

Yorite? Here's a short history of popular greetings

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As you will know if you've been around these parts for any length of time, a pretty normal thing to say if you bump into a friend on The Walk in Norwich on a Saturday morning is "Yorite?"

If you're feeling particularly relaxed and expansive, you might actually use the full form of the greeting, which is of course "Aryorite?"

People from other parts of the world can sometimes be a bit puzzled by this "yorite?" of ours, realising that well yes they are alright, but why are we asking? Don't they look very well? The point is that, when we use our local salutation "Yorite?" like this, we are not really asking if someone is actually alright or not. We do not expect a reply along the lines of "Well, since you ask, I'm not really feeling too good at the moment and I've just been to the doctor's".

Over the decades, the phrase has lost its role as a question and turned into a relatively ritualised greeting formula. Most languages have ritual greeting formulas like this. Norwegian "Morn!" originally meant 'morning', but now it means 'hello' at any time of the day.

"Hiya!" also has the same kind of



■ 'Aryorite?': The relaxed Norfolk way of greeting old friends.

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history. It was originally the genuine enquiry "How are you?" Over the years it has lost its function as a question, and became shortened and reduced as well. This is a common process – when you say "Bye!" to someone, you are using a reduced form of "God be with ye".

The greeting English people traditionally use when being introduced to someone they don't know – "How do you do!" – also started life as a genuine query, but now no longer is.

Once again, the correct response to "How do you do!" is not "well I'm a bit under the weather right now" but "How do

you do!". You answer what looks like a question, but isn't, with something which also looks like a question, but isn't. And I think it's correct to write it with an exclamation mark rather than a question mark.

"How do you do?" was simply the older counterpart of what in modern English would be "How are you doing?"

Using -ing forms like doing and going has become much more common over the last couple of hundred years in the English language.

When we would now say "Is the kettle boiling?", my Granny used to ask "Do the kittle bile?"