

Making ShreWords



Some scholars estimate that William Shakespeare used just over 17,500 words in his 37 plays. Of those, nearly 1700 were new words—words he made up! We call making up a word *coining*. Shakespeare coined words by adding prefixes or suffixes to known words, changing verbs into adjectives or nouns into verbs, and by combining words to form new terms. Here are just a few of the words that Shakespeare may have coined: *arch-villain*, *blanket* (as a verb), *cold-blooded*, *lackluster*, *laughingstock*, *mimic*, *new-fangled*, *uncomfortable*, *watchdog*.

The following words or phrases were probably coined in the play *The Taming of the Shrew*:

eyesore: something that is distasteful or ugly

“Fie, doff this habit, shame to your estate, an eye-sore to our solemn festival!”
(Baptista, Act III, sc. 2)

bedazzled: suffering from loss of vision, especially from strong light

“Pardon, old father, my mistaking eyes, that have been so bedazzled with the sun.” (Katharine, Act IV, sc. 5)

quarrelsome: given to arguing

“My master is grown quarrelsome.” (Grumio, Act I, sc. 2)

Many coinages are combinations of two or more words to make the new word (called *portmanteaus*). For example, *motel* is a combination of *motor* and *hotel*. Can you tell what words were combined to make the following words? Check your dictionary to find out.

emoticon
freeware
ginormous
guesstimate
infomercial
malware
Microsoft
smog

Try It!

Coin a word for one of the following definitions. (Or start with a definition of your own.)

- the sound that keyboarding makes,
- the fear of being the first person to arrive at a party or other event, or
- the act of reading the same book over and over (and enjoying it every time).

Write your word and your definition below. Try your new word out on your friends and family at least three times today. Then ask an adult whether you can send your coined word and its definition to us at www.summershakespeare.org. We'll post some of our favorites on the website. Who knows? Maybe your word will end up in a dictionary some day!