



Pronunciation...

...FOR THE SPEAKER WHO CARES

The *Introduction* to *The Big Book of Beastly Mispronunciations* (Elster) notes that, “When it comes to pronunciation, there are two types of people: Those who don’t give the subject a second thought and those that do. This book is for those that do.” We believe that readers really do care about the *spoken* word as well as the written word and, as with grammar and word origins, the subject is replete with history. Elster says that, “*Pronunciation, like life, is governed by repetition, but rife with ambiguity, passion, and caprice; it is forever vulnerable to change and open to interpretation.*” With this in mind, here are a few entries from the book that may surprise you.

TRANSIENT

Traditionally and properly TRAN-shint. If you care to speak like a Brit, say TRAN-zee-in or TRAN-see-int.

HYPERBOLE

hy-PUR-buh-lee. A figure of speech in which exaggeration is used for emphasis of effect.

THEATER

THEE-uh-tur. Properly, this word has three syllables, but when pronounced quickly in the flow of conversation it often comes out in two, THEER-tur. That is unobjectionable compared with the beastly mispronunciation thee-AY-tur.

TÊTE À TÊTE

TAYT-uh-TAYT (recommended) or TET-ah-TET (“more French”). Both pronunciations are acceptable, but several authorities sanction only TAYT-uh-TAYT.

DÉCOLLETAGE

DAY-kawl-TAHZH (recommended). The primary stress should fall on the final syllable. The second syllable may be pronounced like call, like col—in college, or like coal.

ENVOY

EN-voy not AHN-voy (like EN-vuh-lope and EN-clave).