



# Bare Vexed

**Text Response**  
An opinion piece written  
in response to articles  
about modern slang.

## The Task:

Read the supplied articles about modern slang and write a response to these. This response can either be in the form of a letter to the editor or your own opinion article.

### Choose a position

Do you agree or disagree with the points made in one or the other of the supplied articles? What evidence do you have of the richness (or lack thereof) of modern slang that supports your point?

### You could prepare:

- A list of the points made in the original articles that you agree/disagree with
- Evidence from your own experience that will further support your point.
- A glossary of relevant language terms to ensure your article/letter is confident and credible
- Some anecdotes or examples that you can use to extend your point

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## NEXT STEPS

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1. Go to [w11.edutronic.net](http://w11.edutronic.net) and select “Spoken Language Study” to read and refresh your memory for helpful knowledge and arguments you can use to support your view.
2. Read the attached article and highlight the strongest parts of the argument
3. Consider the author of the article. Are they speaking for you and people like you?
4. Develop a response to these one by one
5. Plan your response by considering the order of the arguments you want to put forward.

**IGCSE English Language Coursework**  
**Component Three**  
**October 2014**

# Twerving, selfie and unlike? Young people don't speak like that – I should know

It doesn't exactly reflect well on young people that the new additions to the Oxford Dictionaries Online are mostly related to image, reputation and sex, writes 20 year-old Isabelle Kerr, who questions why these slang words have been elevated to a level of permanence and authority.



**By Isabelle Kerr**  
4:10PM BST 28 Aug 2013

I'm so gonna unlike that selfie of her twerving. Srsly though, these words make me wanna vom.

If you were to look in the most recent catalogue of the Oxford Dictionary of the English Language online you would think something appalling had happened. Among some of the greatest and most eloquent words in the English language, an invasion of bizarre, nonsensical and downright pointless words appear to have taken over.

The Oxford Dictionaries Online have announced plans to include a variety of new, shall we say, colloquial words to their online collection, including slang words such as vom, selfie, unlike, digital detox, food baby and more. Sadly these are not misprints, nor has Word accidentally changed misspelt words into a seemingly-foreign language. These are in fact the pitiful emblems of the current young generation's contribution to language. My generation. I am 20.

Among the new additions, 'twerving' has taken centre stage. I actually had to Google this word yesterday when investigating why Miley Cyrus was said to have 'twerved' at the MTV video music awards.

The official definition reads: "Twerk, v.: dance to popular music in a sexually provocative manner involving thrusting hip movements and a low, squatting stance." Right.

Regardless, the future of the English language looks bleak.

As a member of the younger generation, partly responsible for these linguistic calamities, I can only apologise. I am embarrassed and ashamed. It doesn't exactly reflect well on young people that the new additions are mostly related to image, reputation and sex. Instead of creating words to improve our ability to communicate and express ourselves, these words simply promulgate an

unhealthy culture obsessed with being seen in the right places and knowing who's doing what.

It's already a constant battle for young people to prove we're not all apathetic, ASBO-wielding yobs who can't communicate properly. These recent additions to the dictionary certainly do us no favours. Comments on Twitter and online today have enhanced our image problem. One online user wrote "no wonder there is so much youth unemployment"; whilst another tweeted "it's over. They've won".

To reiterate, I had no idea what twerking involved before all of this kicked off, and I'm still not entirely sure either. And I'm not alone. Some young Twitter users have expressed their rejection of the new words, with one young follower tweeting "what has the world come to?" While it's important to keep up with language developments, these words give out the completely wrong impression. If they are even to remotely reflect that this is how the young generation speaks, then the dictionary needs a reality check.

Words like twerking, unlike and selfie are nothing more than slang which, just like any fashion trend, come and go. After all, when was the last time you heard someone describe something as "groovy"?

Things that are good are no longer "wicked", they're "sick" and if someone doesn't appeal to you they're not "fugly", they're "butters". Aight?

By including them online, the Oxford dictionaries are awarding these dismal words a degree of permanence that is both unrealistic and unnecessary. Now enshrined in the authenticating realm of the dictionaries' online catalogue, these words unfairly represent what can only be described as this generation's feeble etymological contribution to the English language. I, for one, can only hope that my generation is not remembered for being responsible for removing all the vowels from 'seriously'. I can't imagine Countdown is too happy about that decision either.

So while I scroll through the new listings of the online dictionary, I see the unfortunate positioning of twerk. It sits embarrassingly next to 'twere', an archaic word reminiscent of an era of great language and literary triumph. If the only words we can create are unimaginative hybrids of pre-existing words, or worse, shortening of already perfectly good words, then what hope is there? Shakespeare will be turning in his grave.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/women/womens-life/10271509/Twerking-selfie-and-unlike-Young-people-dont-speak-like-that-I-should-know.html>

# There's nowt wrong with slang

Emma Thompson of all people ought to appreciate that Shakespeare's slang became part of our everyday language

**Belinda Webb**

Friday 8 October 2010 12.00 BST

That epitome of Hampstead luvviness, Emma Thompson, has apparently started a campaign against the use of "sloppy slang" and "street talk". It follows a visit to her old school, Camden High for Girls. What's to be expected from a Cambridge graduate? It is still an institution of received pronunciation. She is not alone in this call to arms against slang. Fellow north Londoner Tom Conti agrees, as does Kathy Lette, that writer of such timeless classics as *Puberty Blues*, which is about "top chicks" and "surfie spunks", and *Alter Ego*, about a "knight in shining Armani". Lette attempts to show off her punning by calling slang a "vowel cancer" and urging teens to study "tongue fu".

This kind of talk has got me well vexed. Listen up, yeah, there's nowt wrong with slang, so you need to stop mitherin', d'ya get me? Those who are from the north will recognise nowt as nothing and mitherin' as bothering. And "d'ya get me?" is, well, comrende? Slang has been around for a long time. Far from showing the user as "stupid", as Thompson contends, it demonstrates inventiveness and quickness of thought; a language plasticity, if you like; a language on the go, evolving not just from one generation to the next, but one year to the next. Its use shows that students are able to learn and speak a wide range of vernacular. The British Library certainly seem to think so, with its upcoming exhibition on evolving English.

Types of slang can be seen as distinct dialects in their own right. Yet there are those who would complain that it excludes many more than it will let in. The same argument has been made regarding novels such as Irvine Welsh's *Trainspotting* – the use of the Leithian dialect a clear statement that, to get "them", requires work; the same work it would take for them to learn RP.

British literature is served well by slang – it can energise prose – and there is also Will Self's "Mokni", from *The Book of Dave*.

I remember reading Anthony Burgess's *A Clockwork Orange*, with its "nasdat" and being so blown away that I rewrote a contemporary female-centric version called *A Clockwork Apple*. I used archaic and old Celtic words in order to get away from the language so favoured by the Blytons (think Thompson). This use was then mocked when a middle-aged male reviewer attempted to write a nonsensical review on it.

What Thompson et al may be put out at is feeling out of touch with the reality of this younger generation. Slang can be seen as a sophisticated attempt to communicate in a semi-private language, only a step removed from Wittgenstein's "private language". Also a Cambridge graduate, Wittgenstein came to believe that the idea that language can perfectly capture reality is a kind of bewitchment. Yet teenagers in each generation seem intent on trying, which is to their credit. They may not consciously know this is what they are doing, but they are seeking a language that represents their reality, and a way

of creating a private space for those with whom they identify.

The issue is, perhaps, what makes people feel in the right to say that anyone who does not speak like them, or in the way they were taught, is wrong and "stupid"? What is stupid is the ignorance of such highly educated public figures who seem not to have realised that Britain's greatest writers used slang and those words became part of our language. Shakespeare helped popularise words such as nery, rancorous, puke, assassination and sanctimonious. Allow me to illustrate the use of these words: Sanctimonious Oxbridge grads are rancorous at the use of teenspeak and slang, which makes them so nery that they want to puke, which could be avoided if they stopped the slang assassination.

I am not saying that slang is a substitute for "standard" English, but should be recognised and capitalised upon for what it is – a love of communication and an inventiveness of speech that continues to make English one of the most interesting languages.