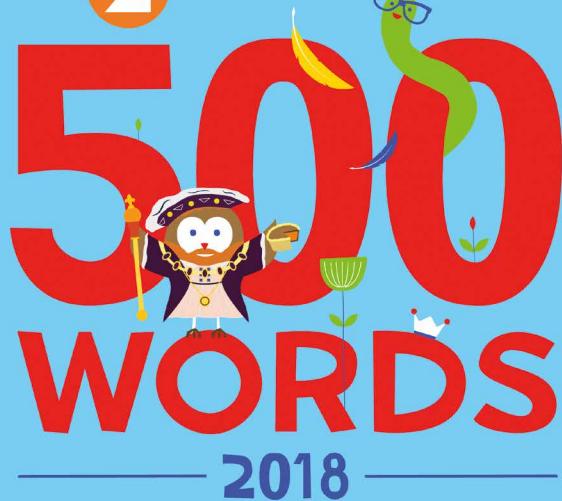


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Oxford  
Dictionaries  
for Children  
*Language matters*

# Oxford Corpus Children's Language Report 2018

Summary report prepared by  
Oxford Children's Dictionaries  
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Oxford University Press is a department of the University of Oxford.  
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# INTRODUCTION

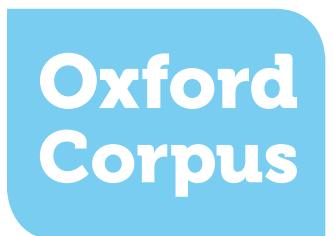
As part of ongoing language and lexical research, the Children's Dictionary department of the Educational Division of Oxford University Press has undertaken to analyse the children's writing submitted to the BBC Radio 2 500 WORDS competition for the seventh year running. The analysis is undertaken by a team of lexicographers, editors, teachers, academics and computational linguists, and is backed by the Oxford Children's Corpus, the largest children's language database in English.

Language is constantly changing and evolving, and children are using language in new and unusual ways to write and communicate. The findings in this document reflect the inventiveness of children today and their new and imaginative use of words every year, along with their interests and preoccupations. All citations from the children's stories are faithful to the original.

Year	Number of stories received in the competition	Number of words in the Corpus
2012	74,075	32 million
2013	90,115	40 million
2014	118,632	50 million
2015	120,421	53 million
2016	123,436	54 million
2017	131,798	55 million
2018	134,780	56 million
<b>Total</b>	<b>793,257</b>	<b>340 million</b>

## Highlights

- Overall participation in the competition has increased by **82%** from 2012 to 2018.
- Proportion of boys participating in the competition has grown by **5%**; In 2012 the proportion of boys and girls was 35% and 65%, in 2018 it is 40% and 60%.
- The 500 WORDS children's writing corpus has grown to **10 times** its size from 2012 to 2018, making it the largest children's writing corpus in English in the world.

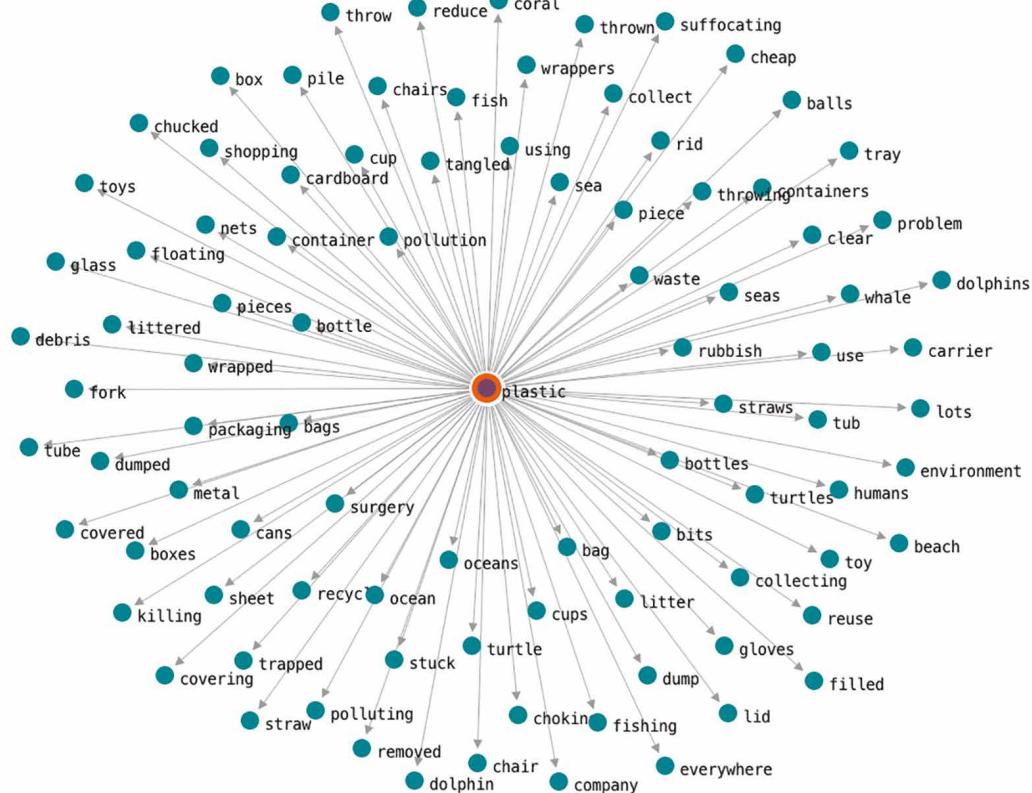


Oxford  
Corpus

# OXFORD CHILDREN'S WORD OF THE YEAR 2018



# plastic



Significant increase of the word **plastic** in 2018  
from 2017

- The word *plastic* appears a total of 3359 times in the 2018 stories. This is a 100% increase from the 1657 occurrences in 2017.
  - The use of the word *plastic* shows new contexts in 2018. In 2017, some of the top words associated with *plastic* were *bag, box, bottle, cup, chair, toy* and *spoon*. In 2018, we have *bag, bottle, rubbish, ocean, fish, waste* and *pollution*.
  - For the first time the word is used in an emotive context, the recurrent theme being the damage caused by plastic pollution, often in an emotional plea from the point of view of sea creatures themselves.
  - This clearly shows the influence of the final episode of David Attenborough's *Blue Planet II*, first shown in December 2017, which highlighted the damaging effect on marine life of plastic pollution in the ocean.

## Associated vocabulary

- Words and phrases that include the word *plastic* and show an increase in usage: *plastic bag*, *plastic waste*, *plastic bottle*, *plastic packaging*, *plastic pollution*, *plastic containers*, *plastic planet*, *plastic wrapper*, *plastic-wrapped*, *plastic material* (even *plastic food*, including a *plastic Yorkshire pudding*); *recycle plastic*, *reduce plastic*, *reuse plastic*, *eat plastic*, *collect plastic*, *swallow plastic*, *molten plastic*
- New words and phrases associated with the word *plastic* in 2018: *biodegradable*, *permeable*, *throw plastic (into the sea)*, *choke on plastic*, *dump plastic*, *plastic ban*
- Along with *plastic*, the terms *recycle* and *recycling*, also show over 100% increase in usage.

## Emotive contexts

Please, listen to me. **Sea animals are dying because of you and your plastic!** Nets get caught around dolphins' necks. Plastic used for glass bottles gets tangled around sea turtle shells..."

*(Save The Planet, boy 7)*

The Sea Kraken was very big and slimy and loved to eat seaweed, sea slugs and Pirate ships but he kept getting **plastic bottles stuck in his throat** which made him angry and sad.

*(Patch and the Sea Kraken, boy 5)*

An empty **plastic bottle** they had carelessly discarded bobbed up and down at the water's edge. The pull of the tide gradually lured it further and further out to sea with each rise and swell of the waves. Yet another **unwelcome plastic alien invader** in the beautiful big blue sea that **one less whale now calls home**.

*(The Big Blue, boy 10)*

## From the point of view of the plastic containers:

My name is Steve and I'm a **plastic Cola bottle**.

*(Cola Journey, girl 10)*

Reaching the surface I found it filled with my kind. Empty bottles bobbed on the surface like rubber ducks, bags of different sizes and colours floating like jellyfish, killing and collecting helpless sea life. **A blanket of plastic suffocating the ocean.** None of us belong here.

*(Misplaced, girl 8)*

For you see, **I am a plastic bag. I can't be recycled and I'm not biodegradable.** Yet people still take us. We don't understand why. It's not like there aren't any other options.

*(The Problem with Plastic, girl 13)*

Did you know, by 2050 there will be **more plastic in the sea than actual fish**. How crazy is that!

*(Plastic! Plastic! Plastic! girl 11)*

## Plastic and the ocean

- The word *ocean* has also increased in usage. Inhabitants of the ocean mentioned: *whale, dolphin, turtle, shark, penguin, octopus*, and of course, *mermaid*.
- 20 words describing the ocean: *vast, blue, deep, dark, open, clear, turquoise, calm, wide, sparkling, salty, azure, freezing, tropical, shimmering, sparkly, sapphire, glistening, stormy, crystal, wavy*
- Descriptive words and phrases: *a bioluminescent jellyfish, you're about as attractive as a fangtooth*
- New phrase in the context of the ocean: *litter picking*
- Verbs associated with *ocean*: along with *see* and *explore*, one of the top verbs is *pollute*.

The once bright, flamboyant and vivacious reef turned into a dull, **deserted graveyard of dead coral and fish.**

(*Where's my Reef, girl 12*)

After watching recent events on the news about plastic ruining the oceans, she had organised a beach **litter picking** event with her friends.

(*Mermaid SOS! girl 11*)

## Story titles

Plastic! Plastic! Plastic!

The Plastic Shore

Finn and the Plastic Pollution

The Plasticarus & How We Should Take Care of the Ocean

The Plastic Fairy

The Mouse and the Plastic pond

The Mermaid's Plastic Mission

The Evil Mr Plastic

Professor Igottit and the Fantastic-sewage-sooperpooper-suckerupper

## Creativity and imagination

The unlikely trio decided to be a team fighting against plastic rubbish. **The three plastic-eeteers!**

(*The Three Plastic-eeteers, girl 8*)

'The machine will do the rest' 'How?' asked Jeremy 'By using your wondrous thoughts and zonking all the polluting machines around the world with my special **Reverse-o-matic Pollutinator Ray Gun**'.

(*The Bookworm, boy 13*)

He wanted to stop sewage going into the sea so people could swim in it without it being horrible so Professor Igottit went to his lab to make a machine to suck up the sewage.... Professor Igottit called the machine the **Fantastic-sewage-sooperpooper-suckerupper**.

(*Professor Igottit and the Fantastic-sewage-sooperpooper-suckerupper, boy 5*)

# TOP NAMES IN 2018

## TOP 25 FAMOUS PEOPLE AND FICTIONAL AND MYTHOLOGICAL CHARACTERS

Name	Frequency 2018
Santa	2669
Cinderella	1434
Donald Trump	1420
Cristiano Ronaldo	1081
Zeus	1070
Snow White	935
Lionel Messi	755
Goldilocks	725
Red Riding Hood	701
Adolf Hitler	675
Batman	635
Harry Potter	629
Tooth Fairy	614
Thor	468
Superman	460
Gretel	449
David Walliams	417
Wicked Witch	414
Mr Wolf	402
Fairy Godmother	401
Neymar	395
Hansel	385
Usain Bolt	357
Easter Bunny	323
Dark Lord	314

## TOP 10 FICTIONAL CHARACTERS

Name	Frequency 2018
Santa	2669
Cinderella	1434
Zeus	1070
Snow White	935
Goldilocks	725
Red Riding Hood	701
Batman	635
Harry Potter	629
Tooth Fairy	614
Thor	468

## TOP 10 FAMOUS PEOPLE (WITHOUT FICTIONAL CHARACTERS)

Name	Frequency 2018
Donald Trump	1420
Cristiano Ronaldo	1081
Lionel Messi	755
Hitler	675
David Walliams	417
Neymar	395
Usain Bolt	357
Queen Elizabeth	296
Cleopatra	271
Queen Victoria	267

## Highlights:

- Santa and *Cinderella* have topped the list of famous names every year for 7 years running.
- The top 10 names of famous people show the usual mix of sports and historical names, with *Donald Trump* taking the top spot for two years running and *David Walliams* appearing in the top 10 for the first time.
- Other top celebrity names include *Chris Evans*, *Ant and Dec*, *Simon Cowell*, authors *Roald Dahl* and *Shakespeare*, and singers *Little Mix*, *Ed Sheeran*, *Ariana Grande*, *Taylor Swift*, *Justin Bieber* and *Olly Murs*. 'Shake it off' is one of the popular songs mentioned.

## FOOTBALL

- *Football* is one of the most popular topics, particularly with 7-8-year-olds, with a total of 12,932 hits for this word. 70% of the stories come from boys, but girls dream about starring in football too:  
**Megan is a Liverpool Football Superstar.** (*Megan's Unbelievable Journey, girl 10*)
- *Ronaldo* and *Messi* have been in the top names for footballers every year; *Neymar* has appeared in the top 10 for 2 years running, while *Salah* is a new entry in the stories in 2018.
- *Liverpool*, *Man United* and *Man City* are the top football clubs. Others that are mentioned range from *Chelsea*, *Arsenal* and *Bristol City* to *Barcelona* and *Real Madrid*. Managers mentioned include *Arsène Wenger*, *José Mourinho*, *Jürgen Klopp* and *Pep Guardiola*.

## Vocabulary associated with football

- *play, match, team, pitch, game, club, training, stadium, kit, kick, park, outside, love, watching, field, against, professional, vs, practice, coach, won, boots, goal, score, tournament, famous, FA Cup, Premier League*

# WOMEN IN HISTORY

Cleopatra

Emmeline Pankhurst

Queen Nefertiti

Florence Nightingale

Anne Frank

Rosa Parks

Emily Davison

Mary Anning

Amelia Earhart

Marie Curie

Ada Lovelace

Mary Seacole

## Highlights:

- Mentions of women in history have increased by 33% in 2018 from 2017 and occur in stories by boys and girls.
- The list of names show an engagement with different areas, from aviation and computers to political activism, and all show increased occurrences in 2018, the most significant increases being *Emmeline Pankhurst* (833%), *Mary Anning* (400%), and *Amelia Earhart* (350%).
- Cleopatra* is one of the most popular women in history in the stories every year, and new names for 2018 are *Emily Davison* and *Ada Lovelace*.
- Phrases such as *the one and only* or *the first woman* show that the women mentioned are looked upon with aspiration, as role models.

## Associated vocabulary

- Related vocabulary comes from the topics of the Suffragette movement and votes for women: *Suffragette*, *suffrage*, *suffragist*, *Votes for Women*, *WSPU*, *force-feed*, *hunger strike*
- Descriptive and emotive language: *political horror-fest*

To change this **political horror-fest**, me, my brave mother Emmeline and my dear sisters: Adela and Christabel shall lead many protests in the streets of London.

(*Deeds, Not Words, girl 11*)

I and my mum are part of this group called **WSPU** (Woman's, Social, Political, and Union) and we are fighting for the **votes for women**.

(*500 Words, girl 12*)

## Creativity and imagination

[Larry the Suffra-cat gets the Prime Minister to agree to votes for all animals.]

Larry started by chaining himself to a statue outside Parliament and yowling so loudly that the MPs couldn't get on with their work. Then he climbed up Big Ben and hung a sign saying "A cat's place is in the House of Commons!"

(*Larry the Suffra-cat, girl 9*)

[Time-travelling Eve meets Emily Davison and tries to save her with a selfie stick.]

Eve recognised her as **Emily Davison** the woman who had killed herself by throwing herself in front of the king's horse as part of the **Suffragette** movement. Eve thought quickly and handed her the **selfie stick** that was in her pocket. "Attach the sash to the end of this," Eve exclaimed.

(*Her Story, girl 9*)

## Aspirations: *the first woman...*:

I am on the spaceship 3000 to become **the first woman on the moon**.

(*The way to the red planet, girl 11*)

the first woman to win the Nobel Prize

the first woman to venture to Mars

the first woman to climb up this mountain

the first woman to travel through time

# THE LANGUAGE OF GAMING

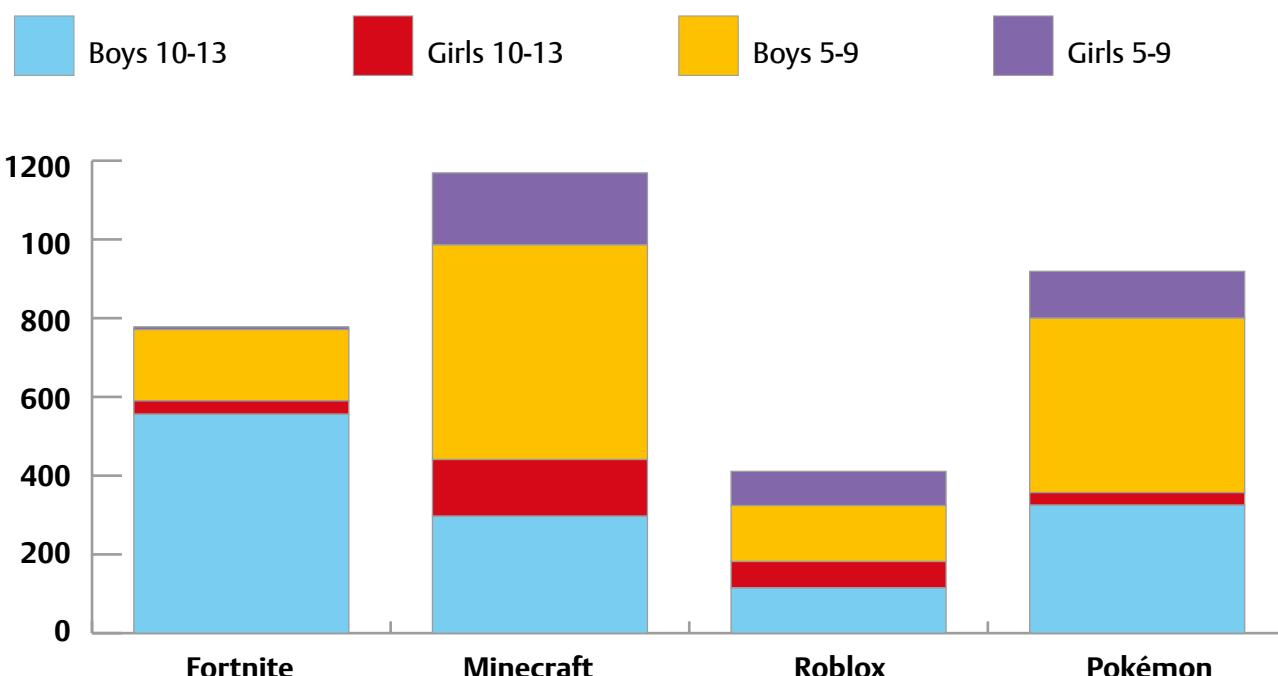
## TOP GAMES

Name	Frequency 2018	Frequency 2017
Minecraft	1169	1000
Pokémon	919	1845
Fortnite	778	0
Roblox	411	182

## Highlights

- Gaming words appear in the 500 WORDS stories every year but in 2018 gaming vocabulary shows an increase of 15% from 2017. Younger boys aged 5-9 years, engage most with the language of gaming.
- The most mentioned game is *Minecraft* with 1169 occurrences, with *Pokémon* next in popularity. *Roblox* made its first appearance in 2016, grew in frequency in 2017 and has grown yet again in 2018 with an increase of 123% from last year.
- Fortnite* is a new arrival in 2018 with 778 occurrences, 63% of those coming from boys. Most occurrences are in stories by children aged 9–10.
- Minecraft* and *Pokémon* are mentioned mainly by younger boys, while *Fortnite* and *Roblox* are more popular with older boys. Younger girls prefer *Minecraft* and *Pokémon* to *Fortnite* and *Roblox*, while older girls are less interested in gaming.
- Lego is still popular, with a total frequency of 2645 hits for the toy as well as games such as *Lego Star Wars*, and shows a 42% increase in 2018 from 2017.

## GAMES MENTIONED BY AGE AND GENDER



## Associated vocabulary

- **Fortnite:** *XBalanque, Hunahpu, Loot Lake, Tilted Towers, Battle Royale, chest, pickaxe, shield potion, v-bucks (currency within the game), llama* (the game features *llama piñatas*).
- **Minecraft:** *mob, biome, creeper, hotbar, crafting, recipe, Enderman, mod, nether, pickaxe, redstone, mining, spawn, obsidian, cobblestone, survival mode*
- **General gaming language:** *cheats, console, glitch, level, mode, portal, platform, snipe, noob* (a newbie or an inexperienced player)

## Gameplay as narrative

- Previous years have seen stories based on getting *sucked into the game* and in 2018 the phrase has 520 hits.
- But the 2018 stories also take it one step further and use the vocabulary of gameplay to build adventurous narratives unconnected to gaming: for example, gaming words like *level, platform* and *glitch* are now used in that same sense in stories of adventure set in worlds outside of gaming.

We VERY quietly made a plan, and we began our escape.... we set up camp for the night at roughly 7:26pm. We set off in the morning, and **the challenge ramped up about 6 levels.**

*(Hezen-5: On the Run, boy 12)*

It was battle time, with her diamond blade she attacked furiously hoping to win the battle against an **evil troll**, that protected the **golden portal key**. Allie opened the portal with the golden key, stepping forward onto a **platform**.

*(The Wonders of Allie, girl 8)*



## Mash-ups

[portals, game pads and Lord of the Rings, Lego.]

He realised he was in his game, they'd all been **sucked through a portal on the game pad** - how were they going to get back? As Josh looked around, **Gandalf** approached and said, "Come fellow friends, help defeat **Lord Vorton!**"

*(Another Dimension, boy 8)*

## Gaming as virtual socialising

She would be **playing a game with her friends. Not physically**, no, no. It had been a long time since they saw each other face to face.... It was 2051 and technology had come a long way.... She would come home and crash in her old ragged chair to meet her friends and **play doubles on Minecraft.**

*(Addicted, boy 10)*

## Gaming as an addiction

- There are some mentions of a concern with addiction to gaming but there are more instances of a humorous approach to adult concerns with it.

His addiction to playing video games took up every second of every day - leading for him not even wanting to go to his favourite club, karate.

*(Bob's Food Obsession, boy 11)*

One day his Mother, Patricia, was frantically searching the internet for any possible diseases Rafi could get from his games, like Mums sometimes do. She found a minor illness which could be linked to excessive gaming, but could not find anything life-threatening.

*(Obsessed, girl 11)*

# PLAYGROUND TRENDS

## SLIME

- The word *slime* is used 3242 times in the stories in 2018, more by girls than by boys.
- There is a 96% increase in references to *slime* in stories (and in story titles) in 2018 from 2017, with a 216% increase in the use of the plural *slimes*.
- The references are to making and playing with (and in some cases vlogging about) slime, a squidgy, gooey material made from ingredients including PVA glue, bicarb of soda, food colouring, shaving cream, contact lens solution, etc.

## Vocabulary associated with *slime*

- bucket, pot, blob, trail of slime, slime monster* (in video games), *make slime, play with slime, be covered in slime*

Just like all 10 and 8-year-olds, me and Evie **love making slime**. Squishy slime, bubbly slime, edible slime, even bogey looking slime, we love it all.

(*Top Secret: Don't tell mum and dad, girl 10*)

I'm a **slime vlogger with over three million subscribers** and it was a regular day where I was testing out different slimes.

(*A Twist in Slime, girl 10*)

## FIDGET SPINNER

- Fidget spinner*, the spinning toy that became popular in 2017 and had one occurrence in the 2017 stories, has increased to 130 hits in 2018 – this is a 9950% increase.
- Spinning a fidget spinner sometimes opens a portal into another world.

I had no choice but jump through the portal “Here we go!” I had gone through the **slimy portal**, Wow I thought to myself this is awesome, because to the side of me there was **fidget spinner land** and in front of me slime land

(*Keeping up with the trends, girl 10*)

## PENNYWISE AND KILLER CLOWNS

- Pennywise* shows a huge increase from 6 hits in 2017 to 216 hits in 2018 – this is an increase of 3622%. This may be influenced by the remake of the horror film *It*, featuring *Pennywise the Clown*, which was released in the UK in September 2017.
- The *killer clown* appeared in stories for the first time in 2017 and is now becoming a staple ‘baddie’ in the stories.

## Vocabulary associated with *Pennywise* and *Killer Clown*

- Descriptive words: *scary, creepy, terrifying, crazy, ugly*

In front of her was a **Killer Clown** - and he was as **creepy** as ever, with long, jagged teeth forming a twisted smile which reached his ears and had a spherical red nose.

*(The Killer Clown, boy 10)*

Once upon a time there lived two brothers called Bill and Georgie. There was a clown called **Pennywise**. He ate all the children because he liked children's brains.

*(The Dancing Clown, boy 9)*

## HANGRY

- Hangry*, meaning 'bad-tempered or irritable as a result of hunger', was recently added to the OED. In the 500 Words stories, the writer usually explains what it means.

Grumble was the leader of the little pack and liked to make the decisions (and if he got hungry, he got angry, some might say '**hangry**').

*(A Dino Adventure, boy 7)*

"umph, you're not funny kangaroo...I'm getting **hangry**" "Hangry what's that?" " it's hungry and angry at the same time" and off he wobbled.

*(krazy kangaroo grass, girl 11)*

## UNICORN

- The word *unicorn* appears over 20,010 times in the stories in 2018, an 85% increase from the 10,951 hits in 2017. 85% of the mentions come from girls, and mostly girls aged 5-7.
- There is also a growth of vocabulary associated with unicorns in 2018 compared to 2017, with a greater variety of invented magical creatures.
- Stories in which unicorns appear belong mainly to the genres of fantasy and fairy tale, and there is a strong connection with mermaids and also with children's films and characters such as *Unikitty* from *The Lego Movie* and *Alicorn* from *My Little Pony*.

## Vocabulary associated with *unicorn*

- Fantasy words:** *rainbow, fairy, dragon, mermaid, pony, princess, goblin, Pegasus, teddy, dolphin*
- Descriptive words:** *fluffy, pink, pet, magical, beautiful, majestic, sparkly, colourful, magnificent, cute*
- Made-up creatures based on unicorns:** *Snowcorn, mermicorn, unicorus, unipug, unidog, unicat, unidragon, unihorse, unipig, unihorn, unihead, lamacorn, uni-panda-corn, pandacom, chickencorn*

## MERMAID

- The word *mermaid* appears 5000 times in the stories in 2018, a 32% increase from the 3754 hits in 2017. 95% of the mentions come from girls, and mostly girls between the ages of 5 and 7.
- There is also a growth of vocabulary associated with mermaids in 2018 compared to 2017, with a greater variety of invented magical creatures.
- Stories in which mermaids appear belong mainly to the genre of fantasy and fairy tale but there are a few mentions of real-world objects such as *mermaid jewellery boxes*.

## Vocabulary associated with *mermaid*

- Fairy tale words:** *unicorn, fairy, dragon, queen, princess, kingdom, castle, palace, island*, also *whale* and *dolphin*
- Mermaid names:** *Pearl, Coral, Shine, Shimmer, Luna*
- Descriptive words:** *beautiful, pretty, gorgeous, magical, sparkly, scaly, magnificent, elegant, glorious, graceful, underwater, marvellous, stunning, majestic*

## Mash-ups

So we went to the magical cafe named after one of the famous fish in the sea “**Nemo**” We had fairy’s come and give us a big **touch screen** menu, which again, it was not an ordinary menu, you could have **mermaids** for dinner! Which I did not want at all.

(*The Day at the Magical Zoo, girl 11*)

Then out rose the **Merlion** with a tail of a mermaid and a head of a lion. The Merlion took the fisherman back to safety. Then the Merlion got caught by the one and only **Captain Hook** and his merry crew.

(*The Mystery of the Merlion, girl 9*)

## Mermaid-like creatures

Mermicorn (mermaid + unicorn)

Merlion (mermaid + lion)

Merhorse (half mermaid/half horse)

Mercat (a cat which turns into a mermaid)

This **mermicorn** had a head of a unicorn and the body of a mermaid. This mythical but magical creature could swim underwater and it could also sing at the same time.

(*The mystery, girl 11*)

# THE LANGUAGE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Word	Frequency 2018	Frequency 2017
youtube	882	939
instagram	375	436
snapchat	263	172
facebook	244	328
twitter	191	195

## Highlights

- The top social media site is *YouTube* (as in 2017), and youtuber *Dan TDM* shows a 90% increase in 2018 with 279 mentions compared to 151 in 2017.
- Of the other sites, *Snapchat* shows an increase of 51% in 2018 from 2017 and *Whatsapp*, *Netflix* and *Spotify* have fewer hits but have also grown in frequency, along with *vlog*, *vlogger* and *vlogging*.
- The word *story* shows an increase in an interesting social media usage, in the *snapchat story* or *instagram story*.
- Girls aged 10-13 mention social media in their stories more than any other group. The only exception is for *YouTube*, where the numbers are quite even across all groups.

## The two types of *story*

"Right we are off to the library young lady and this is getting taken away from you" she shouts, snatching the phone out of Katie's hand, "for however long it takes you to get your priorities straight and realise that your **story** [reading] is a lot more important than your **snapchat story**!"

(*The Phone Age*, girl 11)

## Mash-ups

Once upon a time in a far away land lived a **knight** scrolling through twitter, he saw a notification saying there is a **damsel in distress**, you must go and save her. He knew people would be interested so he started a **snapchat story**.

(*Prince Media*, boy 11)

## Dangers of social media

### BULLYING/ABUSE

Every day she would receive a **message on Facebook or Instagram**, making her feel **hurt and insecure** about herself.

(*Abigail's Birthday Gift*, girl 13)

## POPULARITY, LIKES OR STREAKS

oh no! She'd been blocked! ...Chloe was distraught; she thought her days had come to a close, no more **likes** about her pose

(*Electronic Extravaganza, girl 11*)

"Oh no! No Snapchat, Instagram or Twitter for ages! I'm going to lose my **streaks** on Snapchat! I can't even talk to Mam or Dad!" moaned Jess.

(*The Nightmare of Siblings, girl 12*)

## Gamification of social media

Next to us a large figure stood over us. Looking up I saw the figure was the **Google** logo floating above us.I suddenly knew where we were... IN THE COMPUTER!!!!

(*Computer Adventure, girl 10*)

HELLO! OH MY GOOGLE who are you?" asked Turtle after seeing a mage come down... Are you a good mage or a bad mage?"

(*The Lizard of Woz, boy 11*)

My user now did something quite unusual...he logged onto Brodie my opponent. She often liked to sabotage me by giving me a **glass of google** that she had put a **sprinkle of Wikipedia** in.

(*The Laggy Computer, girl 11*)

## ADULTS WITH SOCIAL MEDIA ADDICTION:

The **teacher** took no notice because she was on **facebook**, I'm like why doesn't get off facebook and put her face in a book!

(*The Un Normal Day, boy 10*)

According to adults children have always got their head in their gadget. All kids know that's not true. Because **adults** will always be on **Facebook** or **twitter**. If children ruled the world they would do better job.

(*Waste Land, girl 9*)

## Positive uses for social media

### RESEARCH AND INVESTIGATION

I sat down and said to my **Amazon Alexa** "Alexa, play my relaxing playlist" to which she instantly replied "Playing your relaxing playlist from your music library" and that got me thinking, alexa helped me straight away, what if I could create something that helped my nan straight away and... not only am I helping my nan, I would be helping others around the world who are also suffering with **dementia**.

(*Demexa, girl 11*)

## SELF-PROMOTION AND OPPORTUNITIES

I logged into **Facebook** and posted it. In the first 10 seconds I had 1 billion likes and in the first day I had been invited to several **news channels**.

(*The MonEy Making Mi\$\$ion, boy 11*)

## CAMPAIGNING, RAISING AWARENESS

*"That sounds terrible, we've got to do something about it this instant", said a squirrel.  
"We will tweet this on Twitter or Facebook to let everyone know", said the birds.*

(*The Unicorn Hunters, girl 7*)

## MEME

- The word *meme* has increased 13% in frequency since 2017. In previous years, it was almost always a character name but in 2018, one in three instances are as a lexical word with meaning and children are noting it as a word specifically used by the younger generations.

I went to the Queen's palace and instead of what I was hoping to have for dinner (nachos) she gave me caviar and squid! I did try eating it... but then I spat it out everywhere. But what's worse I'm now a **meme on the internet!**

(*Nacho boy, boy 11*)

- The term *meme pad* (in the sense of 'launch pad') has been made popular by the game *Fortnite* and we have an unusual use of this term as a verb in the example below.

OPEN FIRE!!!" James screamed... the final remaining guy had built a gigantic base "**lets meme pad up there**".

(*The Zapping Console, boy 11*)

## Gamification of meme

Fern used her **meme attack** to slow everyone else but he was out of range and won by a split second.

(*Candyland, boy 10*)

## Story titles

Stuck in the Meme (boy 10)

Jimmy and the Portal of Memes (boy 10)

The Story of the Meme (boy 11)

The Meme Forest (boy 11)

## Vocabulary associated with *meme*

- *meme lord, meme street, meme machine, meme land*



# THE LANGUAGE OF POLITICAL AND SOCIAL ISSUES

## Political vocabulary

- Political vocabulary was an area of growth in 2017. However, in 2018, an analysis of a cluster of the top 50 words relating to contemporary politics shows a decline of 14% from last year. This includes the use of the words *politics* and *political*.
- Of the words/names which have grown most in frequency since 2017, *Brexit* tops the list with an increase of 182%, with 89 hits in 2018 compared to 31 in 2017.
- Words related to *Brexit* in the stories also show an increase in frequency since 2017.
- Donald Trump* is still the top politician mentioned, although with fewer hits than in 2017.

## BREXIT

Word	Frequency 2018
British	1185
Britain	934
vote	774
protest	732
parliament	315
campaign	139
Brussels	120
Brexit	89
demonstration	36
propaganda	28
declaration	18
referendum	13
Boris Johnson	8

## Highlights

- The term *Brexit* is mainly mentioned as an item on the news or as a boring topic of conversation.
- Words and phrases used in connection with *Brexit*: *boring, dreaded, stupid, tired of, talking about/ranting on about/banging on about*.
- Brexit* is also discussed in terms of social and political upheaval.

I am told that I shall be attending another meeting for **Brexit negotiations** in Brussels today. Was slightly excited for a moment about travelling abroad again, before quickly remembering how **mind-numbingly boring** the last Brexit meeting was. I might have to bring a book, or maybe a pillow.

*(The Daily Life of Theresa May, boy 10)*

## Creative adaptations with interesting allegorical and figurative uses

Once upon a time in a faraway land there was a princess who lived in a castle which was guarded by a monster. **The monster was called Brexit** and everyone blamed him for everything. He kept asking “why is everyone blaming me?”

*(Misunderstanding, girl 9)*

Suddenly I saw an exit it was **as big as brexit**.

*(Down the haunted lane, girl 7)*

## Vocabulary associated with Donald Trump

- Political vocabulary: *president, America, White House, Obama, politics, election, forces, declared, build, wall, Mexico, bomb, attack, destroy, war, North Korea, meeting, news, fake news, famous, powerful*
- Personal descriptions: *hair, wig*

My name is Walter Wig and I sit on Donald Trump's head.

*(Donald Trump's Wig, girl 9)*

- Creative adaptations: *Trump emoji, Robo Trump (a robot with Donald Trump's memory inside)*

Every one gathered round the emoji state building. Donald Trump emoji was walking out of the building after one of the most important meeting's in his life.

*(Emoji World, boy 8)*

- Names inspired by *trump*: *Stuggletrump, Humbletrump, Snozzletrump, Pinetrump, Snuffletrump*

## Vocabulary associated with other contemporary political and social issues

### NORTH/SOUTH KOREA AND WINTER OLYMPICS

- Mentions of *Korea* show a 126% increase since 2017, going from 97 hits last year to 222 hits in 2018. 65% of the mentions are from boys.

I dashed up the rest of the tree and leapt over the mighty wall that separated **South and North Korea.... I am free, I am a fighter.**

*(A Last Chance to be Free, girl 10)*

- Most references are to *North Korea*, associated with Kim Jong-un and the political conflicts. *Kim Jong-un* is mentioned mainly by boys.
- References to *South Korea* are in relation to the Winter Olympics, held in *Pyeong Chang* in February 2018. *Winter Olympics* also shows a 744% increase since 2017, going from 25 hits last year to 212 in 2018.

## Mash-ups

**Kim Jong Un** was a **cyborg** and was mind controlled by **cortana** (windows AI assistant)! I ran for it. “You have destroyed my **wifi network!**” Kim yelled. Then suddenly I was sucked straight into the network system...

(*Space Station, boy 12*)

## Vocabulary associated with *Winter Olympics*

- skiing, snowboarding, ice skating, curling, bobsleigh competition, training, practise, event, mascot, gold medal, costume, GBR, compete, team, teammate, represent, won

Half term started brilliant for Sophie, as the **Winter Olympics** was on TV. She watched the **ice skating, skiing, curling** and many more events.

(*Half Term Fun, girl 11*)

## SYRIA AND REFUGEES

Syria and refugees are still mentioned in 2018, with an emotive treatment in the stories, particularly of refugee children.

My name is Kalia, I am 10 years old and I used to live in **Syria**. Before the **war**, Syria was a beautiful place to live. I went to school, had lots of friends, family, toys and food. However, now I am a **refugee**, I have nothing.

(*One Child's Journey, girl 10*)

## TERRORIST ATTACKS AND SCHOOL SHOOTINGS

There are mentions of terrorist attacks, particularly of certain incidents in the UK.

In the past Daddy has told her he fights all the bad guys like the people who caused the **terrorist attacks** like the ones in London and Manchester.

(*The tail of the unicorn, girl 9*)

A boy no older than 15 sprinted out of the lunch hall with a gun. That's what was happening, I was in the middle of a **school shooting!** I thought I recognised the boy from one of my classes.

(*Olympia, girl 13*)

## HOMELESSNESS

- All of the following have increased in frequency since 2017: *homeless, homelessness, sleep rough, on the streets*
- The stories present an empathetic imagining of the experience of living on the streets.

Ice cold snowflakes swirled like feathers around me, I pulled my ragged, ripped jacket tightly around my shoulders. No water. No food. No family, I'm **homeless**, lonely and scared.

(*Hunger Hope, girl 10*)

## GRENFELL TOWER

The Grenfell Tower tragedy is treated with great empathy and descriptive powers.

As he mused, he saw fireflies drifting in the night sky...he had not seen these in England before and as he drifted off to sleep... What the young boy did not realise was the fireflies were in fact burning embers from the floors below... His tower block was named **Grenfell Tower**.

(*FIREFLIES*, boy 10)

## WORD PLAY

### Invented words

**kubbca:** a place in the jungle where I rule the jungle...where all the animals come and pray to the jungle

(*My Home is the Jungle, girl 10*)

**doo-moo:** a ‘half dog half moo’ creature standing in the queue with Jess the rabbit to hand in homework at Hillfields School when they met a worrycorn

(*Theres a worrycorn in my pocket, girl 9*)

**worrycorn:** a unicorn with a great gold mane, and a sparkling pink unicorn horn bright enough to melt an ice cream in a freezer that can ‘record all your worries and make them disappear’

(*Theres a worrycorn in my pocket, girl 9*)

**uglerugle:** Lish needed to get some uglerugle (the fuel the supersonic plane needed) [had to go ‘mining’ for it and use an ‘uglerugle sucker’]

(*Lish and the Giant Space Burger, boy 9*)

### Invented people/creatures

He went outside and saw **Apple Man** stealing Big Ben from the Queen Elizabeth Tower. He quickly went to his **orange-copter** and Apple Man got into his apple-copter...but **Super Orange’s** orange-copter was out of orange juice!

(*The Orange Who Saved New Year, boy 7*)

Edith found that these little people were called the **Fruggles**. On the island of Fruggle nut they grew exotic fruits and nuts, they were called... Snuffle nuts, Woggle nuts and Woggle fruits.

Once upon a time there lived a squid called **Squidface**. He lived under the sea with his wife and three children. His wife was called **Squidetta** and his three squid children were called **Squiddy**, **Rosesquid** and **Squidly**.

(*A Squid’s Tale, boy 11*)

### Plays on words borrowed from popular culture

I took my fluffy cellphone out of my bedside drawer. These are some of the apps I have on it. **Bitter** (Twitter) **Facegum** (Facebook) **Instafloss** (Instagram) and **whatstoffee** (Whatsapp)

(*Unicorns adventure, girl 9*)

Yes! My camera for my **Cattube** channel has finally arrived! It’s time to sit at my desk and order something to review. I opened my catputer and went on to **Catmazon**. Catmazon always has an amazing selection of stuff especially balls of yarn, feather toys, cat bowls and squeaky mice.

(*Little Tilly’s Cattube Channel, girl 8*)

## Plays on *once upon a time* ...

"Attention all shoppers, baked beans are now half price. Thank you for shopping at Sainstory's, for all your fairytale needs" the loudspeaker bellowed.

(*Once Upon a Supermarket, girl 11*)

**Once upon a paragraph**, there lived a perfectly circular Full Stop.

(*Punctuation Love, girl 11*)

**Once upon a rainbow** there lived a little unicorn called Twinkle.

(*The village that turned grey., girl 8*)

**Once upon a pond** a little grey fish went swimming.

(*Little Fish., boy 5*)

**Once upon a piggy**, There was a small baby pig with a mother just like him.

(*Pig boy, girl 9*)

**Once upon a snozzboggling time** there was a boy called Noah, Noah was no ordinary 9 year old he was one of those suspicious ones that you see jumping in gigantic piles of leaves like a three year old.

(*The Kindest Robot, girl 10*)

## SIMILES, METAPHORS AND OTHER COMPARISONS

- **as famous as:** *David Walliams, Albert Einstein, James Bond, Tim Peak, Pokémon, Roald Dahl*

She hopes that one day she would be in Mission Impossible 20 she would be just **as famous as James Bond**.

(*The Newly Secret Agent, girl 10*)

- **wider than:** *a tire on a wheel, a hot dog, a yawning hippo, a battery charger cable, a banana, a cave, a humpback whale*

I went out to the front garden and there was this really cool amazing spectacular flying car. My mouth opened **wider than a hot dog**.

(*It's a new world, girl 10*)

- **metaphor:**

Beads of sweat hurried down my back, **tracing a river down my spine** with tributaries flowing from my shoulder blades as we hacked our way through the Amazon rainforest.

(*Overcoming the Amazon, boy 10*)

## CONCLUSION

This document records the highlights of the analysis done on the BBC 500 WORDS 2018 corpus by the Oxford Children's Dictionaries department.

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