

Adapted from "A Defense of Slang" in *The Romance of the Commonplace* by Gelett Burgess (1902)

Could Shakespeare come to Chicago and listen curiously to "the man in the street," he would find himself more at home than in London. In the mouths of messenger boys and clerks he would find the English language used with all the freedom of unexpected metaphor and the plastic, suggestive diction that was the privilege of the Elizabethan dramatists; he would say, no doubt, that he had found a nation of poets. There was hardly any such thing as slang in his day, for no graphic trope was too virile or uncommon for acceptance, if its meaning were patent. His own heroes often spoke what corresponds to the slang of today.

The word, indeed, needs precise definition, before we condemn all unconventional talk with vigor. Slang has been called "poetry in the rough," and it is not all coarse or vulgar. There is a prosaic as well as a poetic license. The man in the street calls a charming girl, for instance, a "daisy." Surely this is not inelegant, and such a reference will be understood a century from now. Slang, to prove adjuvant to our speech, which is growing more and more rigid and conventional, should be terse; it should make for force and clarity, without any sacrifice of beauty.

1. Why does the author believe there was no slang in Shakespeare's time?

There were too few laboring classes from which slang could be drawn.

Even strong, offensive, and unusual language was widely accepted and understood.

Slang was considered too vulgar and its usage was discouraged by Queen Elizabeth I.

English dramatists refused to employ slang in their work.

The people of Elizabethan England were too serious for such prosaic creativity.

2. The primary purpose of this passage is to _____.

explain a situation

predict an outcome

establish an argument

refute an argument

honor an accomplishment

3. The author believes that slang should primarily be used _____.

sparingly, so as not to cause offense

when writing plays and sonnets

to describe something inelegantly

to praise or insult an individual

to add color and clarity to language

Choose the word or set of words that best completes the following sentence.

4. Most people were impressed with George's grasp of _____ trivia, but Susan saw it as a mere parlor trick.

popular

useful

arcane

significant

common

Choose the word or set of words that best completes the following sentence.

5. Despite the advice he had received to project a confident _____, James realized that being _____ with the interviewers made him much more endearing than bragging about his accomplishments could have.

demeanor . . . forthright

attitude . . . distinguished

countenance . . . disingenuous

description . . . illusioned

persona . . . distinguished

Choose the word or set of words that best completes the following sentence.

6. Desperate to _____ the results of the survey, which indicated that he was strongly disliked by the general public, the congressman attempted to _____ the company not to publish it.

galvanize . . . malign

suppress . . . induce

distract . . . suspend

sustain . . . conceal

mollify . . . disregard

Adapted from *Nicholas Nickleby* by Charles Dickens (1839)

There was a great bustle in Bishopsgate Street Within, as they drew up, and (it being a windy day) half-a-dozen men were tacking across the road under a press of paper, bearing gigantic announcements that a Public Meeting would be held at one o'clock precisely, to take into consideration the propriety of petitioning Parliament in favour of the United Metropolitan Improved Hot Muffin and Crumpet Baking and Punctual Delivery Company, capital five millions, in five hundred thousand shares of ten pounds each; which sums were duly set forth in fat black figures of considerable size. Mr. Bonney elbowed his way briskly upstairs, receiving in his progress many low bows from the waiters who stood on the landings to show the way; and, followed by Mr. Nickleby, dived into a suite of apartments behind the great public room: in the second of which was a business-looking table, and several business-looking people.

"Hear!" cried a gentleman with a double chin, as Mr. Bonney presented himself. "Chair, gentlemen, chair!"

The new-comers were received with universal approbation, and Mr. Bonney bustled up to the top of the table, took off his hat, ran his fingers through his hair, and knocked a hackney-coachman's knock on the table with a little hammer: whereat several gentlemen cried "Hear!" and nodded slightly to each other, as much as to say what spirited conduct that was. Just at this moment, a waiter, feverish with agitation, tore into the room, and throwing the door open with a crash, shouted "Sir Matthew Pupker!"

The committee stood up and clapped their hands for joy, and while they were clapping them, in came Sir Matthew Pupker, attended by two live members of Parliament, one Irish and one Scotch, all smiling and bowing, and looking so pleasant that it seemed a perfect marvel how any man could have the heart to vote against them. Sir Matthew Pupker especially, who had a little round head with a flaxen wig on the top of it, fell into such a paroxysm of bows, that the wig threatened to be jerked off, every instant. When these symptoms had in some degree subsided, the gentlemen who were on speaking terms with Sir Matthew Pupker, or the two other members, crowded round them in three little groups, near one or other of which the gentlemen who were NOT on speaking terms with Sir Matthew Pupker or the two other members, stood lingering, and smiling, and rubbing their hands, in the desperate hope of something turning up which might bring them into notice. All this time, Sir Matthew Pupker and the two other members were relating to their separate circles what the intentions of government were, about taking up the bill; with a full account of what the government had said in a whisper the last time they dined with it, and how the government had been observed to wink when it said so; from which

premises they were at no loss to draw the conclusion, that if the government had one object more at heart than another, that one object was the welfare and advantage of the United Metropolitan Improved Hot Muffin and Crumpet Baking and Punctual Delivery Company.

Meanwhile, and pending the arrangement of the proceedings, and a fair division of the speechifying, the public in the large room were eyeing, by turns, the empty platform, and the ladies in the Music Gallery. In these amusements the greater portion of them had been occupied for a couple of hours before, and as the most agreeable diversions pall upon the taste on a too protracted enjoyment of them, the sterner spirits now began to hammer the floor with their boot-heels, and to express their dissatisfaction by various hoots and cries. These vocal exertions, emanating from the people who had been there longest, naturally proceeded from those who were nearest to the platform and furthest from the policemen in attendance, who having no great mind to fight their way through the crowd, but entertaining nevertheless a praiseworthy desire to do something to quell the disturbance, immediately began to drag forth, by the coat tails and collars, all the quiet people near the door; at the same time dealing out various smart and tingling blows with their truncheons, after the manner of that ingenious actor, Mr. Punch: whose brilliant example, both in the fashion of his weapons and their use, this branch of the executive occasionally follows.

Several very exciting skirmishes were in progress, when a loud shout attracted the attention even of the belligerents, and then there poured on to the platform, from a door at the side, a long line of gentlemen with their hats off, all looking behind them, and uttering vociferous cheers; the cause whereof was sufficiently explained when Sir Matthew Pupker and the two other real members of Parliament came to the front, amidst deafening shouts, and testified to each other in dumb motions that they had never seen such a glorious sight as that, in the whole course of their public career.

7. As it is used in the fourth paragraph, the underlined word “paroxysm” most nearly means _____.

ailment

vibration

convulsion

sequence

short pronouncement

8. Which of these most accurately restates the meaning of the underlined independent clause?

No one paid attention to the belligerents who were shouting at the skirmishers.

Lots of people were trying to move seats unsuccessfully, when the meeting was started with a shout.

The meeting was stated with a shout from the stage which gained everyone's attention except those who were fighting.

A battle was breaking out when the members of parliament approached the stage.

There were lots of small fights going on until a vocalisation gained the attention of everyone.

9. The information about Mr. Bonney found in the first three paragraphs serves to _____.

demonstrate his musical ability

make the reader dislike him

signal his resignation from the meeting

show he is inept

show he is a prominent member at the meeting

10. For what purpose does the author reference the character Punch from "Punch and Judy" shows in the underlined sentence?

To caricature the policemen, and their indiscriminate use of their truncheons.

To make the reader reminisce about a carnival where one could see such a show

To show how the law enforcement was all just an act

To endear the readers to the policemen

To demonstrate how the entire scene was like something out of a play

11. The tone of this passage could best be described as _____.

whimsical

didactic

severe

abashed

bored

12. What is the main idea of the passage?

There is a quite unruly meeting to petition the government in favour of starting a company.

There is a meeting which quickly becomes violent.

There is a meeting to incorporate different nationalities into the investment of a beverage company.

There is a party for a baking organisation attended by government members.

There is a petition against starting a baked goods company.

13. The fifth paragraph establishes all of the following EXCEPT _____.

The men were equally looking at the empty stage and the women.

The men were impatient and began to stamp and shout.

The policemen could not reach the bottom of the platform because of the density of the crowd.

The main body of the public were in another room than the members of Parliament, waiting for the meeting to start.

The policemen were just in their actions.

14. Which of the following statements about the committee is supported by the passage?

They are all in favor of the members of Parliament.

They are anarchists.

They form three groups in the room when the members of parliament arrive.

They are, in part, self-centred.

They wear wigs.

15. It can reasonably be inferred from the passage that _____.

The policemen have been bribed.

The men do not want to be at the meeting.

The members of parliament were not nice to look at.

It is too loud to hear Sir Pupker speaking.

None of these answers

Choose the word or set of words that best completes the following sentence.

16. The employee was never the most efficient worker, but his many years of unwavering _____ to the firm made him one of the most trusted advisors even to the chief executive.

penury

drudgery

reporting

servitude

fidelity

Choose the word or set of words that best completes the following sentence.

17. The human brain was by far the most popular subject among the biology students, even though it was also the most _____ to study, as they found all of its _____ fascinating.

strenuous . . . intricacies

undemanding . . . complexity

debilitating . . . structure

burdensome . . . prowess

illusory . . . frustrations

Choose the word or set of words that best completes the following sentence.

18. Maggie had never been afraid of heights, but the rope bridge was so _____ that she only took one _____ step before changing her mind.

dilapidated . . . tentative

rotund . . . smug

ramshackle . . . cryptic

morose . . . resonant

pliable . . . nerve-racking