**Cockney Rhyming Slang**

**

***SOOT****: Well, what do ya want me to do? Tell a porky pie?*

***STELLA****: A what?*

***SOOT:*** *A lie! Never heard Cockney rhyming slang?*

Sometimes known as ‘London’s secret language’, Cockney Rhyming Slang is more of a dialect - a collection of phrases used by Cockneys (someone born within the sound of the bells of St Mary-le-Bow Church in London’s East End), and other Londoners.

Dating from the mid nineteenth century, it is popularly believed to have originated amongst market traders to allow them to talk amongst themselves in front of customers. Another theory is that it was developed to intentionally confuse non-locals and build a sense of community. Others believe it was started as a method of secret communication amongst criminals. But whatever its origins, it is a form of language still used today, although more commonly heard now in the outer London boroughs and the suburbs.

Rhyming slang phrases are made by replacing a word with an expression that rhymes with it – for example ‘Look’ becomes ‘Butchers hook’. Very often the rhyming word is also missed out too so ‘Have a look’ becomes ‘Have a butchers’.

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Meaning** | **Slang Word** | **Original Phrase** |
| telephone | dog | dog-and-bone |
| wife | trouble | trouble-and-strife |
| eyes | mincers | mince pies |
| wig | syrup | syrup of figs |
| feet | plates | plates of meat |

Soot introduces Stella to several well known cockney Rhyming slang phrases:

***SOOT****: I bin hidin’ meself away for donkey’s*

***STELLA****: Donkey’s?*

***SOOT:*** *Donkey’s ears, Years!*

*...............*

***STELLA:*** *So how did you end up…*

***SOOT:*** *Brown bread?*

***STELLA***: *Brown bread rhymes with….dead*

***SOOT:*** *You’re getting it.*

Below is a table of some well known Cockney Rhyming slang phrases and their meanings:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Apples and pears | |  | Stairs | |
| Ayrton | | Ayrton Senna | Tenner (10 pound note) | |
| Barnet | | Barnet Fair | Hair | |
|  | |  |  | |
| Boat | | Boat Race | Face | |
|  | |  |  | |
|  | |  |  | |
| Bread | | Bread and Honey | Money | |
|  | |  |  | |
| Brown Bread | |  | Dead | |
| Bull and Cow | |  | Row (argument) | |
| (Have a) butcher's | | Butcher's Hook | Look | |
| (My old) China | | China Plate | Mate | |
|  | |  |  | |
| Crackered (or creamed) | | Cream Crackered | Knackered (tired) | |
| Crust | | Crust of Bread | Head | |
| Current Bun | |  | Sun (newspaper) | |
| Daisy roots | |  | Boots | |
|  | |  |  | |
| Dog and Bone | |  | Phone | |
| Donkey's | | Donkey's Ears | Years | |
|  | |  |  | |
| Frog and toad | |  | Road | |
|  | |  |  | |
| Gregory | | Gregory Peck | Neck | |
| Hampsteads | | Hampstead Heath | Teeth | |
|  | |  |  | |
|  | |  |  | |
|  |  | | |
|  | |  |  | |
| Lardy | | La-di-da | Cigar | |
| Loaf | | Loaf of Bread | Head | |
| Mincies | | Mince pies | Eyes | |
| Mutton | | Mutt and Jeff | Deaf | |
| North and South | |  | Mouth | |
|  | |  |  | |
| Oxford Scholar | |  | Dollar | |
| On your Pat | | Pat Malone | Alone | |
| Pen and Ink | |  | Stink | |
|  | |  |  | |
| Plates | | Plates of Meat | Feet | |
| Taters | | Potatoes in the mould | Cold | |
| Rabbit | | Rabbit and Pork | Talk | |
|  | |  |  | |
|  | |  |  | |
| Rosie | | Rosie Lee | Tea | |
| Ruby | | Ruby Murray | Curry | |
|  | |  |  | |
|  | |  |  | |
| Syrup | | Syrup of Figs | Wig | |
| Tea Leaf | |  | Thief | |
| Titfer | | Tit for tat | Hat | |
|  | |  |  | |
| Trouble and Strife | |  | Wife | |
| Weasel | | Weasel and Stoat | Coat | |

**Exercise 1**

Translate the following sentences:

*‘Last night I got on the dog and bone to my old china, Ted, - we’re going down the frog and toad tomorrow for a ruby’*

*‘Feast your mincies on those daisy roots she’s wearing, bet they cost more than an ayrton!’*

*‘My trouble and strife has gone into town to get her hampsteads seen to by the dentist’*

*‘I’m glad I’ve got my weasel today, it’s taters out there!’*

**Exercise 2**

In pairs, imagine you are two Cockneys meeting at a bus stop. Using the table above, see how many rhyming slang phrases you can get into your conversation.

**Exercise 3**

Try inventing your own rhyming slang phrases for these words:

Dinner, Telly, Butter, Shoe, Bath, Car.

Can you make up some of your own?