

CrossTalk

CROSSROADS Language Studio's Newsletter May, 2020

WHEN DID THE PRESENT BEGIN?

In the English language, time references are assigned to verbs so we can get clear information about when something happened, is happening or will happen, pinning “time” down with very precise indicators.

In the scientific community, some theoretical physicists have been messing around with our neat and orderly concepts of time, suggesting that the “past”, “present” and “future are somehow intermingled and that the nature of time is not linear at all!

Anthropologists, geologists, archaeologists and other scientists however are far more down-to-earth

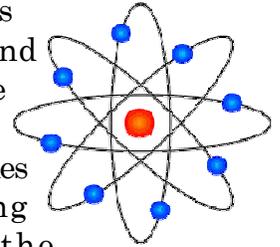


when it comes to “time”. They continue to see time linearly, and they have a very clear notion of just when the “present” began; that was on January 1st 1950. Admittedly, that date is somewhat arbitrary, but for most scientific disciplines that’s it! that’s when “now” began.

So, how or why was January 1st. 1950 selected as indicative of “now?”

Radiocarbon dating is used extensively by scientists to ascertain the age of a fossil or other long dead organisms. The atmosphere contains relatively equal parts of stable carbon-12 and unstable carbon-14. Plants and other living things, absorb both kinds during their lifetimes in the form of carbon dioxide. Once an organism dies, the unstable carbon-14 immediately begins to decay at a known and steady rate. Scientists can then measure the amount of carbon-14 remaining in the dead organism to determine how old it is – this is called radiocarbon dating.

Radiocarbon dating was introduced in the 1940’s and widely adopted from the 1950’s. The 1950’s are also the time when certain countries began widespread testing of nuclear weapons in the atmosphere. It soon became apparent that radiocarbon dating could not be relied upon to accurately date anything thereafter. Why?



Nuclear weapons massively alter the environment and the atmosphere, so much so that the natural ratio of carbon-14 and carbon-12 is altered, even turning a lot of carbon-14 *into* carbon-12!

Basically, this means that any radiocarbon dating done after January 1st. 1950 is invalid – that date is generally agreed upon because it falls in the middle of the beginning of wide-spread nuclear testing. Any time reference after that date is referred to as the “present” and any time before

that date is referred to as “B.P.” or before the present.



Net News

NET LESSONS: Too busy to come to CROSSROADS?

.... Try our *lessons on the net!*

Lots on R-C-D here:

<https://theconversation.com/explainer-what-is-radiocarbon-dating-and-how-does-it-work-9690>

There are many expressions in English that refer to "time." Here are just some..... See if you can match the correct one to each sentence.

1) Do you think you could _____ to go camping during the holidays?

- a. have the time of your life
- b. have a good time
- c. kill time
- d. get time off



2) I'm sorry, I can't talk to you right now. I'm _____.

- a. putting in time
- b. behind the times
- c. on time
- d. pressed for time



3) You arrived just _____. You almost missed the train.

- a. in the nick of time
- b. on time
- c. for the time being
- d. in your spare time



4) The company's closed because of the Coronavirus. When we get back to work, we'll have to _____.

- a. make time
- b. lose time
- c. make up for lost time
- d. kill time



5) Stop _____ and get back to work!

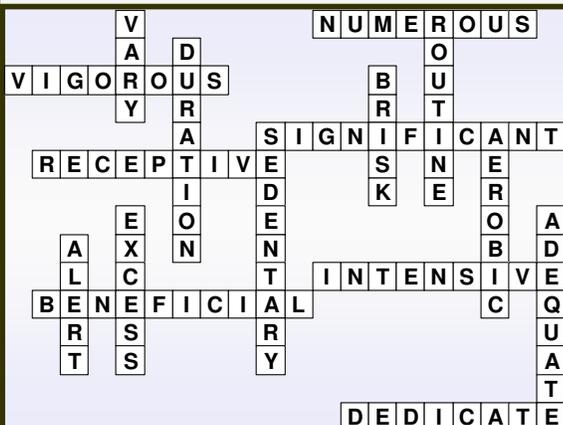
- a. run out of time
- b. losing track of time
- c. worth your time
- d. wasting time

6) I must really be _____. I don't even know how to use a smart phone.

- a. out of time
- b. ahead of time
- c. behind the times
- d. losing time



(Check your answers in next month's NL here on P3)



Last Month's puzzle Solution

ACROSS

- 2 many in number
- 5 strong and active
- 7 important in effect or meaning
- 9 open to ideas or change
- 13 to a high degree
- 14 enhancing well-being
- 15 give special meaning to

DOWN

- 1 be different from
- 3 unvarying way or behavior
- 4 a period of time
- 6 quick, fast
- 7 requiring little activity
- 8 exercise that increases the need for oxygen
- 10 too much
- 11 sufficient for the purpose
- 12 mentally responsive



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