Contents

Introduction 8

1 English Comes of Age 10
Runic Inscriptions 12
Vespasian Psalter 13
Franks Casket 14
King Alfred, Will 16
'Battle of Brunanburh' 17
Beowulf 18
Anglo-Saxon Chronicle 19
Winchester *Liber Vitae* 20
Kentish Homilies 21
Orrmulum 22
'Sumer is icumen in' 23
John of Trevisa, *Polychronicon* 24
Sir Gawayne and the Grene Knight 25
Hoccleve, *The Regiment of Princes* 26
Henry V, Letter 27

2 Setting the Standard 28
Chaucer, Prologue to *The Canterbury Tales* 30
Wycliffe, Bible 31
Caxton, *Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye* 32
Tyndale, Bible 34
Coverdale, Psalms 35
Book of Common Prayer 36
Hart, *An Orthographie* 37
Mulcaster, *The Elementarie* 38
Bullokar, *Pamphlet for Grammar* 39
The Booke of Sir Thomas More 40
Shakespeare, *Richard III* Quarto 42
Shakespeare, *Richard III* Folio 43
King James Bible 44
Cawdrey, *A Table Alphabeticall* 46
Jonson, *English Grammar* 47
Swift, *A Proposal* 48
Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language* 49
Sheridan, *Lectures on Elocution* 50
Lowth, *English Grammar* 51
Walker, *Pronouncing Dictionary* 52
Murray, *English Grammar* 53
Alford, *A Plea for the Queen's English* 54
Oxford English Dictionary 55
Usage Guides 56
BBC, *Broadcast English* 57

3 Everyday English 58
Ælfric, *Colloquy* 60
A Boke of Kokery 61
Brews, Letter to a Lover 62
N-town Mystery Play 63
English–French Phrase Book 64
Head, *The Canting Academy* 65
Wit and Mirth 66
Swift, *Polite Conversation* 67
Andrewes, *A Dictionary of the Slang and Cant Languages* 68
Austen, Letter to Cassandra 69
Kent, *Modern Flash Dictionary* 70
Twain, *The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County* 71
Carolino, *English As She is Spoke* 72
Shaw, *Pygmalion* 73
Partridge, *A Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English* 74
Pinter, *Apart From That* 75

4 English at Work 76
Bald, *Leechbook* 78
Ely Abbey, Accounts 79
Edward the Confessor, Charter 80
Layamon, *Brut* 81
History and Articles of Masonry 82
Proprytees & Medicynes of Hors 83
The Book of St Albans 84
Hornbooks 85
Smith, *An Accidence for Young Sea-men* 86
East India Company, Minutes 87
Hooke, *Micrographia* 88
The Oxford Gazette 89
Hooson, *The Miners Dictionary* 90
Steele, *The Melody and Measure of Speech* 91
Advertisement 92
Punch 93
Broadside 94
Pitman, *The Phonetic Journal* 95
'The Japanese Village' 96
Ogden, *Basic English* 97

5 English at Play 98
The *Exeter Book* 100
'The Owl and the Nightingale' 101
A Hundred Mery Talys 102
Shakespeare, *Sonnets* 103
Sterne, *Tristram Shandy* 104
Falkirk, *Carriches* 105
The Masquerade 106
The Paragon of Alphabets 107
The Trifler 108
The Infant's Grammar 109
The Good Child's Book of Stops 110
Bennett, *Old Nurse's Book* 111

Carroll, *Alice's Adventures Under Ground* 112
Artemus Ward in London 113
Bombaugh, *Gleanings from the Harvest-fields of Literature* 114
Dobson, *Literary Frivolities* 115
Punch's Almanack 116
Cummings, 'Post Impressions XIV' 117
Johnson, *Albert Angelo* 118
Silver, *Laugh Out Loud* 119

6 Accents and Dialects 120
Lindisfarne Gospels 122
Michael, *Ayenbite of Inwit* 123
Chaucer, *The Reeve's Tale* 124
Hardyng (Chronicle); James VI, (The Lord's Prayer) 125
The Kalendayr of the Shyppars 126
Caxton, Prologue to *Eneydos* 127
Deloney, *The Pleasant History of John Winchcomb* 128
Ray, *A Collection of English Words* 129
Burns, 'To a Louse' 130
The Yorkshire Garland 131
Dickens, *The Pickwick Papers* 132
Barnes, 'Jenny's Ribbons' 133
Poor Letter H 134
Wright, *Dialect Dictionary* 135
Lawrence, 'The Collier's Wife' 136
Dictionary of American Regional English, Volume I 137

7 English Around the World 138
Smith, *A True Relation* 140
East India Company, Cargo List 141
The *Barbados Gazette* 142
Hicky's *Bengal Gazette* 143
Webster, *Compendious Dictionary* 144
Leland, Notes 145
Schreiner, *The Story of an African Farm* 146
Yule & Coke Burnell, *Hobson-Jobson* 147
Wright, *Baboo English as 'tis Writ* 148
Morris, *Austral English* 149
A Loyal Acrostic 150
Plaatje, *Mhudi* 151
Stiff, *The Milk and Honey Route* 152
Tutuola, *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* 153
Njoku, *How to Write Love Letters* 154
Levi, *Kuk Buk* 155
Agard, 'Listen Mr Oxford don' 156

Acknowledgements 157
Further Reading 157
Index 158