

## What's In a Word? Library Materials Can Increase your Word Power!

Don't look now, but I think your vocabulary is shrinking. It's part of my job here at the Bartholomew County Public Library to select books about the study of languages. This includes books about how to learn foreign languages, but a considerable part of this area includes reviews and commentary on the English language. Many of these are very informative and, quite frankly, hilarious.

I read in one of these books that only 1000 words now make up 90% of the words used in "Common English." You seem to hear it all the time that our vocabularies are shrinking, and it is often tied to video games, texting, Twitter, the downfall of chivalry, bluegrass music...you name it! I'm not here to pile on more of these criticisms. I'm not a "wordie" by any stretch of the imagination. Rather, I'm just going to say that there are some awesome words out there that aren't commonly used. Some of these are totally outdated old-timey slang, while others are Regional English phrases that just never caught on in Southern Indiana. Here are a few:

Have you ever had a friend sneak up behind you and tap you on the shoulder unsuspectingly? Next time this happens, don't say, "You startled me!" Instead say, "You **bungfundered** me!" This word appeared in slang and colloquialisms dictionaries of the late 1800s and early 1900s. How about that old car you've had for decades that may have finally taken its last drive? Don't say, "This car is well beyond repair. Repair would be pointless." Try this: "This car is **jizzicked!**" It will save you words, and it sounds surprisingly hip for an older regional word from Maine. Continuing in this vein, if your friend makes a particularly good smoothie, instead of saying, "Wow, you made a particularly good smoothie," inform them, "Wow, you made a **strollopin'** good smoothie!" That's Ozarks slang from the Roarin' Twenties.

Here's a word that is legitimately Hoosier, though completely new to me. If you meet someone who seems a little sinister and not completely what he seems, don't say, "I'm very suspicious of that man." The Southern Indiana Hoosier from 1906 would say, "I'm **jubbers** of that fellow," and you should too! Finally, do you know somebody who never asks questions, never wonders what's going on, and generally lacks all semblance of curiosity? There's a word for it! So says the book *There's a Word for It* by Charles Harrington Elster. This person is a textbook **fysigunkus**. I am hoping that you are not one of these people, and I'm guessing that if you're exploring the newspaper, you are not. However, if you happen to know a fysigunkus, send them to Bartholomew County Public Library. Our books, audio books, magazines, and other materials are the sure-fire cure for this dreaded state of being.

In case you were wondering, these books, all available at our public library, were the sources for words in this article: *Dictionary of American Regional English* by Frederic Cassidy and Johan Houston Hall, *Informal English* by Jeffrey Kacirik, and *There's a Word for It* by Charles Harrington Elster. Enjoy these and the many other word books we have at the public library. They're all strollopin' good!

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