



Dictionary of American Regional English, Volume II: D-H

Frederic G., Chief Editor Cassidy

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Volume I of the "Dictionary of American regional English" (DARE), published in 1985, aimed to capture the variety and creativeness of American folk words and expressions. Decades in preparation, the DARE corpus reflects English as it is spoken on America's main streets and country roads - the regional metaphors and similes passed along within homes and communities. Like its predecessor, Volume II contains vernacular Americanisms. In Virginia a goldfinch is a "dandelion bird", in Missouri an insufficient rain shower is a "drizzle-fizzle". The volume contains more than 11,000 entries. The two and a half pages on "dirt" reveal that a small marble is a "dirt pea" in the South. "To eat dried apples," a curious rural euphemism for becoming pregnant, appears in the five pages on "eat". Seven pages on "horn" and related words take readers on a tour of the animal and nether worlds: horned lark, horned frog, horned pout and that horned fellow, the Devil. DARE represents an attempt to document the living language of the entire country. The project's primary tool was a carefully worded survey of 1847 questions touching on most aspects of everyday life and human experience. Over a five-year period fieldworkers interviewed natives of 1002 communities. The result is a database of more than two and a half million items. Additionally, some 7000 publications, including novels, diaries, and smalltown newspapers, have yielded local idioms. Computer-generated maps accompanying many of the entries illustrate the regional distribution of words and phrases.

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