

KNOW YOUR ENGLISH

Know Your English - How is the word 'chary' pronounced?

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What is the meaning and origin of 'scapegoat'?

(Rafi Mohammad, Tirupur)

Whenever a politician in our country does something wrong, instead of apologising, he immediately finds someone to put the blame on. This individual who gets blamed for something that he did not do is called a scapegoat. The word can be used as a noun and a verb.

*The finance officer, Rajagopal, was scapegoated for the company's collapse.

*The VC ensured that the Registrar was made the scapegoat.

For the ancient Hebrew Day of Atonement ceremony, two goats were randomly chosen. One of them was sacrificed, and the other was set free after the priest had symbolically transferred the sins of all people onto the animal. The second goat, the one that was allowed to 'escape' was called 'escape goat'. With the passage of time 'escape goat' became 'scapegoat'. Nowadays, a scapegoat doesn't escape; he is more like the goat that has been sacrificed!

What is the difference between 'blabbermouth' and 'tattler'?

(Jyothi, Hyderabad)

Both words are used in informal contexts to refer to a person who loves to talk. A 'blabbermouth' is someone who blabbers all the time; he finds it difficult to control his tongue. He is a dangerous friend to have for when he talks, he doesn't really think and as a result ends up telling people the secrets of others. The 'tattler' loves to gossip as well, but unlike the 'blabbermouth', he is a lot more discreet. He is more like an informer; he will reveal vital information to others if he has something to gain.

*Be careful what you say in Rani's presence. She is a blabbermouth.

*Jagdish is the department tattler. He keeps the Dean informed about everything.

How is the word 'chary' pronounced?

(T. Raghuram, Chennai)

The British and the Americans pronounce the word in very different ways. The former pronounce the 'char' like the word 'chair' and the following 'y' like the 'i' in 'sit' and 'bit'. The Americans, on the other hand, pronounce it like the word 'cherry'. No matter how you pronounce 'chary', the stress is on the first syllable. The word is mostly used in formal contexts to mean 'cautious' or 'wary'. If someone is 'chary about doing something', he is unwilling to take any action because he is afraid of the consequences. This individual is afraid to take risks and often errs on the side of caution. The word is usually followed by 'about' or 'of'.

*Like most men, Rakesh was chary of expressing his true feelings.

*Ananya is chary about asking people for help.

What is the difference between 'I will come' and 'I would come'?

(G. Geethu, Alapuzzha)

The use of 'will' in the first sentence suggests that you are definitely coming; there is no question about it. 'I would come ...', on the other hand, is an incomplete sentence. The use of 'would' in the sentence seems to suggest that you will be present if certain conditions are met. "I would come if I had the time." The implication is, you don't have the time, and therefore you will not be coming. When a native speaker says, "I would lend you the money ...", he means he is not going to lend the money. The use of 'would' in such sentences is a polite way of saying 'no' to someone.

"If God had really intended men to fly, he'd make it easier to get to the airport." – **George**

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