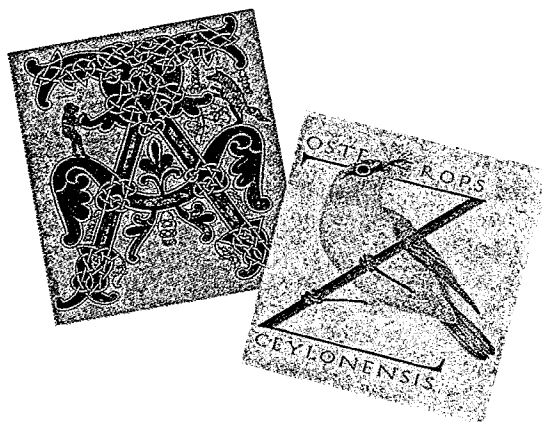


The
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Variation and Change in Our Living Language

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New to this edition of *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* is a series of 50 Notes, titled Our Living Language, at entries like *as far as*, *be*, *geek*, and *za*. These Notes were written to help demonstrate that American English, like all living languages, is not uniform and static but diverse and dynamic. Geography, social class, ethnicity, gender, and age, as well as factors internal to the language, influence the way particular speakers use and shape American English. The Our Living Language Notes discuss exemplary linguistic variations resulting from these factors and provide a broader "snapshot" of our language than is allowed by traditional dictionary practice.

The dynamism of language is easy to see if we take a historical, or diachronic, view. Latin, for instance, is now a dead language because people no longer learn and use it as a native tongue. But in the prime of its life (between the third century B.C. and the second century A.D.) it varied geographically (Romans said *coquina*, "kitchen," while speakers of Latin in Britain said *cogina*), socially (between popular and educated speech), and stylistically (between educated speech and writing). Through relentless processes of change, Vulgar Latin evolved into modern varieties of Italian, Portuguese, Spanish, and French, each dynamically varying and changing in turn.

Despite the ubiquity of variation and change, we are often led to believe that a particular language comes in only one standard, invariant mold, and that deviation or change from that standard spells the impending doom of civilization. But experience repeatedly belies such beliefs. We master textbook Spanish and land in Mexico to encounter a welter of words, pronunciations, and grammatical twists we never even dreamed existed. Or, reading Chaucer, we are struck by the metamorphosis that English has undergone since the 14th century.

Change in Progress

One area in which linguists have made considerable progress over the past century—especially during the last 40 years—is our ability to study language change as it is taking place, usually through careful attention to variations in regional and social usage that are both the harbingers and manifestations of change. Much of this progress was made through the study of American English, so it is especially appropriate to share some of our findings with readers of *The American Heritage Dictionary*. Although our advances have frequently involved pronunciation and grammar rather than vocabulary, words themselves are markers of diversity and carriers of history, and they can sometimes provide crucial evidence about developments in other parts of the language system. The words *go*, *like*, and *all*, for instance, represent ongoing change in the ways in which Americans introduce quotations in speech. In place of the conventional *say*, some speakers began using *go* to report dialogue in the historic or narrative present, as in *Then he goes*, "You think you're real smart, don't you?" This usage now overlaps with and has to some extent been replaced by *be like* and (in California and on the West Coast, at least) *be all*, as in *I'm like*, "No, I don't!" and *She's all*, "You do, too!" One of the ways we can tell that American speech is undergoing change in

this area is that younger people use the newer forms more often than older people do. When we have evidence that a linguistic feature is used at different rates by different age groups, we call it evidence of change in *apparent time*, using the terminology coined by William Labov, the leading figure in the study of language change in progress. Evidence of change in apparent time can be corroborated, however, by evidence of change in *real time*, by comparisons of speech and writing samples from earlier periods with those of today.

The note for *as far as* summarizes the corroborative evidence of change in apparent and real time quite clearly, change that involves syntax as much as vocabulary. That note draws, as this introduction does, on recent research by Tom Wasow, Norma Mendoza-Denton, Julie Espinoza, and myself published in the journal *Language* in 1995. The change taking place in constructions involving *as far as* has been demonstrated not only in America, where it seems to be most advanced, but also in England and other parts of the English-speaking world. The change is not in the *as far as* phrase itself but in the traditional requirement that the noun subject that follows it be followed in turn by a form of *be concerned* or *go*. This requirement is upheld for standard usage by the Usage Panel of *The American Heritage Dictionary* and exemplified by two public figures whose speech is represented here (the number immediately following the name gives the speaker's age):

"As far as the organized resistance is concerned, that's pretty much taken care of" (Lt. Gen. Thomas Kelly, 60s, 1989).

"Results of this summit were positive as far as the Soviet desires went" (President George Bush, 60s, 1990).

But we also have hundreds of examples in our files, most from speech but many from e-mail and expository and fiction writing, in which the final verb is absent. For instance:

"As far as the white servants, it isn't clear" (Stanford student, 22, 1987).

"The whole situation upset me, as far as the outcome of the verdict" (Unidentified young woman, 22, 1992).

How do we know that this is really a syntactic change in progress, that the *as far as* constructions are gradually becoming verbless? First of all, we have the evidence of change in apparent time, the fact that this usage is most frequent in examples from speakers and writers 19 years old or younger, somewhat less in speakers 20–39 years old, less again in speakers 40–59 years old, and least of all in speakers 60 years old or older. It is no accident that the examples of *as far as* followed by a verb cited above come from people in their sixties, nor that the verbless examples come from people in their twenties. The association between this linguistic variation and age is not absolute, for teenagers and young adults do produce some *as far as* sentences with *be concerned* and *go*, and over-60 speakers do produce some *as far as* sentences without these verbal finishers. But the statistical correlations with age are significant, indicating ongoing change.

Moreover, we have some evidence from real time. The *as far as X goes/is concerned* construction (or a variation using *so far as*) is an 18th-century innovation that eventually replaced earlier ways of restricting the topic of one's discourse, such as *(As) concerning X* and *As far as concerns X*. In the 18th-century examples of the innovating construction, the verbal *is concerned* or *goes* part is always present. In the 19th century, the verbal part is almost always present, but in two examples from Jane Austen's *Emma* ("*so far as our living with Mr. Churchill at Enscombe, it is settled*") and "*he only means so far as your having some thoughts of marrying*") and one from Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick* ("*So far as what there may be of a narrative in this book*"), we find our first evidence of the verbless construction.

In the 20th century, not only do attestations of verbless *as/so far as* become increasingly frequent, but usage books start commenting openly and disapprovingly on this usage, a good indication that it has become more common. H.W. Fowler's *Dictionary of Modern English Usage* (1926), for instance, gives this example: *As far as getting the money he asked for, Mr. Churchill had little difficulty*. Fowler follows it with a stern rebuke against omitting the verb. In a 1961 article in *American Speech*, linguist Paul Faris notes that *as far as* occurs frequently in cultivated usage without any form of *be concerned* following it, and he provides 60 verbless examples. From 1960 on, the construction appears to have proliferated, attracting rebukes from almost every usage handbook. Of the more than 1,200 occurrences of the *as far as* construction that my colleagues, students, and I collected in the late 1980s and early 1990s, more than half were verbless. Even in the written examples, verbless constructions appeared in 32 percent of our sample, a significant increase from the 6 percent we found in texts written before 1959.

Thus, a profound and apparently inexorable change in our living language has been taking place—a grammatical change, really—making *as far as* more like a preposition (compare *as for*) than a clausal conjunction. Like many other instances of change in progress, this one began below the level of consciousness and overt comment. In fact, the general public appears to have remained oblivious to this change even at what is now a fairly advanced level.

Rule Governance in Variation and Change

Another respect in which the patterns of variation and change illustrated by *as far as* resemble those of other variables we have studied in the past half century is that they are regular rather than random, governed by unconscious, language-internal rules and restrictions that can often be appreciated only when we assemble large numbers of examples and study these quantitatively. People tend to think of rules and grammar as covering only the small set of items about which we receive overt instruction: to avoid split infinitives, to say *It is I* rather than *It is me*, and so on. But in fact we are unconscious of most of the language regularities and restrictions that we follow every day. For instance, we can say *He took out the trash* or *He took the trash out*, but if the object is a pronoun, we can only say *He took it out*, not **He took out it*. No one sits us down to teach us this rule, but like most of the rules we follow, we acquire and use it unconsciously as we grow up. Language learning and use would be virtually impossible without systematic rules and restrictions; this generalization applies to all varieties of language, including vernaculars.

Many of the entries for which we have provided Our Living Language Notes in this volume are similarly subject to systematic rules that their speakers follow regularly, if unconsciously, even though these words and constructions come from vernaculars that are commonly regarded as lacking rules. For example, the *a-*prefix that is used with verb + *-ing* forms in Appalachian and other highland areas of the American South and Southwest is not used randomly but only with *-ing* forms that are part of a verb phrase, as in *She was a-running*. The benefactive *me* that is used instead of *myself* in Southern and other vernacu-

lars, as in *I bought me some new clothes*, can only be deployed if it is followed by an indefinite modifier or pronoun, such as *a* or *some*. In other words, sentences like **I bought me new clothes* are not permitted in English. The *be like* and *be all* forms that young people use to introduce quotations are usually restricted to pronoun subjects rather than full noun subjects (i.e., one can say *She's all*, "*Yes, you are!*" but sentences like *The woman's all*, "*Yes, you are!*" are virtually unheard of). Restrictions also apply to the zero copula, the absence of the verb *be* in certain situations, as in *He working* and *They nice*, that is characteristic of African American Vernacular English and some Southern varieties. The copula cannot be deleted (be zero) if it is stressed (*He IS nice*), if it is the first person form (*I'm working*), or if it is in the past tense (*He was working*).

In the case of *as far as*, the verbless construction is more likely to appear at the beginning of a sentence, as in *As far as ball techniques and tactics, he's quite good* (perhaps by analogy with the preposition *as for*, which can only occur initially in sentences) than at the end, as in *He's quite good, as far as ball techniques and tactics*. An even more important constraint is that the verbless construction is most likely to be used when its following noun phrase is long and grammatically complex. When that noun phrase is a gerund, as in "*People think I'm constantly in motion, as far as making films*" (Clint Eastwood, 1988), or contains a full sentence, as in *As far as the techniques that he has been using, the coaches were impressed*, the chances that *is concerned* or *goes* will be dropped are very high, over 80 percent. When the noun phrase is a conjoined noun phrase, like *ball techniques and tactics*, or when it includes a prepositional phrase, like *ball techniques in soccer*, the chances of verblessness are about 50-50. And when the noun phrase is a single noun phrase, like *the men*, the chances of the verb being dropped are much lower.

Moreover, this constraint appears to have operated for a long time. The earliest attested verbless *as far as/so far as* constructions (from the 19th century) all involve gerundial or sentential noun phrases, and the first verbless nonsentential example we find in the 20th century is a conjoined noun phrase ("*so far as frame and covering*," Henry Seidel Canby, Thoreau, 1939). We do not find verbless examples involving a single noun phrase until much later.

These historical facts support some general principles of variation and change proposed by the linguist C.J. Bailey in 1973. Among these is that language change does not begin equally in all environments, but begins in one linguistic environment before spreading in waves to other environments while moving to completion where it began. The corollary of this is the *more = earlier/less = later* principle, which holds that environments that show higher frequencies of the innovating variant at any point in time are likely to be the environments that were affected by the change earlier. The data for *as far as* constructions with gerundial and sentential noun phrases support this principle.

Bailey also suggested that changes begin in a limited geographical, social, and/or stylistic space and radiate from there to other parts of the speech community. Our data on the social contexts of the change involving *as far as* are not as comprehensive and clear-cut as they are for the linguistic constraints, but it is worth noting that the innovating verbless variant is currently most frequent in speech and least frequent in writing, as we might expect. Interestingly, the frequency for e-mail, where the element of planning is intermediate between speech and writing, falls in between those of printed writing and speech. We have no hard evidence on this, but it is likely that the *as far as* variation began in spoken usage of the 19th century.

Finally, women have a slight but significant lead over men in the use of the innovating *as far as* variant (60 versus 50 percent in our sample), as has been found to be true in most recent documented cases of ongoing change. Some have suggested that the fact that women frequently lead linguistic change is related to their closer association with the very young, who are often linguistic innovators; others hold that women are more expressive, using language more often as symbolic capital and as markers of personal style. No single explanation has yet been thoroughly validated, nor has any proven applicable to all features and

speech communities. The pacesetter role of women in ongoing change is a fascinating recent finding, but one that requires further empirical verification and explanation.

Synchronic Variation

Variation is the engine of linguistic change, for communities do not switch from one feature to another overnight but go through a period in which new and old variants compete until one wins out. But synchronic variation—variation viewed at one point in time—is not always symptomatic of ongoing change, although it may encapsulate the effects of previous change or resistance to change. Most of the Our Living Language Notes in this dictionary attest to the vibrancy of synchronic variation and variety in current American English without any indications of or implications for ongoing change. Many of our examples come from “vernacular” dialects of American English—everyday informal regional and social varieties with features like *ax* (for *ask*), *hissself* (for *himself*), and *zero copula* (as in *He working*) that are frequently stigmatized as nonmainstream, nonstandard, or worse (considered as evidence of ignorance, lack of education, or laziness). But usages of this type also survive, even thrive, by symbolizing opposition to mainstream culture. That is, they may vividly express the identities of their users as members of a particular region, social class, ethnicity, or age group. Some of these usages are widely emulated as acts of admiration or solidarity by people outside the groups in which they originated. For instance, expressions originating among urban African-American youth are often adopted by white suburban teenagers, who consider these expressions “cool.”

Regional Variation

This Dictionary, like its previous edition, includes a separate set of Regional Notes and an accompanying introductory essay, but certain Our Living Language Notes bear witness to regional variation as well. *Hornswoggle*, “to deceive,” is one of a small but intriguing set of words that first appeared in the 19th century in the American West, perhaps in deliberate, jesting opposition to East Coast words and mores. (A similar situation may apply to present-day *be all*, more commonly used by young people on the West Coast to introduce quotations than *be like*, its East Coast equivalent.) As the notes at *foot* and *mine* reveal, vernacular forms like *three foot* and *That book is hern*, each having its own systematic restrictions, are characteristic of parts of New England and the South. And the South—by far the most salient dialect area in the United States—is the province of several other distinctive Our Living Language Notes, including *like to*, “nearly” (*He like to died*), double modals (*He might could go*), and *right* in the sense of “very” (*He’s right nice*). Regions that are or were especially isolated, like the Appalachian and Ozark mountains, Smith Island on the Maryland-Virginia border, and Ocracoke Island, North Carolina, exemplify even more exotic usages, such as *We’d go hunting of an evening*, and *hit for it*.

Variation by Ethnicity and Social Class

Several Our Living Language entries testify to the influence of some (but by no means all) of the ethnic groups that compose the tapestry of American peoples: *sleigh* (from Dutch, and other words like *boss*, *snoop*, and *Santa Claus*), *schlock* (from Yiddish, along with other Yiddish words like *schlep* and *schmooze*), *dumb* in the sense of “stupid” (from German, along with other words like *kindergarten* and *rifle*), and perfective *I’m*, as in *I’m forgot to do it* (common among the Lumbee Indians of southeastern North Carolina).

The most common ethnic words in the Our Living Language Notes,

however, are those from African American Vernacular English (AAVE), the ethnic variety that has attracted the most attention from sociolinguists and the general public over the past four decades. (Recall the national controversy created in 1996 when the Oakland School Board voted to recognize Ebonics as the primary language of their African American majority students and to use it to help teach Standard English.) Many of the words from this source, including *bad* (“excellent”), *chill* (“to calm down or relax”), *cool* (“first-rate”), *dig* (“to enjoy”), *igg* (“to ignore”), and *rap* (the musical form), have crossed over into general usage among Americans, partly through the immense influence of Black music on American popular culture.

The more grammatical features of AAVE, however, including invariant habitual *be* (*We be steady studying*) and zero copula (*She workin’ now*), are not found as readily among Americans of other ethnicities, with two exceptions. They are found quite frequently in the South (where they seem to have originated and where they are used by white Americans, but usually at lower frequencies than among Blacks) and among Latino, Asian, and Pacific Islander youth who are in close contact with African Americans in urban centers like New York and San Francisco. The zero copula, in particular, may represent the influence of creole-speaking Blacks who were brought into America from the Caribbean in relatively large numbers in the 17th and 18th centuries. Salient grammatical features like habitual *be* and zero copula, which are socially stigmatized by the mainstream but vigorously endorsed by some of their users as markers of oppositional identity, also represent the intersection of ethnicity and social class. For, as quantitative studies in cities like New York, Detroit, and San Francisco have shown, they are most commonly employed by working-class African Americans and much more rarely used by middle-class African Americans. It is certainly not the case that all African Americans use them, and even those who do are most likely to use them in excited or informal interaction with their peers.

Other features covered by the Our Living Language Notes that are most frequent among working-class speakers include *ax* for *ask*, double comparatives (*more higher*), and regularized subject-verb agreement (use of *-s* for all present tense persons and numbers, e.g., *you walks*, *he walks*; or non-use of *-s* for all present tense persons and numbers, e.g., *you walk*, *he walk*). Although socioeconomic class distinctions are often regarded as relatively benign and indistinct in America (compared, for example, with England), language differences like these reveal that such distinctions are nevertheless quite real.

Other Kinds of Synchronic Variation

Not all aspects of synchronic variation can be fully represented by lexical entries; consequently, the Our Living Language Notes do not cover all types of linguistic diversity in America equally well. Gender variation and the social construction of male and female identity have been the focus of intense research in recent years on such topics as male/female differences in interruptions, tag questions (e.g., *you know?*), and the amount of talk and silence; but such aspects of conversational interaction or discourse do not lend themselves readily to dictionary coverage. The extent of one’s social network—the strength and diversity of one’s ties to friends and workmates, for example—has also been shown to be a salient factor in variation, both in America and Europe, but the features studied are elements of pronunciation and grammar rather than vocabulary. Variation by age has already been implicated in our earlier discussion of ongoing change in apparent time in features such as *as far as* and *be all/like*, and the fact that *a*-prefixing and the use of *hern*, *ourn*, and similar forms are more common among older speakers betrays their status as retentions from an earlier period. Recently, linguists have demonstrated that adolescence is a life stage in which the linguistic marking of social identity is at a peak. The extensive use of slang by teenagers, about which we say more below, is a part of this phenomenon.

Slang

As our dictionary entry indicates, slang occurs chiefly in casual, playful speech and is typically made up of short-lived coinages and figures of speech that are deliberately used in place of standard terms for the sake of added raciness, humor, irreverence, or other effect. To this we might add that the creation and use of slang are commonest among adolescents and teenagers, and that some words that enter the vocabulary as slang pass into more general usage and endure for decades, if not centuries, as has occurred with *bad*, *cool*, *dig*, and *dude*. If it is surprising to learn that some of these words go back to the early 20th century and even to the 19th century (as do *bad* and *dude*), it is equally surprising to learn that a seemingly modern, computer-age slang word like *geek* originated in the 19th- and early-20th-century world of the circus, where it originally referred to a performer who engaged in bizarre acts such as biting the head off a live chicken.

Some slang words illustrate very general principles of linguistic variation and change. For instance, *igg*, from *ignore*, illustrates the tendency to reduce or shorten words in informal speech. Although the incidence is higher as one goes down the social ladder, virtually all Americans reduce *past* and *hand* to *pas'* and *han'* in casual or excited speech, at least some of the time, and they can similarly drop the initial unstressed syllable in *(a)bout*. Unlike more broadly accepted slang reductions (such as *mike* for *microphone*), which typically retain their

most strongly stressed syllable, *igg* involves the retention of an initial unstressed syllable and the loss of a stressed syllable. Some of the newer slang reductions, like *za* (from *pizza*) and *rents* (from *parents*) have an even more startling, in-your-face quality. Their effect derives from the fact that they involve the loss of an initial stressed syllable (*PIZza*, *PArents*) and the replacement of the original reduced vowel (ə) in the remaining syllable by full vowels (ä, ě). In this respect they defy convention, much as the recently popular greeting among African Americans *What up?* defied the rule by which the copula in collocations using *what is*, *that is*, and *it is* is usually contracted (as in *wha's up*, *tha's ok*, *i's me*) but not deleted in African American Vernacular English. As the note at *za* reminds us, however, today's startling slang neologism can become tomorrow's conventional standard usage, for *phone*, *bus*, and *wig* were originally derived (from *telephone*, *omnibus*, and *periwig*) by clipping stressed syllables.

A century from now, *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* will undoubtedly bear witness to completed changes and new kinds of regional and social variation that we cannot now envision. But to the extent that intervening editions continue to document and discuss the ways in which this vibrant American language is varying and changing, future developments should not come as a complete surprise, and the Dictionary's readers and compilers will have shared the pleasure of tracking the process.

alignment (ə-līn'mənt) *n.* 1. Arrangement or position in a straight line or in parallel lines. 2a. The process of adjusting parts so that they are in proper relative position: A set of gears needs periodic alignment. b. The condition of having parts so adjusted: Binoocular lenses that are out of alignment will yield a double image. 3. A ground plan: Blueprints for the building included an alignment and a profile. 4. The act of aligning or the condition of being aligned. 5. An arrangement or alliance of groups: a new alignment of factions in the party. 6. Sports a. An arrangement or positioning of players: a defensive alignment. b. The grouping or positioning of teams, as in a conference or league.

alike (ə-līk') *adj.* Having close resemblance; similar: The twins are as alike as two peas in a pod. Friends are generally alike in background and tastes. *adv.* In the same manner or to the same degree: They dress and walk alike. [Middle English *alich* (influenced by Old Norse *alíkr*), blend of *ilich* (from Old English *gelic*) and *anlich* (from Old English *ontic*); see *lik-* in Appendix I.] —**alike'ness** *n.*

alimment (āl'mənt) *n.* 1. Something that nourishes; food. 2. Something that supports or sustains. *tr.v.* (-mēnt') -ment'ed, -ment'ing, -ments To supply with sustenance, such as food: required by court order to alimment the abandoned family. [Middle English, from Latin *alimentum*, from *alere*, to nourish. See *al-* in Appendix I.] —**al'imment'al** (-mēn'tl) *adj.* —**al'imment'al'ly** *adv.*

alimmentary (āl'mən'tā-rē, -trē) *adj.* 1. Concerned with food, nutrition, or digestion. 2. Providing nourishment.

alimentary canal *n.* The mucous membrane-lined tube of the digestive system through which food passes, in which digestion takes place, and from which wastes are eliminated. It extends from the mouth to the anus and includes the pharynx, esophagus, stomach, and intestines. Also called *digestive tract*.

alimmentation (āl'mən-tā'shən) *n.* 1. The act or process of giving or receiving nourishment. 2. Support; sustenance.

alimmony (āl'mō-nē) *n., pl. -nies* 1. Law An allowance for support made under court order to a divorced person by the former spouse, usually the chief provider during the marriage. Alimony may also be granted without a divorce, as between legally separated persons. 2. A means of livelihood; maintenance. [Latin *alimōnia*, sustenance, from *alere*, to nourish. See *al-* in Appendix I.]

A-line (ā'lin') *adj.* Having a fitted top and a flared bottom: an A-line dress. [From garments being shaped like a capital A.]

aliphatic (āl'fāt'ik) *adj.* Of, relating to, or designating a group of organic chemical compounds in which the carbon atoms are linked in open chains. [From Greek *aleiphar*, *aleiphat-*, oil, from *aleiphein*, to anoint with oil. See *leip-* in Appendix I.]

aliquot (āl'i-kwōt', -kwōt) *adj.* Of, relating to, or denoting an exact divisor or factor of a quantity, especially of an integer. *n.* An aliquot part. [Latin *aliquot*, a number of, several: *alius*, some; see *al-* in Appendix I + *quot*, how many; see *kwō-* in Appendix I.]

A list or A-list (ā'list') *n.* Informal A list or group of the most admired or desirable people, as for a job or social gathering: famous actors on the casting director's A list; a private party for Hollywood's A-list.

alight (ə-līt') *v.* A past tense and a past participle of *alight*.

aliterate (ā-līt'ə-rīt) *adj.* Able to read but not interested in reading. See Usage Note at *iterate*. —**alit'er'ate** *n.* —**alit'er'ate** *n.*

alive (ə-līv') *adj.* 1. Having life; living. See synonyms at *living*. 2. In existence or operation; active: keep your hopes alive. 3. Full of living or moving things; abounding: a pool alive with trout. 4. Full of activity or animation; lively: a face alive with mischief. —**idiom:** alive to Aware of; sensitive to: alive to the moods of others. [Middle English: *a-*, in a specified state; see *ā-* + *live*, life (from Old English *lif*; see *LIFE*).] —**alive'ness** *n.*

aliyah (ā'lē-āf', ā'lē-ā) *n., pl. -yahs* also *-yot* (ā'lē-ōt') The immigration of Jews into Israel. [Hebrew *āliyah*, ascent, from *ālā*, to ascend. See *ly* in Appendix II.]

alizarin (ə-līz'ār-in) also **alizarine** (-in, -rēn') *n.* An orange-red crystalline compound, C₁₅H₈O₄(OH)₂, used in making dyes. [French *alizerine*, from *alizari*, madder root, from Spanish, probably from Arabic *al-ūsāra*, the juice: *al-*, the + *ūsāra*, juice (from *āsāra*, to squeeze; see *sr* in Appendix II).]

alkahest (āl'kə-hēst') *n.* The hypothetical universal solvent once sought by alchemists. [Medieval Latin *alchahest*, first used by Paracelsus (1493–1541), and said to have been coined by him in imitation of Arabic words.] —**alkahes'tic**, **alkahes'tical** *adj.*

alkalescent (āl'kə-lēs'ənt) *adj.* Becoming alkaline; slightly alkaline. [ALKAL(I) + -ESCENT.] —**alkales'cence**, **alkales'cent'cy** *n.*

alkali (āl'kə-lī) *n., pl. -lis* or *-lies* 1. A carbonate or hydroxide of an alkali metal, the aqueous solution of which is bitter, slippery, caustic, and characteristically basic in reactions. 2. Any of various soluble mineral salts found in natural water and arid soils. 3. Alkali metal. 4. A substance having highly basic properties; a strong base. [Middle English, alkaline substance from calcined plant ashes, from Medieval Latin, from Arabic *al-qily*, the ashes, lye, potash: *al-*, the + *qily*, ashes (from *qālā*, to fry, roast; see *qly* in Appendix II).]

alkali metal *n.* Any of a group of soft, white, low-density, low-melting, highly reactive metallic elements, including lithium, sodium, potassium, rubidium, cesium, and francium.

alkalimetric (āl'kə-līm'ē-tēr) *n.* An apparatus for measuring alkalinity. —**alkalim'etry** *n.*

alkaline (āl'kə-līn, -līn') *adj.* 1. Of, relating to, or containing an alkali. 2a. Having a pH greater than 7. b. Having a relatively low concentration of hydrogen ions.

alkaline-earth metal (āl'kə-līn-ūrth', -līn'-) *n.* Any of a group of metallic elements, especially calcium, strontium, magnesium, and bar-

ium, but generally including beryllium and radium. Also called *alkaline earth*.

alkalinity (āl'kə-līn'ī-tē) *n., pl. -ties* The alkali concentration or alkaline quality of an alkali-containing substance.

alkalize (āl'kə-līz') also **alkalinize** (-lā-nīz') *v. -lized, -lizes* *ing, -lizes* also *-linized, -linizing, -linizes* *—tr.* To make alkaline. *—intr.* To become an alkali. —**alkali'za'tion** (-lī-zā'shən) *n.*

alkaloid (āl'kə-lōid') *n.* Any of various organic compounds normally with basic chemical properties and usually containing at least one nitrogen atom in a heterocyclic ring, occurring chiefly in many vascular plants and some fungi. Many alkaloids, such as nicotine, quinine, cocaine, and morphine, are known for their poisonous or medicinal attributes. [ALKAL(I) + -OID.] —**alkaloi'dal** (-lōid'l) *adj.*

alkalosis (āl'kə-lō'sis) *n.* Abnormally high alkalinity of the blood and body fluids. [ALKAL(I) + -OSIS.] —**alkalot'ic** (-lōt'ik) *adj.*

alkane (āl'kən') *n.* Any member of the alkane series. [ALK(YL) + -ANE.]

alkane series *n.* A group of saturated open-chain hydrocarbons having the general formula C_nH_{2n+2}, the most abundant of which is methane. Also called *methane series*, *paraffin series*.

alka-net (āl'kə-nēt') *n.* 1a. A European perennial herb (*Alkanna tinctoria*) having cymes of blue flowers and red roots. b. The root of this plant or the red dye extracted from the root. 2. Any of various hairy plants of the Eurasian genus *Anchusa*, having blue or violet flowers grouped on elongated cymes. [Middle English, from Old Spanish *alcana*, diminutive of *alcana*, henna, from Medieval Latin *alchanna*, from Arabic *al-hinnā*, the henna: *al-*, the + *hinnā*, henna; see *HENNA*.]

alkene (āl'kēn') *n.* Any of a series of unsaturated, open chain hydrocarbons with one or more carbon-carbon double bonds, having the general formula C_nH_{2n}. [ALK(YL) + -ENE.]

Al Khalil (āl käl-lēl', khä-) See *Hebron*.

alkyne (āl'kīn') *n.* Variant of *alkyne*.

Alkmaar (āl'kär') A town of northern Netherlands north-northwest of Amsterdam. Chartered in 1254, it has a famous cheese market. Population: 83,892.

alky (āl'kē) *n., pl. -kies* Slang An alcoholic. [Shortening and alteration of ALCOHOLIC + -Y.]

alkyd (āl'kid) *n.* A widely used durable synthetic resin derived from glycerol and phthalic anhydride. Also called *alkyd resin*. [ALKY(L) + (ACI)D.]

alkyl (āl'kəl) *n.* A monovalent radical, such as ethyl or propyl, having the general formula C_nH_{2n+1}. [German *Alkohol*, alcohol (from Medieval Latin *alcohol*, antimony; see ALCOHOL) + -YL.]

alkylate (āl'kə-lāt') *tr.v. -ated, -ating, -ates* To add one or more alkyl groups to (a compound).

alkylation (āl'kə-lā'shən) *n.* A process in which an alkyl group is added to or substituted in a compound, as in the reaction of alkenes with alkanes to make high-octane fuels.

alkyne also **alkine** (āl'kīn') *n.* Any of a series of open chain hydrocarbons with a carbon-carbon triple bond and the general formula C_nH_{2n-2}. [ALKY(L) + -(I)NE².]

all (ōl) *adj.* 1. Being or representing the entire or total number, amount, or quantity: All the windows are open. Deal all the cards. See synonyms at *whole*. 2. Constituting, being, or representing the total extent or the whole: all Christendom. 3. Being the utmost possible of: argued the case in all seriousness. 4. Every: got into all manner of trouble. 5. Any whatsoever: beyond all doubt. 6. Pennsylvania Finished; used up: The apples are all. See Regional Note at *gum band*. 7. Informal Being more than one: Who all came to the party? See Regional Note at *you-all*. *n.* The whole of one's fortune, resources, or energy; everything one has: The brave defenders gave their all. *pron.* 1. The entire or total number, amount, or quantity; totality: All of us are sick. All that I have is yours. 2. Everyone; everything; justice for all. *adv.* 1. Wholly; completely: a room painted all white; directions that were all wrong. 2. Each; apiece: a score of five all. 3. So much: I am all the better for that experience. —**idioms:** all along From the beginning; throughout: saw through the disguise all along. all but Nearly; almost: all but crying with relief. all in Tired; exhausted. all in all Everything being taken into account: All in all, the criticism seemed fair. all of Informal Not more than: a conversation that took all of five minutes. all one Of no difference; immaterial: Whether we go out or stay in, it's all one to me. all out With all one's strength, ability, or resources. all that Informal To the degree expected. all there Mentally unimpaired or competent. all the same 1. Notwithstanding; nevertheless. 2. Of no difference, immaterial. all told With everything considered; in all: All told, we won 100 games. and all And other things of the same type: "The only thing they seemed to have in common was their cowboy gear, ten-gallon hats and all" (Edward Chen). at all 1. In any way: unable to walk at all. 2. To any extent; whatever: not at all sorry. be all informal To say or utter. Used chiefly in verbal narration: He's all, "What did you do that for?" in all Considering everything; all together: In all, it rained for two hours. I bought four hats, in all. [Middle English *al*, from Old English *eall*. See *al-* in Appendix I.]

Usage Note The construction *all that* is used informally in questions and negative sentences to mean "to the degree expected." In the late 1960s, the Usage Panel rejected its use, but evidently resistance to *all that* is crumbling. Seventy-two percent of the Panel now finds the construction acceptable in the sentence *The movie is not all that interesting*. Sentences of the form *All X's are not Y* may be ambiguous. *All of the departments did not file a report* may mean that some departments did not file, or that none did. The first meaning can be expressed unambiguously by the sentence *Not all of the departments filed a report*. The second meaning

ā pat	oi boy
ā pay	ou out
ār care	ōō took
ā father	ōō boot
ē pet	ū cut
ē be	ūr urge
ī pit	th thin
ī pie	th this
īr pier	hw which
ō pot	zh vision
ō toe	ā about, item
ō paw	♦ regionalism

Stress marks: ' (primary); ' (secondary), as in dictionary (dik'shə-nēr'ē)

requires a paraphrase such as *None of the departments filed a report* or *All of the departments failed to file a report*. The same problem can arise with other universal terms such as *every* in negated sentences, as in the ambiguous *Every department did not file a report*. See Usage Note at **every**.

Our Living Language Among the newest ways of introducing direct speech in the United States is the construction consisting of a form of *be* with *all*, as in *I'm all*, *"I'm not gonna do that!" And she's all*, *"Yes you are!"* This construction is particularly common in the animated speech of young people in California and elsewhere on the West Coast, who use it more frequently than the informal East Coast alternatives, *be like* and *go*, as in *He's like* (or *goes*), *"I'm not gonna do that!"* These indicators of direct speech tend to be used more often with pronoun subjects (*He's all*, *"I'm not..."*) than with nouns (*The man's all*, *"I'm not..."*), and with the historical present (*He's all...*) than with the past (*He was all...*). All of these locutions can introduce a gesture or facial expression rather than a quotation, as in *He's all...* followed by a shrug of the shoulders. *Be all* and *be like* can also preface a statement that sums up an attitude, as in *"I'm all 'No way!"* See Notes at **go**¹, **like**².

all- *pref.* Variant of **allo-**.

al-la breve (äl'ä bräv', ä'lä bräv'ä) *adv. & adj.* *Music* In cut time. [Italian: *alla*, according to the + *breve*, *breve*.]

Al-lah (äl'ä, ä'lä) *n.* God, especially in Islam. [Arabic *Allāh*: *al-*, the + *ilāh*, god; see **l** in Appendix II.]

Al-la-ha-bad (äl'ä-hä-bäd', ä'lä-hä-bäd') *n.* A city of north-central India at the junction of the Jumna and Ganges rivers east of Varanasi. It was built on the site of an ancient Indo-Aryan holy city and is still a pilgrimage site for Hindus. Population: 792,858.

al-la-man-da (äl'ä-män'dä) *n.* Any of several tropical American evergreen shrubs of the genus *Allamanda*, widely cultivated in warm regions for their showy yellow or purple trumpet-shaped flowers. [New Latin *Allamanda*, genus name, after Jean Nicholas Sébastien Allamand (1713-1787), Swiss scientist.]

all-A-mer-i-can (äl'ä-mēr'i-kän) *adj.* 1. Representative of the people of the United States or their ideals; typically American: *an all-American family*; *their all-American generosity*. 2. Sports Chosen as the best amateur in the United States at a particular position or event: *an all-American fullback*. 3. Composed entirely of Americans or American materials: *an all-American negotiating team*; *cars of all-American manufacture*. 4. Of all the American nations: *an all-American conference*. ♦ *n.* often **All-American** An all-American athlete.

al-lan-to'id (ä-län'toid') also **al-lan-toi-dal** (äl'an-toid'l) *adj.* 1. Of or having an allantois. 2. Shaped like a sausage. ♦ *n.* See **allantois**. [New Latin *allantoides*. See **ALLANTOIS**.]

al-lan-to-in (ä-län'tō-in) *n.* A white, crystalline oxidation product, C₄H₆N₂O₃, of uric acid that is the metabolic end product of vertebrate purine oxidation and is used medicinally to promote tissue growth. [**ALLANTOIS** + **-IN**.]

al-lan-to-is (ä-län'tō-is) *n., pl.* **al-lan-to-i-des** (äl'an-tō-i-dēz') A membranous sac that develops from the posterior part of the alimentary canal in the embryos of mammals, birds, and reptiles. It is important in the formation of the umbilical cord and placenta in mammals. Also called **allantoid**. [New Latin, from *allantoides*, from Greek *allantoidēs*, sausage-shaped: *allas*, *allant-*, sausage + *-oidēs*, *-oid*.] —**al-lan-to'ic** (äl'an-tō'ik) *adj.*

al-lar-gan-do (ä'lär-gän'dō) *adv. & adj.* *Music* In a gradually broadening style and slowing tempo. Used chiefly as a direction. [Italian, present participle of *allargare*, to broaden: *al-*, to (from Latin *ad-*; see **AD-**) + *largare*, to broaden (from *largo*, broad, from Latin *largus*).]

all-a-round (äl'ä-round') also **all-round** (äl'round') *adj.* 1. Comprehensive in extent or depth: *a good all-around education*. 2. Able to do many things well; versatile: *an all-around athlete*. See synonyms at **versatile**.

al-la-tive (äl'ä-tiv) *adj.* Of, relating to, or being the grammatical case expressing motion toward a place, as Finnish *stadionille* "to the stadium." ♦ *n.* 1. The allative case. 2. A word in the allative case. [New Latin *allativus*, from Latin *allatus*, past participle of *afferre*, to bring toward: *ad-*, *ad-* + *latus*, carried; see **tele-** in Appendix I.]

al-lay (ä-lä') *tr.v.* **-laid**, **-laying**, **-lays** 1. To reduce the intensity of; relieve: *alloy back pains*. See synonyms at **relieve**. 2. To calm or pacify; set to rest: *alloyed the fears of the worried citizens*. [Middle English *aleien*, from Old English *alegan*, to lay down: *ä-*, intensive pref. + *legan*, to lay; see **LAY**¹.] —**al-lay'er** *n.*

all clear *n.* A signal, usually by siren, that an air raid is over or a danger has passed.

all-day (äl'dä') *adj.* Continuing all through the day: *an all-day examination*.

al-le-ga-tion (äl'i-gä'shən) *n.* 1. Something alleged; an assertion: *allegations of disloyalty*. 2. The act of alleging. 3. A statement asserting something without proof: *The newspaper's charges of official wrongdoing were mere allegations*. 4. Law An assertion made by a party that must be proved or supported with evidence. [French *allegation*, from Latin *allegatio*, *allegatio*-, from *allegatus*, past participle of *allegare*, to dispatch, adduce: *ad-*, *ad-* + *legare*, to depute; see **LEGATE**.]

al-le-gé (ä-lēj') *tr.v.* **-leged**, **-leging**, **-leges** 1. To assert to be true; affirm: *alleging his innocence of the charge*. 2. To assert without or before proof: *The indictment alleges that the commissioner took bribes*. 3. To state (a plea or excuse, for example) in support or denial of a claim or accusation: *The defendant alleges temporary insanity*. 4. Archaic To bring forward as an authority. [Middle English *alleggen*, from Old French *alegier*, to vindicate, justify (influenced by *aleguer*, to give a reason), from *esliger*, to pay a fine, justify oneself, from Late Latin **exlitigare*, to clear at law:

Latin *ex-*, out; see **EX-** + Latin *litigare*, to sue; see **LITIGATE**.] —**al-le-gé'** *adj.* —**al-leg'er** *n.*

al-le-ged (ä-lēj'd', ä-lēj'id) *adj.* Represented as existing or as being as described but not so proved; supposed. —**al-le-ged'ly** (ä-lēj'id-lē) *adv.*

Usage Note An *alleged* burglar is someone who has been accused of being a burglar but against whom no charges have been proved. An *alleged* incident is an event that is said to have taken place but has not yet been verified. In their zeal to protect the rights of the accused, newspapers and law enforcement officials sometimes misuse *alleged*. Someone arrested for murder may be only an *alleged* murderer, for example, but is a real, not an *alleged*, suspect in that his or her status as a suspect is not in doubt. Similarly, if the money from a safe is known to have been stolen and not merely mislaid, then we may safely speak of a theft without having to qualify our description with *alleged*.

Al-le-ghe-ny Mountains (äl'i-gä'nē) also **Al-le-ghe-nies** (-nēz) A mountain range comprising the western part of the Appalachian Mountains. The range extends about 805 km (500 mi) from northern Pennsylvania to southwest Virginia and rises to approximately 1,483 m (4,862 ft) in northeast West Virginia. The eastern Alleghenies, also called the **Allegheny Front**, form a steep escarpment and are more rugged than the western portion, known as the **Allegheny Plateau**, which extends into Ohio and Kentucky.

Allegheny River A river rising in north-central Pennsylvania and flowing about 523 km (325 mi) northwest into New York then southwest into Pennsylvania again, where it joins the Monongahela River at Pittsburgh to form the Ohio River.

Word History The Iroquois who inhabited western Pennsylvania considered the Allegheny to be the upper part of the Ohio River. Iroquois *Ohio* means "beautiful river" (*oh-*, "river"; *-io*, "good, fine, beautiful"). When the Delaware, an Algonquian people, moved to western Pennsylvania in the 18th century and displaced the Iroquois, they translated Iroquoian *Ohio* into Delaware, yielding *welchik-heny*, "most beautiful stream" (*welchik*, "most beautiful"; *heny*, "stream"). The name *Welchik-heny* was then Anglicized as *Allegheny*.

Allegheny spurge *n.* A perennial herb (*Pachysandra procumbens*), native to the southeast United States and sometimes grown as an ornamental or ground cover for its usually mottled leaves. [After the ALLEGHENY (MOUNTAINS).]

al-le-giance (ä-lēj'jəns) *n.* 1. Loyalty or the obligation of loyalty, as to a nation, sovereign, or cause. See synonyms at **fidelity**. 2. The obligations of a vassal to a lord. [Middle English *alligeance*, alteration of *ligeance*, from Old French *ligeance*, from *lige*, liege. See **LIEGE**.] —**al-le-giant** *adj.*

al-le-gor-i-cal (äl'i-gör'i-kəl, -gör'-) also **al-le-gor-ic** (-ik) *adj.* Of, characteristic of, or containing allegory: *an allegorical painting of Victory leading an army*. —**al-le-gor-i-cal-ly** *adv.*

al-le-gor-ize (äl'i-gör-riz', -gö-, -gä-) *v.* **-rized**, **-rizing**, **-rizes** —*tr.* 1. To express as or in the form of an allegory: *a story of barnyard animals that allegorizes the fate of Soviet socialism*. 2. To interpret allegorically: *allegorize the quest for the Holy Grail as an inner spiritual search*. —*intr.* To use or make allegory: *sculptors who rendered the moral world by allegorizing*. —**al-le-gor-i-za-tion** (-gör'i-zä'shən, -gör', -gör') *n.* —**al-le-gor-iz'er** *n.*

al-le-gor-y (äl'i-gör'ē, -gör'ē) *n., pl.* **-ries** 1a. The representation of abstract ideas or principles by characters, figures, or events in narrative, dramatic, or pictorial form. **b.** A story, picture, or play employing such representation. John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* is an allegory. 2. A symbolic representation: *The blindfolded figure with scales is an allegory of justice*. [Middle English *allegorie*, from Latin *allegoria*, from Greek, from *allogorein*, to interpret allegorically: *allos*, other; see **al-** in Appendix I + *agoreuein*, to speak publicly (from *agora*, marketplace; see **GER-** in Appendix I).] —**al-le-gor-ist** *n.*

al-le-gret-to (äl'i-grēt'ō, ä'l'i-) *Music adv. & adj.* In a moderately quick tempo, usually considered to be slightly slower than *allegro* but faster than *andante*. Used chiefly as a direction. ♦ *n., pl.* **-tos** An allegretto passage or movement. [Italian, diminutive of *allegro*, *allegro*. See **ALLEGRO**.]

al-le-gro (ä-lēj'rō, ä-lä'grō) *Music adv. & adj.* *Abbr.* **al-lo** In a quick, lively tempo, usually considered to be faster than *allegretto* but slower than *presto*. Used chiefly as a direction. ♦ *n., pl.* **-gros** An allegro passage or movement. [Italian, from Latin *alacer*, lively.]

al-le-le (ä-lē'l) *n.* One member of a pair or series of genes that occupy a specific position on a specific chromosome. [German *Allel*, short for *Allelomorph*, *allelomorph*, from English *ALLELOMORPH*.] —**al-le'lic** (ä-lē'lik, ä-lē'ik) *adj.* —**al-le'lism** *n.*

al-le-lo-morph (ä-lē'lä-mōrf', ä-lē'lä-) *n.* An allele. [Greek *allēlōn*, mutually (from *allos*, other; see **al-** in Appendix I) + **-MORPH**.] —**al-le-lo-mor'phic** *adj.* —**al-le-lo-mor'phism** *n.*

al-le-lo-pa-thy (ä-lē-löp'ä-thē, ä'lä-) *n.* The inhibition of growth in one species of plants by chemicals produced by another species. [Greek *allelōn*, reciprocally (from *allos*, another; see **al-** in Appendix I) + **-PATHY**.] —**al-le-lo-path'ic** (ä-lē'lä-päth'ik, ä-lē'lä-) *adj.*

al-le-lu-sia (äl'ä-lō'yä) *interj.* Hallelujah. [Middle English, from Medieval Latin *alleluia*, from Late Greek *allelouia*, from Hebrew *hallelūyāh*, praise Yahweh. See **HALLELUJAH**.]

al-le-mande (äl'ä-mänd', -mänd', ä'lä-mänd', -mänd') *n.* 1a. A stately 16th-century dance in duple meter. **b.** *Music* A composition written to or as if to accompany this dance, often used as the first movement of a suite. 2. A lively dance of the mid-18th century in triple meter.



allamanda