THE HISTORY OF ENGLISH PODCAST TRANSCRIPTS

EPISODE 189: STRESSED OUT

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Welcome to the History of English Podcast – a podcast about the history of the English language. This is Episode 189: Stressed Out. This time, as we work our way through the story of English, we're going to complete our look at the decade of the 1630s. We're going to look at increased tension and conflict in England as the country inches closer to Civil War. We'll also look at the creation of several new colonies in North America as English speakers continued to expand along the eastern seaboard. And throughout this episode, we're going to examine how the English language has been shaped and defined by stress. It's a topic that we've touched on before, but this time, we'll take a deeper dive and look at how stress patterns have changed over time, and also how those patterns produced a new vowel sound which has become the most common vowel sound in English.

But before we begin, let me remind you that the website for the podcast is historyofenglishpodcast.com. And you can sign up to support the podcast and get bonus episodes at Patreon.com/historyofenglish.

Now this time, we're going to wrap up our look at the 1630s. And let's begin in the year 1633 with the publication of yet another book on spelling reform. This particular book was called 'English Grammar,' and it was written by a beekeeper named Charles Butler. And yes, I said he was a beekeeper. In fact, he is sometimes called the father of English beekeeping. A few years earlier, he had written a book called 'The Feminine Monarchie,' which was the first full-length book about beekeeping composed in English, and it continued to be a popular guide for beekeepers well into the modern era. The book popularized the idea that the largest and most important bee in the hive was a queen-bee – not a king-bee. That was known before Butler, but his book helped to spread the word.

Well, beyond being a beekeeper and an author, Butler was also a priest who had a particular interest in the English language. And he was an advocate of spelling reform in English. As we saw in prior episodes, a spelling reform movement began in the mid-1500s. The goal of the movement was a revised and expanded alphabet that would allow words to be spelled phonetically. But as we saw, that was almost impossible to achieve. There were far too many accents and dialects for any one phonetic spelling system to take hold. It also required major spellings revisions which were difficult to implement. And furthermore, scholars could never agree on the details, like which symbols should be used for which sounds and so on.

Eventually, spelling reformers had to acknowledge that the accepted spelling conventions were too ingrained to be fundamentally changed. Nevertheless, writers continued to publish their own ideas and recommendations for reform. Charles Butler was one of those, and he came along near the end of this reform movement that extended from the mid-1500s into the early to mid-1600s.

Now Butler's proposed reforms weren't really innovative or revolutionary. They were very much in line with some of the other proposals that we looked in earlier episodes, so I'm not going to spend any time on his specific ideas in that regard. The main reason why I have mentioned these various texts on spelling reform is because they each contained a proposed phonetic spelling

system along with examples to illustrate how the system worked. And that's important because it reveals how words were pronounced at the time. And Butler's text on spelling reform is no different. In fact, after releasing this book in 1633, he then released a new version of his beekeeping book which was written entirely in his proposed phonetic alphabet.

But for purposes of this episode, there is one aspect of Butler's book that I want to focus on. In one section, he discussed what he called the 'Accent' of English. That was the common term at the time for what is generally known as 'syllable stress' today. It refers to the emphasis or lack of emphasis that we put on syllables when we speak. We either pronounce a syllable strong and clear, thereby making it a stressed syllable, or we pronounce it soft and weak, in which case it is an unstressed syllable. So we say 'SYL-able' – not 'sy-LA-ble.' In that word, the stress goes at the front, not in the middle. But sometimes the stress does go in the middle. We say 'con-TAIN-er' with the stress in the middle, not 'CON-tain-er' with the stress at the front. And sometimes, we even put the stress at the end. We say 'ma-CHINE' with the stress on the last syllable, not 'MA-chine' with the stress on the first. So these stress patterns vary in English, and as we'll see, they have changed a lot over time

Butler's discussion about syllable stress reveals that many words were pronounced differently in the early 1600s. He tells us that the word ***acceptable*** wasn't pronounced in the modern way as 'ac-CEPT-able' with the stress in the middle. It was actually pronounced with the stress on the first syllable as 'AC-ceptable.' The same was true for ***receptacle***, which was pronounced more like 'RE-ceptacle.' He also says that the verb '***to envy***' was actually pronounced as 'to en-VY' with the stress at the end. These examples show how the stress patterns we have today have fluctuated a bit over time.

So let's look a little closer at this concept of syllable stress, and let's examine how it has changed over the various periods of English. The last time we looked at this issue was back in Episode 167 called 'The Rhythm of English.' In that episode, I talked about how English speakers rotate between stressed and unstressed syllables, which creates an up-down motion or a back-and forth motion as we speak. In that episode, we saw how some people compare the English stress patterns to a roller coaster going up and down, up and down. But some other languages like French have much less syllable variation. In a language like French, the stress patterns are more regular and even. If English is a roller coaster, French is a like train rolling down the track, steady and even without much up-and-down variation.

In that episode, I explained how poets like Geoffrey Chaucer and William Shakespeare tapped into that natural up-and-down rhythm of English, and specific poetic meters like iambic pentameter were adopted to reflect the general rhythm. But that rhythm wasn't always the same as it is today.

During the Old English period – and the earlier Proto-Germanic period – words were almost always stressed on the first syllable. There were some common prefixes that were unstressed, but otherwise, the initial syllable was always pronounced more strongly than the others. But that started to change after the Norman Conquest. At that point, English started to borrow lots and lots of words from French, and in medieval French, words tended to be stressed on the final

syllable. Now that final stress within French has declined over time, and as I noted a moment ago, Modern French is pronounced more evenly today with less stress on the final syllable. But in the Middle Ages, that final stress was much more prominent. And words that came into English during the Middle English period tended to have that stress on the final syllable, which conflicted with the natural English stress on the first syllable.

But that natural English stress pattern was so strong that most of the French words borrowed in Middle English were anglicized over time by moving the stress forward to the first syllable. So French 'pa-LAIS' became English ***palace*** ('PA-lace'). French 'ciTÉ' became English ***city*** ('CI-ty'). And French 'parDON' became English ***pardon*** ('PAR-don'). But that process weakened over time. French words that were borrowed near the end of the Middle English period or later often retain their stress on the final syllable. We still hear that final stress in more recent French loanwords like ***machine***, ***police***, ***parole***, ***petite***, ***duress***, ***divorce***, ***balloon***, and so on.

Sometimes a word was borrowed twice – once during the early Middle English period and again at a later date. And today, the earlier version has the stress shifted to the first syllable, while the later version still has the stress at the end. Consider the words ***human*** and ***humane***. ***Human*** came in first and saw its stress move forward to the first syllable. But ***humane*** came in later, and it still has the stress on the final syllable. The same thing happened with ***critic*** and ***critique***. The Latin word ***canalis*** meant a groove or water pipe. It initially came into English as the French word ***channel***, again with its stress shifted to the first syllable. But it was borrowed again at a later date as the word ***canal***, which has retained the stress at the end. And here's an interesting one. The Latin word ***invalid*** ('in-VA-lid') meant 'weak, feeble, or not strong.' The word came into English as ***invalid***, but over time, the stress shifted to the first syllable and became ***invalid*** ('IN-valid'). The meaning of the word expanded over time to include 'a person who was weak, or feeble, or sickly' And that's the way we use and pronounce the word ***invalid*** ('IN-valid') today. But then the word was borrowed again, this time with its original stress in the middle as ***invalid*** ('in-VA-lid'). And that version has retained much of the original sense of the word as 'weak, feeble, or having no effect or purpose.'

So as you can see, the introduction of French and Latin words during the Middle Ages created complications for English stress. Not only were the stress patterns in those words different from native English words, but the patterns sometimes shifted around once the words became common in English.

Then in the early modern period, more and more words came into English directly from Latin and Greek. And those words were often stressed in the middle or at the end. For example, we still have middle stress in Latin or Greek words like ***determine***, ***biology***, ***bacteria***, ***collision***, ***discretion***, ***official***, ***utopia***, and so on.

So by the early 1600s, English stress had become a bit of mess. Many native words still had their stress on the first syllable, as did some of the older French loanwords that had been anglicized. But newer French loanwords, as well as words from Latin, Greek, Spanish and Italian often had their stress elsewhere. And that created a lot of confusion within English.

Some of this confusion is reflected in Charles Butler's text on English in 1633 where he described stress patterns in words that were different than today. And we also have other evidence of those older stress patterns. For example, scholars who have studied Shakespeare's works – and the poetic meter that he used – have identified many words that were pronounced differently in the early modern period. ***Revenue*** was pronounced 're-VEN-ue.' ***Character*** was 'char-ACT-er.' ***Extreme*** was 'EX-treme.' ***Conceal*** was 'CON-ceal.' And ***parent*** was 'pa-RENT.'

The word ***complete*** could be pronounced like today with the stress on the second syllable as 'com-PLETE,' but it could also be pronounced with the stress on the first syllable as 'COM-plete.' [*SOURCE: Why Is English Like That, Norbert Schmitt and Richard Marsden, p. 119; and A Biography of the English Language, C.M. Millward, p. 260*]

So in looking at these examples, we see that English stress didn't just go up and down. It also seemed to bounce around a bit during this period. And as we bounce through this episode, we'll revisit the matter of English stress, but for now, let's consider what else was happening in England when Charles Butler's book on English was published in 1633.

Well, in that year, there was another notable development. The Archbishop of Canterbury died, which allowed King Charles to appoint his close ally William Laud to that position. As I noted last time, Laud was the Bishop of London and a fierce opponent of the Puritans. He believed that the Church of England should continue to be governed by its bishops, and he demanded strict adherence to the formal ceremonies and rituals of the Church. The Puritans strongly opposed Laud and his policies. Laud was already one of the most important religious figures in England given his closeness to the king, and now he was designated as the leading cleric in the country.

Under his leadership, music was reintroduced to the Anglican cathedrals. Old festivals were once again celebrated, and old holy days like All Saints Day were brought back. The Church leadership took a decidedly anti-Puritan stance, and for Puritans, it looked a lot like Catholicism had returned under a Protestant veil. [*SOURCE: Rebellion, Peter Ackroyd, p. 166-7*] These developments played a major role in the religious and political rifts that soon led people to take up arms against each other.

While the Protestants were divided among themselves, things weren't any better for the Catholics in England. They were a minority and were also occasional targets of the Protestant authorities. It was especially tricky for prominent members of the English nobility or gentry who chose to remain Catholic. They had to walk a thin line between loyalty to the Crown and loyalty to their faith. One of those prominent Englishmen who maintained that delicate balance was named George Calvert. He had been a member of the royal court during the reign of King Charles's father James. But as a Catholic, Calvert found his options limited there. He wasn't able to advance to a more prominent position, so he ended up leaving the court and selling his office. Upon leaving, King James gave him the Irish barony of Baltimore, and he thereupon became Lord Baltimore. [*SOURCE: The Barbarous Years, Bernard Bailyn, p. 120-1*]

With time on his hands and money from the sale of his office, he became obsessed with trying to establish a haven for Catholics in North America. In 1629, he had taken a group of settlers to Virginia, but the local authorities there blocked any effort to establish a Catholic settlement in the region. Back in the British Isles, he focused on trying to obtain a royal charter for a Catholic colony in North America.

The idea was to place a new colony between the existing colony at Virginia and the Dutch settlement of New Netherland, which extended all the way down the east coast to the eastern bank of the Chesapeake Bay. The new colony would create a buffer zone between those two existing colonies. [*SOURCE: The Barbarous Years, Bernard Bailyn, p. 124*]

Calvert's plans received royal approval, but he died shortly before a formal charter was issued for the colony. His son Cecilius inherited the claims and picked up where his father left off. He saw the new colony through to completion. Cecilius became the new Lord Baltimore, and the charter he received allowed him to establish a new colony to the immediate east and north of Virginia with the Potomac River being the dividing line between the old colony and the new.

Calvert named the new colony after the queen. Her name was Henrietta Maria. She was the sister of the French king Louis XIII, and she was admired by many Catholics in England because she was also Catholic. So she became the namesake of the new colony. In England, Henrietta Maria was commonly known as 'Queen Mary,' so Calvert called his new colony ***Maryland***. And of course, its largest city today is named after Calvert's title – Baron Baltimore.

Calvert wanted the new colony to provide a safe haven for Catholics, but he didn't intend it to be an exclusively Catholic settlement. His plan was that all Christians who settled there would be able to worship as they pleased, thereby providing an option for Catholics who wanted to practice their religion without coercion from Protestant authorities. Since the colony was open to all, he recruited both Catholics and Protestants. And in 1634, the first group of settlers headed across the Atlantic to the new colony of Maryland, as it was called at the time.

As it turned out, most of the settlers who moved to the colony were in fact Protestant. Early on, many of the initial settlers were prominent Catholics, but they brought their Protestant servants with them. And the settlers also came to rely on indentured servants who were brought over in large numbers, and again most of them were also Protestant. So within a few decades, the colony was predominantly Protestant. [*SOURCE: Old World New World, Kathleen Burk, p. 58, 61; and The Barbarous Years, Bernard Bailyn, p. 130-1, 142*] Nevertheless, Catholics were protected within the colony as the Calverts had intended, and in fact, the colony eventually issued a law called 'An Act Concerning Religion,' which allowed the free worship of any form of Christianity, which was a freedom not granted at the time in either Jamestown or Massachusetts. [*SOURCE: Old World New World, Kathleen Burk, p. 59*]

Now I noted that this new colony was called 'Mary-land' at the time, and it is still called that in the British Isles, but in North America, the pronunciation has evolved over time into /Mer-ə-lənd/ – sometimes reduced down to two syllables as /Mer-lən/. So what happened there? Why is the name pronounced so differently in North America? Well, the answer has to with syllable

stress – that same topic that we looked at earlier. Specifically, it has to do with how stress patterns affect the pronunciation of a words over time. In this case, since ***Maryland*** is the name of the US state, the name is much more common in American English, and therefore shows the long-term effects of those stress patterns in American English, whereas it doesn't really show those changes in British English where the name is less common.

The key to understanding this phenomenon is the difference between stressed and unstressed syllables. As we saw a few moments ago, some syllables in multi-syllable words are stressed, and some are not. When we pronounce a syllable with stress, we tend to preserve and retain the vowel sound in that syllable. But when we pronounce a syllable without stress, the vowel sound tends to change a bit. It tends to lose its distinctive quality, and very often, it evolves into a somewhat generic 'uh' sound. That's the sound that linguists call 'schwa.' In fact, most multi-syllable words in English tend to have this generic 'schwa' sound in those unstressed syllables.

This phenomenon is so widespread and so common that we can easily point to examples with all of the vowel letters. The letter [a] normally has the /ei/ sound, or the /æ/ sound, or sometimes the /a/ sound. But in unstressed syllables, it often has this generic /ə/ sound. Think about the [a] at the beginning of words like ***about***, and ***agree***, and ***apply***. All of those words are stressed on the final syllable, so that initial [a] is unstressed, and is pronounced as /ə/. The same thing happens at the end of many words like ***China***, ***lava*** and ***banana***. In those words, the final [a] is unstressed, and again, it is pronounced as /ə/.

The same thing happens with letter [e] in an unstressed position. Again, the letter [e] normally has the /i:/ sound or the /e/ sound, and when it is stressed, those are sounds we hear, as in ***meet*** or ***met.*** But in an unstressed position, it often comes out as that generic /ə/ sound. Think about the [en] at the end of words like ***seven***, ***open***, and ***taken***. And the [el] or [le] at the end of words like ***travel***, ***tunnel***, ***castle***, or ***simple***. Again, in those unstressed positions, we get that same /ə/ sound.

What about letter [i]? Well, it usually has the /ai/ or /i/ sound when stressed as in ***bite*** or ***bit***. But notice what happens when it is unstressed before [l] at the end of words like ***April***, ***pencil*** and ***nostril***, and before [t] at the end of ***rabbit*** and ***habit***. Again, we get that same generic /ə/ sound. We also hear that sound in the [i] in the middle of the words like ***credible*** and ***edible***.

Well, what about letter [o]? Again, it normally represent the /o:/ or /o/ sound as in ***hope*** or ***hop***. Again, those are stressed syllables. But in an unstressed position, the sound also reverts to /ə/ in many words. Think about the 'o' at the front of words like ***oppose*** and ***occult***. Also consider the 'o' in the final unstressed syllable of words like ***lemon***, ***common***, ***canyon***, ***gallop***, ***pilot*** and so on. Again, we revert to that /ə/ or schwa sound in those unstressed syllables.

That leaves letter [u]. And again, we find the same phenomenon with that letter. Consider the [u] at the front of the word ***upon***, or the [u] in the final unstressed syllable of words like ***circus***, ***cactus***, ***wishful*** or ***hopeful***. Again, we have the same schwa sound.

And even the letter [y], which is sometimes used as a vowel letter. Think about the initial unstressed syllable in the word ***syringe*** or the final unstressed syllable in the word ***vinyl***. Again, the [y] has that generic /ə/ sound in those unstressed syllables.

And that takes us back to the word ***Maryland***. In that name, the initial syllable is stressed, leaving the [y] in ***Mary*** and the [a] in ***land*** unstressed. And in both of those unstressed syllables, those vowel sounds became /ə/ over time, converting 'Mary-land' into /Mer-ə-lənd/. That shows the strong tendency of English speakers to convert those unstressed syllables into that generic schwa sound.

So what's going on there? Why does that happen? Well, it's related to the way vowel sounds are formed. As I have explained in earlier episodes, the normal vowel sounds in English – so the usual long and short sounds of the vowel letters – are formed by the way the tongue is shaped. The front or back of the tongue is raised or lowered to create specific vowel sounds. So for example, if we raise or arch the front of the tongue, we get the /i:/ sound. If we lower it, we get the /e/ and /æ/ sounds. Similarly, if we raise the back of the tongue, we get the /u:/ sound, and if we lower it, we get the /o:/ and /ɔ:/ sounds.

But what happens if we don't raise or lower the tongue at all – if we just let it lay there flat basically doing nothing. Well, we get /ə/ – that schwa sound. So the schwa sound is basically a neutral sound – neither front nor back, neither high nor low. We might even think of it as a bit or a cheat or shortcut. If we don't make any effort to shape the tongue at all, we get /ə/. And that's why that sound sometimes emerges in those unstressed syllables. Since unstressed syllables are not as prominent or loud, we tend to pronounce them softly and with less distinction or emphasis. And that lends itself to the schwa sound where no real effort is required to shape the vowel sound.

Sometimes, that unstressed syllable is so lightly pronounced that it disappears altogether. As I noted, some people pronounce ***Maryland*** without that unstressed syllable in the middle. So it becomes a two-syllable word – /Mer-lən/. This dropping of an unstressed syllable is more common that you might realize. Think about the word ***every*** – /EV-ə-ry/. That's three syllables with an unstressed /ə/ in the middle – /EV-ə-ry/. But it's very common to drop that middle syllable altogether, thereby giving us /Ev-ry/. Along the same lines, the word ***several*** with schwa in the middle often becomes /sev-ral/ without the schwa. ***Bravery*** often becomes /brav-ry/. ***Robbery*** becomes /rob-ry/. ***Mystery*** becomes /mis-try/. ***Listening*** becomes /list-ning/. ***Dangerous*** becomes /dang-rous/. ***Bachelor*** becomes /bach-lor/. ***Sophomore*** becomes /soph-more/. The name ***Margaret*** becomes /Mar-gret/. And the name ***Catherine*** becomes /Cath-rine/. So as you can hear, we sometimes drop the unstressed schwa altogether, especially in the middle of words.

And by the way, this isn't new. You might not realize that a lot of common two-syllable words in English actually began as three syllable words in Latin or French or Middle English. But this same process reduced them down to the two syllables we use today. For example, the word ***alarm*** was originally ***alarum*** [a-l-a-r-u-m]. But the unstressed 'u' near the end – pronounced as /ə/ – was lost over time. The word ***chapter*** began as the Old French word ***chapiter***, and the word ***lobster*** was ***lopister*** in Middle English. The word ***courtesy*** produced the variant ***curtsey***, and the

word ***fantasy*** produced the variant ***fancy***. And yes, ***fancy*** is just an abbreviated form of the word ***fantasy***. [*SOURCE: The Cambridge History of the English Language, Vol. III, Roger Lass, Ed., p. 136*]

So, as we've seen, unstressed syllables are often pronounced with that generic /ə/ sound which we call schwa, and sometimes, that sound is dropped altogether in words. If you have a good memory, you might recall that we've actually encountered this phenomenon before. During the episodes about Middle English, I talked about how most of the inflectional endings that were used in Old English gradually fell out of use. They were used for grammatical purposes. But then English grammar changed as it came to rely more on specific word order. When that happened, many of those specific suffixes or endings were no longer needed. So in Middle English, those endings were in an unstressed position at the end of many words – and were pronounced as simply /ə/.

In the opening lines of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales, we saw that the word ***root*** was "roote," ***sweet*** was "swete," ***young*** was "yonge," ***small*** was "smale," and so on. Then as the Middle English period progressed, that /ə/ sound or schwa at the end of those words gradually disappeared. Again, that's another example of how schwa in an unstressed syllable sometimes disappears because it is such a weak, neutral, non-specific sound. It doesn't really do very much. It doesn't even convey a specific vowel sound – beyond the schwa itself.

This Middle English example is also a good reminder that schwa has been around for quite a while in English, at least since the Middle English period. There isn't really any evidence that it existed or was common before that in Old English. The best evidence of its emergence in Middle English comes from the erosion of those inflectional endings. Then in the 1600s, it became more common in the language in other unstressed syllables as distinct vowel sounds weakened and moved toward this neutral schwa sound. By the mid-1700s, the schwa was clearly documented as a common feature in unstressed syllables. And it has become more and more common since then. [*SOURCE: The Cambridge History of the English Language, Vol. III, Roger Lass, Ed., p. 134-5*]

There was also another important development during the Middle English period that relates to stress. As those inflectional suffixes at the end of words disappeared, much of the grammatical functions that they served were replaced with prepositions and articles and other distinct words. Words like ***a***, ***an***, ***the***, ***of***, ***on***, ***in***, ***with***, and ***to*** became more common in the language. Those words serve a grammatical function, but otherwise, they don't convey a lot of meaning. Linguists call them function words. In addition to those words, other common function words include pronoun forms like ***who***, ***whom***, ***whose***, ***which***, ***this***, ***that***, ***these*** and ***those***; and conjunctions like ***and***, ***or***, and ***but***. As you may have noticed, those are some of the most commonly used words in the English language. We can also add in other common verb forms like ***am***, ***is***, ***are***, ***was***, ***were***, ***has***, ***have***, ***go*** and ***can***. Again, these are words we use all the time and are among the most common words in the language.

So what do those words have to do with stress? Well, as it turns out, when we use those types of words in a sentence, we don't tend to stress them. We tend to stress the words around them – the

key nouns and action verbs and adjectives and adverbs. But we don't tend stress the common function words in between.

Now that's a bit of an oversimplification, but it's a good general rule. And since those common function words are typically unstressed, they are often pronounced with a schwa sound rather than their normal vowel sound.

This is why in actual speech the word ***the*** is often pronounced as /thə/, and ***a*** is often pronounced as /ə/. We don't normally say "The dog chased a cat." We say "Thə dog chased ə cat." That's because those articles ***the*** and ***a*** are usually unstressed in normal speech, so they're pronounced with that schwa sound. The same thing often happens with other function words when they are unstressed. The ***and*** in "this and that" is usually pronounced more like "This ən that." And the ***to*** in "give it to me" is often rendered as "give it tə me." Again, that schwa sound often emerges in those unstressed positions. So when stressed, we get specific vowel sounds. When unstressed, we tend to get /ə/. Of course, sometimes we have a choice in our speech. We can stress the word ***the*** to show emphasis. We can say, "This is THE one." When we do that, we pronounce the vowel sound clearly to stress it. But normally, we don't stress the ***the***, so it becomes /thə/ – "This is thə one."

Now let me push this idea a little bit further with an example that will illustrate something very interesting about English stress patterns. And let's consider a simple sentence: "Dogs chase cats." Each word is a single syllable, and each word is stressed. And so, when we say that sentence, we get a natural 'dum-dum-dum' rhythm – "Dogs chase cats."

But now, let's add three unstressed syllables to that sentence, so we're doubling the total from three to six. Let's do that with this sentence, "The dog has chased a cat." We've added the words ***the***, ***has*** and ***a*** before the words in the original sentence. And each of those new words are function words, so they are unstressed. Now, we have that classic iambic rhythm that I talked about in earlier episodes – da-DUM, da-DUm, da-DUM. 'The dog has chased a cat." That's the rhythm that poets tapped into when they used iambic pentameter, except that iambic pentameter has five beats instead of three.

But now, let's add another unstressed syllable to our sentence, which will give us three stressed syllables and four unstressed syllables. So how do we deal with that odd number? The new sentence is "The dog is chasing a cat." Now we have two unstressed syllables between ***chase*** and ***cat***. In 'chasing a cat,' we have ***chase*** which is stressed, the suffix '***-ing***' which is unstressed, the word ***a*** which is unstressed, and then the word ***cat*** which is stressed. So now we have two unstressed syllables in between those two stressed syllables. So how does that affect the natural even rhythm of the line? Well, it doesn't. As English speakers, we usually combine or compress those two unstressed syllables together so that they share the offbeat. So the rhythm goes from 'da-DUM, da-DUm, da-Dum' to 'da-DUM, da-DUm, dada-Dum.' From "The dog has chased a cat" to "The dog is chasing a cat." The stressed beats stays the same. They maintain their regular rhythm. We can tap our feet or clap our hands to them like a song. And that means that we have to compress those two unstressed syllables together to make them share the offbeat.

Now let's add another unstressed syllable before the verb ***chase***, so we have two unstressed syllables before it and two after it. The new sentence is "The dog will be chasing a cat." So now the rhythm is 'da-DUM, dada-DUm, dada-Dum.' "The dog will be chasing a cat." Again, we still maintain the regular, steady beat on the stressed syllables – ***dog***, ***chase*** and ***cat***. The other parts of the sentence – the function words and grammatical suffix – are combined or compressed to share the offbeat. So it doesn't really matter if we have no unstressed syllables in between, or one unstressed syllable, or even two, because in English we tend to keep the beat on the stressed syllables. They are evenly or regularly spaced in English. Linguists say that English is a 'stress-timed' language because it is pronounced like the beat of a song. Again, the beat is on the stressed syllables. But, of course, not all languages work that way.

Languages like French and Spanish tend to stress each syllable evenly because they don't really have the 'up and down' stress pattern of English. In those languages, each syllable is pronounced with roughly the same stress and for roughly the same amount of time. Those are called 'syllable-timed' languages. So if English was a syllable-time language, that last sentence would read more like "The dog will be chasing a cat." It would be much flatter and even. Instead of "The dog will be chasing a cat," where we see-saw between stressed and unstressed syllables and maintain a steady beat on the stressed ones.

I hope that makes sense, and I hope it reveals something interesting about English, which is that stress patterns are very important to the way we speak, and in fact, they are so important that they can alter the way words are pronounced over time as we try to make the words fit the natural rhythm of the language.

Now I began this discussion about stress by explaining how 'Mary-land' became /Mer-ə-lənd/ in American English. Well that wasn't the only new colony that emerged in the mid-1630s. Up in New England, people were spreading westward out of Massachusetts and a couple of new colonies appeared in that region as well.

In the last episode, we looked at the founding of the Massachusetts Bay Colony and the large-scale migration to that colony during the 1630s. And we saw that the Massachusetts colony was founded by Puritans who demanded strict adherence to their Puritan religious beliefs and practices. There was no 'freedom of worship' there. So religious tolerance didn't really exist. And that strict adherence to Puritan principles created its own set of problems.

While the Puritans generally agreed about they things they were against, they didn't always agree about the things they were for. It was easy to criticize and point out the shortcomings of the Anglican Church and the Catholic Church, but when it came to developing their own dogma, their views started to diverge. And some of the new colonists didn't like the way the colony was being governed – some feeling that its leaders were too harsh and arbitrary, while others thought they were too forgiving and lax. These internal divisions led some settlers to 'pull up stakes' and head west to found new settlements away from the Massachusetts authorities.

I say that they 'pulled up stakes' using that common phrase because that phrase originated around this time in New England. And in fact, some scholars consider it to be the earliest known English phrase or idiom to be coined in North America.

When settlements were built in North America, one of the first things the new arrivals did was to build a fence or palisade around the settlement for protection. The fence consisted of a series of vertical poles or stakes. It took a lot of time to cut the logs to make that type of palisade, so if the settlers decided to relocate the settlement, it was easier to pull up those posts or stakes and take them along rather than cutting new ones at the new location. So the phrase 'pull up stakes' came to mean 'moving to a new location.' The phrase is first recorded with that meaning in the mid-1630s in the slightly older form 'to pluck up stakes.' It appeared in a letter from an English lawyer named Thomas Lechford who had been living in New England for a couple of years. He wrote to a friend back in England that he was leaving and heading to Ireland. He wrote, "I am loth to hear of a stay, but am plucking up stakes with as much speed as I may, if so be I may be so happy as to arrive in Ireland . . ." [*SOURCE: 2107 Curious Word Origins, Sayings and Expressions; Charles Earle Funk, p. 610*] Again, that turn of phrase is apparently the oldest known English idiom to be coined in North America. [*SOURCE: https:// www.phrases.org.uk/meanings/pull-up-stakes.html*]

Well as various settlers came into conflict with the local political and religious authorities in Massachusetts, they were forced to 'pull up stakes' and head elsewhere. One of the first was an early settler in Massachusetts named Roger Williams. He created a lot of problems for the local authorities. He was a trained minister, and after he arrived in North America, he preached that the local Puritans should completely break with the Church of England. He was expelled by the authorities in Salem in 1635, but rather than returning to England, Williams headed west, just beyond the territorial reach of Massachusetts and the earlier Plymouth Colony. The local indigenous people took him in, and he worked out an agreement with them to establish a settlement nearby on a bay called the Narrragansett Bay. He was soon joined by family and friends and religious followers. Thanks to the acts of kindness from the local indigenous people who allowed the settlement to be constructed, Williams felt that God had guided him and protected him in his efforts. So he decided to call the community ***Providence*** meaning 'divine guidance.' [*SOURCE: The People Behind the Border-Lines, Mark Stein, p. 2-3*]

Around this same time, another settler in Massachusetts named Anne Hutchinson was banished from the colony for her religious views. She and her family and close followers traveled west to the same region where Roger Williams had settled a few months earlier. Williams welcomed the group, and they settled on an island in the Narrragansett Bay. The island was called Aquidneck by the local indigenous people, but Williams referred to it as ***Rhode Island***. It isn't entirely clear where than name originated, but one belief is that it was originally coined by Dutch explorers in region. Rhode Island meant 'red island,' and it may have been called that because the Dutch first observed it in the fall when the leaves on the island had turned red or orange.

Over time, Williams's settlement at Providence and Hutchinson's settlement on Rhode Island grew closer and eventually joined together to form an independent colony called 'Rhode Island and Providence Plantations.' It received a formal charter from the English crown a few decades

later, and of course, it was one of the original thirteen colonies which became states after the American Revolutionary War. And here's something you may not know. Even though the state has always been commonly known as simply 'Rhode Island,' its official formal name remained 'Rhode Island and Providence Plantations' until the year 2020 when the 'Providence Plantations' part was finally dropped.

Around the same time that Williams and Hutchinson were settling around the Narrragansett Bay in Rhode Island, other groups of people from Massachusetts headed a little further west to the region around the Connecticut River. In 1635, several families migrated there. Over time, the fertile valley attracted other people from Massachusetts, as well as settlers who came directly from England. In 1636, a reverend named Thomas Hooker and his congregation moved there from Massachusetts and founded a settlement called Hartford. The following year, another reverend named John Davenport led his followers nearby and established a settlement called New Haven.

By the end of the decade, several more communities had been established in the region, and of course, those settlements were later combined into a new colony which became known as ***Connecticut***, named for the river that fed the fertile land around those settlements. [*SOURCE: American Regional Dialects, Craig M. Carver, p. 22*] ***Connecticut*** was a native Algonquin word that meant 'long tidal river.'

A few decades later, Connecticut became a separate colony when it acquired a charter from the English crown giving it full legal standing. [*SOURCE: Old World New World, Kathleen Burk, p. 85*]

Now today, Rhode Island is the smallest state in the United States, and Connecticut is the third smallest. And this points to one of the noticeable features about New England when we look at the region on a map. The region is comprised of a lot of small states. But that is largely because of this phenomenon where early settlers in Massachusetts broke with the Puritan leadership – or were forced out – and they then 'pulled up stakes' and headed elsewhere beyond the reach of the authorities.

Last time, we looked at the origin of Massachusetts, Maine and New Hampshire, and this time, we've examined the origin of Rhode Island and Connecticut. So we have covered all of the New England states except Vermont. Vermont was another part of western New England, but it was never an English colony. It was not one of the original thirteen American colonies, and it didn't become a state until after the Revolutionary War. So why wasn't Vermont part of this original group of New England colonies? Well, the answer is the Dutch.

A few episodes back, we looked at the founding of the Dutch colony of New Netherland. It was centered around Manhattan Island – called ***New Amsterdam*** at the time. But the Dutch claimed the territory to the north and east of Manhattan all the way to the Connecticut River. The Dutch considered that river to be the border between the Dutch territory and the English colonies of New England. Well, a few decades later, the English defeated the Dutch and renamed that northern part of the Dutch territory ***New York***. But the new English colony of New York and the

older English colony of New Hampshire didn't agree on the border between them. The residents of New Hampshire didn't recognize the Connecticut River as the border, so in the 1700s, they began expanding to the west and building settlements on the western side of the river. So that region west of the Connecticut River became a disputed territory between New Hampshire and New York. Control remained disputed all the way until the American Revolutionary War, at which time the residents of the region declared their independence, and the region was finally admitted as a separate state shortly after the war. The name ***Vermont*** comes from the mountains of the region known as the 'Green Mountains.' ***Vermont*** was an attempt to render the English term 'Green Mountains' into French. But ultimately, Vermont exists as a separate state today in part because it was originally a disputed area with competing claims going back to the original Dutch and English colonies. That's why it wasn't one of the original thirteen colonies. [*SOURCE: How the States Got Their Shapes, Mark Stein, p.277-80*]

Now speaking of New Netherland, I have one more note about that Dutch colony before we move on. We just saw that the Dutch claimed the area to the north of Manhattan, so most of modern-day New York state. But they also claimed the area to the south along the Delaware River all the way down to the eastern shore of the Chesapeake Bay. This Dutch region to the south encompassed most of modern-day New Jersey, but it extended beyond that. It reached south to encompass the region around the Delaware Bay, where the Delaware River meets the Atlantic Ocean. Well, that's the same general area where the new colony of Maryland was established around this same time in the mid-1630s. So the overall Dutch colony of New Netherland not only bordered the English colonies in New England, it also bordered the newly created colony of Maryland in the south. And Maryland claimed much of this same territory in the peninsula between the Chesapeake Bay and the Delaware Bay, but no Europeans had settled there yet.

Well, around this time, the Dutch investors in the New Netherland colony joined with a group of investors in Sweden, and they arranged for a group of Swedish settlements to be established along the southern part of the Delaware River in this same general region. And in 1638, those settlers arrived there. They built settlements along the Delaware River, and their colony became known as New Sweden. In fact, this is barely even a footnote in most American history books. Most people don't even know that there was a Swedish colony along the east coast of North America. The fact is that it never amounted to very much. Just a few isolated settlements and a few hundred people at most. The Dutch eventually took control of the settlements a few years later, and then they were surrendered to the English when England took control of the Dutch colony. So this Swedish colony around the lower Delaware River was relegated to a historical footnote, but it is important to our story for a couple of reasons.

First, the settlers came from Sweden and other parts of Scandinavia, including Finland. And the Finns made an important contribution to American history. Back in Finland, they had developed a building technique that was unknown in North America and most of Europe. Rather than cutting logs into boards and beams, the Finns sometimes used whole logs to construct small buildings. The Finns brought that technique to New Sweden on the east coast of North America. And that technique eventually spread throughout the colonies, and of course, that was the origin

of the log cabin which became so common in the American frontier as settlers moved deeper into the countryside.

The other consequence of New Sweden is that it ultimately led to the founding of Delaware, which was another one of the original thirteen colonies that gained their independence and formed the United States. To simplify what happened, the new colony of Maryland claimed all the land extending eastward from the Potomac to the Atlantic Ocean, which included the region around Delaware Bay where some of these Swedish, Finnish and Dutch people had settled. When the English eventually displaced the Dutch and took control of colony, this region around the Delaware remained disputed between Maryland and the people who had been living there during the Dutch period. By that point, the colony of Pennsylvania had been established to the immediate north of Delaware Bay. Again, all of this took place a little bit later in our story. But Pennsylvania's main city was Philadelphia. And Philadelphia's only direct access to the Atlantic Ocean was down the Delaware River to Delaware Bay. At the time Pennsylvania's leaders didn't want Maryland to control the mouth of the river – because Maryland could then block boats and ships from reaching Pennsylvania. So the leaders of Pennsylvania sided with the settlers in the region around Delaware Bay who wanted to maintain their independence from Maryland. And with the support of Pennsylvania's leaders, the English crown eventually recognized an independent colony around the mouth of the river. It was called Delaware after the name of the river and the bay. The peninsula between the Delaware Bay and the Chesapeake Bay to the west was divided between Delaware and Maryland – with Delaware taking the eastern part and Maryland taking the western part. Virginia actually retained a claim to the southern tip of the peninsula. And that's why the peninsula is called the Delmarva Peninsula today. It's a portmanteau combining the first part of the names of the three states that share it – Delaware, Maryland and Virginia. [*SOURCE: The People Behind the Border-Lines, Mark Stein, p. 11-12*]

So we've now covered the foundation of eight of the original thirteen colonies that formed the United States. I realize that much of this history doesn't directly impact the story of English – but I wanted to trace the origins of those colonies because it is such an overlooked part of history. American schools don't focus very much on colonial history because it is largely treated as British history. And British schools don't focus on the American colonies because they see it as American history. As a result, the development of these colonies tends to be overlooked by most popular histories. But I want to focus on them in this podcast because they provide an important link between British history and American history, and also because developments in those colonies shaped the distinctions that emerged between British English and American English. The story of early American English is really tied to those colonies and their development, and that's why I wanted to give you that important background in these episodes.

Now, before we take the story back to England, we need to make a quick return to Massachusetts to address another notable development there in the mid-1630s. And this development has to do with literacy and education in the region. As I noted last time, the settlers who arrived in New England were highly educated compared to earlier settlers who had migrated to North America. This level of education and literacy was tied to their Puritan beliefs. Members of local congregations were encouraged – and even expected – to read the Bible, so that meant that there was emphasis on literacy. That was why most of the communities established in New England

had a public schoolhouse, and all children were expected to attend the school. [*SOURCE: American Nations, Colin Woodward, p. 61*]

But by the mid-1630s, the leading authorities in Massachusetts realized that they also needed a school to train future preachers and other members of the clergy. So in 1636, the Massachusetts Bay Colony approved the establishment of such a school. A couple of years later, a modest building was constructed in a town called Newtowne. This was the first institution of higher learning in the British colonies, and the local community decided to rename the town from Newtowne to Cambridge, in honor of the university in England which many of the prominent settlers had attended. The school was called Newe College, and it grew over time thanks to the generosity of the community. In the same year that the school building was constructed, a local minister named John Harvard died and left the school a sizeable bequest consisting of money and his large personal library. The school was named after him the following year to honor his bequest, and of course, we know that school today as Harvard University. Again, it is the oldest college or university in British America.

Around the same time that the original school building was constructed in 1638, the school acquired something else very important – the colonies' first printing press. It appears that when the school was being planned a couple of years before, it was decided that the school and the community would benefit from having a printing press that could produce publications locally – rather than having to import them from England. A reverend named Joseph Glover acquired a press in England, and he contracted with a locksmith named Stephen Daye to oversee the operation of the press in Cambridge. Glover and Daye and the printing press made their way across the Atlantic to New England in 1638, but Glover died on board the ship during the voyage. His wife received the press, and she brought it to Cambridge and put Daye in charge of its operations. As I noted, Daye was a locksmith and didn't have any experience operating a printing press. Furthermore, it appears that he was largely illiterate, but his son Matthew came with him, and Matthew had experience as a printer's apprentice. So it appears that Matthew actually ran the printing operation, though his father Stephen is often cited as the first printer in the colonies.

Around this same time, a local merchant named Hezekiah Usher started selling books in his home in Cambridge, and he became the first bookseller in the colonies.

It is worth noting that a printing press didn't appear in any of the other colonies for nearly 50 years after this point. So Massachusetts had a monopoly on printing in the American colonies for the next few decades.

And all of this is important because printing had become highly regulated and restricted in England by this point in history. In the late 1500s, laws were enacted there which restricted printing to London, York, Oxford and Cambridge. And government censorship was always an issue. Published books had to be registered with the Stationer's Company, and printers had to keep records of all books that were published. The authorities also had the power to confiscate illegal presses. Meanwhile, in North America, the printing press was subject to local restrictions,

but otherwise avoided many of the restrictions imposed in Britain. [*SOURCE: The Colonial Printer, Lawrence C. Wroth, p. 12-3*]

And speaking of British publishing, it's time to take the story back to Britain where a new book was about to set in motion a series of events that ultimately led to Civil War. That book was a new Service Book to be used by the Church of Scotland. Now it's important to understand that the Church of Scotland and the Church of England were both Protestant churches, but the Church of Scotland was more reformed than the English Church, and it tended to agree with a lot of the Puritan criticisms of the English Church. For example, King Charles was the official head of the Church of England, but he was not the head of the Church of Scotland. And the Anglican Church was governed by bishops, whereas the Scottish Church had a Presbyterian structure in which it was governed by representative assemblies.

Well, all of this is important because in 1637, King Charles – who was the king of both England and Scotland – tried to impose what was essentially the English service book or prayer book on the Church of Scotland. It was part of a larger attempt to align church services in both countries. But as you might have guessed, it was met with fierce opposition in Scotland. For many in Scotland, it looked like an attempt to reimpose Catholicism. The book was first read to the public at St. Giles Cathedral in Edinburgh in July of 1637, and during the service, the bishop's life was threatened and a riot broke out. During the commotion, people threw stones at the doors and windows of the church. More riots followed when the book was read in other parts of the country. [Rebellion, Peter Ackroyd, p. 173-4] The following year, the Church of Scotland expressly rejected the new Service Book, and the bishops who had tried to impose it were excommunicated.

Charles was angered by the challenge to his authority, and during the spring and summer of 1639, he sent troops to Scotland, which led to a series of skirmishes between the king's forces and the local Scottish forces. This conflict is known to history as the First Bishop's War. Charles quickly realized that he didn't have the funds to raise a serious army or mount an extended campaign in Scotland. As you may recall, he had dissolved Parliament nearly a decade earlier, and only Parliament could give him the funds he needed. This was the same problem in ran into early in his reign when he had tried to send troops to France and to other parts of the continent to take part in the Thirty Years War. Parliament had blocked his efforts then, and he had finally dissolved Parliament altogether and tried to rule without it. But now, he needed the money that only Parliament could approve. Without the funds, he had to make peace in Scotland, but he had no intention of permanently backing down. So that meant he had to recall Parliament. [*SOURCE: The Story of Britain, Rebecca Fraser, p. 333-4*] And as you might have guessed, Parliament was in no mood to assuage the king's demands when it was finally recalled, and the relationship between the king and Parliament would only go downhill from there, ultimately leading to war between the two institutions.

All of this takes us to the end of the 1630s and the eve of Civil War. But before we conclude this episode, I want to mention a notable document that appeared in the following year. In 1640, a folio or collection of Ben Jonson's works was published. As we know, Ben Jonson was one of the most important poets and playwrights of the Shakespearean era. His popularity rivaled that of

Shakespeare himself. Well, Jonson died in 1637, and shortly after his death, this folio of his works was assembled and published. The folio included several works that had not been published before. And among them was a description of the English language called 'English Grammar.'

The work is notable for Jonson's description of the sounds of the various letters. In an earlier episode about the letter R, I mentioned his description of the sound of that letter in this work. He described it as "the dog's letter " comparing it the growling sound made by a dog. Beyond the sounds of the letters, Jonson also looked at the grammar of English and other aspects of the language. None of it was especially groundbreaking, but it did include a section on English stress – or 'accent' as it was called at the time. And in keeping with the theme of this episode, I want to consider what he had to say about the topic.

First, he noted that there was a common distinction between the way people stressed nouns and opposed to verbs. He observed that nouns with two-syllables were usually stressed on the first syllable, whereas verbs with two-syllables were usually stressed on the second. This was most obvious where the same word was used for both parts of speech. He specifically noted the distinction between 'RE-fuse' and 're-FUSE.'The noun 'RE-fuse' is 'something you discard or reject,' and the verb 're-FUSE' is 'the act of discarding or rejecting something.' The noun is stressed on the first syllable, and the verb is stressed on the second. He also gave the examples of PRE-sent and 'to pre-SENT,' 'OB-ject' and 'to ob-JECT,' 'CON-vert' and 'to con-VERT,' and 'TOR-ment' and 'to tor-MENT.'

He also gave a couple of examples that may be a little bit surprising because we don't normally think of them as variations of the same word. The first was 'DE-sert' and 'to de-SERT.' The noun ***desert*** means 'a dry and barren place,' but it originally meant 'a wasteland' and could even mean 'a wilderness,' but it came from a Latin root word meaning 'to forsake or abandon.' That sense of the word was retained in the verb 'to de-SERT.' Again, they're ultimately the same word distinguished by stress in Modern English.

Jonson also gave the example of 'IN-cense' and 'to in-CENSE.' Both words are related to the word ***incendiary***, and they all come from a Latin root word meaning 'to set on fire.' The noun 'IN-cense' literally means 'something that is set on fire or burnt,' but today, it has a specialized meaning as something that produces a sweet or distinctive smell when it is burned. Meanwhile, the verb 'to in-CENSE' means 'to arouse, or anger, or incite,' but again, it comes from that original sense of setting something on fire. Again, both words are distinguished today by stress based on their respective parts of speech.

By the way, I've mentioned this distinction between nouns and verbs before. I mentioned it in an earlier episode about legal terminology because it pops up a lot in that context. You might con-VICT a CON-vict, or sus-PECT a SUS-pect, con-TRACT with someone by making a CON-tract.

Here are a few others, you might re-CORD a RE-cord, con-TEST a CON-test, sub-JECT a SUB-ject, pro-JECT a PRO-ject, es-CORT an ES-cort, re-BEL against a RE-bel, per-MIT with a PER-mit, in-CREASE with an IN-crease, con-DUCT with certain CON-duct, and in-SULT with an

IN-sult. Again, the nouns have the stress on the first syllable, and the verbs have the stress on the last syllable.

Now I should note that Ben Jonson wasn't the first person to record this phenomenon. I began this episode by discussing a work on English spelling reform by a man named Charles Butler, and he also gave a few of these examples in his work in the early 1630s. In fact, the first writer to mention this phenomenon was Peter Levins who composed a work called 'Manipulus Vocabulorum' in 1570. One of the examples he gave was the noun ***surname*** ('SUR-name') and the verb 'to sur-NAME' meaning 'to give someone a surname or additional name.' Of course, that verb has largely disappeared since then. But all of this evidence gives us a general timeline for the development of this phenomenon in English. It had appeared by the late 1500s, and it had spread from there, and had apparently become quite common by the 1630s. [*SOURCE: The Cambridge History of the English Language, Vol. III, Roger Lass, Ed., p. 127*]

But despite that general distinction between nouns and verbs, it doesn't always apply. Any time we are talking about stress patterns, we can only speak in general terms because there are always lots of exceptions. And that's the case here as well. Some noun-verb pairs are pronounced exactly the same – like 'AN-swer' and 'to AN-swer,' 'at-TACK and 'to at-TACK,' 'CHA-llenge' and 'to CHA-llenge,' 're-PORT' and 'to re-PORT,' and so on.

But the bottom line here is this noun-verb distinction made English stress patterns even more variable. Stress patterns were not only confused through the borrowing of words from other languages as we saw earlier, but also by requiring different patterns for different parts of speech.

All of this confusion has allowed the stress to shift around in words over time – sometimes in an orderly way, but sometimes in more random and haphazard ways. And I want to conclude this episode by looking at some examples of words that were stressed differently in the past, and also words where the stress is variable today.

Let's begin by looking at examples of the general long-term trend in English where the stress is moved forward to the first syllable in words. Remember that Old English almost always placed the stress on the first syllable, so there is a natural tendency in English to move the stress forward to that initial syllable over time. And when French and Latin and Greek words came into English with their stress on the second or third syllable, English speakers tended to shift that stress forward over time.

A moment ago, I mentioned that early work by Paul Levins in 1570 that first outlined the differing stress patterns in nouns and verbs. Well, his work also indicated that some words were pronounced with the stress on the second syllable, where we would put it on the first syllable today. For example, he tells us that ***parent*** was pronounced 'pa-RENT' and ***stubborn*** was 'stub-BORN.' [*SOURCE: The Cambridge History of the English Language, Vol. III, Roger Lass, Ed., p. 128*] Both of those words have seen their stress move forward since that description in the late 1500s.

A lot of information about these shifting stress patterns can be gleaned from a variety of sources from the 1700s and 1800s like pronunciation guides, dictionaries and other texts where writers commented about the way words were pronounced. The sources tell us that in the 1800s, the word ***compensate*** was 'com-PEN-sate,' ***concentrate*** was 'con-CEN-trate,' ***demonstrate*** was de-MON-strate (a pattern still found in the word 'de-MON-strable'), ***denigrate*** was 'deh-NAI-grate,' ***illustrate*** was 'il-LU-strate,' and ***promulgate*** was 'pro-MULgate.' So the stress was on the second syllable in those words in the 1800s. But since then, it has been moved forward to the first syllable. [*SOURCES: John Walker's Critical Pronouncing Dictionary (1791); and The Stories of English, David Crystal, p. 475*]

We also have an interesting passage from the mid-1800s that shows how some people of the period were annoyed by these shifting stress patterns. The anecdote comes from a poet named Samuel Rogers in a work that was published shortly after his death in 1855. The book was called "Recollections of the Table-talk of Samuel Rogers," and in one passage, he complained about the newer pronunciation of words like ***balcony*** and ***contemplate***. Traditionally, those words had been pronounced with the stress on the second syllable as 'bal-CO-ny' and 'con-TEM-late.' But with the stress moving forward, he registered this complaint, "The now fashionable pronunciation of several words is to me at least very offensive: cóntemplate is bad enough; but bálcony makes me sick." The passage includes stress marks over the first syllable of those words to indicate the stress on the first syllable that Rogers found so offensive. [*SOURCE: Sounds Appealing, David Crystal, p. 52*]

The word ***alloy*** was once pronounced with the stress on the second syllable as 'al-LOY.' And ***ally*** was pronounced as 'al-LY' with a stress pattern still found in the word ***alliance***. The word ***cabbage*** was once 'cab-BAGE.' And similarly, some people have moved the stress forward in the word ***homage*** (/oh-MADG/), thereby producing the word ***homage*** (/HA-mij/). The same thing has happed with ***research*** (/re-SEARCH/). It's final stress is sometimes moved forward to produce the word 'RE-search.' The same thing has happened with the word ***finance*** (/fi-NANCE/), which many people pronounce today as 'FI-nance' with the stress moved forward to the first syllable.

Now of course, the English-speaking world is very large, and not all dialects experience the same changes. So sometimes, we can see a shift in the stress pattern in one place, but not in another. For example, the word ***adult*** traditionally had the stress on the second syllable as it still does in American English, but over the past couple of centuries, the stress has tended to shift forward in British English to 'AD-ult.' The same thing happened with the French word ***garage*** ('ga-RAGE'), which has retained its final stress in American English, but the stress has shifted forward in British English to 'GAIR-ij' or 'GAIR-ahj.' ***Composite*** was traditionally pronounced with the stress on the second syllable, as is still the case in American English, but in Britain, the stress has moved forward to 'COM-po-site.'

Now sometimes, the opposite occurred. The stress shifted forward in American English, but not in British English. That's what happened with ***advertisement*** (/ad-VER-tisment/), which became 'AD-ver-TISE-ment' in American English, and also in parts of northern England. The word

inquiry (/in-QUIRy/) has traditionally had the stress on the second syllable. But among many speakers in North America, the stress has shifted forward and become 'IN-quiry.'

Similarly, the word ***address*** (/a-DRESS/) is sometimes rendered as 'AD-ress' in American English when it is used as a noun.

So those are some examples of words where the stress has moved forward to the first syllable. But sometimes, the stress moved away from the first syllable to the second, third or later syllable. In some respects, this is even more interesting because it reverses the normal trend in English. This has normally happened in longer words where there are three or more syllables. And this process really got under way in the mid-to-late 1700s. [*SOURCE: The Cambridge History of the English Language, Vol. III, Roger Lass, Ed., p. 129-30.*]

If we look at sources from the late 1500s and 1600s – around the current point in our overall story of English – we find evidence that many longer words once had the stress on the first syllable. In that early work on English stress by Paul Levins that I mentioned a moment ago, we learn that the word ***observance*** was pronounced 'OB-ser-vance.' ***sequester*** was 'SE-quester,' ***defective*** was 'DE-fec-tive,' ***perspective*** was 'PER-spec-tive,' ***distribute*** was 'DIS-tri-bute' (a pattern still found in ***distribution***), and ***contribute*** was 'CON-tri-bute' (a pattern still found in ***contribution***). [*SOURCE: The Cambridge History of the English Language, Vol. III, Roger Lass, Ed., p. 128*] So all of those words have seen the stress shift from the first syllable to the second syllable since the late 1500s.

From the works of Shakespeare and other poets of the early modern period, we know that the word ***academy*** was often pronounced with initial stress as 'AC-a-demy.' That pronunciation lingered through the 1700s, but by the 1800s, sources clearly indicate that the stress had moved over to the second syllable, thereby giving us modern 'a-CA-demy.' [*SOURCE: Sounds Appealing, David Crystal, p. 55*]

Since the late 1700s, ***hospitable*** ('HOS-pitable') has become 'hos-PIT-able' – showing that stress movement to the second syllable. Similarly, ***formidable*** ('FOR-midable') had started to become 'for-MID-able,' though you can hear both pronunciations today.

And ***preferable*** has started to acquire an alternate pronunciation as 'pre-FER-able' – again showing that movement of the stress to the second syllable. That newer pronunciation is still somewhat limited, but it appears to be growing. It may be more common in American English, and that points again to the way these patterns sometimes change in one place, but not in others.

With respect to American English, the word ***congruent*** ('CON-gruent') has become 'con-GRU-ent' – showing that same shift.

The word ***aristocrat*** ('AIR-is-to-crat') has become 'a-RIS-to-crat' in American English, though both forms can probably be heard in the UK today.

And ***harass*** (‘HARass’) became ‘ha-RASS’ in American English over the past couple of centuries – again showing that same shift.

So in those cases, American English shifted the stress to the second syllable. But sometimes, this situation is reversed. The stress was shifted in British English, but not American English.

So for example, ***controversy*** ('CON-tro-versy’) is the traditional pronunciation of that word with the stress on the first syllable. It’s still the standard in American English, and it also survives in British English, but since the mid-1900s, the stress has started to shift to the second syllable in the UK and has produced the newer version ‘con-TRO-ver-sy.’ [*SOURCE: The Stories of English, David Crystal, p. 475*]

The word ***doctrinal*** (‘DOC-trinal’) was traditionally stressed on the first syllable as I just pronounced it. But in British English, the stress has shifted over to the second syllable and has become ‘doc-TRI-nal.’

The word ***laboratory*** also had its original stress on the first syllable, which is still the case in American English. But the stress has shifted to the second syllable in British English, thereby giving us ‘la-BOR-a-tory’

And I should make a quick note about that ‘-ary’ suffix. In words ending in [-ary], [-ery] or [-ory,’ American English usually pronounces these words with two stressed syllables – with primary stress on the first syllable of the word, and secondary stress on the first part of this suffix. So we get ***military*** (‘MIL-i-TAR-y’), ***cemetery*** (‘CEM-e-TER-y’), ***category*** (‘CAT-e-GOR-y’), and so on. But in British English, these words only have stress on the first syllable. The secondary stress is dropped, leaving the entire suffix unstressed. And as we saw earlier, when that happens, those unstressed syllables tend to blend together. So we end up with ‘MIL-uh-tree,’ ‘CEM-e-tree,’and ‘CAT-e-gree.’

And this same thing happens in certain place names – especially those ending in ‘-ham.’ So we have American Birmingham (‘BIR-ming-HAM’) and Nottingham (‘NOT-ing-HAM’), whereas British English only stresses the first syllable as ‘BIR-ming-um’ and ‘NOT-ing-um.’ And we can also hear that schwa sound at the end of those British versions in those unstressed syllables.

So I hope I’ve stressed how important stress is in Modern English. It’s an aspect of the language that is often overlooked, and as we’ve seen, it has varied quite a bit during the modern era – and continues to vary among regional dialects. And it has also given English a certain rhythm that we don’t necessarily think about when we speak.

I’m going to wrap up on that note. Next time, we’ll push forward into the 1640s, and we’ll look at the outbreak of Civil War in England. We’ll also examine some important developments concerning the sound of letter U during that period as well. The large inventory of sounds associated with letter U is about to become even larger.

So until then, thanks for listening to the History of English Podcast.