's leading actor in a Flemish accent! I'd had no time for research, no time to gather primary sources, and was essentially reduced to winging it from my recollection of conversations with Belgians over the years. If only there were a website where you could listen to examples of every dialect in the world, I thought.

The fantasy took shape, and by the time the shoot was over I was firmly resolved to create this thing myself, as no one else had. I had a terrific student by the name of Shawn Muller, a computer wiz who assured me that what I had in mind was quite possible. With his help as webmaster and technical director, I went to work to create what turned out to be the world's first online archive of primary-source recordings of the dialects and accents of English as encountered throughout the world. We organized it hierarchically by continents, countries, and state/provinces, and set about collecting recordings of people speaking English in their own natural accent or dialects.

Largely through the Voice and Speech Trainers' Association (VASTA), we recruited associate editors in every corner of the globe. It was the job of these colleagues to collect recordings from where they lived and worked, and to send them to Shawn and me in Kansas. And this they did. In the first couple of years, the archive grew to nearly 400 recordings, the nearly fifty associate editors living in seven different countries. Now with more than 1,500 recordings, IDEA is still growing. And thanks to the brilliant work of current webmaster Dylan Paul, the site will continue to serve as a user-friendly tool for 21st-century research.

Listening to real people speaking their own accent or dialect is a vital part of learning how to "do" stage dialects. It's just not good enough to rely on the dialect teacher or coach, or to copy such and such an actor who used the accent in this or that movie. That's the way stereotypes – as well as accents that are just plain wrong – get perpetuated. As with all other aspects of theatre, life must be our model.

So, please, listen to the real-life speakers on IDEA. You will find them at:

<https://www.dialectsarchive.com>

STANDARD LEXICAL SETS

When studying a particular dialect, it helps to know that words in the same *lexical set*, to a large extent, are pronounced with the same vowel. So if you know the signature sound of the set and can assign to that set the word in which you are interested, you can pronounce it with some reasonable confidence of being correct. For example, *last*, *master*, *dance*, *pass*, *staff*, *basket*, *half*, and *demand* are all members of the *bath* lexical set. In Received Pronunciation (RP), for example, they are all pronounced with [ɑ], and in General American (GenAm) with [æ]. Leading scholar J.C. Wells developed the classification system now widely used by others in the field, and it is his classification and a shortened list of his sample words that follows. You may find the full discussion in his book *Accents of English, Volume 1*, Cambridge University Press, 1998.

KIT: RP [ɪ]; GenAm [ɪ]; *ship, rib, dim, milk, slither, myth, pretty, build, women, busy.*

DRESS: RP [e]; GenAm [ɛ]; *step, ebb, hem, shelf, effort, threat, bread, ready, any, friend.*

TRAP: RP [æ]; GenAm [æ]; *tap, cab, ham, scalp, arrow, plaid.*

LOT: RP [ɒ]; GenAm [ɑ]; *stop, rob, Tom, solve, profit, honest, swan, waffle, knowledge.*

STRUT: RP [ʌ]; GenAm [ʌ]; *cup, rub, hum, pulse, butter, done, monk, touch, blood.*

FOOT: RP [ʊ]; GenAm [ʊ]; *put, full, cuckoo, good, woman, could.*

BATH: RP [ɑ]; GenAm [æ]; *staff, path, brass, clasp, blast, ask, after, master, basket, fasten, laugh, dance, grant, branch, demand, example, chancel, calf, shan't, Iraq.*
And some words that, in RP, can be either *trap* or *bath* words: *chaff, plastic, lather, contralto.*

CLOTH: RP [ɒ]; GenAm [ɑ] or [ɔə]; *off, cough, froth, cross, soft, often, Australia, gone, moth, long, accost, foster, wash, origin, borrow, florid, horrid, Morris, sorrow, Lawrence, quarrel.* (N.B. There is great variability in GenAm among these words, which, for many speakers, may fall into the *lot* set, or into no standard lexical set.)

NURSE: RP [ɜ]; GenAm [ɜ]; *usurp, curb, turn, burnt, shirt, firm, myrrh, assert, verb, term, certain, earth, heard, rehearsal, work, worst, scourge, attorney.*

FLEECE: RP [i]; GenAm [i]; *creep, seed, seem, see, needle, these, shriek, ceiling, be, reap, bead, team, sea, feast, meter, complete, deceive, Caesar, phoenix, quay, police, mosquito.*

FACE: RP [eɪ]; GenAm [eɪ] or [e]; *tape, babe, name, change, taper, April, bass* (in music), *gauge, crepe, wait, day, rein, they, weigh, reign, great.*

PALM: RP [ɑ]; GenAm [ɑ]; *calm, bra, hurrah, Brahms, spa, Shah, cantata, bravado, Zhivago, Dali, llama, candelabra, Koran, khaki, enchilada, almond, Ghana* (N.B. this set is unstable and membership in it varies greatly from dialect to dialect, with *trap* being the leading other set to which words may be assigned.)

THOUGHT: RP [ɔ]; GenAm [ɒ]; *taught, naughty, ought, taut, applaud, autumn, gawk, jaw, chalk, all, bald, halt, alter, fault.*

GOAT: RP [əʊ]; GenAm [oʊ] or [o]; *soap, road, note, robe, hole, so, noble, brooch, bowl, soul, colt, roll, sew, dough.*

GOOSE: RP [u]; GenAm [u]; *loop, mood, boom, boost, move, tomb, group, dupe, cube, plume, funeral, duty, flu, ludicrous, sleuth, sewage, fruit, view, beauty.*

PRICE: RP [aɪ]; GenAm [aɪ]; *price, tribe, time, Friday, indict, isle, hi-fi, type, eider, height, fight.*

CHOICE: RP [ɔɪ]; GenAm [ɔɪ]; *boy, noise, void, coin, poison, buoy, employ, hoist.*

MOUTH: RP [aʊ]; GenAm [aʊ]; *out, loud, noun, count, flour, crowd, dowry, bough, MacLeod.*

NEAR: RP [ɪə]; GenAm [ɪə]; *beer, here, bier, pier, weir, fear, fierce, weird, beard, serious, eerie, and RP and GenAm both use [ɪə] in idea, Korea, European, Sophia, museum, real.*

SQUARE: RP [ɛə]; GenAm [ɛə]; *care, air, bear, heir, their, there prayer, scarce, vary, canary, Mary, dairy, aerial.*

START: RP [ɑ]; GenAm [ɑə]; *far, bazaar, sharp, card, farm, snarl, party, heart, sergeant, aardvark, sari, safari, aria, Sahara, tiara.*

NORTH: RP [ɔ]; GenAm [ɔə]; *for, war, distort, orb, form, porpoise, orbit, normal, quart, Laura.*

FORCE: RP [ɔ]; GenAm [ɔə]; *ore, boar, floor, four, deport, afford, borne, portent, coarse, court, oral, glorious, uproarious. (NOTE: north and force, historically distinct, have merged in many dialects.)*

CURE: RP [ʊə]; GenAm [ʊə]; *moor, poor, dour, your, allure, gourd, tourist, assurance, mural, centurion, curious, during, Europe.*

happy: RP [ɪ]; GenAm [ɪ]; *happy, lovely, city, baby, spaghetti, taxi, salami, movie, birdie, prairie, committee, coffee, money, valley, Chelsea, Swansea.*

letter: RP [ə]; GenAm [ə]; *father, batter, scorer, sinner, fisher, centre/center, meter/metre, tower, calendar, sugar, liar, mirror, pallor, survivor, odo(u)r, flavo(u)r, martyr, pressure, measure, failure.*

comma: RP [ə]; GenAm [ə]; *pajama, drama, sofa, quota, vodka, panda, saga.*

Comma Gets a Cure

A Diagnostic Passage for Dialect and Accent Study

by Jill McCullough & Barbara Somerville

Edited by Douglas N. Honorof

Incorporating the standard lexical set words of J.C. Wells

“Well, here's a story for you: Sarah Perry was a veterinary *nurse* who had been working daily at an old zoo in a deserted district of the territory, so she was very happy to *start* a new job at a superb private practice in *North Square* near the Duke Street Tower. That area was much *nearer* for her and more to her liking. Even so, on her first morning, she felt stressed. She ate a bowl of porridge, checked herself in the mirror, and washed her *face* in a hurry. Then she put on a plain yellow dress and a *fleece* jacket, picked up her *kit* and headed for work. When she got there, there was a woman with a *goose* waiting for her. The woman gave Sarah an official letter from the vet. The letter implied that the animal could be suffering from a rare form of *foot-and-mouth* disease, which was surprising, because normally you would only expect to see it in a dog or a *goat*. Sarah was sentimental, so this made her feel sorry for the beautiful bird.

Before long, that itchy goose began to *strut* around the office like a lunatic, which made an unsanitary mess. The goose's owner, Mary Harrison, kept calling, “*Comma*, *Comma*,” which Sarah *thought* was an odd *choice* for a name. Comma was strong and huge, so it would take some *force* to *trap* her, but Sarah had a different idea. First, she tried gently stroking the goose's lower back with her *palm*, then singing a tune to her. Finally, she administered ether. Her efforts were not futile. In no time, the goose began to tire, so Sarah was able to hold onto Comma and give her a relaxing *bath*.

Once Sarah had managed to bathe the goose, she wiped her off with a *cloth* and laid her on her right side. Then Sarah confirmed the vet's diagnosis. Almost immediately, she remembered an effective treatment that required her to measure out a *lot* of medicine. Sarah warned that this course of treatment might be expensive – either five or six times the cost of penicillin. I can't imagine paying so much, but Mrs. Harrison – a millionaire lawyer – thought it was a fair *price* for a *cure*.”

Comma Gets a Cure (the text that most subjects read on IDEA, at <https://www.dialectsarchive.com>) and derivative works may be used freely for any purpose without special permission, provided the present sentence and the following copyright notification accompany the passage in print, if reproduced in print, and in audio format in the case of a sound recording: Copyright 2000 Douglas N. Honorof, Jill McCullough & Barbara Somerville. All rights reserved.

PAUL MEIER DIALECT SERVICES

This book – a compilation of 27 dialects/accents with links to their streaming sound files – is my newest premiere product and the one I recommend for both actors and casual fans of accents and dialects. But I also offer a variety of similar products in various formats, including individual accents and dialects in ebook format, at my website, PaulMeier.com. I also will keep offering *Accents & Dialects for Stage and Screen* and *Dialects of the British Isles* in their original format, with CDs, as long as there is a demand – though the print/CD version contains slightly fewer accents and dialects than this book. My website also gives details of other services, such as workshops, Skype/Zoom/phone coaching, accent reduction, voice-over, in-person coaching, custom recording, public speaking, and show-specific recordings.

These show-specific recordings, detailed at <https://www.paulmeier.com/product/dialect-recordings-for-plays-musicals>, are drawn from my library of dialect designs for the many productions I have coached in the theatre. Among the hundreds of plays and musicals I have coached over my 45-year career in England and the United States are: *A. My Name is Alice*, *And Then There Were None*, *Angels in America (Millennium Approaches and Perestroika)*, *Anna in the Tropics*, *Annie Get Your Gun*, *Anything Goes*, *Art of Murder*, *Awake and Sing*, *Behold, Black Coffee*, *Black Comedy*, *Blood Brothers*, *Boeing-Boeing*, *Born Yesterday*, *Brigadoon*, *Broadway Bound*, *Brooklyn Boy*, *Bullshot Crummond*, *By the Bog of Cats*, *Cabaret*, *California Suite*, *Candida*, *Chess* (British and American versions), *A Christmas Carol*, *Communicating Doors*, *Crimes of the Heart*, *The Cripple of Inishmaan*, *The Crucible*, *The Cup*, *Dancing at Lughnasa*, *Danny and the Deep Blue Sea*, *Drood*, *Easy Street*, *The Fantasticks*, *Father of the Bride*, *Fiddler on the Roof*, *Finian's Rainbow*, *The Foreigner*, *The Freedom of the City*, *Frozen*, *The Gaol Gate*, *The Glass Menagerie*, *Guys and Dolls*, *Harry Potter*, *Hay Fever*, *The Heart of a City*, *Henry IV, Part I*, *The History Boys*, *The House of Blue Leaves*, *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, *Jane Eyre*, *Johnny Belinda*, *Kindertransport*, *The King and I*, *The Last Days of Judas Iscariot*, *Last Night of Ballyhoo*, *Leading Ladies*, *Lend me a Tenor*, *A Lesson in Blood*, *Look Back in Anger*, *Love's Labour's Lost*, *Major Barbara*, *A Man of No Importance*, *Mary's Wedding*, *Midwives*, *The Mousetrap*, *Music Man*, *My Brilliant Divorce*, *My Fair Lady*, *Necessary Targets*, *Newsies*, *Noises Off*, *The Odd Couple*, *Oh What a Lovely War*, *Oliver*, *Once in a Lifetime*, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, *One Man Two Guv'nors*, *Our Country's Good*, *The Passion of Dracula*, *A Plague of Angels*, *Pride & Prejudice*, *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, *Pygmalion*, *Quartet*, *Quiet in the Land*, *Ragtime*, *The Real Thing*, *Rebels*, *Road to Mecca*, *The Scarlet Pimpernel*, *The Secret Garden*, *Shadowlands*, *Shakespeare in Hollywood*, *A Shayna Maidel*, *Sherlock's Last Case*, *Silent Sky*, *Skylight*, *Six Degrees of Separation*, *Smash*, *South Pacific*, *Steel Magnolias*, *Storefront Church*, *Street Scene*, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *Suddenly Last Summer*, *Sweeney Todd*, *Talley's Folly*, *Ten Unknowns*, *39 Steps*, *Titanic*, *Translations*, *27 Wagons Full of Cotton*, *The Waiting Room*, *Warwickshire Testimony*, *Wendy and Peter Pan*, *West Side Story*, *Whale Music*, *When We Are Married*, *Women of Lockerbie*, *Wonderful Tennessee*, *Woody and Viewed*, and *You Can't Take it with You*.

In these recordings, I demonstrate character's lines in dialect: pronunciation, intonation, and tone and rhythm, isolating and discussing the actor's choices. I avoid giving “line readings” by working slightly under tempo, allowing the actor to hear the dialect more clearly; I concentrate on *sounds* rather than *character intentions*. I also explain the idioms and obscure vocabulary, talking about the society presented by the play and how that character fits into it – a kind of dialectal dramaturgy, if you will. Hundreds of actors have used these recordings and played their dialect roles with skill and confidence, knowing they have the sounds right and understand the cultural nuances. They are available for lease to any company licensed for production of the play in question.

For details of all instructional materials and services, see:

<https://www.paulmeier.com>

FOR INSTRUCTORS

This book is best used in conjunction with the International Dialects of English Archive (IDEA), at <https://www.dialectsarchive.com>, where recordings of native speakers of most of the dialects and accents in this book can be found. I like to have my own students take notes as they listen, finding out how the speakers conform with or depart from my suggested “signature sounds” for each dialect or accent. By comparing speakers in this way, and noticing the differences between their reading style and their conversational style, the students gain a richer context for my instruction and for their dialect work as actors.

Many dialect instructors include dialect sample-gathering as a class activity: The students are asked to find dialect speakers, record them, analyze their speech, and often create monologues based on the interviews. Some instructors, particularly if they are also editors of IDEA, use this activity to create additional recordings for the archive. Your creation and submission of recordings would be most welcome. Please consult the “Wish List” at <https://www.dialectsarchive.com/wish-list> to see what is most needed. My university, the University of Kansas, with an enrollment of roughly 30,000, always has more than 1,000 students from other lands studying with us. These are a rich source for dialect-gathering; your institution is probably similar in that regard.

A very useful resource for teachers and students are my interactive charts of the International Phonetic Association. The graphics were designed by my colleague, Eric Armstrong of the University of York in Toronto, while I voiced all the sounds. You will find the charts at <https://www.paulmeier.com/ipacharts>, and on Eric Armstrong’s website at www.yorku.ca/earmstro/ipa/index.html. This interactive demonstration of the International Phonetic Alphabet is also available as a CD-ROM and an app for both Apple mobile devices and Android. Please visit <https://www.paulmeier.com/product/ipa-chart-cd> for more information and links to both the iTunes app store and Google Play store.

Also related to dialect and accent instruction is my *In a Manner of Speaking* podcast, available for free at <https://www.paulmeier.com/in-a-manner-of-speaking> and on most podcast distribution channels, such as iTunes and Stitcher.

Finally, I offer a certification program, allowing actors to take a formal exam and earn a Certificate of Proficiency in each of the dialects studied in this book. For details of this program, see <https://www.paulmeier.com/training>.

Our collaboration with theatre and film instructors who employ this book as their chosen text is something we value highly. Please feel free to contact us at any time, and good luck with your teaching of this most important skill.

For further instructor information, please visit:

<https://www.paulmeier.com/instructors>

THE SEVEN-STEP METHOD

Learning an accent or dialect is essentially an exercise in mimicry. It comes easily for some but is harder for others. My job as dialect instructor is to give you as many aids to your own natural powers of mimicry as possible. I have devised a Seven-Step Method.

Step One I break down the dialect (or accent) into *signature sounds*, identifying the most important *lexical sets* (groups of words sharing the same phonetic features), and I give you the IPA symbol for each sound. You may not know the International Phonetic Alphabet; most of my clients don't. However, without even trying, you'll quickly relate to these symbols. If you are inspired to learn them in more depth, I demonstrate them on my website at <https://www.paulmeier.com/ipacharts>, where you can also find information about some of the technical terms I use from time to time.

Step Two I introduce *Additional Features* of the dialect. You see, you need to know more than simply how the words are *pronounced*. A dialect is a complex matrix of features, and my job is to open your ears to all of them.

Step Three If there are useful notes to give you about the *Rhythm, Stress, Intonation, and Tone* of the dialect we are studying, this is where you will find them. Often I have found that success in these areas is more important than pronouncing the individual words correctly.

Step Four Here I give you *Signature Sounds in Sentence Context*. You will find several examples of the signature sound next to each other, each word reinforcing the others. These sentences are easy to mimic and give you early success on which you can build.

Step Five Now it's time to listen to *Real-life Speakers on IDEA*. I will ask you to listen to particular recordings from the International Dialects of English Archive, which I founded in 1998. From among the hundreds of recordings in the archive, I have selected the best examples of the dialect you are studying, giving commentary on them to guide your listening.

Step Six *Coordination Exercises* come next – several different signature sounds in close proximity. These are more difficult, but I provide two great visual aids – the numbers of the signature sounds AND the phonetic transcription beneath the text. This, combined with the auditory stimulus of the sound files, makes the job a lot easier.

Step Seven Finally, I provide *Monologue One* and *Monologue Two*, one male and one female, from a play or film requiring the dialect. By listening to the recording at the same time as seeing the visual aids beneath the text, you have all you need to master a speech in the dialect you are setting out to conquer. My goal is to have you “pitch-perfect” with at least one monologue requiring the dialect, so that you can walk more confidently into auditions for dialect roles.

GLOSSARY

The following list defines some of the terms used in the chapters that follow. All of them appear in the text in italics. Further technical information can be found in the charts of the International Phonetic Association, reproduced in this book, and at the author's website at <https://www.paulmeier.com/ipacharts>. Text in Roman letters appearing between forward slash marks /text/ denotes English spelling, while text appearing between square brackets [tekst] is phonetic transcription.

accent reduction: term often used to describe the process of modifying a non-prestige dialect or accent, or changing a foreign-language accent toward a perceived standard, mainstream, or prestige dialect.

affricate: a co-articulated plosive and fricative, such as we hear in *church*, *age*, *tsunami* [tʃ] [dʒ] [tʃs], etc., in English.

allophone: a contextually modified variant of a *phoneme* (see separate entry). Notice, for example, how the /t/ in *team* varies from that in *try*. These are said to be *allophones* of the *phoneme* /t/.

alveolar ridge: the little bump behind the top teeth.

approximant: a consonant in which the vocal tract is narrowed, but not enough to cause turbulent air flow. The /r/ in many English dialects is often spoken as the *approximant* [ɹ].

aspiration: literally breath. Often used to denote the little puff of air that accompanies the release of the *voiceless plosives* [p, t, k] in most English dialects' pronunciation of *pick*, *tick*, and *kick*, etc.

assimilation: denoting the fusion of two consonants into one; for example the /s/ and /y/ of *as you*, so that [æz ju] becomes [æʒu].

bilabial: sound made with the two lips.

close: referring to a vowel in which the highest part of the tongue is raised toward the roof of the mouth. The jaw will also be fairly closed.

co-articulation: referring to simultaneous articulation of two phonemes; for example, the /t/ and /s/ in *tsunami*.

code switching: referring to the practice of varying the style of one's speech according to its purpose or social context. For example, the contrasting styles of a formal address in public versus casual conversation with a friend.

consonant: a sound characterized by constriction or closure at one or more points of the speech tract.

consonant cluster: e.g., /sps/, /cts/, /sts/.

continuant: referring to a consonant that may be prolonged indefinitely rather than having the finite duration of a stop; for example, /v/, /m/, /l/.

dark /l/: sometimes called a *velarized* /l/. You will note the difference in quality between the two /l/ sounds in RP and GenAm *leak* and *call*. The latter contains the dark /l/.

dental: referring to the teeth.

devoiced: referring to a normally voiced consonant losing some or all of its voicing, as often occurs to final voiced consonants. Dutch and German, for examples, call for final voiced consonants to be somewhat devoiced. A useful distinction from *unvoiced*.

diacritic: a mark placed above or below a *phonetic* symbol, modifying it. For example, [ɾ̥] above a vowel indicates *r-coloration* of that vowel.

dialect: a regional variant of a language distinguished by pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar from other regional varieties. Variants based on class and other types of sub-grouping also exist. It has been said that a language is a dialect with an army, suggesting the political nature of the definition. The two terms, *accent* and *dialect*, are often used interchangeably, even though accent refers more to pronunciation alone. However, I like to maintain a distinction between English-language *dialects* and foreign-language *accents*. This is a fairly common theatrical tradition in North America.

diphthong: a vowel that glides from one position to another. The vowel in GenAm and RP *price* is an example, gliding from [a] to [ɪ].

drawl: term denoting the lengthening of vowels, or their diphthongization, as occurs in some dialects.

dynamics: generally referring to *pitch*, *duration*, and *volume* as the musical qualities that can be varied for expressive purposes.

elide (elision, noun): to omit. For example, we might say that some American speakers *elide* the /t/ when speaking the word *sentence*. Some people also use the term to refer to a *legato* transition between one word and (usually) a vowel-initial word that follows, e.g. *we all*, or *not ever*.

ESL: English as a Second Language.

fortis: strong. For example, in most English dialects the /c/ of *peace* is *fortis* while the /s/ of *peas* is *lenis*, or weak. Generally a quality associated with *voiceless* consonants.

fricative: *consonant* made by narrowing the vocal tract sufficiently to cause turbulent airflow. The /f/ and /v/ in *five* are examples.

GenAm (General American): contentious, but useful term, referring to an ill-defined mainstream or “prestige” dialect of American English. It may be thought of as a “non-regional” style.

glide: sometimes used to mean *diphthong*.

glottal (glottis, noun): a sound articulated by the vocal folds themselves. The most famous glottal consonant is the *glottal stop* or *glottal shock* [ʔ], such as we hear in the classic Cockney *butter* [bʌʔə], or that we sometimes intrude between two words such as *my eye* where the second begins with a vowel.

glottal reinforcement: term often meaning the *co-articulation* of the glottal stop [ʔ] with another consonant, usually a stop. One hears this in Newcastle speech, for example, on the /t/ in *fourteen*, spoken as [fɔʔtʰiːn]. Frequently this also can be observed in unreleased stops at the end of an utterance, as in *stop!* [stɒʔp̚].

glottal shock: (see glottal.)

glottal stop: (see glottal.)

glottis: the space between the vocal folds.

hypercorrect: referring to how we sometimes overcompensate in correcting our mispronunciations while learning a foreign language, or in changing our dialect. For example, knowing they often fail to observe the /h/ in English words, French speakers sometimes overdo it.

IDEA: The International Dialects of English Archive, online at <https://www.dialectsarchive.com>, a repository of recordings of native speakers speaking English in their own accents and dialects.

inflection: in this discipline, referring to melody contour or pitch change, as in *rising inflection*, *falling inflection*.

intervocalic: occurring between two *vowels*, such as the /r/ in *Paris*.

intonation: term virtually interchangeable with *inflection*; referring to the melody contour of a phrase.

intrusive /r/: the phenomenon, chiefly observed in non-rhotic dialects, of intruding an /r/ where none occurs in the spelling. For example, *idea of it* where /r/ is used to connect the first two words [aɪdɪəʊvɪt].

IPA: both International Phonetic Alphabet and International Phonetic Association.

labial(ized): referring to the lips. For example, /r/ is labialized in some speakers and some dialects; for example, in elevated RP *very sorry* [vɛɹ̥ɪ sɒɹ̥ɪ].

labiodental: lips and teeth. e.g., *labiodental fricatives* in English, [f v].

lateral: sideways. For example, in English /l/, a *lateral approximant*, the point of contact is *alveolar*, while the air stream escapes laterally. The Welsh phoneme inventory contains *the unvoiced, alveolar, lateral fricative* [ɬ] (think lateral lisp) for /l/ words like *Lloyd*, *Llandudno*, etc.

lax: relaxed. An important distinction from *tense* in discussing vowels, for example. Contrast the vowels in *sheep* and *ship* to feel the difference.

legato: smooth, flowing; the opposite of *staccato*. Useful, for example, in describing the transition to a vowel-initial word in a phrase like *All Americans eat every ounce of avocado available* (comprising only vowel-initial words). A *staccato* delivery might use a *glottal* to initiate each word while a *legato* delivery would be smooth, fluid, and use no glottal attack.

lenis: weak. The opposite of *fortis*.

lexical set: a set of words all employing the same phonetic vowel, regardless of spelling. *Care, air, bear, heir, their, there, prayer, and scarce* are all members of the *square* lexical set, for example. J.C. Wells devised the system now widely employed by those in the field.

liaison: linking: the strategy of using the final sound of one word to initiate the following. A defining quality of French speech.

linking /r/, linking /l/: the terms I use to refer to the way /r/ or /l/, elided when a consonant follows, is used when a vowel follows. For example, in non-rhotic dialects, when /r/ following a vowel is normally silent, it is sounded to link to a following vowel-initial word. Contrast RP *here we* [hɪə wɪ] with *here are* [hɪəɹə]. Similarly, in Cockney, for example, contrast *well no* [wɛʊ naʊ] with *well I* [wɛl aɪ]; notice the linking /l/.

minimal pair: a pair of words differing in only one *phoneme*, e.g. *pit, peat* [pɪt pɪt].

monophthong: a single-stage vowel; from the Greek, *phthong* (sound) and *mono* (one).

nasal: concerning the nose.

nasality: nasal resonance. Frequently heard on vowels before or after a nasal consonant, i.e. [m, n, ŋ].

neutral: sometimes referring to the neutral vowel, or *schwa* [ə].

neutral onset: referring to the phenomenon of gliding on to the vowel from a neutral position. For example, in Cockney, *team* would receive a neutral onset producing [təim]. Sometimes called *onglide*.

open: used to refer to a vowel where the highest part of the tongue is low in the mouth.

palate: the roof of the mouth can be divided into hard and soft palate (velum).

pharynx (pharyngeal, adjective): area of speech tract between the uvula and the larynx.

phone: An actual speech sound, without regard to the *phonology* of a language, as revealed by *phonetic* analysis. Note that the /t/ in *tab* is *aspirated* in English [t^h], while in *stab* it is not [t]; and that the /t/ in *little* and *try* are also somewhat differently sounded. *Phones* that are variants of the same *phoneme* are called *allophones* (see separate entry) of that *phoneme*.

phoneme (phonemic, adjective): the smallest single segment of speech capable of distinguishing meaning. Unlike a *phone* (an actual speech sound), a *phoneme* is simply the “idea of a sound,” its actual realization taking many forms, resulting in different *phones*. /t/ and /d/ are examples of *phonemes*, since they contrast sufficiently in *minimal pairs* (see separate entry), such as in *bit/bid* to change the meaning of the utterance.

phonetics: the science of speech; can also refer to phonetic analysis or transcription of speech.

phonology: is distinguished from *phonetics* by its concern with how sounds function in a given language or group of languages, rather than simply their mechanical or acoustic properties.

pitch: the relative musical note of an utterance.

plosive: a consonant characterized by a total occlusion of the speech tract, followed immediately by an explosive release of the trapped air.

polysyllabic: referring to words composed of more than one syllable.

post-vocalic: after a vowel.

pre-vocalic: before a vowel.

prosody: that aspect of an utterance that has to do with duration, pitch, and stress, i.e., its supra-segmental qualities, or its qualities that go beyond a description of its phonetic segments. In other contexts, the term has more to do with the study of versification.

pulmonic: referring to the lungs. All spoken languages use pulmonic sounds, while some also contain non-pulmonic sounds (clicks, implosives, and ejectives) that do not rely on lung pressure to create the air stream.

r-coloration: refers mostly to vowels that may be “colored” in a given dialect by the following /r/.

Received Pronunciation (RP): term coined by Daniel Jones to refer to that dialect of English most widely “received” or understood; sometimes called Standard British English, the Queen’s English, or Oxford English.

released: may refer to a *plosive* fully completed by the speaker, where the pent-up air is released; as opposed to one where only the stop stage is present, with no audible release.

retroflex, retroflexion: refers to a consonant in which the tongue tip is curled up and back.

reverse mistakes: a term I coined to refer to the phenomenon that occurs when, conscious of a potential mistake, we make a correction where none is needed. For example, French speakers, knowing their tendency to elide the /h/ in English, will sometimes place one where none is needed – for example *inhabit* [hinabit] – and also produce it *hypercorrectly*.

rhotic, rhoticity: referring to a wide range of phonemes that are “r-like” in nature.

rhythm: an important and complex aspect of speech, referring predominantly to the pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables.

r-less: referring mostly to dialects where *post-vocalic* /r/ is silent, a.k.a. *non-rhotic*.

schwa: the central neutral vowel [ə], found in great abundance in casual English; as in *among*, *particular*, *fascination*, and a host of *unstressed* syllables in *polysyllabic* words, and in the *weak forms* of some monosyllabic words too. “Careful” English may elevate many of these schwas to other vowel sounds, such as [ʊ] or [ɪ].

semi-vowel: another term for those *approximants* that are rather vowel-like in nature, or serve vowel-like functions within the syllable structure of words; specifically [w] and [j] in English.

shadow vowel: a term much favored by some singing teachers, referring to the “ghost” of a vowel that sometimes can be heard following a particularly well-defined consonant. Consider an emphatic question, “When?!!” and the /n/ might well be released into a shadow vowel.

signature sounds: term I coined to refer to those sounds that are the hallmark, or “footprint” of a dialect, serving to sum up its distinct differences from other dialects.

staccato: rapid, brief, clipped: the opposite of *legato*, referring to a series of short, sharp syllables, often using a glottal to begin vowel-initial words. Think of a musical phrase on the flute with a tiny silence between each note, as opposed to that same phrase where each note is smoothly replaced by the next.

standard lexical set: see *lexical sets*.

stress, stressed: referring to those syllables in an utterance receiving emphasis, signaled by extra duration, a jump in pitch, extra loudness, or a combination of all three. Primary and secondary stress can be notated in IPA as [ˈ] or [ˌ] as in *phonetician* [ˌfənetɪˈtʃən].

tap, tapped /r/: an /r/ made by a single tap of the tongue tip on the *alveolar ridge*.

tense: the opposite of *lax*, and referring to the muscularity of the tongue.

tone: an ambiguous word that sometimes means *pitch* (as in semi-tone, full tone) but usually refers to quality or “tone of voice,” i.e., *harsh*, *soft*, *nasal*, *denasal*, etc.

tongue-bunching: refers to one among several strategies for creating the sound of /r/. Research shows that some people curl their tongues up and back while others simply bunch up the center of their tongues to produce the same effect. Lip-rounding and tongue root tension can also enhance our perception of *rhoticity*.

trill: refers chiefly to /r/ sounds in some languages and dialects involving multiple taps of the tongue.

triphthong: a three-stage vowel; for example, RP *prior* [pɹaɪə] when spoken as a monosyllable; especially useful in versification.

twang: highly unscientific but useful onomatopoeic term, usually connoting some *nasality* of tone.

unreleased: see *released*.

unstressed: see *stressed*.

unvoiced: a.k.a. *voiceless*: referring to sounds that do not involve the vibration of the vocal cords. During the /ss/ in *missing*, for example, the vocal cords momentarily cease vibration.

uvula (uvular, adjective): small appendage of the soft palate.

velum (velar, adjective): the soft palate.

voiced: referring to sounds that involve the vibration of the vocal cords. During the /s/ in *miser*, for example, the vocal cords are vibrating.

voiceless: synonymous with *unvoiced*.

volume: loudness or amplitude.

vowel: speech sound characterized by total absence of obstruction to the airflow. It is usually the dominant and central part of the syllable.

weak form: refers to the change that may happen to a word when it occurs in an *unstressed* position. For example, we use the strong form of *can* when saying *She CAN; I CAN'T* [ʃi **kæn** aɪ kɑnt] but the weak form in *I know I can DO it!* [aɪ nəʊ aɪ **kən** du ɪt].

yod: name for the palatal *approximant* [j], as in *music*, *youth*, *few* [mjuzɪk, juθ, fju], etc.

II. BRITISH AND IRISH DIALECTS

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THE BIRMINGHAM DIALECT

INTRODUCTION

Birmingham, with its roots in the sixth century, is a large, industrial city in England's West Midlands, about 130 miles north of London. (Click on IDEA's Global Map¹ to see surrounding towns and to listen to native speakers from the area.) Birmingham lies on the eastern edge of what is called the "Black Country," possibly named for the vast amounts of soot generated during the Industrial Revolution, or perhaps for a huge seam of coal lying quite close to the surface in that area.

Brummies, as natives of the city are affectionately known, live in the United Kingdom's second most populous city, the UK's "second city," with roughly four million living in the wider metropolitan area. "Brummie" is taken from the city's nickname, Brum, which comes from its ancient name, Brummagem, itself perhaps derived from Bromwich-ham. The Brummie dialect is very distinctive but not universally loved by Brits from other regions, and it is often stigmatized.



Birmingham's city centre is dominated by St. Martin in the Bull Ring, center, and the Bull Ring Shopping Centre, right. The latter, containing Selfridge's Department Store, was constructed in 2003 and is now an icon of Birmingham regeneration. St. Martin was built in 1873 but its tower and spire is several centuries older. (iStockPhoto image #535429223 courtesy Chris Hepburn, www.chrishepburn.co.uk)

¹ The Global Map is at <http://www.dialectsarchive.com/globalmap>.

The Birmingham Dialect

Like all large cities, Birmingham is home to a diverse population, so to speak about “the” Birmingham dialect is a gross simplification. More than half of school-age children are from non-white British families; over a quarter of residents of the city are of Asian descent, and the white population in the 2011 census was listed at 58 percent. Socio-economic profiles are as diverse as you would expect, with all the variety of speech styles that implies.

So my attempt is to assist you in portraying a middle-of-the-road dialect, one that will help you with characters needing only a mild accent as well as those requiring something stronger.

TRACK 1

SIGNATURE SOUNDS

1. In the FLEECE and happ-Y lexical sets (see STANDARD LEXICAL SETS above), this dialect uses a short “on-glide” [əɪ]. Stronger versions can be heard with a more forward starting point, even as forward as [ɛ], resulting in [ɛɪ]. As I speak the following list, I’ll leave you time to repeat what you hear. The different spellings (-ea, -ie, -ee, -ei, -e, -y, and -i) remind us that words in the same lexical set share sounds but not necessarily letters.

EXAMPLES: *cease, piece, cheese, receive, completely, happy, naughty, police, he, she, we*

2. In the KIT lexical set, some Brummie speakers can be heard “raising” and “fronting” this vowel to [i], making *fit*, in Brummie, identical to *feet*, in Received Pronunciation, or RP.

EXAMPLES: *kit, list, kick, figure, pretty, women, business*

3. In the LOT set, some Brummies use [ɑ], like General American speakers, while others use [ɒ], the lip-round equivalent used in most other British dialects.

EXAMPLES: (both ways) *sorry, because, sausage, want, dog, cough, involve, quality*

For this preview version, pages 29-53 have been removed.
Your book will contain all 426 pages.

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A MODERN BRITISH DIALECT: ESTUARY

INTRODUCTION

The term “Estuary English” was coined by David Rosewarne in the early 1980s when he realized that, as dialects always do, Received Pronunciation (RP), described in my *The Standard British English* manual (part of the larger collection, *Accents & Dialects for Stage and Screen*), was fading as the dominant prestige dialect of British English.²⁰ The sounds of Cockney, described in my *The Cockney Dialect* (also part of *Accents & Dialects for Stage and Screen* and *Dialects of the British Isles*), were mingling with it. At the same time, new sounds – neither RP or Cockney – were evolving. The upward and outward social, geographical, and economic mobility of London’s working class, and the downward pressure of a more egalitarian politics (diminishing RP as the professional and social entrance ticket it had once been) were among the factors driving this change. More and more presenters on the BBC (that bastion of establishment values), more and more professionals in all walks of life, and even younger members of the aristocracy were abandoning the rigorously defined sounds of RP.²¹ Although it was still being taught to actors training for the theatre as essential for the period British drama they would always have to perform, it was no longer being drilled into them as their everyday style of speech, as it was when I trained for the theatre in the 1960s.

Estuary English is still a contentious term, but it has caught on.²² Yes, it shares features with RP and Cockney but now has enough different features of its own to finally stand alone, particularly as it is widely accepted as standard pronunciation and not stigmatized, as Cockney had been.

Where does the name come from? The “estuary” in question is that of the River Thames, the largest river in southeast England. From its source, a little upstream from Oxford, and running east through the capital down to the North Sea, the Thames is tidal for nearly 100 miles, over half its length. Hence the Thames Estuary – estuary is defined as the tidal part of a river – dominates southeast England. It roughly bisects the most populous and most politically, artistically, and economically powerful part of Britain.

It is spoken in the area that expanded out from London to alter the character of the dialects and accents of the seven “home counties” bordering London, and far beyond.

²⁰ Rosewarne, David, 1984. “Estuary English.” *Times Educational Supplement*, 19 (October 1984).

²¹ As David Crystal recalls in the *In a Manner of Speaking* podcast I recorded with him in November 2019, he overheard Prince William, Duke of Cambridge, in conversation with his former Search and Rescue pilot colleagues. Crystal says the prince’s speech style was full of the signature sounds of Estuary. However, just minutes later, when he stepped up to the platform to give a speech, RP was back at full strength. You can listen to the podcast at <https://www.paulmeier.com/2019/10/31/episode-22-received-pronunciation>.

²² As Crystal says in that same podcast, he prefers the term General British English, distinguishing it from General American English. He points out that Estuary is a collection of different accents (as perhaps any broadly applied label must be) and that most of the signature sounds can be found in either RP or Cockney.

A Modern British Dialect: Estuary



Listen to the upmarket Cockney of Jonathan Ross (note his famous weak /r/), born in northeast London, and you hear Estuary. Listen to David Beckham, born a few streets away from Ross, and you hear Estuary, as you will with his famous wife, former Spice Girls pop star Victoria Beckham. Ricky Gervais, actor and comedian, is a great exemplar too.

The dialect crosses ethnic and racial lines. Listen to comedians Lenny Henry, Gina Yashere, and Bilal Zafar; they are London-born and of Caribbean, African, and Asian heritages, respectively. This makes Estuary an important dialect for English-speaking actors of color, wherever in the world they live.

Estuary, varying in its precise shading, should be considered for almost any character born and raised in the dialect region after 1980, or even earlier.

I should also mention Multi-Cultural London English (MLE), which shares some features with Cockney and Estuary but yet has enough features to deserve a separate discussion.

But let's dive in and see what features Estuary shares with RP and Cockney, and how it differs from them. I will also contrast it occasionally with General American (GenAm) and MLE.

TRACK 1

SIGNATURE SOUNDS

1. In the FLEECE and happ-Y lexical sets (see STANDARD LEXICAL SETS above), this dialect uses a short “on-glide” [ɪ̯]. As I speak the following list, I’ll leave you time to repeat what you hear. The different spellings (-ea, -ie, -ee, -ei, -e, -y, and -i) remind us that words in the same lexical set share sounds but not necessarily letters.

EXAMPLES: *cease, piece, cheese, receive, completely, happy, naughty, police, he, she, we*

2. In the LOT lexical set, Estuary speakers align with both Cockney and RP, using the open, back, lip-rounded vowel [ɒ], in contrast to General American speakers who use [ɑ], which uses no lip-rounding.

EXAMPLES: *sorry, because, sausage, want, dog, cough, involve, quality*

3. In the BATH set, Estuary speakers align with Cockney and RP, and use [ɑ], unlike GenAm speakers who use [æ]. (There is a very small subset of this group in which GenAm and British English speakers reverse their usual practice. For instance, Americans usually say *pasta* [pastə] while Brits usually say [pæstə]; Estuary speakers follow this practice too.)

EXAMPLES: *bath, laugh, dance, last, pajamas, rather, can’t* (but note *can*), *aunt*; but *pasta, tacos, Nissan, teriyaki, mafia*, etc.

4. In the THOUGHT set, Estuary, Cockney, and RP all use the open, mid-back, rounded vowel [ɔ], where GenAm uses [ɑ] or [ɒ]. Some Estuary speakers use [oʊ], as in *thought* [θoʊt].

EXAMPLES: (pronounced both ways) *thought, awkward, daughter, fall, talk, bald*

5. To make things easier for you, I’ve included in this signature sound all the lexical sets in which the letter /r/ follows a vowel: NURSE [ɜ], START [ɑ], NORTH/FORCE [ɔ], lett-ER [ə], NEAR [ɪ], SQUARE [ɛ], and CURE [ɜ]. Estuary, like RP and Cockney, is a “non-rhotic” dialect. This means that the letter /r/ is silent when it follows a vowel. To imitate it, hold the blade of your tongue low, with the center of your tongue relaxed, so you produce no “r-coloration.” This contrasts dramatically with GenAm and other “rhotic” Englishes. Also

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The Irish Dialect

TRACK 7

MONOLOGUE ONE

Sean O'Casey's 1924 play, *Juno and the Paycock*, is about the Boyles, a poor Dublin family. Their redemption from poverty seems possible when a bequest favoring them comes to light. But by the end of the play, their only son Johnny is dead, their only daughter, Mary, pregnant, and the inheritance slips from their grasp. The first monologue is that of Captain Boyle, the "paycock."

BOYLE

The boyo that's afther doin' it to Mary done it to me as well. The thick made out the Will
14 7 14 2 6 5 11 a/b 1 2 12 14 14 15 8 10 15 14 12
d̪ə bɔɪə d̪ats ɟɪtʰə d̪ʲən ət̪ə m̪eːɹi d̪ʲən ɪt̪ə m̪i əz w̪el d̪ə t̪ɪkʰ m̪eɪd̪ ɛʊ? d̪ə w̪ɪl

wrong; he said in th' Will, only first cousin an' second cousin, instead of mentionin' our
3 14 12 7 5 1 2 1 b 5
wɔŋ hi s̪eɪd̪ ɪn d̪ə w̪ɪl ɔnli fɜːst kʊz̪ɪn̪ ən s̪ek̪ʰŋ kʊz̪ɪn̪ ɪnst̪əd ə m̪enʃən̪ən ə

names, an' now any one that thinks he's a first cousin or second cousin t'oul' Ellison can
8 2 10 c 1 12 2 14 5 1 5 1 g 12 2
n̪eɪmz ən n̪ʲəʊ ænɪ wʊn d̪at̪ t̪ɪŋks h̪iz ə fɜːs kʊz̪ɪn̪ ə s̪ek̪ʰŋ kʊz̪ɪn̪ t̪aʊl̪ ɛl̪əs̪ŋ k̪ən

claim the money as well as me, an' they're springin' up in hundreds, an' comin' from
8 14 1 2 12 2 2 14 5 a/b 1 15 1 14 2 1 3
kleɪm d̪ə mʊni əz w̪el əz m̪i ən d̪eə s̪pɾɪŋŋən ʊpʰ ɪn hʊndr̪ɪd̪z ən kʊm̪ən fr̪əm

America an' Australia, thinkin' to get their whack out of it, while all the time the lawyers
2 4 8 14 a/b 15 15 14 13 2 15 10 15 b15 13 9 12 4 12 14 9 14 4 5
əm̪eɪɹk̪ə ən əst̪r̪eɪlj̪ə t̪ɪŋk̪ən t̪ʰə ɡet̪ʰ d̪eə m̪akʰ ɛʊt̪ʰ əv̪ ət̪ʰ m̪ɔɪl̪ əl̪ d̪ə t̪ɔɪm̪ d̪ə l̪əj̪əz

is gobblin' it up, till there's not as much as ud buy a stockin' for your lovely daughter's
3 a/b b 1 15 12 14 5 3 15 1 2 9 3 a/b 5 5 1 4 15 5
ɪz ɡɔbl̪ən̪ ət̪ʰ ʊpʰ t̪ɪl̪ d̪eəz nɔt̪ʰ əz mʊt̪ʃ əz əd̪ bɔɪ ə stɔk̪ŋ f̪ə j̪ə lʊvli d̪at̪ʰəz

baby!...I'm tellin' you the scholar, Bentham, made a banjax o' th' Will; instead o' sayin',
8 9 a/b 11 14 3 5 14 8 2 2 14 12 8 a/b
beɪbi ɔɪm̪ t̪el̪ən̪ j̪ʊ d̪ə skɔlə b̪ɛnt̪əm̪ m̪eɪd̪ ə b̪ændʒaks ə d̪ə w̪ɪl | ɪnst̪əd ə seɪn̪

The Irish Dialect

‘th’ rest o’ me property to be divided between me first cousin, Jack Boyle, an’ me second
14 e 3 5 9 b e 5 1 2 15 12 2 e
ðə ˌrɛst ə mi ˌprɒpəˈdi tʰə bi ˌdɪvɪdɪd bɪtwɪn mi fɜːs kʊzn dʒæk bɔɪl an mi sɛkʰŋ

cousin, Mick Finnegan, o’ Santhry’, he writ down only, ‘me first an’ second cousins’, an’
1 15 2 14 10 7 e 5 2 1 2
kʊzn mɪk fɪnəɡən ə sənθri hi ɹɪˌdʊn ɒnli mi fɜːst ən sɛkʰŋ kʊznz an

the world an’ his wife are afther th’ property now.
14 5 12 2 9 5 6 14 14 3 5 10
ðə wɜːld an ɪz wɪf ə ˌɑftʰə ðə ˌprɒpəˈdi nɔʊ

TRACK 8

MONOLOGUE TWO

Mrs. Boyle, Juno, his wife, speaks the second monologue, from the same play.

JUNO

I forgot, Mary, I forgot; your poor oul’ selfish mother was only thinkin’ of
9 5 3 15 9 5 3 15 5 g 12 1 14 5 7 14 a/b
ɪ fəɡɒtʰ mɛəri ɪ fəɡɒtʰ jɜː pʊə aʊl sɛlfɪʃ mʊðə wəz ɒnli ˌtɪŋkən əv

herself. No, no, you mustn’t come – it wouldn’t be good for you. You go on to me
5 12 7 7 11 1 1 15 5 11 7 3 e
hɜːsɛlf nɔ nɔ jʊ ˌmʊsntʰ kʊm ɪtʰ wʊdnʰt bi ɡʊd fɜː jə jʊ ɡo ɒn tə mi

sisther’s an’ I’ll face th’ ordeal meself. Maybe I didn’t feel sorry enough for Mrs. Tancred
14 5 2 9 12 8 14 5 12 b 12 8 9 3 1 5 15 2 b
sɪstʰəz an ɪl fe:s ði ɔːdɪl mɪsɛlf meɪbi ɪ dɪdnʰt fiːl sɔɹi ɪnʊf fɜː mɪsɪz tʰɑŋkrəd

when her poor son was found as Johnny’s been found now – because he was a Diehard!
13 5 5 1 10 2 3 10 10 9 5
wɛn hɜː pʊə sʊn wəz fəʊnd əz dʒɒnɪz bɪn fəʊnd nɔʊ bɪkəz hi wəz ə dɔɪhɑːd

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III. DIALECTS OF THE UNITED STATES

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THE AMERICAN SOUTHERN DIALECT

(Mid-South)

INTRODUCTION

The American South does not possess one monolithic dialect. There are immense differences between the cultivated tones of Savannah, Georgia; the twang of the mountain people of Eastern Kentucky; the urban, almost New York sounds of New Orleans; and the sounds of West Texas. Yet all are part of what we refer to as “The South.” It pains residents of “Dixie” to hear non-Southern actors doing dialects from the wrong area, or worse yet, mangling and caricaturing their speech, as happens too frequently in the theatre and in the movies.

With the South’s rich literary and dramatic tradition, it is imperative that actors understand and portray with greater respect the dialectal and cultural diversity of the Southern American states – for an actor in English-language plays and films cannot go long before being called upon to play a Southerner.

I offer this among the several Southern dialects with which I am familiar, as it embodies many features found throughout the South and so is also useful for portraying Southern characters whose precise origins are not specified.



Churchill Downs has been hosting the Kentucky Derby in Louisville, Kentucky, since 1875. The famous twin spires date from 1895. Though the dialects in Louisville, in north-central Kentucky, are often either a more regal version of the one heard in this booklet or a close cousin to the General American dialect heard in Ohio and Indiana, the annual Derby is a celebration of all things Kentucky.

(photo courtesy of Creative Commons Attribution 2.0 Generic)

TRACK 1

SIGNATURE SOUNDS

1. One signature sound common throughout the South is the use of [ɪ] where most of the rest of the United States uses [ɛ]. This feature can be heard almost exclusively in words in which the vowel is followed /n/ or /m/. Occasionally this vowel is *diphthongized*.

EXAMPLES: *end, lemonade, many, Benjamin, men folk, remember, seminary, mental, generous, chemistry, semblance*

2. By contrast, and somewhat confusingly, the Southerner draws words in the *kit* lexical set,⁹¹ sounding them with a definite *glide*, much more pronounced when followed by *voiced continuant* consonants. Additionally, observe how the resultant *diphthong* has a much *closer* starting point. Hence: [iə].

EXAMPLES: *him, list, children, fill, sieve, with, his, milk; BUT sick, sip, lift, mix, etc.*

3. Again, in common with the whole region, this group of words sees the drawing of the vowels in both the *bath* and *trap* lexical sets. The result is [æɪə] – a *triphthong*, or 3-stage vowel. Again, the drawl is most pronounced when *voiced continuants* follow the vowel and the syllable is in a stressed position.

EXAMPLES: *past, half-time, band, fan-dance, granddad, laugh, chance*⁹²

4. When /l/ or /ll/ in a word follows the vowel, is terminal in the word or syllable, and is followed by silence or a consonant, there is a tendency for the /l/ or /ll/ to be sounded as a rather *lip-rounded, close, back* vowel [ʊ], or the sound is elided altogether. If, however, a vowel follows, then a full *alveolar* [l] is used – a kind of “linking /l/.”

EXAMPLES: *milk, million, self, welcome, fall, silver, salt, hilt, kill, selfish, bulb, culpable; BUT ceiling, cellar, caller, nylon, peeling, talent, fall off*

⁹¹ A lexical set is a group of words all sharing the same phonetic feature. I use J.C. Wells’ standard lexical sets, as found in his book, *Accents of English*, Volume 1, Cambridge University Press, 1998.

⁹² If the vowel is followed by voiceless consonants, which in English always have the effect of shortening preceding vowels, then this feature is much less noticeable. Interestingly, when the vowel is followed by /l/ or /ll/, the feature is also absent. And when followed by [ŋ] as in *angle, tango*, etc., the vowel we hear in this dialect is in the vicinity of [ɛ].

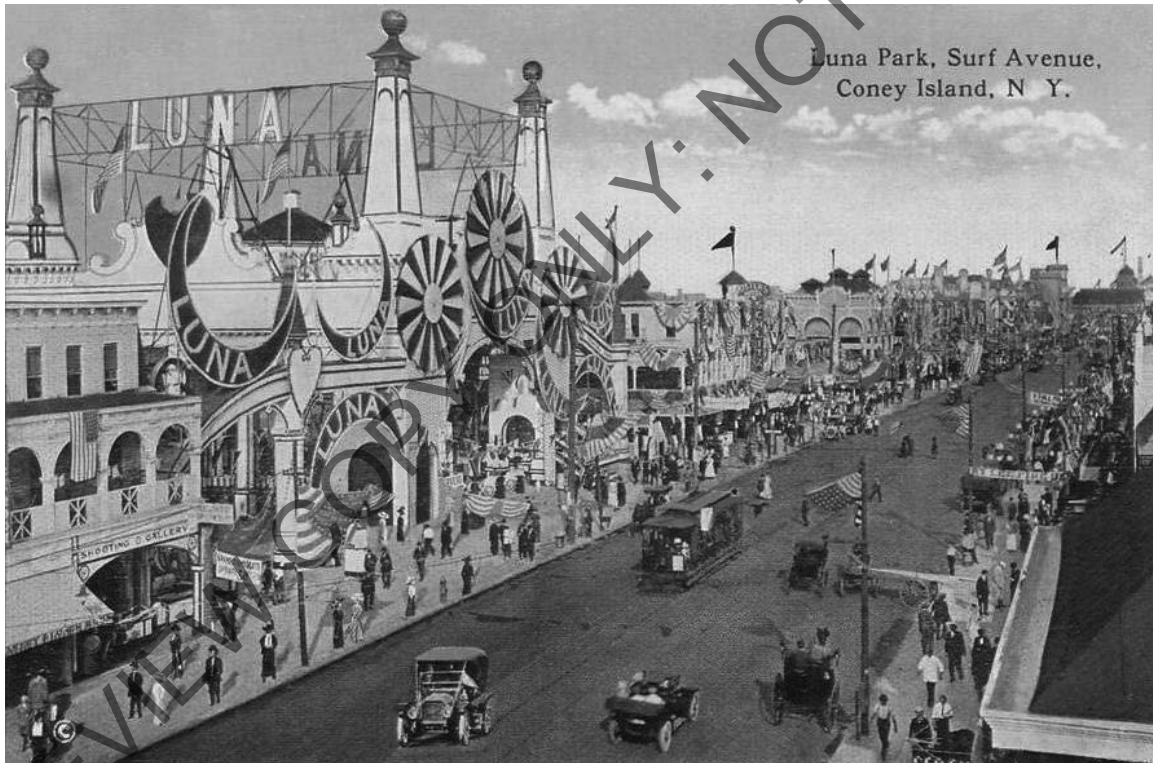
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THE GENERAL NEW YORK DIALECT

Perhaps more than most big cities, New York City is a cultural and ethnic melting pot. There are cities within cities within cities. There is vast diversity in all aspects of its life, and this, of course, extends to the accents and dialects heard there. There are many New Yorkers who would never be taken for New Yorkers by the rest of the world when judged by their speech alone because they do not conform to the popular stereotype. It must be admitted that actors do their share of perpetuating stereotypes, and it is my wish to present here the sound of the average, educated, Caucasian New Yorker, rather than perpetuating the “gangster” model we have received from the movies.

Having said that, let us analyze some of the signature sounds associated with a general New York style of speech.



This rendering of the old Luna Park on Coney Island in Brooklyn depicts typical New York City leisure life around 1913. This public-domain image is reproduced from a postcard published by C.S. Woolworth & Company.

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IV. OTHER ENGLISH-LANGUAGE DIALECTS

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THE GENERAL AUSTRALIAN DIALECT

INTRODUCTION

Although there are many styles of speech to be heard in Australia, as you would expect of such a multi-cultural country, the dialect of Australia is fairly homogeneous. For such a huge continent, there is not the startling difference in speech from Perth to Sydney to Melbourne to Adelaide that you would find in comparing New York with Atlanta, Boston and New Orleans; and certainly not the scale of difference that distinguishes the speech of London, Manchester, Bristol, and Newcastle.

As a former English colony and a leading member of the British Commonwealth, Australia is hugely influenced by British English. And we must remember how young the country is. Only a relatively few number of generations have passed to allow Australian English to diverge from the speech of the English who founded the country and who continued to be the dominant immigrant group for some time. Certainly, my analysis of Australian reveals that it has much in common with Standard British English, or Received Pronunciation (RP). However, Australian English *has* certainly diverged, as the following signature sounds reveal.



The Sydney Opera House

The Australian Dialect

TRACK 1

SIGNATURE SOUNDS

1. Use of /t/. Just as medial and final /t/ (especially if followed by a word beginning with a vowel) in American dialects is pronounced as [d], [ɾ], or is *unreleased*, vernacular Australian speech often does the same.

EXAMPLES: *better, lot of, shatter, motive, eating, sit up, writer*

2. Use of [j]. Following the *alveolar* consonants /t/d/n/l/ and /s/ and preceding the [u] vowel (when spelled /u/, /ui/, or /ew/), Australians, just as in RP (Received Pronunciation), intrude the *semi-vowel* [j], omitted by most American speakers, for example. An easy rule for American actors is to use this feature only when it is a possible alternate pronunciation in American English. One could never pronounce *tool* as [tʃuɪ], for example. In the case of /t/ and /d/ words, notice that the vernacular Australian speaker uses [tʃ̠] and [dʒ̠], hence *tune* [tʃ̠ɪn] and *duke* [dʒ̠ɪk].

EXAMPLES: *duel, during, lure, news, nude, assume, student, tune, lurid*

3. As you heard in the previous signature sound, the long /u/ vowel, as in *goose*, gets an interesting treatment by the Australian speaker. Not as *tense* or *lip-round* as the French vowel [y], this vowel is *lax* and less *lip-round* and probably more *central*, and could be designated [ɪ̞] for many speakers.

EXAMPLES: *news, future, issues, kangaroo, spoon, who are you, moving*

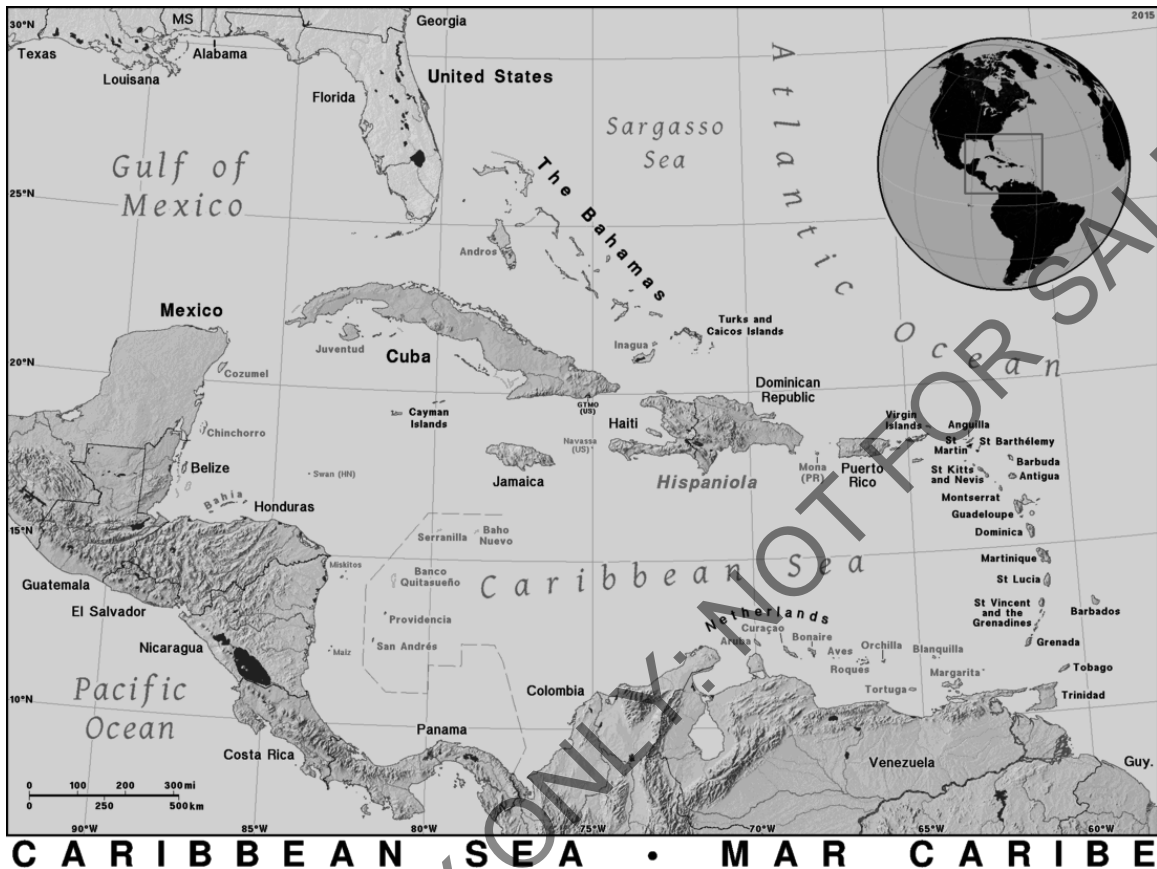
4. Australian English is *non-rhotic*, i.e., *r-less*; meaning that /r/ following a vowel is silent, just as in RP, although the vowel shapes vary significantly. In the *nurse* set, the lip shape is more like General American – lightly rounded – although, unlike GenAm, there is no *r-coloration*. (The exception to this silencing of the /r/ rule is the *linking* /r/, signature sound #11.) We might designate the Australian vowel [ə].

EXAMPLES: *earth, thirty, murder, shirt, learn, curly, pearls, gerbil, colonel*

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THE JAMAICAN DIALECT



INTRODUCTION

Jamaica – with the Cayman Islands, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Haiti, and Puerto Rico – constitutes the region known as the Greater Antilles, with over 90 percent of the land mass and 90 percent of the population of the West Indies.¹⁶¹ Britain, France, Denmark, The Netherlands, and Spain have all left their indelible marks on the region, but it is the descendants of the enslaved Africans (transported by European countries to work their Caribbean plantations) who have principally shaped the language and culture. In today's post-colonial era, more and more actors of color will be creating films and plays exploring the richness of the African diaspora. It is to those actors that this book is dedicated.¹⁶² Enjoy!

¹⁶¹ Public-domain map courtesy of PAT, at <http://ian.mackey.net/pat/map/cari/cari.html>.

¹⁶² We should not forget that white Jamaicans (about 3 percent of Jamaica's population) employ the same sounds as their fellow African-Jamaicans. To hear this for yourself, listen, for example, to recordings (available on YouTube) of interviews with former Jamaican Prime Minister Michael Manley, whose heritage, though principally white European, included some mixed-race ancestors. Michael Manley's accent is completely non-rhotic, however.

The Jamaican Dialect

A survey of the literature reveals that most of the very few publications that teach actors the dialect of Jamaican English have chosen to deal with the entire West Indies, describing a “Caribbean” sound; or, stepping back even further, attempt to describe a style of speech common to both the Caribbean and West Africa.

This study, in contrast, focuses on Jamaica alone, allowing greater specificity. But it is also a good place to start your exploration of the dialects and accents spoken throughout the West Indies. And the similarities between Caribbean creoles and African languages are fascinating. However, even a study such as this one, tightly focused on Jamaica alone, is complicated by several factors:

- Jamaica is a bi-lingual nation. Standard Jamaican English (SJE) is the official language for “all domains of public life” (government, education, the media, the legal system, etc.); the other language is the English-based creole known as Jamaican Creole (JC), or simply Jamaican and popularly known as Patwa (from the term, patois). Almost all Jamaicans know Patwa, regarding it proudly as their mother tongue, but about 40 percent of the population speaks *only* Patwa.¹⁶³ And about half of Jamaicans are bi-lingual in both Patwa and SJE.
- Those who are bi-lingual frequently “code-shift” in their speech from Patwa to SJE, according to the requirements of the moment, so there is a continuum, rather than a sharp divide, between the two languages.
- About 4,000 square miles, Jamaica is large and socially diverse enough to foster considerable dialectal variety among the population of 3 million, almost a third of whom live in the capital, Kingston. Linguists have documented significant differences between the creoles of the eastern and western regions of the island.

All this frustrates attempts to propose unbreakable rules for the way Jamaicans pronounce English. Actors will need to adapt my signature sounds to the specific characters they are playing and undertake further research on their own.

There is a rich, creative tension between SJE and JC. Patwa is certainly not “broken English” but a stable, complex, natural language in its own right, with its own vocabulary, syntax, morphology, and pronunciation; it arose from the collision of the West African languages of the enslaved people brought to the island from the 15th to 19th centuries, and the English of their overlords (with additional influences from French, Portuguese, Spanish, and other languages).

In scholarly work on creoles, be they Jamaican or Haitian or any other, linguists refer to a “creole speech continuum.” Two terms were coined: *basilect*, referring to the strongest creole and most unlike the dominant language; and *acrolect*, the weakest and most similar to the dominant language. A third term, *mesolect*, referring to intermediate points

¹⁶³ Elizabeth Montoya-Stemann, associate editor for Jamaica for the International Dialects of English Archive, cites a report by the Jamaican Language Unit at the University of the West Indies at Mona that shows the number of Jamaicans who say they speak both SJE and JC (Patwa) is 78.4 percent. I am indebted to her for her close reading of my text and for her many helpful suggestions.

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V. FOREIGN-LANGUAGE ACCENTS

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AN AFRIKAANS ACCENT

INTRODUCTION

The Afrikaans language, spoken by about six million people in South Africa and neighboring countries, was considered simply a dialect of Dutch until the early 20th century, when it came to be considered a language in its own right. Simply meaning *African* in Dutch, the language evolved from those mainly Dutch settlers who colonized the Cape of Good Hope in the latter half of the 17th century. This strategic point on the southern tip of Africa had been a resupply point for the Dutch East India Company's ships' long voyage between the Orient and Europe for some fifty years prior to full-scale settlement. The colonists also brought indentured servants and slaves from the Malay peninsula; their descendants in the Cape area speak a variant of Afrikaans known as "Cape Dutch."



This photo from the early 20th century provides a glimpse into South Africa's past. It shows the main street of Pietermaritzburg, the capital of the province of KwaZulu-Natal. In the background is the City Hall, built in 1901, which is regarded as the largest red-brick building in the Southern Hemisphere.

(public-domain photo courtesy of Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Collections)

Following the British seizure of Cape Town in 1806, and following the Boer War (1899-1902), many Afrikaans speakers moved north and west, settling the area now home to the executive capitol, Pretoria, and neighboring Johannesburg.

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A French Accent

TRACK 6

COORDINATION EXERCISES

(The numbers under the text refer to the signature sounds needed.)

1. I find that true change is harder the older we become.
a 6 3 9 c d 2 1 7 9 9 6 5 8 9 1 10 e
aɪ fænd ʒat tɾɪ ʃeɪndʒ ɪz ɑːkdəʒ ʒi ɒldəʒ wi 'bɪkʌm
2. Moliere is remembered as the greatest French dramatist of all time.
5 9 1 9 e 9 3 6 9 2 10 9 d 9 3 10 1 8 10
mɒljɛʁ ɪz 'rɪmɛmɛɾd əz ʒə greɪtɛst frɛnʃ dɾəmatɪst ɒv ɔl taɪm
3. The weather we²²¹ having on our holiday is perfectly horrible.
6 e 6 9 7 3 1 9 7 1 2 1 10 9 7 e 1 8
ʒə we 'zɛʁ wi ʌviŋ ɒn əvəʁ ɒlɪdeɪ ɪz pɛʁfɛktli ɒ'ɪrɪbl
4. Those other six children should be in school learning how to read the Bible.
6 5 6 9 1 d 1 8 9 4 1 8 9 e 1 7 10 9 6 8
ʒoʒ əʒəʁ sɪks ʃɪldrən ʃʊd bi ɪn sku:l lɜːnɪŋ haʊ tu ri:d ʒə baɪbl
5. Please ask your father to pass me the old book behind the lamp if he will.
10 9 6 e 9 10 10 3 6 5 8 4 1 7 6 3 1 7 1 8
pli:z ɑːsk jɔːʃ fa'zɛʁ tu pɑːs mi ʒi ɒld buːk bihaɪnd ʒə lɑːmp ɪf i wɪl
6. Ball games are very popular with people all over the world.
8 e 2 9 9 10 10 c e 9 1 6 10 8 8 5 9 6 9 8
bɔːl 'geɪmz ɑː vɛri pɒpjʊləʁ wɪθ piːpl ɔl əvəʁ ʒə wɜːld
7. The landing party hopes to confirm the little tropical island largely uninhabited.
6 3 1 10 e 9 7 5 10 10 e 9 6 1 8 9 10 11 0 8 9 1 7 3 1 10
ʒə lændɪŋ pɑːʃ'ti ɒps tu 'kɒnfɜːm ʒə lɪtl tɾɒpɪkl aɪlənd lɑːʒli ʌnɪnəbɪtɪd

²²¹ Errors in grammar and syntax are part and parcel of a foreign-language accent. The playwright or screenwriter will often write such errors into the role, but I believe an actor has a right, when playing such a character, to make such errors that are consistent with the character's command of English, even if the author has not written them in.

A French Accent

8. Throughout history, people have disgraced themselves with alarming regularity.
 6 9 e 7 1 e 9 10 10 8 7 3 1 e 9 2 6 8 1 6 9 1 9 c 3 9 1 e 10
 'ʃʁuaut̪iːstə'ɪ pipl̩ av 'disgr̩eɪst zəmsɛlvz wɪz əlaʁmɪŋ rɛgylækɪ'ti
9. Peter put his heart and soul into building the house of his dreams.
 10 10 9 10 4 7 1 7 9 3 5 8 1 10 18 1 6 7 7 1 9
 pitəx put iz axt̩ an sol̩ intu bɪldɪŋ zi aus̩ dv̩ iz dremz̩
10. Henry's chocolate pudding was the triumph of the dinner party.
 7 9 d 10 4 1 6 9 6 1 e 9 10 e 9 10
 ɛnrɪz ʃɒkələt̩ pudɪŋ wɒz zə tʃaɪlɒmf̩ dv̩ zə di'nəʃ paɪt̪i

TRACK 7

MONOLOGUE ONE

From *The Scarlet Pimpernel*.²²² This is a scene between Chauvelin, a leader in the Revolution; Marguerite, his former lover, now married to the English aristocrat, Percy; Percy himself, disguised as Grappin; and Coupeau. The scene is a French prison, where Marguerite has come to try to free her brother, Armand.

CHAUVELIN

An excellent performance, Marguerite. (pulls her headpiece off) It's amazing when one sets a
 3 10 9 9 9 9 1 3 2 1
 an ɛksələnt̩ pɛʁfɔʁməns̩ mɑʁgɛrit̩ its̩ əmeɪzɪŋ wɛn wʌn sɛts̩ ə

trap what one catches (Percy enters as Grappin) Ah. Grappin. Do you recognize Mademoiselle
 10 9 3 10 3 9 3 10 a 9 10 e 3 8
 trɒp wʌt̩ wʌn kætʃɪz̩ a grapɛ̃ du ju rɛ'kɒɡnaɪz̩ mɑmzɛl̩

St. Just? She has taken off her British ... *costume*, and dressed herself more in her ... *true*
 a c 7 3 10 2 7 9 9 1 10 1 10 c e 3 9 7 9 8 9 1 7 9 10 9 c
 sɛ̃ ʒyst̩ ʃi az̩ tɛkən̩ dv̩ ɛʃ bɪtɪʃ̩ kɒs'tɪm̩ and̩ dɹɛst̩ ɛksɛlf̩ mɔʁ̩ in̩ ɛʃ tɹy̩

²²² Excerpt from the musical play *The Scarlet Pimpernel*, with books and lyrics by Nan Knighton and music by Frank Wildhorn, copyright © Nan Knighton 1997. Used by permission.

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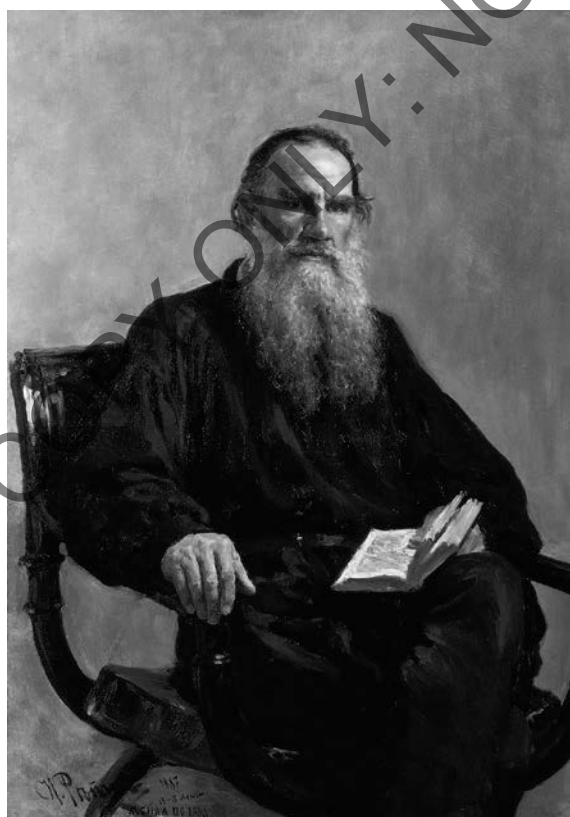
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A RUSSIAN ACCENT

INTRODUCTION

The Russian language, together with Ukrainian and Belorussian, comprise what linguists define as the East Slavonic group within the Slavonic branch of Indo-European. Bernard Comrie²⁵¹ tells us that the distinction between these three languages emerged only after around the year 1000. Other Slavonic languages include Czech, Slovak, Slovene, Serbo-Croat, Macedonian, Bulgarian, and Polish. There is considerable phonological similarity among this group, and so the speakers of these languages encounter similar challenges in mastering English. In other words, the accents in the English of this group will exhibit a range of similar features, more so, say, than within the Romance language group (French, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, and Rumanian being the major ones).

Around 153 million people in Russia and countries in the former USSR speak Russian as their first language, while another 60 million speak it as a second language.



More than perhaps any other person, Leo Tolstoy (shown here in an 1887 portrait by Ilya Efimovich Repin) is credited with exposing the West to the culture of the Russian people, through works such as *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina*.

²⁵¹ Comrie, Bernard, *Slavonic Languages*, and “Russian,” *The World’s Major Languages*, edited by Bernard Comrie, Oxford University Press, 1990.

A Russian Accent

TRACK 1

SIGNATURE SOUNDS

1. The Russian language contains no [ɪ] vowel. Therefore, in pronouncing the words of the lexical set *kit*, Russians, when speaking English, are very likely to employ the vowel in Russian closest to it, [i], a *tense* vowel often with more duration.

EXAMPLES: *sit, hymn, listen, children, busy, business, little, missionary*

2. For similar reasons, Russian speakers often reduce the [ɛɪ] *diphthong* of the *face* lexical set and use a long [ɛ:] or [ə:] instead.

EXAMPLES: *danger, wave, May Day, James, label, cavemen, waistline*

3. In contrast with Received Pronunciation (RP)²⁵² [əʊ] and General American (GenAm) [oʊ], Russian speakers often use the more *open back* vowel [ɔ] for the *goat* set.

EXAMPLES: *program, broken, mobile, stone, Estonia, hopeless, moaning*

4. In the case of the *unrounded back* English vowel [ʌ], needed to pronounce the *strut* set in either RP or GenAm, the Russian speaker often uses the *rounded back* vowel [ɒ].

EXAMPLES: *one, country, interrupt, bunches, among, monk, culminate, sprung*

5. The vowel of the *foot* set – the *close, short, lax* English vowel [ʊ] in RP and GenAm – is often sounded by the Russian speaker as the *close, lip-rounded*, and *tense* vowel [u].

EXAMPLES: *book, full, woman, bosom, should, wooden, crooked*

²⁵² Received Pronunciation, Standard British English, BBC English, or Queen's English.

For this preview version, pages 376-411 have been removed.
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A Yiddish Accent

11. Eleven lively looking little Labs licked Laura's blue platter clean.
12. The weather on the northern heath bothered Ethel's breathing.
13. We were swift with questions when Willy went swimming quickly westward.

TRACK 5

REAL-LIFE DIALECT SPEAKERS ON IDEA

Now it's time to listen to recordings of authentic speakers of this dialect, which you can access from the IDEA²⁸⁶ website. This is an essential part of your dialect study. Listen to all the examples of this dialect you can find, on IDEA, and elsewhere.

There were two examples of Yiddish accents in the archive at the time this edition was being prepared.

I have chosen Holocaust 1²⁸⁷ to demonstrate in more detail. The speaker demonstrates the following features:

- Signature Sound #1 in *these, is* [dɪz, ɪz].
- SS#2 in *passage, act, path, miscarriage, family* [pæsɪdʒ, ɛkt, pεθ, mɪskərɪdʒ, fεmɐli].
- SS#3 in *gold, closer, alone, ghetto, called, Polish, doctor* [gɔld, klɛzər, əlɐn, gɛrɐ, kɛld, pɔliʃ, dɛktɐr].
- SS#4 in *husband, truck, brother* [hʊsbɛnd, trʊk, brʊdɐr].
- SS#5 in *look, took* [lʊk, tʊk].
- SS#6 in *thirty* [tɛɪdɪ].
- SS#7 in *form, arch, according, German* (using the alveolar trill) [fɔrm, ɑrtʃ, əkɔrdɪŋ, dʒɜrmɐn].
- SS#8 is not demonstrated. She pronounces *boiling* as [bɔɪlɪŋ].
- SS#9 in *help* [xɛlp], though she pronounces most /h/ words correctly.
- SS#10 in *strikes, rainbow* [straɪks, rɛnbɔ]. Almost every pre-vocalic /r/ is a strong, *alveolar trill*.
- SS#11 in *Polish, late* [pɔliʃ, lɛt].
- SS#12 in *something, threw* [sʌmtɪŋk, tʁu].
- SS#13 in *with, Warsaw, war* [vɪd, vɔrsɐ, vɔr].

²⁸⁶ The International Dialects of English archive (IDEA) can be found at <https://www.dialectsarchive.com>.

²⁸⁷ Contributed by Shawn Muller, IDEA's webmaster emeritus and an associate editor. The sample can be found at <https://www.dialectsarchive.com/holocaust-1>.

A Yiddish Accent

- Additional Feature #a: no examples. She aspirates [p, t, and k] in normal English fashion.
- AF#b in *doctor, night* [dɛktɔ, ˈnaɪt].
- AF#c in *towns* [taʊnz].
- AF#d in *long, sitting, repeating* [lɔŋk, sɪrɪŋk, rɛpɪrɪŋk].

Note also this subject invariably pronounces *so* as [zo].

TRACK 6

COORDINATION EXERCISES

(The numbers under the text refer to the signature sounds needed.)

1. Thirty years the boys and girls were happy in the little blue home on the corner.
12 6b1 7c12 8c2bb 6c13 7 92 a 1 1b 12 111b 1 4 93 3b 12 a 7 b 7
tɛɪdɪ ˈjiəɪz dɔ bɔɪs ɛnd ɡɔɪlz wɛr xɛpɪ ɪn dɔ ˈlɪtɪ blʊ xɛm ɔn dɔ kɔɪnɛr
2. The old couple lovingly danced in the square while the violins sweetly played.
12 3c a 4 a 114c1d111b2b 1b 12 13 7 13 12 3 111b 13 1 1 a 11 c
dɔ ɛld kʊpl ˈlʊvɪŋkɪ dɛnst ɪn dɔ skvɛər vart dɔ vɛɪtɪns svɪtlɪ plɛd
3. Chance took a hand in our lives and swiftly brought us together at last.
2b a 5 a 92bc b 7 11c c 2bc 13 1 111 10 3 a 4 a 12 7 2b112
tʃɛns tʊɡ ə xɛnt ɪn ʔʊər laɪfs ɛnt svɪftɪ brɔd ʊs tʊɡɛdɛr ɛt lɛst
4. His thoughts turned westward, though his choices were in the east.
9 1c 12 3 a 6 b c 13 13 6 c 12 3 9 1c 8 c 13 7 1b 12 1
xɪs tʃɛts tɛɪnt vɛst vɜrt dɔ xɪs tʃɔɪsɪs vɛər ɪn dɔ ˈiːst
5. The snow in winter made our little village sparkle in the sunlight.
12 b 3 1b 13 1b 7 b 7 111 1 111 1c 7 1b 12 4b 11 b
dɔ snɔ ɪn vɪntɛr mɛd ʔʊər ˈlɪtɪ vɪlɪʃ spɑrkɪ ɪn dɪ sʊnlajt
6. Running away seemed clearly the only thing he could think of doing.
10 4 b 1 d 13 1 ca 11 7 11 11 12 3b 11 11 2 1 d 9 1 a 5 c 12 1 3c b 4 1 d
rʊnɪŋk əvɛ smt klɪərɪ dɔ ɛnɪ tɪŋk xɪ kʊd tɪŋk ɛf dʊɪŋk

A Yiddish Accent

7. The path through the dark forest was scary, but flowers bloomed in the hedges.
 12 a 2 12 12 10 4 12 b 7 a 3 10 12 c 10 1 4 b 11 7 c 11 4 c 1 b 12 9 c 1 c
 דאָ פעַט טרו דאָ דאַרק פֿערעסט וועט שערע בוד פֿלאַוערס בלומט אין דאָ העגס
8. The long voyage on the ship brought us all the most terrible sea sickness.
 12 11 3 d 8 1 c 3 b 12 1 a 10 3 b 4 3 12 3 a 10 1 1 a b
 דאָ לאַנגק וואַיטש ענ דאָ שיפּ ברענגט אונז אלע דאָ מערסט פֿערעבט סיי סיגעס
9. He is a proud man; Humble Pie was the last dish he ever would have ordered.
 9 1 1 c a 10 c 2 b 9 4 a 13 3 c 12 11 2 b 1 9 1 c 7 13 5 c 9 2 c 7 b 7 c
 ער איז אַ פֿראַוד מען חומבל פּאָי וועט דאָ לעסט דיף ער וועלד האָבן אָרדערט
10. All week she worked in the little office in Queens; the weekends she went home.
 3 13 1 11 3 6 1 b 12 11 1 3 1 1 b a 13 1 b c 12 13 1 a b b c 11 3 b 9 3
 ער וועט זי וואַרקט אין דאָ הייזט עפּיס אין קווינס דאָ וועגנס זי וועט נאָם

TRACK 7

MONOLOGUE ONE

From *Fiddler on the Roof*,²⁸⁸ lyrics by Sheldon Harnick, music by Jerry Bock, and book by Joseph Stein.

TEVYE

A fiddler on the roof. Sounds crazy, no? But in our little village of Anatevka, you might
 1 b 11 7 3 b 12 10 4 b c a 10 c 1 b 3 4 b 1 b 7 11 1 b 11 c c b a c a 4 b
 אַ פֿידלער ענ דאָ רופּ סאונדס קרעזי נע בוד אין אונזער הייזט ווילדז ער אַנאַטעוואָקאַ יו מאַר

say every one of us is a fiddler on the roof, trying to scratch out a pleasant, simple tune
 c 10 11 3 4 b c 4 1 c 1 b 11 7 3 b 12 10 4 a 10 1 d a 4 10 2 b a 11 c b 1 c 4 b
 זע עברי ווען אונז איז אַ פֿידלער ענ דאָ רופּ טראַנק טו שרעט אַט אַ פֿלעזנט סימפּל טונ

²⁸⁸ From *Fiddler on the Roof* by Joseph Stein, copyright © 1964 by Joseph Stein. Music and Lyrics copyright © 1964 by Sunbeam Music Corp. Used by permission of Crown Publishers, a division of Random House, Inc. To hear a recording of a Yiddish-speaking Lithuanian speaking all the names, terms, and idioms from *Fiddler on the Roof*, consult IDEA's Special Collection at <https://www.dialectsarchive.com/play-names-terms>.

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VI. TESTING, TRAINING, AND CERTIFICATION

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TESTING, TRAINING, AND CERTIFICATION

Now that you have studied the accents and dialects in this book, naturally you want to find out how good you are. You should be able to perform the monologues and practice sentences accurately and convincingly. But can you successfully apply what you have learned to an unfamiliar text? Could you teach this dialect to someone else? Or dialect-coach a production? To help you answer those questions, I have devised a test for each accent and dialect; you may access them online as follows. (For ease, you may find these as clickable links at <https://www.paulmeier.com/training>):

BRITISH AND IRISH DIALECTS

Birmingham	https://www.paulmeier.com/TESTS/BirminghamTest.pdf
Cockney	https://www.paulmeier.com/TESTS/CockneyTest.pdf
Estuary	https://www.paulmeier.com/TESTS/EstuaryTest.pdf
Hampshire	https://www.paulmeier.com/TESTS/HampshireTest.pdf
Irish	https://www.paulmeier.com/TESTS/IrishTest.pdf
Liverpool	https://www.paulmeier.com/TESTS/LiverpoolTest.pdf
Northern Ireland	https://www.paulmeier.com/TESTS/NIrelandTest.pdf
Scottish	https://www.paulmeier.com/TESTS/ScottishTest.pdf
Standard British English	https://www.paulmeier.com/TESTS/RPTest.pdf
Welsh	https://www.paulmeier.com/TESTS/WelshTest.pdf
Yorkshire	https://www.paulmeier.com/TESTS/YorkshireTest.pdf

DIALECTS OF THE UNITED STATES

American Southern	https://www.paulmeier.com/TESTS/SouthernTest.pdf
Deep South	https://www.paulmeier.com/TESTS/DeepSouthTest.pdf
Downeast New England	https://www.paulmeier.com/TESTS/DowneastTest.pdf
General American	https://www.paulmeier.com/TESTS/GenAmTest.pdf
New York	https://www.paulmeier.com/TESTS/NewYorkTest.pdf
South Boston	https://www.paulmeier.com/TESTS/SouthBostonTest.pdf

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Jamaican	https://www.paulmeier.com/TESTS/JamaicanTest.pdf

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Spanish	https://www.paulmeier.com/TESTS/SpanishTest.pdf
Yiddish	https://www.paulmeier.com/TESTS/YiddishTest.pdf

After you have tested yourself, you may wish to go further. I or one of my associates can evaluate and certify your proficiency in each dialect. For details go to:

<https://www.paulmeier.com/training>

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VII. WORKS CITED

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If you are having trouble opening the page with your password or have questions about the functionality of the page, please visit [this page will be provided in your book].

Thank you for your purchase, and good luck with all your accent and dialect work!

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Paul C' with a stylized flourish at the end.

PASSWORD: [Your password will be inside your book.]

Paul Meier

PAUL MEIER is a leader in the field of stage dialects, coaching many feature films and hundreds of theatre productions. Of special note are *Ride with the Devil*, directed by Ang Lee, starring Tobey Maguire, Skeet Ulrich, and Jewel; *Molokai*, directed by Paul Cox, starring David Wenham, Peter O'Toole, Kris Kristofferson, and Tom Wilkinson; and *Virginia*, directed by Lance Black, starring Ed Harris, Jennifer Connelly, and Harrison Gilbertson.

Meier has trained two generations of actors at some of the most famous theatre schools in America and his native Britain, including the North Carolina School of the Arts, the Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts, the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Arts, and the Webber-Douglas Drama School. He is professor emeritus at the University of Kansas, where he founded the International Dialects of English Archive (IDEA) in 1998.

He is a leading figure in accent reduction, much in demand by Fortune 500 companies seeking training in English pronunciation for their executives around the world.

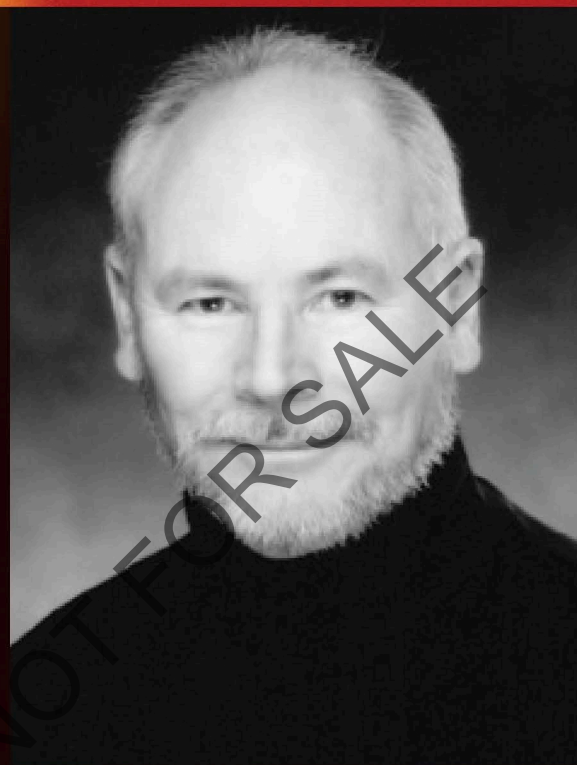
He holds degrees and diplomas in theatre, drama, and phonetics from London's Rose Bruford College of Speech and Drama, the University of Kent at Canterbury, and the University of London.

His work as an actor on stage, in films, and on television includes several years with the BBC Drama Repertory Company. His films include *Stolen Women*, *Cross of Fire*, *Ride with the Devil*, and *Houston, We've Got a Problem*. He is also much in demand as a voice-over talent with more than thirty audio books to his credit, including John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*, Ayn Rand's *Anthem*, Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*, and F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button*.

Accents & Dialects for Stage and Screen Deluxe Streaming Edition contains Meier's instruction for 27 commonly used stage dialects. Thousands of actors all over the world have been trained through this system for four decades. Dialects and accents covered are *Afrikaans* (South African), *American Southern* (Mid-South), *Australian*, *Birmingham* (England), *Cockney*, *Deep South*, *Downeast New England*, *Estuary* (modern, southern England), *French*, *General American*, *German*, *Hampshire*, *Jamaican*, *Indian*, *Irish*, *Italian*, *Liverpool*, *New York*, *Northern Ireland*, *Russian*, *Scottish*, *South Boston* (Southie), *Spanish*, *Standard British* (RP), *Welsh*, *Yiddish*, and *Yorkshire*. Practice material uses IPA notation, as well as Meier's successful "number-keying" system. His famous Seven-Step Method is based on his proprietary **signature sounds**. The accompanying sound files are available as streaming audio, which this book provides you access to. Those sound files contain Meier's instruction and demonstration of each dialect. He also cites native-speaker recordings for each dialect, freely playable from IDEA, at <https://www.dialectsarchive.com>. Additionally, he provides an interactive, animated demonstration of the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) at his website, <https://www.paulmeier.com>.

"Paul Meier, a leader in the field of dialects and accent training and the founder of the International Dialects of English Archive website (IDEA), brings dialect study into the 21st century. [This book is] a much-welcomed addition to the existing publications on dialect and accent training [and] combines the best aspects of other popular dialect training methods into a succinct, comprehensive and affordable training tool. ... I couldn't be happier with the improvement it has made in [my] students' comprehension and accuracy, and in my own ease in class preparation and execution. ... An enthusiastic two thumbs up!"

—Krista Scott, *The Voice and Speech Review*



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