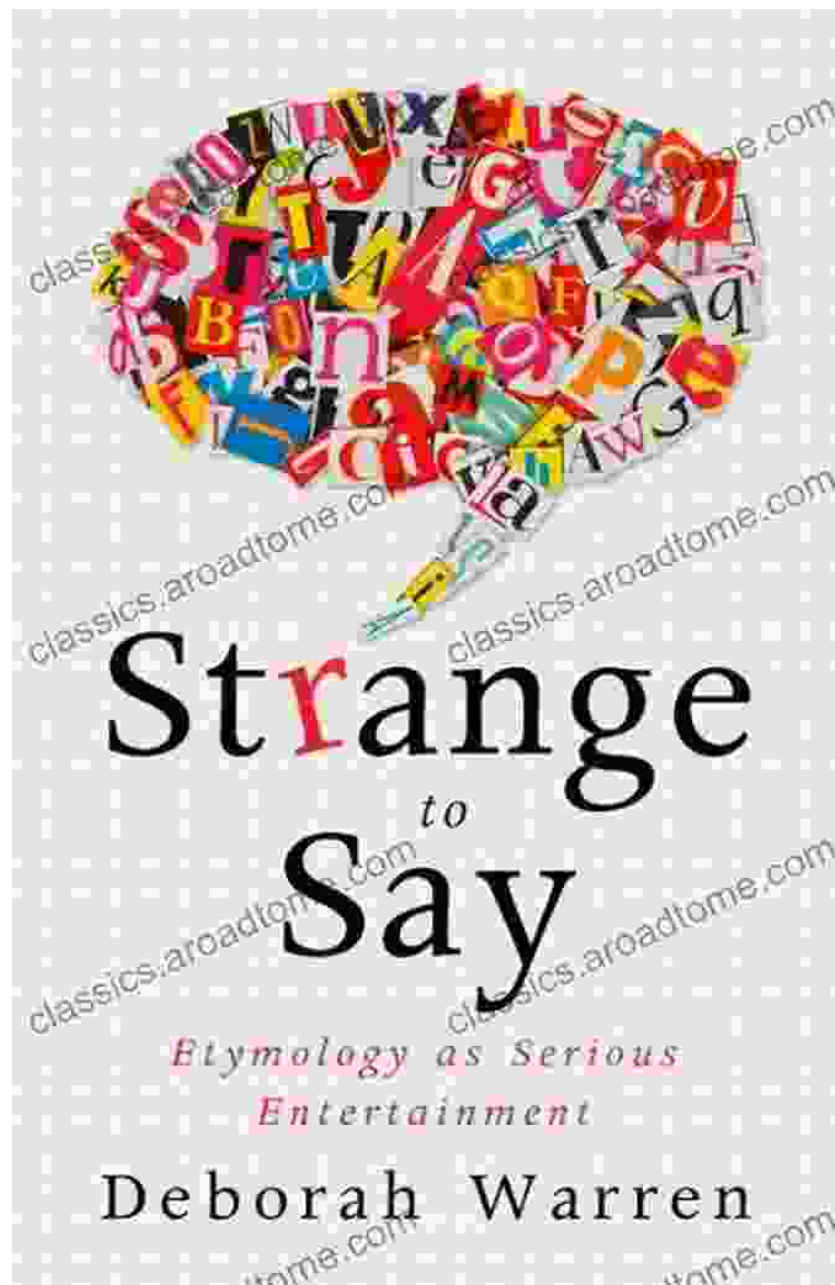


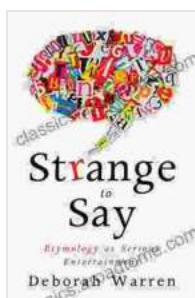
A Deep Dive Into the Enchanting World of Words: A Review of "Strange to Say: Etymology as Serious Entertainment"



Language is a living, breathing thing, constantly evolving and adapting to the ever-changing world around us. Words are not mere collections of

letters; they are vessels of meaning, carrying with them the weight of history, culture, and human experience. Etymology, the study of the origin and development of words, offers us a fascinating window into the intricate tapestry of language.

In his captivating book, "Strange to Say: Etymology as Serious Entertainment," renowned linguist John McWhorter takes us on an enthralling journey through the etymological landscape. With wit and erudition, McWhorter explores the hidden stories behind the words we use every day, revealing the surprising and often bizarre origins of our language.



Strange to Say: Etymology as Serious Entertainment

by Deborah Warren

★★★★☆ 4.2 out of 5

Language : English
File size : 2052 KB
Text-to-Speech : Enabled
Screen Reader : Supported
Enhanced typesetting : Enabled
Print length : 213 pages
Lending : Enabled



McWhorter's approach to etymology is refreshingly accessible, making this book a delight for both language enthusiasts and casual readers alike. He deftly weaves together linguistic insights with historical anecdotes, cultural observations, and personal reflections, creating a narrative that is both informative and entertaining.

One of the most striking aspects of "Strange to Say" is McWhorter's ability to uncover the unexpected connections between words. He shows us how seemingly unrelated terms can share common etymological roots, revealing the hidden threads that bind our language together.

For example, McWhorter traces the origins of the word "assassin" to the Arabic word "hashshashin," which referred to a group of Muslim warriors who used hashish to induce a fearless state before battle. Similarly, he reveals that the word "berserk" comes from the Old Norse word "berserkr," which means "bear-shirt" and refers to warriors who believed they gained the strength and ferocity of bears by wearing bear skins.

McWhorter also delves into the fascinating world of semantic change, exploring how the meanings of words have shifted and evolved over time. He shows us how the word "nice" once meant "foolish" and how the word "awful" originally meant "full of awe."

Through these etymological explorations, McWhorter provides a unique perspective on the history of human thought and culture. He shows us how language reflects the beliefs, values, and experiences of the societies that use it.

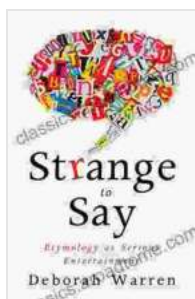
But "Strange to Say" is more than just a collection of etymological curiosities. McWhorter uses his linguistic insights to address broader issues related to language, culture, and identity. He challenges the notion that there is a single "correct" way to speak and argues for the importance of linguistic diversity.

McWhorter also tackles the thorny issue of political correctness, arguing that it can stifle creativity and limit our ability to express ourselves fully. He

believes that language is a powerful tool that should be used to communicate ideas, not to silence them.

, "Strange to Say: Etymology as Serious Entertainment" is a captivating and thought-provoking exploration of the world of words. John McWhorter's wit, erudition, and passion for language shine through on every page, making this book a must-read for anyone who is fascinated by the power and beauty of language.

Whether you are a seasoned linguist or simply someone who enjoys the curious and wonderful world of words, "Strange to Say" is sure to captivate and entertain you.



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