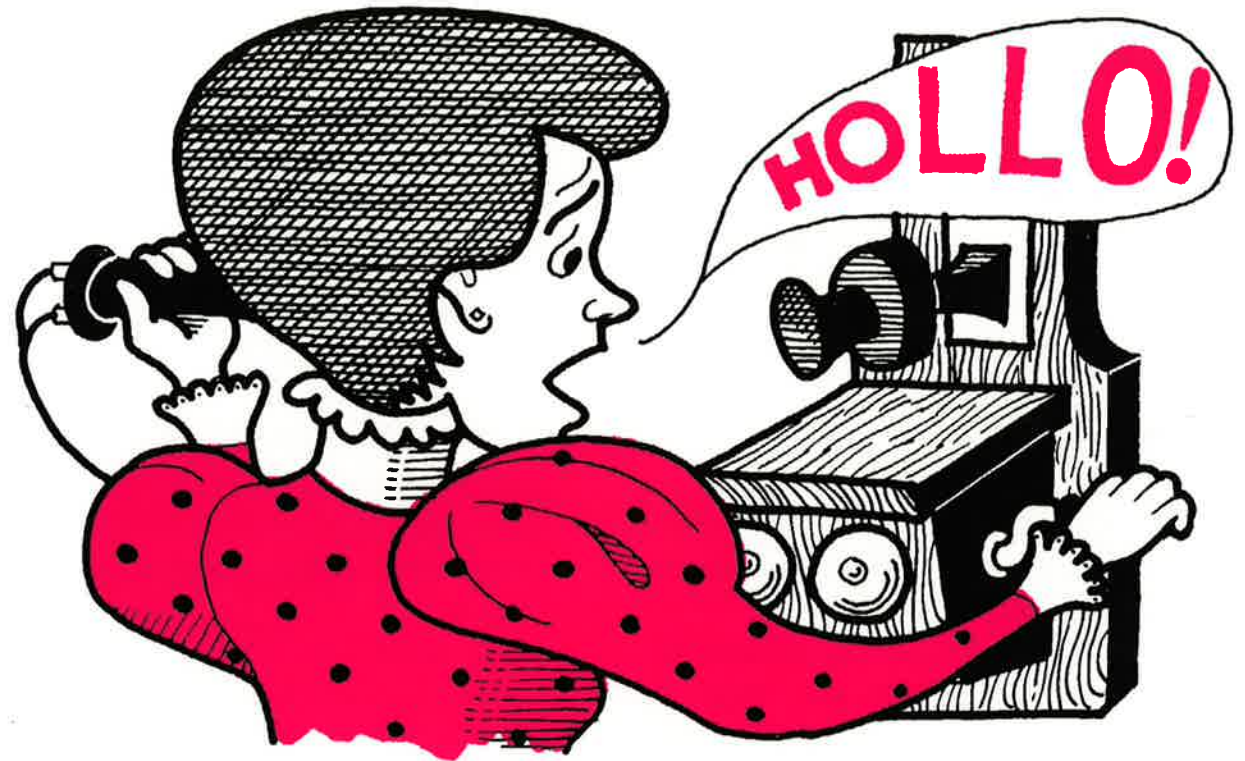


Every Word Is a Puzzle

by Sam and Beryl Epstein



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1 Hello!
2 Do you know what that word means? Of course you know what you mean when you say it. But did you know that just a hundred years ago there was no word *hello*? In those days people said

“How do you do?” or “Good morning” when they spoke to each other. And they could speak to each other only when they were together.

3 Then Alexander Graham Bell invented the telephone. People could

talk to each other even when they were far apart. Everyone thought the new invention was wonderful. When a person heard a voice speaking over the telephone from miles away, he was too excited to say "How do you do?" or "Good morning." But he was also afraid the person at the other end of the wire wouldn't hear him unless he shouted. So he called out "Hollo!" This was a very old word. Farmers and hunters used it to call to someone out in the fields or woods.

4 After a while, people changed the word a bit. They called "Hello!" instead. Pretty soon they knew they didn't have to shout at all. But by that time the word had become a habit. Today most people still say "Hello" when they pick up the telephone.

5 New words are born whenever they are needed. New words are being invented all the time.

6 Some new words become part of a language, just as *hello* did. That word was kept because it's so useful. Other new words that aren't so useful may be forgotten soon. The world is changing all the time. So words change too, to keep up with it.

7 Every word has a kind of secret story behind it, just as *hello* has. Each word is a puzzle.

8 Some of the puzzles are easy to solve. The word *breakfast*, for example, is made up of two smaller words, *break* and *fast*. You know what *break* means.

And when someone *fasts*, it means he doesn't eat. Most people fast from the time they go to bed until they get up in the morning. They break their fast when they eat their morning meal—*breakfast*.

9 But some word puzzles are a little harder. The word *paper* comes from the name of a plant called papyrus. Papyrus grows in hot countries such as Egypt. Long ago in Egypt men learned how to mash papyrus into a pulp, flatten it out, and let it dry into a thin sheet. They used the sheet to write on. That's why today the word *paper*, from *papyrus*, is used for sheets that are written on. But today's paper is not made of papyrus at all!

10 *Umbrella* comes from the Latin word *umbra*, which means shade. The Italians took that word to make the word *ombrella*, which means "a little shade." In their hot and sunny land they needed an umbrella to give them shade from the sun. The English word was borrowed from the Italians, but its meaning changed. You don't use an umbrella when the sun is shining. Instead you use it when it rains.

11 This is a good example of how words sometimes stay the same even when their meaning changes.

12 Think of a word you'd like to know more about. How will you solve the puzzle and learn its story? A dictionary is a good place to start.

to each other even when they were apart. Everyone thought the new invention was wonderful. When a person heard a voice speaking over the phone from miles away, he was too shy to say "How do you do?" or "Good morning." But he was also shy of the person at the other end of the phone. He wouldn't hear him unless he called. So he called out "Hollo!" This is a very old word. Farmers and hunters used it to call to someone out in the fields or woods.

After a while, people changed the word a bit. They called "Hello!" instead. Pretty soon they knew they didn't have to shout at all. But by that time the word had become a habit. Today most people still say "Hello" when they pick up the telephone.

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How Well Did You Understand?

A Choose the best ending for each sentence. Write *a*, *b*, or *c*.

1 This story is about
a how the telephone was invented
b how words develop over time
c how Egyptians first learned to write

2 People said "Hollo!" on the phone because
a it was hard to hear each other on the phone
b that was how they called to each other outdoors
c that was how people said "How do you do?" then

3 New words like *hello* are invented when
a people want to forget old words
b there aren't any old words with the right meaning
c Neither *a* nor *b*

4 The word *umbrella* comes from a word that
a was spelled differently
b meant something different
c Both *a* and *b*

5 The writer of this story thinks that a dictionary is
a a useful tool
b a good way to learn a word's history
c Both *a* and *b*

Learn about Words

B Often you can find out the meaning of a word by seeing how it is used in a story. The other words in the story give you clues.

Directions: Find the word in the story that best fits each meaning below. (A paragraph number tells you where to look.) Write the word.

- 1 with each other; near (2)
- 2 made for the first time (3)
- 3 yelled; called very loudly (3)
- 4 usual way of acting (4)
- 5 becoming different (6)
- 6 clear up; find answers to (8)
- 7 soft, wet mixture (9)

C too = also
two = the number after one

Say *too* and *two*. They are homonyms. **Homonyms** are words that *sound* the same but aren't spelled the same and don't mean the same thing.

Directions: Look at each word in **heavy type** below. Note the paragraph number. Look at the paragraph and find the homonym. Which of the two words fits in the blank in the sentence? Write the word.

- 8 **herd** (3)
I ____ my dad talking on the telephone.
- 9 **knew** (5)
Bell ____ how to make things.

Think about It

- D** unheated = **un** + heated
 reheated = **re** + heated

The letters *un* and *re* are called prefixes. A **prefix** is added to the beginning of a word. It changes the word's meaning. The prefix *un* means "not." The word *unheated* means "not heated." The prefix *re* means "again." The word *reheated* means "heated again."

Directions: Each word in **heavy type** needs a prefix. Choose the correct prefix—*un* or *re*. Write the new word.

- 1 Years ago the word *hello* was not known. It was **known**.
 - 2 Then the word *hollo* was born again as a new word. The word *hollo* was **born**.
 - 3 The English named *ombrella* again. They **named** it.
 - 4 Some languages are never written down. They are **written** languages.
 - 5 Ollie wrote his report on paper that wasn't lined. It was **lined** paper.
- E** Words with the same meaning are called **synonyms**. *Tiny* is a synonym of *small*. *Begin* is a synonym of *start*.

Directions: Read each sentence. Which word in the box is a synonym of the underlined word? Write the word. (**Hint:** There are more words in the box than you need.)

definition said yelled created
marvelous puzzle alter

- 6 When Bell invented the telephone, he **_____** it.
 - 7 If a thing is wonderful, it's **_____**.
 - 8 People shouted "Hollo" into the telephone and **_____** to each other outdoors.
 - 9 If the meaning of *hollo* changes, its **_____** changes.
 - 10 If you change a word, you **_____** it.
- F** One word in this row doesn't belong with the others.
 chickens ducks ~~foxes~~
- Chickens and ducks are birds. Foxes are not birds. *Foxes* is the word that doesn't belong.
- Directions:** Write the word that doesn't belong in each row.
- 11 square thin flat
 - 12 puzzle paper mystery
 - 13 breakfast lunch shade
 - 14 Italian papyrus Latin
 - 15 shout holler whisper