



Words in the Age of Corona

Julie Cummins

What would we do without words to express ourselves, whether in print, vocally, audibly, or with our hands? Dictionaries add and delete words responding to usage, both current and archaic.

Our culture reflects our language, especially in today's technology. The following list of words shares examples of how meanings have evolved from previous days to life in the age of a global pandemic. Remember when these words meant these things . . . and not something more?

- WEB, a snare woven by a spider (not the ever-present computer network)
- MOUSE, an undesirable rodent (again, another, albeit less furry, computer term)
- LINKS, sausage (not just click bait!)
- WINDOWS, panes of glass (how many can we open at once?)
- AMAZON, a river in South America (a lifeline during the pandemic)
- FILES, implements used for manicures (how many files do I have to read today?)
- ZOOM, going fast in a vehicle (the omnipresent video tech of choice . . . or a 1970s education TV show)
- THUNDERBIRD, a fast car or an inexpensive wine
- BYTES, when someone uses their teeth (not just their keyboard)
- INTERFACING, iron-on fabric stiffener (I see you, so look prepared!)
- QUICKBOOKS, ones you could read in an hour
- PASSWORDS, something spies used (now used by all students, even the youngest)
- DIGITAL, giving someone the finger
- ACROBAT, trapeze performer (will I ever get that file to download properly?)
- SPAM, mystery meat in a tin can (What? Another email I can't open?)

To sum up, here are a few thoughts on words by some of the world's greatest minds. John Milton said, "Apt words have the power to suage the tumors of a troubled mind."

Poet George Herbert said, "Good words are worth much, and cost little." And founding father Benjamin Franklin said, "A word to the wise is enough, and many words won't fill a bushel." &



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Got a great, lighthearted essay? A funny story about children and libraries? Books and babies? Pets and picture books? A not-so-serious look at the world of children's librarianship? Send your Last Word to Sharon Verbeten at CALeditor@yahoo.com.