

HATE CRIME
HYGGE
BREXIT
POST-TRUTH
XENOPHOBIA
WOKE
COULROPHOBIA
BIGLY
POPULISM
LATINX
CHATBOT
SURREAL

In one year, out the other: These were among the most important words in 2016, say experts.

A bigly, post-truth, surreal 2016 ends ...

Literacy

'Post-truth', 'hate crime', 'xenophobia':
the world's leading dictionaries have
revealed their words of the year. What
do they say about 2016, and how can
they help us in the months ahead?

Literacy

Dictionaries rarely make headlines. But come winter, they get their moment. This is when editors look at the most popular search terms of the last 12 months and pick their words of the year. The media reports the results with enthusiasm.

Literacy

Judging by this year's crop, 2016 has been a year of confusion and fear. Merriam-Webster's winner was **'surreal'**. Interest in the word spiked after terrorist attacks in Belgium and France, the coup in Turkey, and Donald Trump's election. It applies to 'moments of both tragedy and surprise', explained the editors.

Literacy

Oxford Dictionaries chose **'post-truth'**, a term that defines the declining influence of facts on public opinion. It suits a year in which politics has been shaped by blatant lies and fake news stories. This was partly true of the campaign for **'Brexit'** – Collins's word of the year. Noting that 'fear of the *other*' has been a major theme in 2016, Dictionary.com went for **'xenophobia'**

Literacy

Of course, words of the year reflect the trends of their time. The first ever such contest, held by the American Dialect Society in 1990, was won by 'bushlips' – a reference to George H.W. Bush. Other examples include '9-11' (in 2001), 'blog' (2004) and 'big society' (2010). Some are neologisms, others are old words given new life. Some last, others die.

Literacy

This year, the dictionaries' shortlists reflect all sorts of cultural goings-on. **'Chatbot'** is a nod to developments in AI. **'Hygge'**, originally a Danish word, describes the current craze for relaxed, healthy lifestyles. **'Coulrophobia'** – a fear of clowns – recalls that weird killer-clown mania.

Literacy

Unsurprisingly, though, words relating to the year's chaotic politics dominate. As well as the winners, they include **'hate crime', 'populism', 'Trumpism', 'alt-right'** and **'deplorable'**. Oxford chose **'woke'**, an adjective meaning 'alert, informed', which became a rallying cry for black Americans as they faced renewed violence from the police.

All of this points to a year of major upheaval. As 2016 draws to a close, can we take comfort from the words that defined it?

Literacy

Wise words

This year made no sense, say some. Wars raged. Terrorism grew. Disease spread. Celebrities dropped like flies. Bigotry trumped tolerance. Lying became acceptable. And a 70-year-old child was made the world's most powerful man. In the face of such mayhem, it is hard to know what to do. 'Surreal' sums it up.

Cheer up, reply others. If 2016 has shown us anything, it is that problems have solutions. Huge progress was made in the fight against disease. Revolutions in Europe and America got a new generation interested in politics. Social media gave them a louder voice than ever. 'Woke' is the word: stay informed and don't give up.

Literacy

What is your word of the year?
(Pick one that is not mentioned
in the article.)

Literacy

As a class, come up with
ten words that could be big
in 2017.

Literacy

WORDS MEAN MORE
THAN WHAT IS SET
DOWN ON **PAPER**.

IT TAKES THE **HUMAN**
VOICE TO INFUSE THEM
WITH DEEPER **MEANING**.

Maya Angelou

noun of the day

coup

1. a sudden, violent, and illegal seizure of power from a government.

*"he was overthrown in an army **coup**"*

2. an instance of successfully achieving something difficult.

*"it was a major **coup** to get such a prestigious contract."*

adjective of the day

surreal

having the disorienting, hallucinatory quality of a dream;
unreal;fantastic:

*The sensations assured her the **surreal** situation was really happening.*

Literacy



Word Banksy

IF YOU
WANT TO
ACHIEVE
GREATNESS
STOP
ASKING
FOR
PERMISSION



FIND OUT THE
MEANING OF THIS
WORD.
USE IT CORRECTLY
IN YOUR WORK OR
WHEN IN LESSON TO
EARN P POINTS.

deplorable

