

“Our Lawless Language” (Anonymous)

Instructions: Listen to the poem and then do the exercises below on “Plural Forms.”

We'll begin with a box, and the plural is boxes,
 But the plural of ox is oxen, not oxes!
 Then one fowl is a goose, but two are called geese,
 Yet the plural of moose should never be meese!
 You may find a lone mouse or a whole nest of mice,
 But the plural of house is houses and, not hices!
 If the plural of man is always called men,
 Why shouldn't the plural of pan be called pen?
 If I speak of a foot, and you show me feet,
 And I give you a boot - would a pair be called beet?
 If one is a tooth, and a whole set are teeth,
 Why should not the plural of booth be called beeth?
 Then one may be that and three would be those,
 Yet hat in the plural would never be hose,
 And the plural of cat is cats not cose!
 We speak of brother, and also of brethren,
 But though we say mother, we never say methren!
 Then the masculine pronouns are he, his and him,
 But imagine the feminine, she, shis, and shim!
 So English I fancy, you will all agree,
 Is the funniest language you ever would see!

Vocabulary: ox (*boeuf*), fowl (*volaille*), goose (*oie*), mouse (*élan*), pan (*casserole*), pen (*stylo*), beet (*betterave*), booth (*cabine*), hose (*tuyau*), fancy (*croire, s'imaginer*), ever (*ici: jamais*)

Which of the words in the text above do not exist in the English language? Write the incorrect forms on the line below. Check against the KEY, when you have finished.

There are incorrect plural forms above that do not exist—there are seven in all.

List below **all the nouns** in the poem together with their **correct plural forms**. The first noun in the singular and plural form is given as an example.

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| sing. box pl. boxes _ | sing. pan pl. pans _ | sing. hat pl. hats _ |
| sing. ox pl. oxen _ | sing. foot pl. feet _ | sing. cat pl. cats _ |
| sing. goose pl. geese _ | sing. boot pl. boots _ | sing. brother pl. brethren _ |
| sing. moose pl. moose * _ | sing. tooth pl. teeth _ | sing. mother pl. mothers _ |
| sing. house pl. houses _ | sing. booth pl. booths _ | * <i>moose</i> is the same in the plural. |
| sing. man pl. men _ | sing. that pl. those _ | ** Now test your partner. |