



QUOTES OF THE WEEK

"Since a politician never believes what he says, he is quite surprised to be taken at his word."

—Charles de Gaulle

"Anyone who is capable of getting themselves made president should on no account be allowed to do the job."

—Douglas Adams

from *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*

"Politics is the art of looking for trouble, finding it everywhere, diagnosing it incorrectly and applying the wrong remedies."

—Groucho Marx

THIS WEEK IN HISTORY

MARCH 11, 1818: Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley's *Frankenstein, or the Modern Prometheus*, is published in London. Ms. Shelley was a mere 21 years old when she wrote the story, which many consider to be the world's first science-fiction novel.

The genesis of the novel was in the summer of 1816 (also known as the "Year Without a Summer," because global temperatures remained well below normal, thanks to the eruption of Mount Tambora the year before), when Mary and her husband-to-be Percy Shelley visited their friend Lord Byron at the Villa Diodati near Lake Geneva, Switzerland. After reading an anthology of German ghost stories, Byron challenged Mary, Percy, and his physician Polidori to compose ghost stories of their own. It was here that Mary thought up the initial strands of *Frankenstein*. Byron wrote a fragment of a story about vampires, which later served as an inspiration for Polidori, who wrote *The Vampyre*. This novel was published in 1819 and is widely regarded as the impetus for the romantic vampire genre with which many of us are familiar today. Polidori was largely responsible for transforming the vampire from a character of folklore to the form we now recognize: an aristocrat who preys on members of high society.

The name *Frankenstein* likely came from the former name of a city in Silesia, Poland, which was the historical home of the Frankenstein family. A member of this family was vacationing in Europe with Mary, and evidently left an impression.

It should be remembered that Frankenstein is the name of the doctor, not the monster. In the book, Dr. Frankenstein calls his creation "The Fiend."

Sources: www.wikipedia.org, www.historychannel.com/today.

3 WORDS

Memorize these by week's end and you shall quickly develop an enviable lexicon.

This week's theme: words related to politics.

psephology (say-FOAL-a-gee) *n*

1. the scientific analysis of political elections and voting

Ex. To most, **psephology** is more of an inexact art than a precise science.

brass-collar *adjective*

1. unwavering loyalty to a political party
2. having the characteristic of always voting along party lines

Ex. Grandpa is a diehard, **brass-collar** Democrat, having never voted for a Republican in his life.

Etym. Likely from the image of a faithful dog, bound by a collar and leash.

blackball *verb*

1. to vote against; esp. to exclude from membership by casting a negative vote
2. to exclude socially; ostracize
3. *noun.* a negative vote

Ex. Calvin and Hobbes routinely **blackball** girls in their frequent treetop G.R.O.S.S. meetings.



ETYMOLOGY 101

This week's spotlight word is rather obscure and hard to use, but it can make one sound intelligent if properly utilized, and has an interesting etymological history.

The word *psephology* comes from the Greek *psephos** (stone, pebble) and *-logy* (study of), and thus means literally "study of pebbles." Why the relationship between stones and elections? The answer: in mid-16th century Italy, little smooth pebbles were cast and used as counters in secret votes, so the identity of the voters could not be known. Those who counted the votes were therefore counting pebbles.

It is also attested that similar, colored stones were used to pass judgment on criminals—black stones for condemnation and white stones for acquittal—it is from this ancient practice we get the word *blackball*.

The word *ballot* also derives from this old practice of casting stones—it comes from the Italian word *pallotte*, which is a diminutive of *palla*, or "ball." The Italians considered the stones similar to little balls; hence, *ballot comes from the Italian word meaning literally "little ball."*

* Pronounced SAY-fos.

PLAIN ENGLISH

WHAT THE HECK IS A DIMINUTIVE?

A diminutive is a form of a word used to express smallness. In English, this is usually accomplished by adding *-let* or *-y* or *-ies*. Hence, *ringlet* is the diminutive form of *ring*, and *piglet* is a little pig. Diminutives are often given to things for which we hold great affection; for example, *mommy*, *doggy*, and *jammies*.

In Spanish, diminutives are more varied, often in the form *-ita* or *-illa*. Hence, *casita* is the diminutive form of *casa*, and *rosita* is a little *rosa*, or rose. The term *guerilla*, often associated with a type of warfare, literally means "little war" in Spanish, and in practice this is often the case: guerillas are infamous for their small, surprise attacks and for their aversion to large and drawn out confrontations.

WELL I'LL BE!

THE ANSWER TO A QUESTION YOU NEVER ASKED

Why are policemen called "cops"?

One popularly circulated explanation is that *cop* is short for "Constable on Patrol" or "Constabulary of Police." This theory is, however, unsupported by any evidence.

The term *cop* is derived from an 18th-century English usage, and means "to seize," "to catch," or "to get hold of." This usage was common in Britain, and is likely derived from the Latin verb *capere* (to take). The term was applied to policemen because they were engaged in the

business of seizing and catching criminals—that is, copping. Policemen were originally (and still are) called *coppers* for this very reason.

The word *cop* is thus an abbreviation for *copper*, and was first used to describe a policeman in 1859. It was originally considered very disrespectful to address a policeman as a cop; only in recent times have those in blue begun calling themselves by this word.

An alternate theory holds that the term comes from the large copper buttons worn by the first modern police force in London, established in 1829 by Sir Robert Peel. London police are still called *peelers* and *bobbies* after their founder, who was affectionately known as "Bobby" Peel.

Source: George Stimpson, *A Book About A Thousand Things*, pg. 413.



Sir Robert Peel
(1788-1850)



NEAT-O THE ORIGINS OF ST. PATRICK'S DAY

It's a little early to be talking about this wildly popular saint's day, but I've got spring break to attend to next week.

As with most holidays that have been celebrated for centuries, the origins of St. Patrick's Day are mildly disputed. To understand the day, we must first understand the man behind it.

St. Patrick was born somewhere in southwestern Britain in the late 4th century (that's right, over 1600 years ago). His given name was Maewyn Succat. Patrick wrote a sort of autobiography, entitled *Confessio*, in which he detailed his capture and subsequent enslavement at the age of 16.

Patrick was taken to Ireland, where he served as a Druidic chieftain's shepherd for six years. During this time, it is said he had numerous visions and became inspired to spread God's word. He escaped to Gaul and was ordained a priest; it was here he took the name Patricius, from which his modern name is descended.

Patrick returned to Ireland sometime later, perhaps around 432, to begin his missionary work. Although Patrick was not the first Catholic missionary to visit Ireland, he did have the most impact. However, Ireland was still a predominantly pagan country, and mostly devoid of Catholicism; as such, Patrick and his companions were often met with hostility and resistance. His *Confessio* imparts that he was detained no fewer than 12 times—once to be put to death—though on every occasion he was set free.

Legend has it that at one point in Patrick's mission, on an Easter Sunday, he used a shamrock to illustrate the Holy Trinity to the Irish folk. It is from this simple lesson that Ireland's national symbol was born and yet endures.

And what of the familiar tale that Patrick was the one who drove all the snakes from Ireland and into the sea? Science suggests that due to the region's climate, Ireland never had any snakes to begin with. The more popular and likely explanation is that the story is a metaphor for what Patrick accomplished—he drove the pagans (to whom the serpent was an important religious symbol) from the country, and effectively converted it to Christianity.

So why do we celebrate this man's life on March 17? The deceptively simple answer is: because he supposedly died on that day. Yes, St. Patrick's day is an anniversary of death, though you'd never guess it from all the revelry associated with it. There seems to be little authority on why drinking is so heavily associated with this day, though one source says it is because St. Patrick brought the art of distilling liquor to Ireland (though no other sources corroborate this).

In Ireland, St. Patrick's Day is an important religious event marking the anniversary of the country's conversion to Christianity. It was not until very recently that Ireland held any parades or secular celebrations, and these are far outdone (at least in size) by those in the United States.

St. Patrick's Day was first celebrated in the United States in 1737, when the Charitable Irish Society of Boston organized the first St. Patrick's Day parade. New York has hosted an annual parade since 1762, and it is currently the world's largest.

Sources: www.encyclopedia.com,
www.wikipedia.org.

A BIT O' CULTURE

A few traditional Irish toasts:

☞ Here's to our wives and girlfriends: may they never meet!

☞ Here's to a long life and a merry one; A quick death and an easy one; A pretty girl and an honest one; A cold beer—and another one!

☞ Here's once to absent friends, and twice to absent enemies.

☞ Here's to me, and here's to you, And here's to love and laughter; I'll be true as long as you, And not one moment after.

LITERARY GENIUS

One of the most famous speeches in American history took place at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago on July 9, 1896. It was given by the highly skilled orator William Jennings Bryan, who advocated a federal policy of "bimetallism," whereby the amount of money in circulation would be measured not only by the amount of gold in federal reserves, but also by the amount of silver. This was an attempt to increase the money supply to provide relief to financially imperiled farmers, whose crops were selling at thirty year lows following a three-year long depression.

Bryan's policy was not popular with party leaders, who were mostly from east-coast manufacturing states, but they nonetheless allowed him to speak at the convention. He was scheduled to speak at 10 o'clock at night, after nearly 12 straight hours of continuous speeches. Due to delays, he did not begin until after midnight; however, his speech was unexpectedly rousing, and the famous concluding words earned him an ovation that lasted for nearly an hour.



EXCERPTS FROM THE *CROSS OF GOLD* SPEECH

William Jennings Bryan

I WOULD BE PRESUMPTUOUS, indeed, to present myself against the distinguished gentleman* to whom you have listened if this were a mere measuring of abilities, but this is not a contest between persons. The humblest citizen in all the land, when clad in the armor of a righteous cause, is stronger than all the hosts of error. I come to speak to you in defense of a cause as holy as the cause of liberty—the cause of humanity.

When this debate is concluded, a motion will be made to lay upon the table the resolution offered in commendation of the Administration...We object to bringing this question down to the level of persons. The individual is but an atom; he is born, he acts, he dies; but principles are eternal; and this has been a contest over a principle.

Never before in the history of this country has there been witnessed such a contest as that through which we have just passed. Never before in the history of American politics has a great issue been fought out as this issue has been, by the voters of a great party...

Then began the conflict. With a zeal approaching the zeal which inspired the Crusaders...our silver Democrats went forth from victory unto victory until they are now assembled, not to discuss, not to debate, but to enter up the judgment already rendered by the plain people of this country. In this contest brother has been arrayed against brother, father against son. The warmest ties of love, acquaintance, and association have been disregarded; old leaders have been cast aside when they have refused to give expression to the sentiments of those whom they would lead, and new leaders have sprung up to give direction to this cause of truth. Thus has the contest been waged, and we have assembled here under as binding and solemn instructions as were ever imposed upon representatives of the people...

We say to you that you [gold delegates] have made the definition of a business man too limited in its application. The man who is employed for wages is as much a business man as his employer; the attorney in a country town is as much a business man as the corporation counsel in a great metropolis; the merchant at the crossroads store is as much a business man as the merchant of New York; the farmer who goes forth in the morning and toils all day, who begins in spring and toils all summer, and who by the application of brain and muscle to the natural resources of the country creates wealth, is as much a business man as the man who goes upon the Board of Trade and bets upon the price of grain; the miners who go down a thousand feet into the earth, or climb two thousand feet upon the cliffs, and bring forth from their hiding places the precious metals to be poured into the channels of trade are as much businessmen as the few financial magnates who, in a back room, corner the money of the world. We come to speak of this broader class of business men.

Ah, my friends, we say not one word against those who live upon the Atlantic Coast, but the hardy pioneers who have braved all the dangers of the wilderness, who have made the desert to blossom as the rose--the pioneers away out there [Bryan points westward], who rear their children, ear to Nature's heart, where they can mingle their voices with the voices of the birds--out there where they have erected school houses for the education of their young, churches where they praise their Creator, and cemeteries where they rest the ashes of their dead--these people, we say, are as deserving of the consideration of our party as any people in this country. It is for these people that we speak. We do not come as aggressors. Our war is not a war of conquest; we are fighting in the defense of our homes, our families, and our posterity. We have petitioned, and our petitions have been scorned; we have entreated, and our entreaties have been disregarded; we have begged, and they have mocked when our calamity came. We beg no longer; we entreat no more; we petition no more! We defy them!

...No private character, however pure, no personal popularity, however great, can protect from the avenging wrath of an indignant people a man who will declare that he is in favor of fastening the gold standard upon this country, or who is willing to surrender the right of self-government and place the legislative control of our affairs in the hands of foreign potentates and powers...

If the gold standard is a good thing, we ought to declare in favor of its retention and not in favor of abandoning it; and if the gold standard is a bad thing why should we wait until other nations are willing to help us to let go? Here is the line of battle, and we care not upon which issue they force the fight; we are prepared to meet them on either issue or on both. If they tell us that the gold standard is the standard of civilization, we reply to them that this, the most enlightened of all the nations of the earth, has never declared for a gold standard and that both the great parties this year are declaring against it. If the gold standard is the standard of civilization, why, my friends, should we not have it? If they come to meet us on that issue we can present the history of our nation.

More than that; we can tell them that they will search the pages of history in vain to find a single instance where the common people of any land have ever declared themselves in favor of the gold standard. They can find where the holders of fixed investments have declared for a gold standard, but not where the masses have.

...[M]y friends, the question we are to decide is: Upon which side will the Democratic party fight; upon the side of "the idle holders of idle capital" or upon the side of "the struggling masses?" That is the question which the party must answer first, and then it must be answered by each individual hereafter.

The sympathies of the Democratic party, as shown by the platform, are on the side of the struggling masses who have ever been the foundation of the Democratic party... The Democratic idea, however, has been that if you legislate to make the masses prosperous, their prosperity will find its way up through every class which rests upon them...

My friends, we declare that this nation is able to legislate for its own people on every question, without waiting for the aid or consent of any other nation on earth; and upon that issue we expect to carry every state in the Union...It is the issue of 1776 over again. Our ancestors, when but three millions in number, had the courage to declare their political independence of every other nation; shall we, their descendants, when we have grown to seventy millions, declare that we are less independent than our forefathers?

No, my friends, that will never be the verdict of our people. Therefore, we care not upon what lines the battle is fought. If they say bi-metalism is good, but that we cannot have it until other nations help us, we reply that, instead of having a gold standard because England has, we will restore bi-metalism, and then let England have bi-metalism because the United States has it. If they dare to come out in the open field and defend the gold standard as a good thing, we will fight them to the uttermost. Having behind us the producing masses of this nation and the world, supported by the commercial interests, the laboring interests and the toilers everywhere, we will answer their demand for a gold standard by saying to them: "You shall not press down upon the brow of labor this crown of thorns! You shall not crucify mankind upon a cross of gold!"

Source: www.pbs.org/greatspeeches/timeline/index.html.

*Former Massachusetts governor William E. Russell, a pro-gold Democrat who had just delivered a lengthy, scathing criticism of Bryan's position.