

## The Chaos of English Pronunciation by G. Nolst Trenité

If you can pronounce correctly every word in this poem, you will be speaking English better than 90% of the native English speakers in the world. After trying the verses, a Frenchman said he'd prefer six months of hard labour to reading six lines aloud.

Dearest creature in  
creation,  
Study English  
pronunciation.  
I will teach you in my verse  
Sounds like corpse, corps,  
horse, and worse.  
I will keep you, Suzy, busy,  
Make your head with heat  
grow dizzy.  
Tear in eye, your dress will  
tear.  
So shall I! Oh hear my  
prayer.  
Just compare heart, beard,  
and heard,  
Dies and diet, lord and  
word,  
Sword and sward, retain  
and Britain.  
(Mind the latter, how it's  
written.)  
Now I surely will not plague  
you  
With such words as plaque  
and ague.  
But be careful how you  
speak:  
Say break and steak, but  
bleak and streak;  
Cloven, oven, how and low,  
Script, receipt, show, poem,  
and toe.  
Hear me say, devoid of  
trickery,  
Daughter, laughter, and  
Terpsichore,  
Typhoid, measles, topsails,  
aisles,  
Exiles, similes, and reviles;  
Scholar, vicar, and cigar,  
Solar, mica, war and far;  
One, anemone, Balmoral,  
Kitchen, lichen, laundry,

laurel;  
Gertrude, German, wind  
and mind,  
Scene, Melpomene,  
mankind.  
Billet does not rhyme with  
ballet,  
Bouquet, wallet, mallet,  
chalet.  
Blood and flood are not like  
food,  
Nor is mould like should  
and would.  
Viscous, viscount, load and  
broad,  
Toward, to forward, to  
reward.  
And your pronunciation's  
OK  
When you correctly say  
croquet,  
Rounded, wounded, grieve  
and sieve,  
Friend and fiend, alive and  
live.  
Ivy, privy, famous; clamour  
And enamour rhyme with  
hammer.  
River, rival, tomb, bomb,  
comb,  
Doll and roll and some and  
home.  
Stranger does not rhyme  
with anger,  
Neither does devour with  
clangour.  
Souls but foul, haunt but  
aunt,  
Font, front, wont, want,  
grand, and grant,  
Shoes, goes, does. Now first  
say finger,  
And then singer, ginger,  
linger,

Real, zeal, mauve, gauze,  
gouge and gauge,  
Marriage, foliage, mirage,  
and age.  
Query does not rhyme with  
very,  
Nor does fury sound like  
bury.  
Dost, lost, post and doth,  
cloth, loth.  
Job, nob, bosom, transom,  
oath.  
Though the differences  
seem little,  
We say actual but victual.  
Refer does not rhyme with  
deaf.  
Foeffer does, and zephyr,  
heifer.  
Mint, pint, senate and  
sedate;  
Dull, bull, and George ate  
late.  
Scenic, Arabic, Pacific,  
Science, conscience,  
scientific.  
Liberty, library, heave and  
heaven,  
Rachel, ache, moustache,  
eleven.  
We say hallowed, but  
allowed,  
People, leopard, towed, but  
vowed.  
Mark the differences,  
moreover,  
Between mover, cover,  
clover;  
Leeches, breeches, wise,  
precise,  
Chalice, but police and lice;  
Camel, constable, unstable,  
Principle, disciple, label.  
Petal, panel, and canal,

Wait, surprise, plait,  
promise, pal.  
Worm and storm, chaise,  
chaos, chair,  
Senator, spectator, mayor.  
Tour, but our and succour,  
four.  
Gas, alas, and Arkansas.  
Sea, idea, Korea, area,  
Psalm, Maria, but malaria.  
Youth, south, southern,  
cleanse and clean.  
Doctrine, turpentine,  
marine.  
Compare alien with Italian,  
Dandelion and battalion.  
Sally with ally, yea, ye,  
Eye, I, ay, aye, whey, and  
key.  
Say aver, but ever, fever,  
Neither, leisure, skein,  
deceiver.  
Heron, granary, canary.  
Crevice and device and  
aerie.  
Face, but preface, not  
efface.  
Phlegm, phlegmatic, ass,  
glass, bass.  
Large, but target, gin, give,  
verging,  
Ought, out, joust and scour,  
scourging.  
Ear, but earn and wear and  
tear  
Do not rhyme with here but  
ere.  
Seven is right, but so is  
even,  
Hyphen, roughen, nephew  
Stephen,  
Monkey, donkey, Turk and  
jerk,  
Ask, grasp, wasp, and cork  
and work.  
Pronunciation (think of  
Psyche!)  
Is a paling stout and spikey?  
Won't it make you lose your  
wits,

Writing groats and saying  
grits?  
It's a dark abyss or tunnel:  
Strewn with stones, stowed,  
solace, gunwale,  
Islington and Isle of Wight,  
Housewife, verdict and  
indict.  
Finally, which rhymes with  
enough,  
Though, through, plough, or  
dough, or cough?  
Hiccough has the sound of  
cup.  
My advice is to give up!!!

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Listen/watch:  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1edPxKqiptw>