

The Power of F Words

Fair, fall, fang, farm, first, fast, father, foe, friend, folk, fight, few, feed, free, forbid, forever — these are just a few of the F words that come from Anglo-Saxon. This means they have been in our language longer than any other words: for a thousand years.

While at one point in our history all our words were Anglo-Saxon, today less than 1% of our total vocabulary consists of words with Anglo-Saxon roots. Most of our words now come from French or Latin. Yet our daily speaking vocabulary is largely Anglo-Saxon — because these words are so fundamental to our daily lives.

In my new YA novel, *The F Words*, Chicago teen Cole Renner writes *the* F word on his school wall, is caught in the act by his English teacher, and is required to write two poems a week, each about a word that starts with the letter F. Thus begins Cole's coming of age through learning how to fight for social justice and how to write poetry.

My 40-minute presentation, *The Power of F Words*, uses colorful slides to present a history of the English language from Anglo-Saxon to current day, with a special emphasis on the importance and power of Anglo-Saxon words — particularly those that begin with F.

After giving an engaging history of these words I will briefly discuss my novel, with an emphasis on the F words that Cole Renner chooses to write poems about (with an explanation of how and why, plot-wise, but without any spoilers).

This is a program that will appeal to both adults and teens, as well as to those fascinated by language and history and the creative writing process.