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British bestsellers of 1993:

Hardback Fiction:
1. Roddy Doyle, *Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha* (Secker and Warburg.
2. Jeffrey Archer, *Honour Among Thieves* (HarperCollins).
3. Sue Townsend, *Adrian Mole: The Wilderness Years* (Methuen).
4. Jilly Cooper, *The Man Who Made Husbands Jealous* (Bantam Press).
5. Dick Francis, *Decider* (Michael Joseph).
6. Vikram Seth, *A Suitable Boy* (Phoenix House).
7. Susan Hill, *Mrs de Winter* (Sinclair-Stevenson).
8. John le Carré, *The Night Manager* (Hodder).
9. Wilbur Smith, *River God* (Macmillan).
10. Joanna Trollope, *A Spanish Lover* (Bloomsbury).

Paperback Fiction:
1. Michael Crichton, *Jurassic Park* (Arrow).
2. John Grisham, *The Firm* (Arrow).
3. Robert James Waller, *The Bridges of Madison County* (Mandarin).
4. Joanna Trollope, *The Men and the Girls* (Black Swan).
5. Catherine Cookson, *The House of Women* (Corgi).
6. John Grisham, *The Pelican Brief* (Arrow).
7. Maeve Binchy, *The Copper Beech* (Orion).
8. Catherine Cookson, *The Maltese Angel* (Corgi).
9. Danielle Steel, *Jewels* (Corgi).
10. Sue Townsend, *The Queen and I* (Mandarin).

Hardback Non-fiction:
1. Margaret Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years* (HarperCollins).
2. John McCarthy & Jill Morrell, *Some Other Rainbow* (Bantam Press).
3. Andy McNab, *Bravo Two Zero* (Bantam Press).
4. Terry Waite, *Taken on Trust* (Hodder).
5. Alan Clark, *Diaries* (Weidenfeld).
6. Michael Palin, *Pole to Pole* (BBC)
7. Ranulph Fiennes, *Mind over Matter* (Sinclair-Stevenson).
8. Alistair Fothergill, *Life in the Freezer* (BBC Books).
9. Jonathan Rice, *Keeping Up Appearances* (BBC Books).
10. Stephen Hawking, *A Brief History of Time* (Bantam Press).

Paperback Non-fiction:
1. Jung Chang, *Wild Swans* (Flamingo).
2. Brian Keenan, *An Evil Cradling* (Vintage).
3. Nick Hornby, *Fever Pitch* (Gollancz).
4. Andrew Motion, *Diana: Her True Story* (O'Mara).
5. James Herriot, *Every Living Thing* (Pan).
6. Bill Bryson, *The Lost Continent* (Abacus).
7. Stephen Pry, *Paperweight* (Mandarin).
8. Paul Merton, *Paul Merton's History of the Twentieth Century* (Boxtree).
9. Gary Larson, *The Far Side Gallery 4* (Warner).
10. Carl Giles, *The Giles Annual* (47th edition) (Pedigree).

Source:
Bookwatch

ROWENA JANSSON

What Means *Do*?

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Over the years many a student has asked me, "What means *do*" and I have replied that it does not mean anything. Puzzlement has induced the next question, "Why we need?" And, in my ignorance, I have replied that we need it because that is the way English works. Well, of course, there is a more comprehensive answer than this and, in the catch phrase of a famous English radio comedy show, "The answer lies in the soil." Neither God nor the grammarians suddenly said, "Let there be *do*!". No, *do* demonstrates a process of language evolution. It arose to fill a need created by the changing phonological, morphological and syntactic patterns of English which at the end of the Middle Ages were developing and evolving at a much faster rate than at any time in the history of the English language. To find the answer we must go back into the history, back to the roots, into the soil of English.

Old English is characterized as the period of full endings, Middle English as that of levelled endings and Modern English as that of lost endings. The inflectional systems of Old and Middle English had allowed a flexible word order in the syntactic system but once the inflections began to disappear, without a more rigid word order, meanings were no longer clear. In the interests of efficient communication other means were adopted to fill the gaps. *Do* represents one of these fillers.

If we look at the functions of *do* in Present-day English we can then go back in time and see when it was first used in these functions (as far as there are records to show this) and examine why.

Setting aside the function of *do* as a main verb, its functions as an auxiliary or operative are: as a pro-verb, either as a substitute for a main verb or on its own; as a 'dummy' in Yes-No questions and WH-questions both positive and negative where no other auxiliary or operator exists in the main verb; in directives in front of a negative; and for emphasis to deny a negative statement or implication or to express purely emotive force.

According to Ellegård's graph (1953:162) it appears that *do* indicating a grammatical function began to be active in a small way through the fifteenth century but rather suddenly at the turn of the century it became much more common in negative questions (from 10% to 60% over a period of twenty years) and this increase was soon followed by an increase in affirmative questions using the 'empty' *do* function. For example, subject-verb inversion, *Seest thou these things?* (Translation of Virgil, 1540) could alternate with, *or do we fear in vain Thy boasted Thunder?* (Translation of Vir-

gil, 1697). In these questions the word order using a functional *do* becomes identical with the word order of similar questions using another auxiliary or modal, for exampel, *Wilt thou kill me...?* (Acts of the Apostles, 1611).

Using *do* as a functional word in affirmative questions established the more rigid word order of,

Auxiliary (or *do*) + Subject + Verb + (Object)

or,

WH-item + Auxiliary (or *do*) + Subject + Verb

In negative questions and declaratives the *do* structure was even more preferable as not only was it identical to the word order of sentences containing an auxiliary or modal, viz:

...if you do not like him...
...if you cannot like him...

it also preserved the contact position of the verb with its object so that the negative *not* did not split the verb from its object, as in:

I doe not set my life at a pins fee. (*Hamlet,* First Folio, 1623)

rather than:

I set not my life...

and in so doing it clearly indicated sentence negation rather than object negation. Thus, in the *Hamlet* quotation, Hamlet is indicating that he places no value on his life, not that he is philosophising upon its value.

It is during this historical period that the use of functional *do* in negative declarative sentences and in negative imperatives becomes more common although not until later in the sixteenth century. However, it took until the end of the seventeenth century before it became the standard or norm. An example of a negative imperative is:

But doe not goe with it. (*Hamlet,* First Folio, 1623).

and a negative declarative from the same source, as commented on earlier is:

I doe not set my life at a pins fee.

There are also some interesting examples of *do* as a pro-verb form:

...than the common sorte of teachers dooth. (*A short Introduction of Grammar* 1549)

and a little later:

...and if he reade little, had heede haue much cunning, to seem to know that he doth not... (Francis Bacon, 1597).

and later still:

Wilt though kill me as though diddest the Egyptian yesterday? (Authorized Version, 1611)

and again from *Hamlet*

Doe not, my Lord.

As an affirmative declarative function *do* was used optionally in the mid and late sixteenth century, often in poetry as Spencer's *The Faerie Queene* (1596) illustrates:

...forth her bleeding life doth raine...
...the sad pang approching she does feele...
...his ruddie lips did smile...
...and rosy red did paint his chearefull cheekes...

When this usage is found in other texts it is generally for stylistic purposes although the influx of Latin verbs with an *–ate* ending influenced its use until the *–eth* inflection was extinct.

It is in this period that *do* came to be used in inversion in sentences with initial adverbs. It is still used poetically in this way, for example, *Yet do I marvel* by Countee Cullen, and regularly with initial negative adverbs.

There are examples of *do* used for emotive emphasis such as the one where his father's ghost tells Hamlet:

The Serpent that did sting thy Fathers life,
Now weares his Crown.

However, not until after the Early Modern English period did *do* become used regularly for contrastive emphasis.

And so, back to my confused students, the meaning of *do* is still the same: it does not mean anything. But we need it to keep a symmetry in the word order of English sentences, to fill the gap caused by the loss of inflections, thus avoiding ambiguity of meaning and, in so doing, to maximize effective and efficient language communication.

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