

DISCOVERING WORDS ON WEDNESDAY NOVEMBER 5TH -"FREE CHOICE"

The aim of this record is to help you to follow up any points of interest.

OFF THE CUFF

In Tudor dramas, actors wearing costumes with big cuffs often wrote prompts on them.

JODHPURS AND PYJAMAS

Words well known from the days of the Raj. Around the 1860s, **polo** was exported from the former north-west Indian region of Rajputana (now Rajasthan) to England by army officers, together with the "**jodhpurs**" a type of breeches which they further modified. Named after the Indian city of Jodhpur, these were adapted for riding from traditional Indian clothing

Pyjamas is a word of Urdu origin, meaning "leg clothing" and originally daytime wear.

"PUT A SOCK IN IT"

Recorded in 1919. After the invention of the phonograph/gramophone (trademark "His Masters Voice") in the late C19, woollen socks were often placed in the large horn which served to amplify the sound in order to dampen it, because there was no means of volume control. As World War 1 slang. the phrase became a metaphor for telling someone bluntly to stop talking or be quiet.

CRAVAT

From the neckcloth worn by Croat mercenaries, soldiers serving in the French army in the Thirty Years War (1614-1648). The French adopted the neckcloth style which spread to England. So the word "cravat" comes via the French "cravate" from the Serbo-Croat "hrvat" i.e. "Croat.

CHAPERONE

Recorded from c.1720, in the sense of a woman escort, acting as advisor or protecto. Comes from the Old French chaperon, meaning "a little hood". So the chaperone protects her charge as the hood protects the face.

TAWDRY

Recorded from the 1670s, derived from the showy "tawdry lace" (1540s) sold at the annual fair of St. Audrey on the Isle of Ely on October 17th along with cheap jewellery. So the adjective was applied to anything gaudy or bad taste. Apparently. St. Audrey, otherwise Æthelthryth, Queen of Northumbria, c. 630-679, died of a throat tumour as punishment for wearing showy necklaces!

CYBER

The prefix "cyber-" comes from the Greek word *kybernētēs*, meaning "steersman" or "governor".

Cybernetics: in the 1940s, mathematician Norbert Wiener used *kybernētēs* as the basis for the term "cybernetics," defined as the study of communication and control systems.

Modern usage:

Terms like "**cyborg**" (cybernetic organism) be it "superhero" or "monster" and "**cyberspace**," popularised by science fiction, cemented the connection between "cyber-" and technology, networks, and virtual reality.

This led to an "explosive" use of "cyber" as a prefix to mean anything related to computers, the internet, or virtual reality (e.g. **cybercrime**, **cyberbullying**, **cyber cafe**).

Cybersecurity to protect people from **cyberattacks** is in the news e.g. M&S profits halved by a recent cyberattack, not fully protected by insurance; attack on Jaguar Land Rover threatening the survival of businesses in the supply chain. The attack will cost an estimated £1.9bn and be the most economically damaging cyber event in UK history so far, according to researchers.

REDUCTIVE WORDS e.g. "INNIT"

This spoken slang, contraction of "isn't it?" has evolved in modern, informal British English (particularly among young urban speakers) into a general tag at the end of a statement, regardless of the subject, person, or verb tense, to seek agreement or attention e.g. "We went out last night, innit?" instead of "didn't we?"

Part of MLE, Multi-Cultural English, probably influenced by languages spoken in British Punjabi communities, such as Hindi/Urdu, which has a similar broad tag question "hain na".

The word became widely recognised as a "youth-culture" term from the 1990s, partly due to its use and satire by the character Ali G (created by Sacha Baron Cohen).

Link to **HINGLISH**:

Its etymology is the combination of Hindi and English to describe a hybrid form of speech that mixes words, phrases, and grammatical structures from both languages. The term was first recorded in 1967.

Also **Emiway Hindi rap**; **SAEMY rap**; **Rough Mumbai** ("authentic") or **Gully rap** all of which influence the development of Hinglish.

WORDS INSPIRED BY NOVEMBER 5TH.

"THE PLOT THICKENS"

The phrase "the plot thickens" originates from a 1671 satirical play, "The Rehearsal" by George Villiers, Second Duke of Buckingham, where a character says, "Now the plot thickens very much upon us". This was mocking the heroic and over-complicated plays of the Poet Laureate, Dryden, and was successful enough to be reprinted in collections of English drama.

Other critics followed suit. For instance, Dryden's poem "The Hind and the Panther", in which he intended to debate religion as a recent Catholic convert, encouraged the pamphlet, "The Hind and the Panther Transvers'd to the Story of the Country Mouse and the City Mouse", which includes the phrase, " But now gentlemen, the plot thickens, here comes my t'other mouse, the City Mouse".

The phrase continued to be used in C18 mock epic poems and parodies of Victorian melodramas. In 2007 it appeared in Julia Cresswell's "Penguin Book of Cliches" and now is often used jokingly.

EXPLOSION

Recorded in 1620s, as the "action of driving out with violence and noise", via French *explosion*, from Latin verb *explodere*. to "drive out by clapping": "ex" means "out" and "plaudere" to clap.

Athenian audiences were highly demonstrative, clapping and shouting approval but also stamping and hooting disapproval, the Romans likewise. At the end of a performance, one of the actors would bid farewell to the Roman audience with a request for approbation "vos valet et plaudite". From the 1530s, English audiences were driving actors off the stage by making a noise with hostile clapping and hissing.

Early scientific texts used the word "explosion" in the late C17 and C18. The meaning of "going off with violence and noise" is recorded from the 1660s; to cause to burst suddenly and noisily (1794); "to go off with a loud noise (1790s – American English). The general sense of "bursting with destructive force" was not common until the late C19 (around 1882).

The explosion of a flour mill in Turin was described in 1785 as "spontaneous inflammation", but later documented as a "dust explosion".

The sense of explosion as "a rapid increase or development" is first attested in 1953; with "explosion of population" (1959) The sense of "exploding a theory" is of uncertain origin.

BOO

Recorded from early 15c. to mean, "a combination of consonant and vowel especially fitted to produce a loud and startling sound" [OED, which refers to Latin *boare*, Greek *boaein* "to cry aloud, roar, shout"]; became an expression of disapproval, 1884: hence, the verb meaning "shower (someone) with boos" (1885). Booing was common in the late 19c. among London theatre audiences and at British political events, but the custom seems to have been little-known in America before c. 1910.

"A PINCH OF SALT"

The phrase is thought to come from the Roman Pliny the Elder's "Naturalis Historia", regarding the discovery of a recipe written by King Mithridates to give immunity to poison. One of the ingredients in the recipe was a grain of salt. Threats involving poison were thus to be taken "with a grain of salt", and therefore less seriously. In old English measures, a grain was about 65 mg, which is roughly the amount of salt a person might pick up between the fingers as a **pinch**.

The Latin word *sal* means both "salt" and "wit", so the Latin phrase *cum grano salis* could be translated to either "with a grain of salt" or "with a grain of wit", i.e. "with caution".

"BEYOND THE PALE"

This figure refers to "behaviour beyond the boundary of acceptability". "Pale" derives from the Latin word *pālus*, meaning "wooden stake." (It also gives us the verb *impale*, and the noun *palisade*, or a fence made from pales, around the 1450s).

It came to mean "a district or territory within determined bounds," as per the OED. One of the most famous examples of this was "The Pale" around Dublin in the Middle Ages, which was regarded as the "civilised" area under English control, occupied by settlers while the native Irish lived outside it.

"CURRY FAVOUR"

This phrase comes via the 14th-century "**curry favel**", from the Old French "**correier fauvel**" which literally meant "to groom the chestnut horse", from Old French *correier* "put in order, prepare" and also *favel* or *fauvel* which meant both a horse and "flattery or duplicity".

Favel (or Fauvel) was a cunning and deceitful chestnut horse featured in a C14 satirical French allegorical poem, and grooming him symbolised flattery. Over time, the meaning of "grooming the deceitful horse" shifted to the modern meaning of seeking personal advantage through flattery, and the word favel was changed to the more familiar-sounding, but unrelated, word "favour".

WORDS AND IDIOMS TO DO WITH FORCEFUL ARGUMENTS

Topical debate programmes, and parliamentary sessions too often descend into violent arguments, which may be a form of entertainment, but are not very productive. Interesting to explore words and idioms used to describe this.

ARGUE comes from Latin *arguere*, to "make clear, make known prove, declare" – but often doesn't do this in reality.

ACRIMONY – This and "**acrimonious**" come from the Latin word "acrimonia," which means "sharpness" or "bitterness," derived from "acer," meaning "sharp" or "pungent".

ANTAGONISM - recorded from 1790s comes from the Greek word *antagonisma* meaning 'a struggle', derived from *anti* and *Agon*, the Ancient Greek deity who personified conflict, struggle or contest.

SLANGING MATCH – an argument involving a prolonged exchange of insults.

"Slanging" comes from the old verb *slang*, meaning "to use vulgar language" (1828) or to abuse verbally" (1844).

SLANG the noun was noted in 1756, as the "special vocabulary of tramps or thieves" or any set of persons of low character, later "jargon of a particular profession" (1801). The sense of "very informal language characterised by vividness and novelty" is by 1818.

The origin of "slang" seems to come from the Northern England noun *slang* "a narrow piece of land running up between other and larger divisions of ground" and the verb *slanger* "linger, go slowly," which is of Scandinavian origin linked to the idea 'to move freely in any direction' "

Early writers like John Fielding used the phrase *slang patter*, as a kind of talk belonging to some territory. So the meaning evolved from slang as "a piece of delimited territory" to "the territory used by tramps for their wandering", to the language of itinerant merchants.

"**MATCH**", can mean "to place (one) in conflict with (another)" from c. 1400. May come from Old English *mæcca* in the sense of "one of a pair", in this case, set against each other.

OED's earliest evidence for *slanging match* is from 1834, in *New Sporting Magazine*.

"TO BE AT LOGGERHEADS" – to disagree very strongly

First recorded 1670s, possibly from the use of a *loggerhead* ("metal tool consisting of a long rod with a bulbous end") as a weapon during a fight. Earlier, recorded in 1580s, to mean "stupid person, blockhead, dunce, numbskull," perhaps from dialectal *logger* "heavy block of wood" + head. Later it came to mean a type of thick-headed iron tool (1680s), a type of cannon shot, a post in the stern of a whale-boat, and a type of turtle (1650s).

According to the author Patrick O'Brian, being at loggerheads was a form of duelling among lower-deck personnel in Nelson's navy, Loggerheads were cannonballs mounted on long poles. Their purpose, heated in the galley fire, was to soften pitch for sealing the decks of the old sailing ships. Sailors at odds with each other took turns swinging them at each other – "like playing conkers, only more painful".

"GOING AT IT WITH HAMMER AND TONGS"

attacking a task, or arguing forcefully. "*We went at each other hammer and tongs*," from early 1700s ; reflecting the use of both the blacksmith's main tools.

CONTRETEMPS – a minor disagreement

Recorded in the 1680s, as a "a blunder in fencing," from French *contre-temps* "movement out of time, unfortunate accident, bad times" (16c.), from Latin *contra* "against;" + *tempus* "time". Meaning of "an unfortunate accident, an unexpected or embarrassing event" is from 1802; as "a dispute, disagreement," from 1961.

Interesting how words originally to do with physical battle have come to be used figuratively.

BELLIGERENT_– readiness to argue

From 1570s, meant "waging war, engaged in hostilities," from Latin ***bellum*** "war" + ***gerere*** "to bear, to carry. **BELLICOSE – similar meaning.** From early 15c., "inclined to fighting, same Latin origin

PUGNACIOUS – quarrelsome

Comes from the **Latin verb *pugnare***, meaning "**to fight**", which in turn comes from the Latin word for "**fist**," ***pugnus***. Another Latin word related to *pugnus* is ***pugil***, meaning "**boxer**." This is the source of our word **PUGILIST**, which means "fighter" and is used especially of professional boxers.

POLEMICAL - intended to incite or engage in vigorous intellectual or ideological conflict. Often applies to works and speeches designed to lead to change. Derived from Greek '**polemos**,' which means 'war' or 'battle.'

HOSTILE - showing or feeling opposition or dislike

The noun meaning "hostile person" is recorded from 1838

Term recorded late 15c. from French *hostile* "of or belonging to an enemy" or directly from **Latin** *hostilis* "of an enemy; inimical," from *hostis*, in earlier use "a stranger, foreigner."

TRUCULENT - quick to argue or oppose; aggressively defiant.

Recorded as meaning "fierce, savage, barbarous," in 1530s, from **Latin** *truculentus* "fierce, savage, stern, harsh, cruel," from *trux*, "fierce, rough, savage, wild"

CHOLERIC - easily angered, hot-tempered

Recorded in mid-14c. as *colrik*, "bilious of temperament or complexion," from Old French *colerique*, originally from Greek *kholerikos*, from *kholera* "a disease caused by bile," from *khole* "gall, bile," so called for its colour, *khlōros* "pale green, greenish-yellow. The word *choleric* comes from the **medieval notion** that people's **personalities are based** on the balance of four different types of elemental fluids in their body, called humours: **choleric, melancholic, phlegmatic, sanguine.**