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John McWhorter, Ph.D., John McWhorter
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WORD ON THE STREET

DEBUNKING THE MYTH OF A
"PURE" STANDARD ENGLISH
JOHN McWHORTER

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how John has made accessible the ideas of language ideology for the layperson. So much of our research goes unknown by non-linguists that our ideas come as a surprise (and sometimes a shock) when we explain them. You will find a great explanation of why "Standard" language is merely socially constructed and completely arbitrary. You'll also get a healthy dose of historical linguistics, which goes hand-in-hand with showing why the language deemed correct today was likely deemed horrible at some point, and vice-versa. I use this book in my Introduction to Linguistics class and a little in my Introduction to Sociolinguistics class. The explanations are accessible to anyone. I have bought this book for my family members and friends as well because the average person knows little about the science of language. (check out [...] for more fun layperson linguistics.) Learning the currently fashionable grammar in a language is socially important, but that is all. If language is a lava lamp (as he says), grammar is trendy fashion clothing. Read this book to find out why. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Great read
By Ginger M. While I originally bought this for a course, it turned out to be super interesting and very easy to understand. I really like the author's style of writing and approach to a normally dry topic. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars
By Customer Insightful!

Though there is a contingent of linguists who fight the fact, our language is always changing--not only through slang, but sound, syntax, and words' meanings as well. Debunking the myth of "pure" standard English, tackling controversial positions, and eschewing politically correct arguments, linguist John McWhorter considers speech patterns and regional accents to demonstrate just how the changes do occur. Wielding reason and humor, McWhorter ultimately explains why we must embrace these changes, ultimately revealing our American English in all its variety, expressiveness, and power.

"Word on the Street is one of the best books ever written on language and public affairs." -- Steven Pinker, author of The Language Instinct and Words and Rules
About the Author John McWhorter is Assistant Professor of Linguistics at the University of California at Berkeley. A specialist in pidgin and Creole languages, he lives in Oakland, California.