

# The Words of the Week - 6/26/20

Some of the words that defined the week ending June 26, 2020

Welcome to The Words of the Week, in which we look over some of the good, the bad, and the semantically imprecise words that tickled your curiosity this past week. Please note that [bad](#) is used here in a vague fashion; we do not really think of any words as bad (although sometimes they are a bit unruly).



## Hombre'

President Trump once again caused lookups for [hombre](#) to spike, after he used the Spanish loan word in a speech last week.

@PodSaveAmerica

"It's 1:00 in the morning, and a very tough—I used the word on occasion, hombre is breaking into the window of a young woman whose husband is away as a traveling salesman or whatever he may do."

—Trump on why cutting funds for police will let "hombres" break into your home.

*Hombre*, Spanish for “man,” has been in use in English since the early 17th century, with the meaning of “fellow, guy.” Trump’s [musings](#) on *hombres* also sent more people than usual to the dictionary to look up the meaning of [ombre](#), a word which may mean either “an old three-handed card game popular in Europe especially in the 17th and 18th centuries” or “having colors or tones that shade into each other —used especially of fabrics in which the color is graduated from light to dark.”

[musing](#) (n.): MEDITATION

## 'ICU'

[ICU](#) has been in the news a considerable amount over the past few months, but last week saw the word subject to more attention than usual of late, after officials in Florida [averred](#) that only patients who needed intensive care should be listed as being in the intensive care unit.

[aver \(v.\): to declare positively](#)

Florida changing the way ICU beds are reported  
State wants hospitals to report only number of patients receiving 'intensive level of care'  
— (headline) [WPTV](#) (wptv.com), 24 Jun. 2020

In case you were wondering, yes, *ICU* is an abbreviation of [intensive care unit](#), which we define as “a unit in a hospital providing intensive care for critically ill or injured patients that is staffed by specially trained medical personnel and has equipment that allows for continuous monitoring and life support.”

## 'In jest'

[In jest](#), which is not to be confused with [ingest](#), surged in lookups last week, after White House officials claimed that President Trump was speaking [thusly](#) when he announced that he had asked for a slowdown in coronavirus testing.

[thusly: in this manner : thus](#)

The White House said Monday that President Donald Trump was speaking only in “jest” when he said at Saturday night’s rally that he told officials to slow down testing for the coronavirus and that he had not actually ordered anyone to do so.  
— Jordyn Phelps and Ben Gittleson, [ABC News](#) (abcnews.go.com), 22 Jun. 2020

We enter *in jest* as an idiom, with the definition of “as a joke,” and label it as *formal* and *old-fashioned*.

## 'Shambolic'

[Shambolic](#) spiked last week after former President Barack Obama used the word to describe recent actions of his successor.

Former President Barack Obama [slammed](#) President Donald Trump’s “shambolic” and “mean spirited approach to government” during a rare, fiery rebuke of his successor while speaking at former Vice President Joe Biden’s virtual fundraiser on Tuesday.  
— Chris Riotta, [The Independent](#) (London, Eng.), 24 Jun. 2020

[slam \(v.\): to criticize harshly](#)

We define *shambolic* as “obviously disorganized or confused.” The word, which is chiefly found in British use, has been around since the early 1940s, and is believed to have come from [shambles](#).

[shambles \(n.\) a scene or a state of great disorder or confusion](#)

We **loll** about the bar in twos and threes,  
Exchanging bits of **scintillating** “shop.”  
I quote such **fragrant specimens** as these:  
”At last we’ve got old D.A.D.O.S. on the **hop**.”  
”They say it was a most shambolic op.”  
This is one bar I did not want to **prop**.  
I wish the Major would go in to dinner.  
— *Punch, or the London Charivari* (London, Eng.), 15 Dec. 1943

**loll** (v.): to act or move in a lax, lazy, or indolent manner : lounge

**scintillating** (adj.): : brilliantly lively, stimulating, or witty

**fragrant** (adj.): having a sweet or pleasant smell

**specimen** (n.): an individual, item, or part considered typical of a group, class, or whole

**hop**: ?

**prop** (v.): sustain, strengthen —often used with *up*?

## 'Chicks'

The country music trio formerly known as the **Dixie Chicks** has dropped the **attributive** portion of their name, and henceforth will be referred to simply as the *Chicks*.

**Dixie**: the states of the southeastern and south central U.S. and especially those which constituted the Confederate States of America

**attributive**: grammar : joined directly to a modified noun without a linking verb (such as *city* in *city streets*)

The Dixie Chicks are now the Chicks. The platinum-selling country trio, which in 2003 became **pariahs** in Nashville for criticizing President George W. Bush on the eve of the American-led invasion of Iraq, has changed its name, apparently in tacit acknowledgment of criticism over its use of the word “Dixie,” a nostalgic nickname for the Civil War-era South.

— Ben Sisario, *The New York Times*, 25 Jun. 2020

**pariah** (n.): one that is despised or rejected : outcast

We define **Dixie** as “the states of the southeastern and south central U.S. and especially those which constituted the Confederate States of America,” and the *Confederate States of America* as “the 11 southern states of the U.S. during their secession from the Union between 1860 and 1865: South Carolina, Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Texas, Virginia, Arkansas, North Carolina, and Tennessee.” The relevant sense of **chick** in this case is “girl, woman,” and is labelled as *informal* and *sometimes offensive*.

## Our Antedating of the Week: 'exceptionalism'

Our antedating of the week is *exceptionalism*, which we define as “the condition of being different from the norm,” and “a theory expounding the exceptionalism especially of a nation or region.” Our earliest record of use had previously come in 1929, but recent findings show that it may be found in print as far back as the 1840s.

To this we are approaching, and we even hope that the tedious stupid West India debates of the last **fortnight** may be accepted as the sweeping away of the last heap of the **rubbish** of *exceptionalism*.

— *The Standard* (London, Eng.), 4 Jul. 1848

**fortnight (n.): a period of 14 days : two weeks**

**rubbish (n.): something that is worthless or nonsensical**

The word is often associated with the belief in an exceptional quality felt by Americans; while not the earliest use we have come across, this sense does exist as far back as the Civil War.

It is probable that the “exceptionalism,” if one may use the word, on which the Americans rather pride themselves, will not prevail in in the case of the struggle between North and South.

— *The Times* (London, Eng.), 20 Aug. 1861