Word of the Day

June 27 – July 3

Highlighted word: New word. Unsure about its meaning or pronunciation.

incontrovertible

adjective | (ˌ)in-ˌkän-trə-ˈvər-tə-bəl | in-kahn-truh-VER-tuh-bul | June 27, 2020

Definition

: not open to question **:** [indisputable](#)

Did You Know?

If something is indisputable, it's incontrovertible. But if it is open to question, is it *[controvertible](#)*? It sure is. The antonyms *controvertible* and *incontrovertible* are both derivatives of the verb *[controvert](#)* (meaning "to dispute or oppose by reasoning"), which is itself a <mark>spin-off</mark> of *[controversy](#)*. And what is the source of all of these controversial terms? The Latin adjective *controversus*, which literally means "turned against."

<mark>spin-off (n.): a collateral or derived product or effect: BY-PRODUCT.</mark>

Examples

"'Why are you kids inside? It's nice outside.' It wasn't a question. It was a directive. Out the door, <mark>pronto</mark>. Further, to us kids, the logic seemed *incontrovertible*. Indeed, if the sun were shining, why wouldn't we be playing under it?" — [Phil Luciano, *The Journal Star* (Peoria, Illinois), 12 May 2020](#)

<mark>pronto (adv.): without delay.</mark>

"And so while all this may just be temporary—and it may simply be that in our leisure and idleness we are hearing <mark>birdsong</mark> that always was there, and noticing wildlife that was just beyond our <mark>ken</mark>—it nonetheless is *incontrovertible* that there is a small but discernible <mark>uptick</mark> in our <mark>apprehension</mark> of nature, and of our appreciation of the natural world." — [David M. Shribman, *The Salem (Massachusetts) News*, 16 May 2020](#)

<mark>birdsong (n.): the song of one or more birds.</mark>

<mark>ken (n.): the range or perception, understanding, or knowledge.</mark>

<mark>uptick (n.): an increase, rise, or upward trend</mark>

<mark>apprehension (n.): the act or power of perceiving or comprehending something.</mark>

argot

noun | ˈär-(ˌ)gō | AHR-goh | June 28, 2020

Definition

: the language used by a particular type or group of people **:** an often more or less secret vocabulary and [idiom](#) peculiar to a particular group.

Did You Know?

We borrowed *argot* from French in the early 1800s, although our language already had several words covering its meaning. There was *[jargon](#)*, the Anglo-French ancestor of which meant "<mark>twittering</mark> of birds"; it had been used for specialized (and often obscure or pretentious) vocabulary since the 1600s. There was also *[lingo](#)*, from the Latin word *lingua*, meaning "language"; that term had been in use for more than a century. English novelist and lawyer Henry Fielding used it of "court gibberish"—what we tend to call *[legalese](#)*. And speaking of *legalese*, the suffix *[-ese](#)* is a newer means of indicating <mark>arcane</mark> vocabulary. One of its very first applications at the turn of the 20th century was for "American '<mark>golfese</mark>.'"

<mark>twitter (v.): to utter successive chirping noises.</mark>

<mark>arcane (adj.): known or knowable only to a few people: SECRET. Broadly: MYSTERIOUS, OBSCURE.</mark>

<mark>golfese (n.): the jargon used by golf players and commentators.</mark>

Examples

"Should all go well, after three weeks or more, the state would move on to phase two, which officials, creating a new virus-age *argot*, have labeled 'Cautious.'" — [Matt Stout and Tim Logan, *The Boston Globe*, 18 May 2020](#)

"The Universe, [[Galileo](#)] famously wrote, 'is written in the language of mathematics.' It was an *argot* that allowed him to break reliance on the Aristotelian cosmology prized by the Catholic Church, and to forge a new, <mark>quantitative</mark> study of nature." — [Alison Abbott, *Nature*, 4 May 2020](#)

<mark>quantitative: ˈkwän-tə-ˌtā-tiv</mark>

parse

Verb | ˈpärs | PARSS | June 29, 2020

Definition

1 a : to divide (a sentence) into grammatical parts and identify the parts and their relations to each other

b : to describe (a word) grammatically by stating the part of speech and explaining the [inflection](#) and [syntactical](#) relationships

2 : to examine in a minute way **:** analyze critically

3 : to give a grammatical description of a word or a group of words

4 : to admit of being parsed

Did You Know?

If *parse* brings up images of elementary school and learning the [parts of speech](#), you've done your homework regarding this word. *Parse* comes from the first element of the Latin term for "part of speech," *pars orationis*. It's an old word that has been used since at least the mid-1500s, but it was not until the late 18th century that *parse* graduated to its extended, non-grammar-related sense of "to examine in a minute way; to analyze critically." Remember this extended sense, and you're really at the head of the class.

Examples

The lawyer meticulously *parsed* the wording of the final contract to be sure that her client would get all that he was asking for.

"[AI](#) technologies can be very useful when there's enormous amounts of data to *parse,* and that data is patterned in a way that is either already known or which the AI can discover." — [Alexander García-Tobar, quoted in *The San Francisco Business Times*, 19 May 2020](#)

louche

Adjective | ˈlüsh | LOOSH | June 30, 2020

Definition

: not reputable or decent

Did You Know?

Louche ultimately comes from the Latin word *luscus*, meaning "blind in one eye" or "having poor sight." This Latin term gave rise to the French *louche*, meaning "squinting" or "cross-eyed." The French gave their term a figurative sense as well, taking that squinty look to mean "shady" or "devious." English speakers didn't see the need for the sight-impaired uses when they borrowed the term in the 19th century, but they kept the figurative one. The word is still quite visible today and is used to describe both people and things of questionable repute.

squint (adj.): of an eye **:** looking or tending to look obliquely or askance (as with envy or disdain)

cross-eye (n.): strabismus in which the eye turns inward toward the nose

repute (n.): the character or status commonly ascribed to one **:** reputation

Examples

"Here, he's just a dude, with an earring and a motorcycle, a dude who wears jeans to military court. Freeman's best when he's not trying to win re-election or standing at the Pearly Gates, when he's just a guy slouching in dungarees, looking a little *louche*." — Wesley Morris, *The New York Times*, 30 Apr. 2020

dungaree (n.): a heavy coarse durable cotton twill woven from colored yarns specifically **:** blue denim

"On 7 May, for one week only, it released a modern-dress version of Antony and Cleopatra set in a series of strategy rooms, conference centres and five-star hotel suites. The lovestruck Roman was played by a *louche*, gruff, brooding Ralph Fiennes." — Lloyd Evans, *The Spectator* (UK), 16 May 2020

lovestruck (adj.): powerfully affected by feelings of romantic love for someone **:** deeply in love

gruff (adj.): rough, brusque, or stern in manner, speech, or aspect

brooding (adj.): moodily or sullenly thoughtful or serious

farrago

Noun | fə-ˈrä-(ˌ)gō | fuh-RAH-goh | July 1, 2020

Definition

: a confused mixture **:** hodgepodge

Did You Know?

Farrago might seem an unlikely relative of *farina* (the name for the <mark>mealy</mark> breakfast cereal), but the two terms have their roots in the same Latin noun. Both derive from *far*, the Latin name for <mark>spelt</mark> (a type of grain). In Latin, *farrago* meant "mixed <mark>fodder</mark>"—cattle feed, that is. It was also used more generally to mean "mixture." When it was adopted into English in the early 1600s, *farrago* retained the "mixture" sense of its ancestor. Today, we often use it for a jumble or <mark>medley</mark> of disorganized, haphazard, or even nonsensical ideas or elements.

<mark>mealy (adj.): containing meal **:** farinaceous</mark>

<mark>meal² (n.): the usually coarsely ground and unbolted seeds of a cereal grass or pulse :a product resembling seed meal especially in particle size or texture</mark>

<mark>spelt (n.): an ancient wheat (*Triticum spelta* synonym *T. aestivum spelta*) with long spikelets containing two light red flattened grains</mark>

<mark>fodder (n.): something fed to domestic animals *especially* **:** coarse food for cattle, horses, or sheep</mark>

<mark>medley (n.): a diverse assortment or mixture especially **:** hodgepodge</mark>

Examples

"Combining these plots is a terrible idea for multiple reasons. One is simply logistical; the fusion turns two improbable but engaging stories into a ludicrous *farrago*." — Laura Miller, *Slate*, 8 Nov. 2019

"Although it's hard to know anything for sure about North Korea, the fertilizer-plant photo suggests the reporting about Kim over the past few weeks was a *farrago* of misinformation, non-information, half speculation and outright guessing." — Paul Farhi, *The Washington Post*, 5 May 2020

obtain

Verb | əb-ˈtān | ub-TAYN | July 2, 2020

Definition

1 : to gain or attain usually by planned action or effort

2 : to be generally recognized or established **:** prevail

Did You Know?

Obtain, which was adopted into English in the 15th century, comes to us via Anglo-French from the Latin *obtinēre*, meaning "to hold on to, possess." *Obtinēre* was itself formed by the combination of *ob-*, meaning "in the way," and the verb *tenēre*, meaning "to hold." In its earliest uses, *obtain* often implied a <mark style="background-color:green">conquest</mark> or a successful victory in battle, but it is now used for any attainment through planned action or effort. The verb *tenēre* has incontestably prevailed in the English language, providing us with

such common words as *abstain*, *contain*, *detain*, *sustain*, and, perhaps less obviously, the adjectives *tenable* and *tenacious*.

<mark>conquest (n.): ˈkän-ˌkwest</mark>

Examples

The experiment was designed to *obtain* more accurate data about weather patterns.

"By time of competition, [NHL deputy commissioner Bill] Daly said, the league will test players every night and *obtain* results by the time they report to the <mark>rink</mark> the next morning." — Matt Porter, *The Boston Globe*, 26 May 2020

<mark>rink (n.): a smooth extent of ice marked off for curling or ice hockey</mark>

stentorian

Adjective | sten-ˈtȯr-ē-ən | sten-TOR-ee-un | July 3, 2020

Definition

: extremely loud

Did You Know?

The Greek <mark>herald</mark> Stentor was known for having a voice that came through loud and clear. In fact, in the *Iliad*, Homer described Stentor as a man whose voice was as loud as that of fifty men together. Stentor's powerful voice made him a natural choice for delivering announcements and proclamations to the assembled Greek army during the Trojan War, and it also made his name a <mark>byword</mark> for any person with a loud, strong voice. Both the noun *stentor* and the related adjective *stentorian* pay homage to the big-voiced warrior, and both have been making noise in English since the early 17th century.

<mark>herald (n.): an official crier or messenger</mark>

<mark>byword (n.): one that personifies a type</mark>

Examples

"'Let it Be' … was <mark>uncannily</mark> similar to 'Bridge Over Troubled Water,' not only in sentiment, but even to its <mark>churchy</mark> flavor. 'They're both very <mark>gospely</mark> songs,' [David] Wills says. 'I think 1968 was a very turbulent year … and in 1969 there was this life-affirming achievement of going to the moon. So I think that was in the <mark>zeitgeist</mark>, those *stentorian*, stately gospel piano-based songs.'" — Jim Beckerman, *NorthJersey.com*, 14 May 2020

<mark>uncanny (adj.): seeming to have a supernatural character or origin **:** eerie, mysterious</mark>

<mark>churchy (adj.): of or suggestive of a church or church services</mark>

<mark>gospely (adj.): Related to the Gospel?</mark>

<mark>zeitgeist (n.): the general intellectual, moral, and cultural climate of an era</mark>

"'Laughing together is as close as you can get without touching,' I wrote in my first book…. Laughter has always been the best medicine; I wasn't exactly making any boldly original statement almost three decades ago. I wasn't expecting a MacArthur grant. But what I expected even less … was that the not-touching part of my line would eventually be part of a *stentorian,* global prescription to combat COVID-19." — [Gina Barreca, *The Bedford (Pennsylvania) Gazette*, 23 Mar 2020](#)