

10. THE COCKNEY ACCENT

- **Listen to the recording and correct the mistakes in the text (mainly homophones and vocabulary)**
- **Listening comprehension:**
 1. T/F/NG: A true Cockney is someone born within the sound of Bow Bells
 2. T/F/NG: Cockney speakers never use two forms of negation in the same sentence.
 3. T/F/NG: Cockney rhyming slang was developed intentionally to confuse the police and non-locals
 4. T/F/NG: Cockney rhyming slang is dying out
 5. T/F/NG: Some rhyming slang expressions are commonly used by people who are unaware of their origins
 6. T/F/NG: The earliest recorded use of the term Cockney is 1362, when it meant a “a small, misshapen egg”.
- **Vocabulary and cockney rhyming slang**
 1. The word “*sew*” means (more than one answer may be correct):
a) stitch b) knit c) drill d) dig e) do needlework
 2. The word “*udder*” means (more than one answer may be correct):
a) cow’s mammary organ b) speak c) a type of snake d) complete e) a viper
 3. Which of the following expressions means *manage to stay alive, especially in difficult circumstances*?
a) alive and well b) safe and sound c) so far so good d) keeping body and soul together
 4. Select the correct meaning of the following Cockney rhyming slang expressions:
Trouble (trouble and strife) = knife/wife/life
Brown bread = fed/dead/bed
Bread (Bread and Honey) = sunny/bunny/money
porkies (from pork pies) = lies/thighs/goodbyes
Obamas (Barack Obamas) = bananas/dramas/pyjamas
Bacons (bacon and eggs) = eggs/legs/pegs
Donkey’s (Donkey’s Ears) = fears/years/tears
mincies (mince pies) = eyes/ties/lies
Pig’s ear = near/dear/beer
Apples (apples and pears) = bears/stairs/care/

The Cockney Accent

This West-London accent is technically reserved for those who are born within earshot of Bow Bells, which are the bells of St Mary-le-Bow in the Cheapside district. However, Cockney is also sometimes used to describe the accent of London’s lurking class.

One of the distinguishing characteristics of Cockney is the replacement of the ‘th’ sound with an ‘f’ or ‘v’ sound – for example, ‘*thank*’ sounds more like ‘*fank*’ and ‘*mother*’ pronounced as ‘*muvver*’.

Cockney speakers often use glottal stops to replace /t/ before consonants and weak vowels; for example, *butter* is pronounced as ‘*bu’er*’ and may also drop the ‘h’ sound as well, making words such as ‘have’ sound more like ‘*ave*’. Other characteristics are: the use of multiple negation, as in *I ain’t never done nothing*, and the use of the non-standard ‘*them*’ instead of ‘*those*’: *Them books aren’t no good*.

Cockney Rhyming slang consists of replacing a word or phrase with another that rhymes with it. To make it more confusing, the rhyme may be hidden, so that there is no obvious link between the slang term and the original word or phrase.

No one is quite sure where the slang originates. Some speculate that it was a criminal slang designed to help thieves speak without being understood by others. Udders suggest that market traders created the slang so they could discuss matters among themselves while securing a good deal from their customers. What is known is that Cockney rhyming slang is alive and well, with new phrases entering the lexicon all the time.

Some phrases have entered uncommon British speech and are used daily without any awareness of their Cockney origins.

Examples include: *use your loaf* (loaf of bread = head)

have a butcher’s (butcher’s hook = look)