

Words Old and New

One of the great things about the English Language, is that it easily adopts and adapts. It takes on board, words from many other languages, and calls them its own. New words are created by authors, cultures, sub-cultures and dialects. And words can often change their meaning over time.

“If enough of us go on using a word ... in a new way, that word acquires an onion skin of new meaning. What Bill Bryson termed catachresis. ** However that means using a word incorrectly (OED), not using a word with a new meaning. (HB)*

abandon	To subdue, subjugate
abscond	Hide to evade debt or the law
admonish	To urge by warning
admonition	A firm warning or reprimand
afford	To go forward
aftermath	A second crop of grass
amend	To reform or convert free from fault
amuse	Mislead, deceive, delude
aquarium	A place to water cattle
artificial	Full of artistic or technical skill
awful	Deserving or full of awe
backlog	The largest log was put at the back of the fire, the smaller fire at the front could be better controlled for cooking.
basement	A toilet
bead	A prayer
bland	Gentle, soft, smooth
brave	Cowardice
bully	A ‘good fellow’ or darling
buxom	Obedient, compliant, meek
confound	Mix up, confuse, prove wrong, defeat
conserve	To observe a law, rite or custom
counterfeit	Denote a perfect copy
crafty	Strong, powerful, skilful
crave	Demand as a right
charity	Love of mankind (faith hope & charity)
clay	Material of the human body
clerk	One ordained into the Christian ministry
compass Ps17/9	Surround
cute	Shortened form of ‘acute’ meaning ‘keenly perceived and shrewd’. Bow-legged
daft (deft)	Meek and mild
decimate	To kill one in 10
depend	To suspend
dissemble	Hide, conceal, disguise

distemper	Bad temper, illness, upset
divers	Diverse, varying, several, different
doom	A statute or law, judgement, decree
dribble	To shot an arrow short or wide of target
eager	Sharp, biting, pungent, sour
edify	To build, construct
embarrass	To hamper or obstruct
empty	At leisure, unoccupied, unmarried
enormity	Transgression. Deviation from moral or legal rectitude
enthusiasm	Possessed by a God; inspired
ethnic	Neither Jew nor Christian. Heathen.
excursion	Running away, escaping
fain Ps71/21	Pleased or willing under the circumstances
fear	Reverence and awe
felicity	Profound happiness
flabby	Damp or clammy
flinch	Slink away
fog, foggy	Coarse grass, covered with grass, mossy
forward Ps58/3	Difficult to deal with: contrary. Leading away from
further	Help the progress or development of ..., promote
garble	To sort something out
gay	C13 Light-hearted and joyous, merry, carefree. C17 'gay woman' was a prostitute. A 'gay house' was a brothel
girl	A young person of either sex
grin	To scowl. Show teeth as a sign of anger
guess	To take aim
harbinger	A host. One who provides lodging
hyssop Ps51/7	A wild shrub, twigs used in sprinkling in Jewish purifications rites
humble pie	Deer's entrails were called 'humbles'. Servants would eat a pie made from minced humbles
idiot	A layman, as opposed you a clergyman
imprecate	To pray for
impute Ps32/2	Assign, credit, to a cause or sauce (often negative)
infant	Unable to speak (of any age)
invest	To clothe
knight	A boy
leasing Ps4/2	Acting in a loose or lax way
legacy	Office, function or commission of a Papal legate
luxury	Sinful self-indulgence
prevent	Go before, lead the way
propitiate	Make favourable (propitiation)
magnify	Praise highly, glorify, exalt
manufacture	Made by hand
manure	To hold or manage land or property
mechanic	A skilled craftsman who made anything with his hands: e.g. goldsmith, cabinetmaker, blacksmith

minished	Ps12/1 Diminish (archaic)
mugger	A seller of mugs
neck	A parcel of land (neck of the woods)
nice	Ignorant, foolish, silly
nuisance	Injury, harm
parlour	Monastery room for receiving (speaking to) visitors (Fr. parler to talk) Victorians formal sitting room for receiving visitors. Now specialist room, ice-cream, beauty, pizza, massage, funeral ...)
pedant	A schoolmaster
pit	P 140/10 A trap, well
practise	Scheme or plot an evil purpose
presently	Currently, now
promiscuous	Confused or undistinguished
prove	Test, approve, demonstrate
queer	Odd,
quick	Alive
quicken	Stimulate or become stimulated. Foetus – movement (signs of life)
quiz	To make fun of. A practical joke. A joker
rid (me)	Cleanse (me)
ruthless	Lacking in compassion
sad	Someone who grave, serious, firm or trustworthy. Of muted colours, puce, sombre green
salon	(from saloon – c.f. parlour) A large room / hall (It. sala)
shambles	A place / street of animal slaughter
silly	Helpless, defenceless, esp. a woman, child or animal
similitude	Ps106/20 A person or thing resembling someone or something else
sophisticated	Corrupted
spoils	P119/162 Goods, stolen or forcibly taken
stablish	Establish (archaic)
statute	A law or decree made by a sovereign or by God
suffer	Tolerate, allow
tell (er)	Count (counter)
testimony	A solemn protest of declaration
trieth	Ps7/10 Tries, tests
try (me)	Ps139/23 Make severe demands upon
truant	A beggar, vagrant
vanity	Ps6/8 The quality of being worthless, furtive or empty
wallet	A knapsack that might carry sufficient provisions for a few days
whip	To move quickly
whitsun	Pentecost - White Sunday, ref. the white robes of the newly baptised
whoring	Ps106/38 Debasing oneself by doing something for unworthy motives

Ps The Book of Psalms in The Holy Bible

- * *“Lost Words”* Philip Howard The Robson Press London 2012
- * *“Mother Tongue”* Bill Bryson Penguin London 1990