

CROSSROADS Janguage Studio's Newsletter May, 2022

NES NUTS, YOURE BANANAS Over time as languages evolve, new words get added and old words take on new or additional meanings. English is a prime example of this.

The English language has expanded over the centuries by incorporating words from many other languages and by the invention of new words to accommodate evolving situations - new technologies being one example. Older, established words have also acquired new or additional meanings. Take for example the words 'nuts' and 'bananas'. Both of these words, apart from identifying food we enjoy eating, also have come to mean '*crazy*.'

Since about 875CE, the word 'nut' has meant a "shell-encrusted fruit." It still does to this day. Over time, however, other meanings have been attached to this word. For example, the 'nut' in nuts and bolts came into use around 1611; the part of a musical instrument's neck that the strings rest on (1698); a question that's difficult to answer (1545). And in the mid-19th century, 'Nuts' came to mean "crazy." ('Bananas' adopted this additional meaning about 100 years later.)

How the word 'nut' acquired so many different meanings is unclear, but the particular meaning of "crazy" may be linked to the late 1700's British slang terms, 'nuts upon' or 'nuts about', used to describe a person who was overly enthusiastically fond of or

infatuated with something (or someone), just like we say "crazy about" today. In the 1850's, 'nut' was used to refer to a person's head. It followed that "off ones nut" means "crazy." 'Bananas,' meaning "crazy," is a much more recent development. In the 1920's,

"banana oil" was a slang term meaning "nonsense." In the late 1960's, college students in the United States were starting to use the term 'bananas' to mean "excited" or "upset" to the point of being angry, or acting "wild."

At about that time many young people were experimenting with drugs of various kinds. "Going

bananas" may be linked to the myth that if one were to smoke banana peels, one could get "high!" Although totally untrue, some people took this idea seriously and even found reference to it in a popular song of the time: anyone remember Donovan's "Mellow Yellow?"

"....e-lec-tric-al banana is gonna be a sudden craze..."

These days 'going bananas' still means "going crazy," but in a more aggressive, energetic, or even angry sense, than 'going nuts'.



'Nuts' or 'bananas' used in this way is slang. "Slang is metaphor, and all metaphor is poetry" wrote G.K. Chesterton in 1901. Here are a few more examples of common slang still in use today:

Chill or *chill-out* – take it easy, calm down; *Bread* or *loot* or *paper* – money;

Cool – very good, or suave, or acceptable, or calm, or uninterested, unfriendly;

Peeps – friends, people.

(Find more slang in P3's Slang Quiz.)



NET LESSONS: Too busy to come to CROSSROADS?

.... Try our *lessons on the net!* You can check out some modern English expressions here: https://www.evilenglish.net/

Some Thoughts for the Month



Joshua Says: : One of the hardest challenges in learning a new/second language is dealing with common expressions that don't seem to mean what they mean! This month's cover story is concerned with this issue, slang. When you watch English movies or read novels, slang, idioms, puns and similar figurative expressions are commonly used and it can be very confusing to get a clear meaning of what's going on. Even native speakers don't always get it.

Junko Says: Why does time go by faster as we age? Psychologists say, children's brains operate faster than adults'. This makes children more conscious of their experiences and, as a result, their sense of the passing of time moves more slowly than it does for adults. So, how can we keep our minds sharp and quick at any age? 1. Keep learning (anything and everything); 2. Use as many of your senses as you can to take impressions of things; 3. Believe in yourself; 4. Prioritize; 5. Repeat what you want to know; 6. Space it out.... I have more details if anyone is interested in knowing more.





<u>Marek Says</u>: The flood of Ukrainian refugees to western European countries continues, with Poland receiving 3 million citizens and Germany accepting 300,000, thus far. Straightforward visa application allows the consulates to process large number of applications. Meanwhile in the UK, the red tape means that only a fraction of applicants (who filled in 51 pages in ENGLISH) has been processed. The system is so badly constructed that UK households volunteering to accept refugees fail the process if they have a pond in the garden!

<u>Mandcy dit</u>: Bonjour à tous, Ce mois-ci, je tiens á féliciter Madame le Premier-Ministre Elizabeth Borne. En effet, la France est un pays avec peu de femmes politiciennes. Je suis donc vraiment contente que nous ayons enfin une femme avec un poste important. J'espère que son succès inspirera le monde et les petites filles. Nous lui souhaitons donc bon courage !!!





