

# Modern English as a Global Language

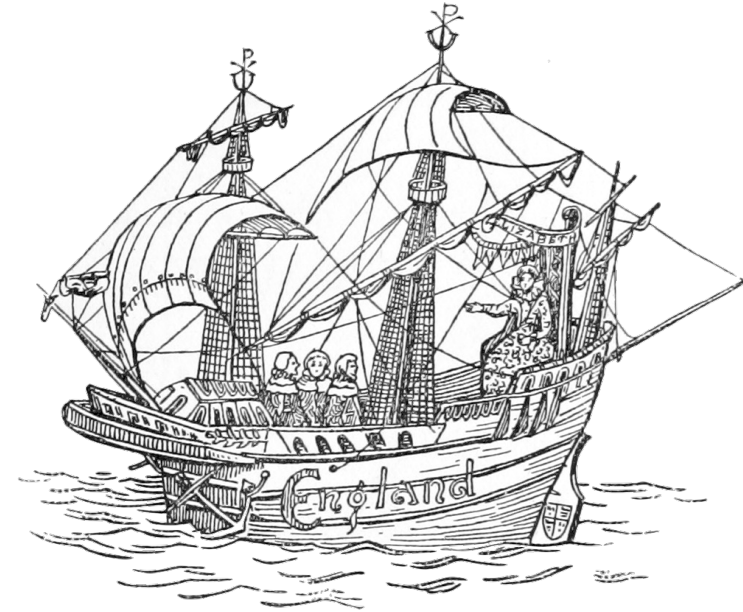
Ling 390

Fall 2020

Joseph Pentangelo

# Modern English (post-1800)

- Old English was a small Germanic language of little international importance.
- English-speaking people were conquered by Vikings and, later, Normans.
- English was seen as uncouth vs. Norman French and Latin.
- Now, English is one of the most widely-spoken languages in the world, with native speakers on every continent.
- How did this happen?



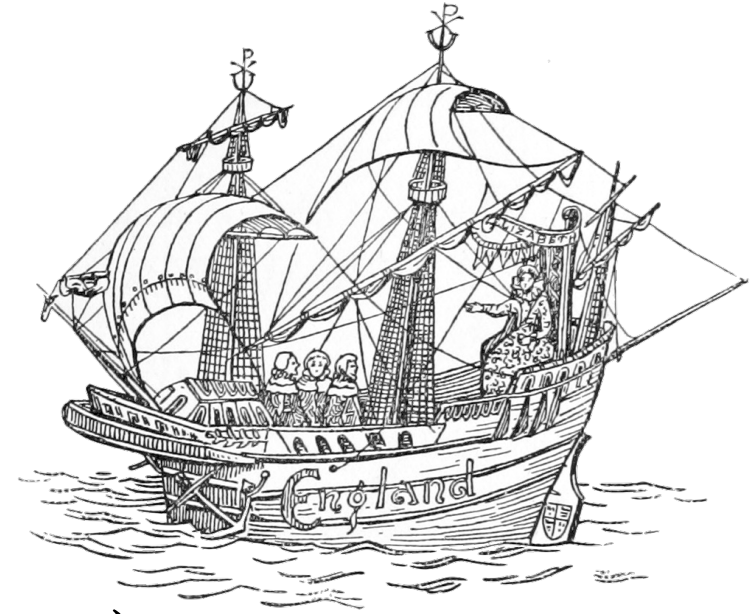
# Modern English (post-1800)

Modern English is identifiable by its global spread.

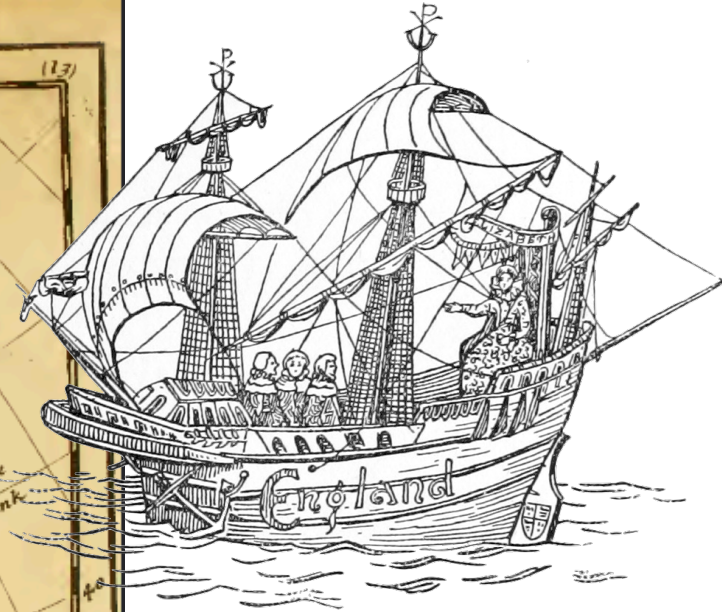
- What facilitated this?
- Imperialism & colonialism (on the part of U.K. and U.S.)
- Trade & globalism

Despite its global reach, English is a single language with two major varieties: American English and British English.

- Why is English so (relatively) unified?
- Shared media – print materials, radio, movies, news, etc.







**The British Empire**  
IN *1741*  
**AMERICA.**  
CONTAINING  
The HISTORY of the Discovery,  
Settlement, Progress and State of the  
**BRITISH COLONIES**  
ON THE  
Continent and Islands of AMERICA.

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VOL. I.

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Being an ACCOUNT of the Country, Soil, Climate,  
Product and Trade of

|   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| NEWFOUNDLAND,<br>NEW-ENGLAND,<br>NEW-SCOTLAND,<br>NEW-YORK, | NEW-JERSEY,<br>PENNSYLVANIA,<br>MARYLAND,<br>VIRGINIA, | CAROLINA,<br>GEORGIA,<br>HUDSON'S-BAY. |
|---|--|--|

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SECOND EDITION, Corrected and Amended.

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With the Continuation of the HISTORY, and the Variation in  
the Site and Trade of those COLONIES, from the Year 1710  
to the present Time. Including OCCASIONAL RE-  
MARKS, and the most feasible and useful Methods for their  
Improvement and Security.

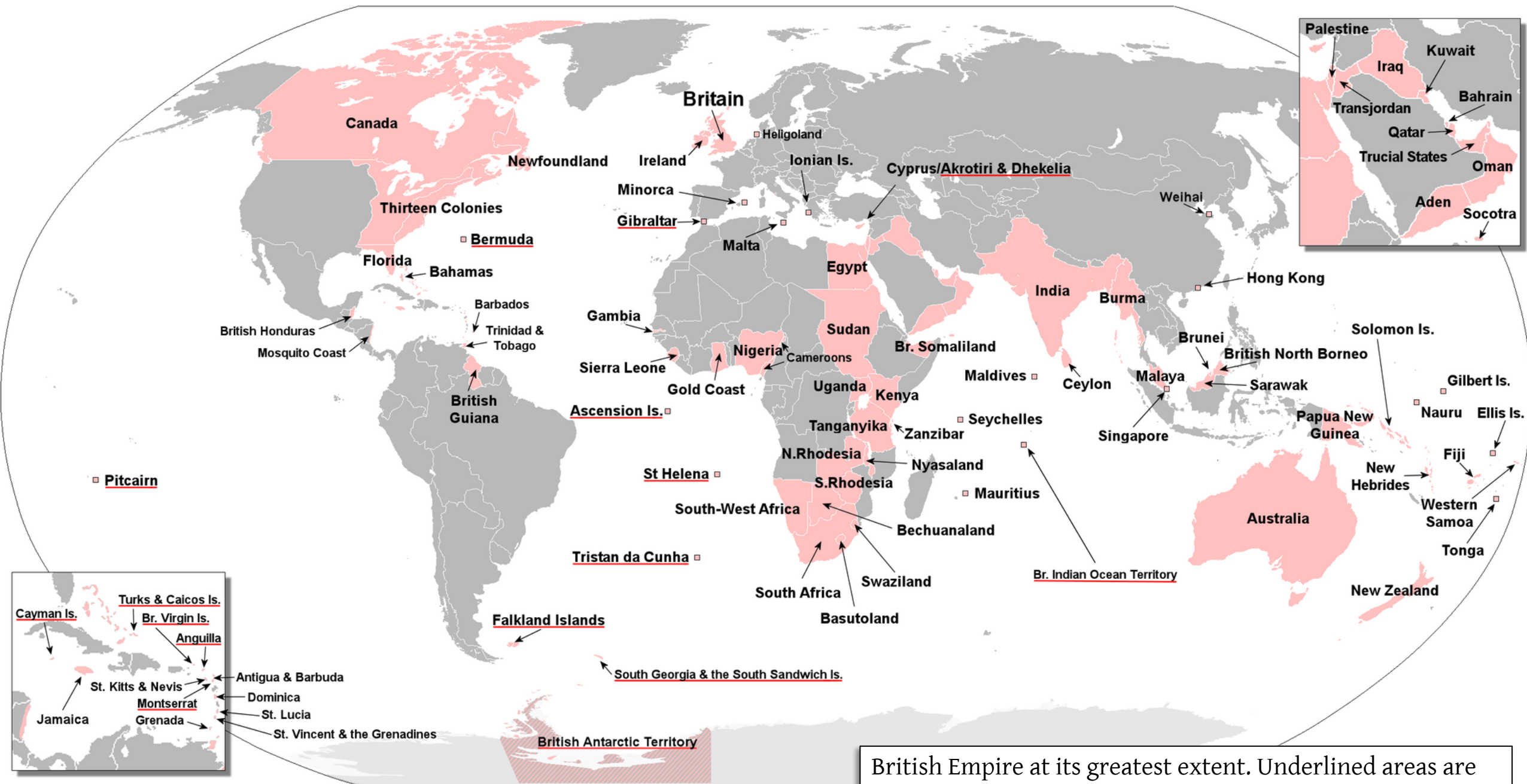
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LONDON:

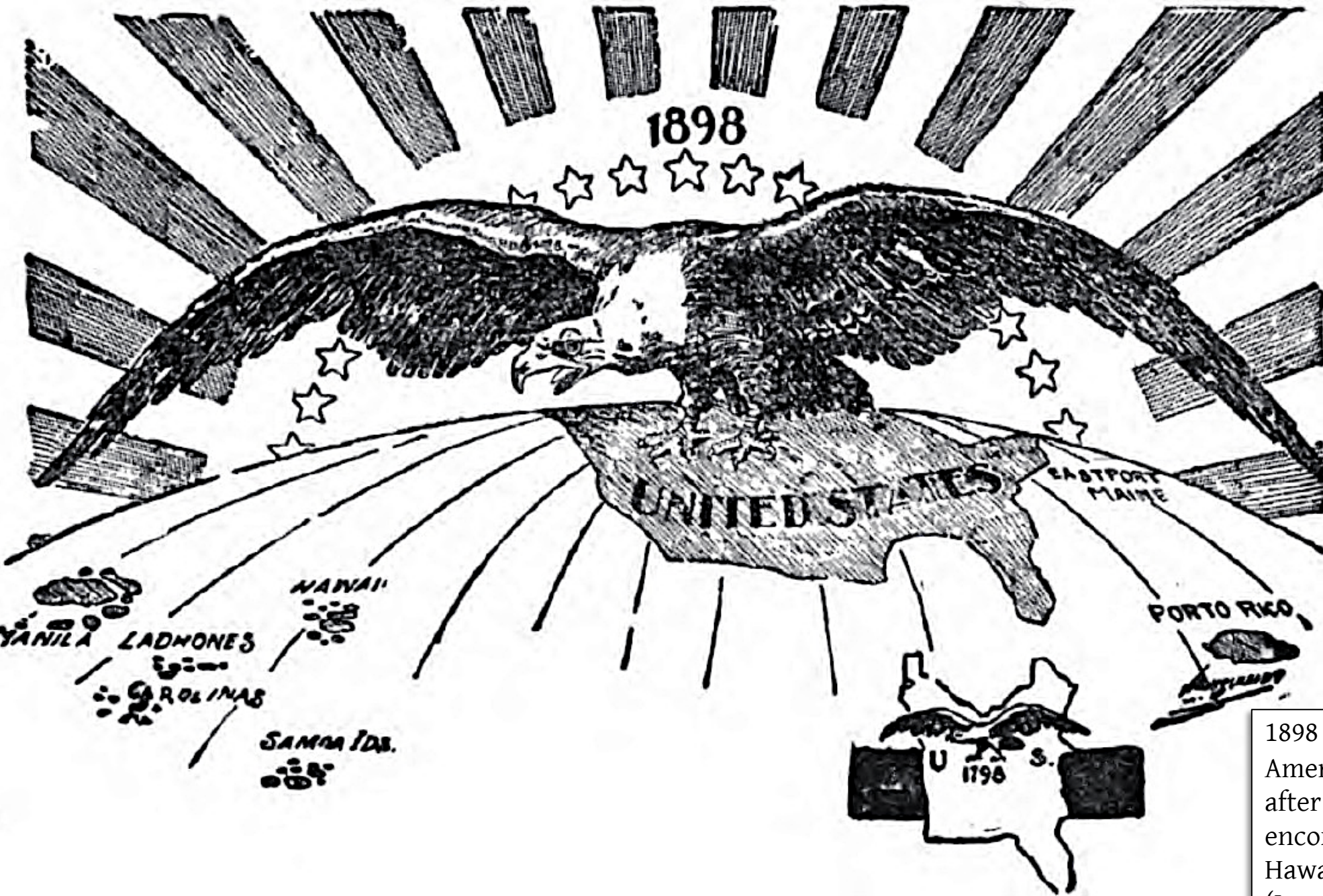
Printed for J. BROTHERTON, J. CLARKE in Duck-Lane,  
A. WARD, J. CLARKE at the Royal-Exchange, C. HITCH,  
J. OSBOURN, E. WICKSTEED, C. BATHURST, TIMOTHY  
SAUNDERS, and T. HARRIS. MDCCLXII.

A British map of North America, 1741, showing British and other colonial possessions. (Image: [The British Empire in America](#))





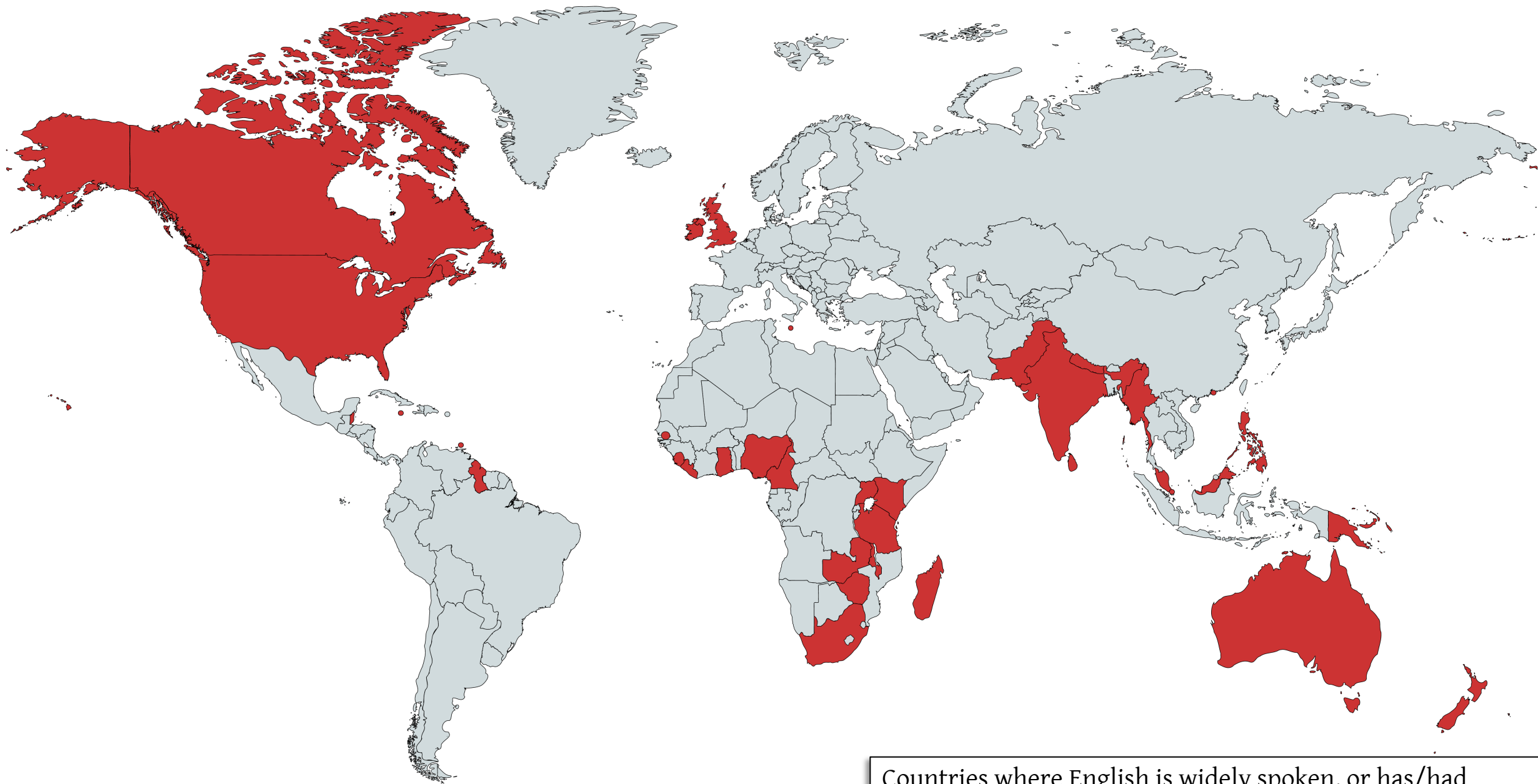
British Empire at its greatest extent. Underlined areas are still British Overseas Territories. (Image: [Public domain](#))



1898 newspaper cartoon showing America's territorial expanse after the Spanish-American war, encompassing the Philippines, Hawai'i, Puerto Rico, and more. (Image: [Public domain](#))

**Ten thousand miles from tip to tip.—Philadelphia Press.**





Countries where English is widely spoken, or has/had official status. Data from Algeo (2009: 182–183).

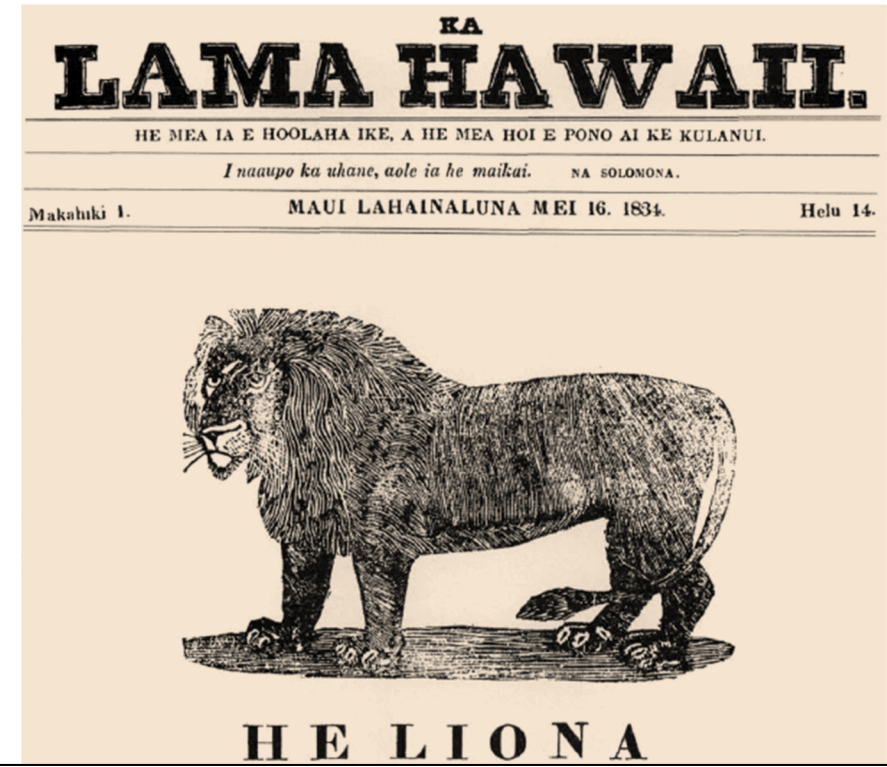


# Modern English (post-1800)

English was spread through a variety of means, often at the intentional expense of local languages.



Carlisle Indian Industrial School  
in Pennsylvania around 1900.  
(Image: [Public Domain](#))



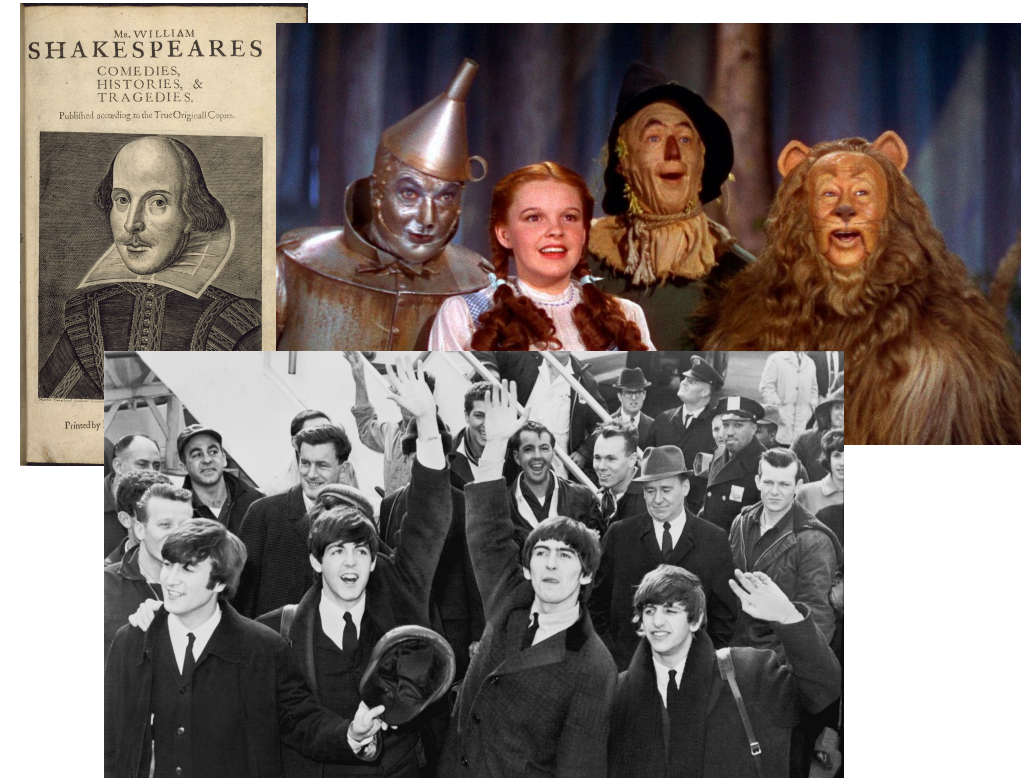
Hawai'ian literacy was quite high in the 19<sup>th</sup>  
century, but the language was banned in schools  
beginning in 1896. (Image: [Public Domain](#))

# Modern English (post-1800)

English also spread through attraction: English, and English-speaking communities, acquired a desirable social & economic cachet.



Immigrants arriving at Ellis Island in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. (Image: [Public Domain](#))



Cultural touchstones in the English language: Shakespeare's works, *The Wizard of Oz*, and the Beatles.



# English as a Global Language

- British English originally preeminent, owing to imperialism and global trade.
- American English became dominant in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, aided by “films, television, popular music, the Internet and World Wide Web, air travel and control, commerce, scientific publications, economic and military assistance, and activities of the United States in world affairs” (Algeo 2009: 183).



# English as an Interplanetary Language



- Algeo (2009) neglected to mention that American English is the only variety to be spoken on the moon.
- Is he jealous?

# American vs. British English

- In many ways, American English is more conservative.
  - What's an example of this? (See p. 183–184 in Algeo.)
  - Pronunciation of [æ] in *after, ask, dance, glass, path*, etc.
  - Retention of [r] in *bird, burr, far, mother*, etc.
  - *fall* for the season, *deck* of cards (vs. *autumn, pack*)
- What are some things that American English lost?
  - *fortnight, copse, dell, fen, heath, moor, spinney, wold*
- What are some things that came from American English, then spread to British English?
  - Words of Indigenous American origin: *raccoon, muskrat, woodchuck, pumpkin*, etc.
  - Others: *backwoods, underbrush, belittle, prairie, swamp, blizzard*

# Other Englishes

- Irish English and Indian English are described in the text. Both are more British than American, but have their own unique features.
- Canadian English (they say [o] in *process*, but are otherwise more American than British sounding).
- Australia, NZ, S. Africa, all more British than American.



# Syntactic & Morphological Differences

Pulled from Algeo (2009: 188).

- Thus Mgr. Knox is faced by a word which, if translated by its English equivalent, will give a meaning possibly very **different to** its sense.
- When he found his body on Hampstead Heath, the only handkerchief was a clean one which **had certainly not got** any eucalyptus on it.
- You don't think...that he did confide in any person? –Unlikely. I think he **would have done** if Galbraith alone had been involved.
- I'll **tell it you**.
- In the morning I was **woken up** at eight by a housemaid.

# Phonological Differences

- Main accentual differences:  
British uses [a] for [æ] (*ask, path, class*) and dropping [r] except before vowels (*bard, partial, nurse*)
- But intonation is actually more significantly divergent.

BE: Where are you going to be?

AE: Where are you going to be?

BE: Are you sure?

AE: Are you sure?

BE: Let me know where you're going to be.

AE: Let me know where you're going to be.

From Algeo (2009: 192).

# Phonological Differences

What are some things you notice about British English that diverges from Standard American English in the following?

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-7E85YmZTsA>
- 00:33:55–00:35:15
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jY1yqfEmRlM>
- 00:34:45 “Can you lend Claudia the blanket?”



# Variations within Varieties

- **Dialect** involves where we learned our language, our sex, age, ethnicity, cultural affiliations, etc.
- Everyone here speaks New York English, but because of our different backgrounds, our dialects differ. This accounts for differences of pronunciation, vocabulary, and so on.
- **Register** involves the context of language use. You may use a different register in class vs. with family vs. among friends. Most of us use, at minimum, a different register when talking to animals.

# A.A.E.

- One major dialect of American English is African-American English (a.k.a. AAE, or African-American Vernacular English, AAVE).
- This dialect is marked by its use of habitual *be*, similar to Irish English:

“She be working.” ≠ “She is working,” but more like “She is always working.”
- *Be* can also be dropped for the present progressive, as in “She working” = “She is working.”
- Different theories of where AAE comes from: one is that it descended from a creole, another that it arose from an older variety of English spoken on plantations alongside white people.

# A.A.E.

- How universal is AAE, really?
- It's sometimes taken for granted that Black Americans all have the same dialect, but there are some major problems with this analysis.
- Not all Black Americans have the same heritage.
- Regional dialectal differences as well: see famous Baltimorean accent, "Aaron earned an iron urn."  
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Oj7a-p4psRA>)
- This is definitely not the same as AAE spoken in other areas, e.g. NY.

# Register

- We all moderate our speech depending on the context in which we're communicating, including who we're speaking to, where we're speaking, and what we're trying to do.
- What's different about how you talk to a professor vs. your friends?
- Your parents vs. your pets?
- Your boss vs. your coworker?



# Sociology of Language

Sign up!

- LING 380-D001 (50710)
- This course explores the intersection of society and language. When a person speaks, a large amount of information about their gender, ethnicity, class, location, and even political affiliation is often expressed. Students will learn about key topics in sociolinguistics, including language variation, language change, attitudes towards language, register, and code switching.

Particular attention will be paid to sociolinguistic issues in New York City. The sorts of questions that will be explored include: What is conveyed by the stereotypical New York accent, and why do so many people actively try to lose theirs? (And why does it seem to come back when around family?) Why do some New Yorkers pronounce “mozzarella,” “ricotta,” and “capicola” in a noteworthy way, and why are they often made fun of for it? Where did “ain’t,” “finna,” and “brang” come from, and why do some people wrongly insist that they’re “not real words”?