

# CHRISTMAS PUZZLES / The Language Quiz 2023

set by John Morrish

Every year brings new words, globalisation is swirling them around, and English-language dictionary-makers have never been more enthusiastic about scooping them up and giving them currency. This year's crop reflect a world that is increasingly unrecognisable.

## Delightful debutantes

When does a word 'come out' and achieve respectability? Possibly when it joins the ever-expanding database of the *Oxford English Dictionary*. All these words (or unrecorded senses of old words) made their debut this year, although they may have been around for years. It was meant to be a Devilish Dictionary of Delightful Debutantes but unfortunately not all letters of the alphabet provide suitable new words.

What are these things?

### 1. Antigram

- a. A message for your mother's sister
- b. An anagram that directly contradicts the word it was created from
- c. An antique record player

### 2. Beige flag

- a. The standard carried by the bland when leading the bland
- b. An emergency service for nervous old people
- c. An indication that a potential romantic partner is possibly a bit dull

### 3. Caledonian antiszygy

- a. A cake developed by Edinburgh's Greek community, combining feta cheese and lard
- b. The idea that Scottish people are uniquely capable of embracing contradictory ideas simultaneously
- c. A thistle named after a football team

### 4. Downblousing

- a. Wearing a duck-feather puffa jacket over your bravissimo balconette before letting it all hang out at Wetherspoons
- b. Taking uninvited photographs of a lady's embonpoint from a higher viewpoint.
- c. Failing to tuck your trousers into your boots, in breach of military regulations

### 5. Easybeat

- a. Latest clubbing sensation, for people who'd rather be at home listening to *Gardeners' Question Time*
- b. A new type of culinary whisk, designed to stop your poor little hand getting overtired
- c. An Australian expression for a person or team who can be vanquished without effort

### 6. Frack

- a. A variant on the ever-popular intercourse-related expletive, used in such expressions as 'frack off'
- b. A type of electronic dance music, a cross



between drill, grime, trap, gizzard, wazzock and pleonasm

- c. The noise made by a billionaire tech genius when bending the space-time continuum by furrowing his brow and putting on a stern face

### 7. Headcanon

- a. Legal device for firing an unwanted chief executive
- b. Polyphonic composition for improvising singers
- c. A fan's version of a story or game elaborated from the original

### 8. Life admin

- a. Boring chores necessary for existence
- b. A 40-year career in loss-adjusting
- c. A specialist who comes round and goes through that bag of receipts you've been collecting since 2013

### 9. Prompt

- a. A harmless herbal antidote to the harmless herbal sleeping aids to which you've become addicted
- b. The ability to do things quickly, like we did before information technology made everything more efficient
- c. The information people feed into an AI system

### 10. Speedrun

- a. An unpleasant gastric complication of artificial sweeteners
- b. To run in an effort to get somewhere quickly, rather than to give your new joggers an outing

- c. To rush through a computer game you've played before, just because you can

### 11. Weighted blanket

- a. A technique in marketing, in which algorithmically selected postcodes are carpet-bombed with leaflets about retirement villages
- b. An actual blanket with weights in it, to hold you down and help you sleep, like being swaddled in first-century Jerusalem
- c. A meteorological condition in which water vapour combines with atmospheric filth to produce brown snow

## A Dictionary of names

As a service to those involved in parenting, godparenting, baptism, etc., here are some suggestions for baby names. I couldn't find an example for one letter, so I made that one up. In each case, say whether the name was originally:

- 1. A god or goddess
- 2. An entertainer
- 3. A fruit, vegetable, herb or flower
- 4. A pharmaceutical compound
- 5. A science fiction villain
- 6. A term in rhetoric, philosophy or religion
- 7. A settlement
- 8. A finny denizen of the deep

Adapalene  
Brodalumab  
Clozapine  
Doxepin  
Estril  
Fluoxetine  
Ganirelix  
Haloperidol  
Idarucizumab  
Jonnibigood  
Ketotifen  
Lanthanum  
Maribavir  
Nadolol  
Patisiran  
Quinagolide  
Ramipril  
Sulindac  
Tibolone  
Upadacitinib  
Voxelotor  
Warfarin  
Xipamide  
Zopiclone

## Oof, it's da yoof

10 bits of argot, acquired from a young person (™). It's possible this pronoun-free

entity has invented at least one of them to bamboozle this sad boomer.

1. Booky
2. Bussin'
3. Drip
4. Gassed
5. Low key
6. 'No capping!'
7. Roadman
8. Snack
9. Whip
10. Yeet!

### You callin' me booky, roadman?

One of the most risible of today's notions is that all knowledge is available online, or soon will be, if you can afford the subscriptions. Not so. Here are a few questions inspired by some discarded books I rehabilitated this year.

1. How old is this phrase, and where did it originate? 'I'll have your guts for garters.'
2. And this one: 'Some of my best friends are Jewish.'
3. A television traveller on a pushbike

arrived in a town in 1989 and was handed a shamrock, an *empanada* and lectured on the imperial crimes of the British, before rounding off with *dulce de leche*. Where was he? Who was he?

4. What is a 'happiness machine' and what was it really called?
5. Which warriors confused *sobh bekheir* and *zohr bahir* when they entered people's homes in search of an enemy they referred to as Terry?

### 10 Christmas crackers from our guest star

Welcome the lexicographer Jonathon Green, the world's greatest expert on English slang and a living encyclopaedia of counter-culture. He's provided a few seasonal questions.

1. What or who was once nicknamed a *Christmas*?
2. What is Australia's *Christmas hold*?
3. What, around 1780, were *Christmas compliments*?

4. What or who might be *Christmas on a stick*?

5. Which expression is, in slang's taxonomy of abuse, the odd one out?
  - a. Mackerel-snapper
  - b. Guppy-gobbler
  - c. Spud-muncher
  - d. Soap-dodger
6. Why would one *drive turkeys to market*?
7. What, in Australia, is or was a *carol singer*?
8. Who has been *christened by a baker*?
9. What, in New Zealand, are *Christ and the two apostles*?
10. Which is the odd one out?
  - a. To hitch up the reindeer
  - b. To take a sleighride
  - c. To go ice-skating
  - d. To fall in a snowdrift

And one for luck:

11. Veggies aside, would you want a *course of sprouts*?

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