



Hear Through the Grapevine



To hear something on/through the grapevine means **hearing unconfirmed news**, that is, news from someone who heard the news from someone else.

I heard on the grapevine that they split up, but I don't know anything more.

The first practical public demonstration of the **telegraph** was given in **1844**, when Samuel Morse sent a message from Washington to Baltimore. The invention was widely welcomed as a means of rapidly communicating news and, during the **American Civil War**, telegraph wires were strung from tree to tree like vines. Soon after the telegraph was invented, the term '**grapevine telegraph**' was coined (first recorded in a US dictionary in **1852**): this distinguished the new direct telegraph from the earlier '**rumor method**', which was likened to the coiling tendrils of a vine. The allusion was to interactions amongst people who could be expected to be found amongst grapevines, that is, the **rural poor**, or to the structure of the **American twin house**, which, being a semi-detached house with adjoining backyards separated by a grapevine trellis, may have spurred eavesdropping and subsequent gossiping.