



The History of English in Ten Minutes

The English of Science

Narrator:

Before the 17th Century scientists weren't really recognised – possibly because lab-coats had yet to catch on.

But suddenly Britain was full of physicists – there was Robert Hooke, Robert Boyle – and even some people not called Robert, like Isaac Newton. The Royal Society was formed out of the Invisible College – after they put it down somewhere and couldn't find it again.

At first they worked in Latin. After sitting through Newton's story about the 'pomum' falling to the 'terra' from the 'arbor' for the umpteenth time, the bright sparks realised they all spoke English and could transform our understanding of the universe much quicker by talking in their own language.

But science was discovering things faster than they could name them. Words like 'acid', 'gravity', 'electricity' and 'pendulum' had to be invented just to stop their meetings turning into an endless game of charades.

Like teenage boys, the scientists suddenly became aware of the human body – coining new words like 'cardiac' and 'tonsil', 'ovary', and 'sternum' - and the invention of 'penis' (1693), 'vagina' (1682) made sex education classes a bit easier to follow. Though and 'clitoris' was still a source of confusion.