

## The American Language

### Revolutionary English

**Directions:** Read pages 127-129 of your lit book and briefly answer the questions below. Most can be answered in short phrases; some will require full sentences. Omit #33 and any others that do not have apparent answers.

1. What became more and more apparent in the years following the settlement of the New World?
2. What two things did British visitors to the New World notice about the way Americans spoke?
3. What was one of the factors in causing the differences in British and American English?
4. What is one major difference in pronunciation that still exists between British and American English?
5. What are two areas in which language can change as a result of physical separation?
6. Explain one example of a difference in usage between the two types of English.
7. Explain one example where Americans actually retained the older meaning of a word while the use of the word in England changed meanings.
8. Define what was meant by *Americanism*.
9. Explain three Americanisms that John Witherspoon recorded in his study of early American English.
10. What did some critics of Americanisms and American English in general consider English to be?
11. What did these people think of changes to the English language?
12. How did Basil Hall, a British language purist, respond to Noah Webster's claim that if a word were used universally in America it should "take its station in the language"?
13. Why might British visitors to the Colonies be justified in feeling American English to be inferior?
14. What was there no demonstration of up until the mid-nineteenth century?
15. What did people fear might happen if the two forms of English kept changing?
16. What, for some, was the rejection of English authority in matters of language also an aspect of?
17. What did the "language contingent" at a march in support of the Constitution advocate the use of?
18. What two important people supported "Federal English?"
19. What were these supporters convinced of?
20. What two things did these supporters hope "Federal English" would establish and preserve?
21. What did the most radical position on language argue for?
22. What did some proponents see as the greatest virtue of American English?
23. What were not marked by accents in America?
24. What differences were less important in American English?
25. What would an American be able to do as he/she traveled the country?
26. Explain one other way American English was "democratized."
27. What did John Adams claim good language would be a means of establishing?

28. What, according to Adams, would eloquence in language become, as opposed to money, status, or political connections?
29. What would be the purpose of Adams's "American Academy"?
30. What does language resist?
31. How does language change?
32. What happened to this "American Academy" and what happened to American English?
33. Paraphrase what Jefferson says on page 112.
34. Is it possible to keep language from changing?
35. Is it desirable to keep language from changing?
36. How might the American characteristic of being practical and self-reliant have effected the way language developed in this country?
37. If you were British, how would you have felt about this "new" English being spoken by one of your former colonies?
38. If physical separation causes languages to change and diverge, what might happen to language in our modern world where people of different cultures are becoming increasingly interconnected?
39. Do we make judgments about people based on the way they talk--accents, vocabulary, etc? Explain.
40. Can you always tell where a person is from or what social status their family has attained by the way they talk? Why or why not?