Word Myths: Debunking Linguistic Urban Legends

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Do you "know" that *posh* comes from an acronym meaning "port out, starboard home"? That "the whole nine yards" comes from (pick one) the length of a WWII gunner's belt; the amount of fabric needed to make a kilt; a sarcastic football expression? That Chicago is called "The Windy City" because of the bloviating habits of its politicians, and not the breeze off the lake?

If so, you need this book. David Wilton debunks the most persistently wrong word histories, and gives, to the best of our actual knowledge, the real stories behind these perennially mis-etymologized words.

In addition, he explains *why* these wrong stories are created, disseminated, and persist, even after being corrected time and time again. What makes us cling to these stories, when the truth behind these words and phrases is available, for the most part, at any library or on the Internet?

Arranged by chapters, this book avoids a dry A-Z format. Chapters separate misetymologies by kind, including *The Perils of Political Correctness* (picnics have nothing to do with lynchings), *Posh, Phat Pommies* (the problems of *bacronyming*--the desire to make every word into an acronym), and *CANOE* (which stands for the Conspiracy to Attribute Nautical Origins to Everything).

Word Myths corrects long-held and far-flung examples of wrong etymologies, without taking the fun out of etymology itself. It's the best of both worlds: not only do you learn the many wrong stories behind these words, you also learn why and how they are created--and what the real story is.

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