

FOREWORD

The first quarter of the 21st century has brought a protracted cultural war between liberal (progressive) and conservative ideologies. The “progressives” have concentrated their efforts on the exploitation of racial animosities, the promotion of equal rights for the LGBTQ community, and the imposition of woke ideology on educational institutions. The conservatives and populists have tried to appeal to the patriotism of their supporters, condemning the perceived aggressive attacks on their freedom of speech and the heavy-handed legal maneuvering of their opponents.

The backdrop to this culture war is the disappearance of the objective news media, the emergence of social media as the major source of information and means of communication, and an effort by both sides to use language as a tool to influence thought and behavior.

Our collection, the *American Idioms in Historical Perspective*, is a reflection of the conflict between two competing cultural and political philosophies. It includes the woke terms referring to gender, race, social justice, and political correctness. It is also rich in euphemisms, buzzwords, catchphrases, and slang commonly used by the last four generations. The reader will find in the book words and phrases like *snowflakes*, *Trump derangement syndrome*, *minor attracted person*, and *toxic masculinity*. The collection contains 11,500 entries and 10,350 example sentences, illustrating their use. There are many references to the origin and the first recorded date of the of the phrases.

The author has made an effort to keep the definition of political terms impartial and objective. This is the first comprehensive phraseological English dictionary reflecting the cultural and political revolution taking place in our time.

George L. Nagy

INTRODUCTION

Thanks to the internet and social media, our language is changing faster than ever before. As a result, the linguistic generation gap between the computer-savvy Gen Z and the baby boomers has been widening. Printed dictionaries are slowly disappearing, replaced by on-line glossaries, modified daily by artificial intelligence. *American Idioms in Historical Perspective* may be one of the last major printed collections. It is a time capsule, recording the idiomatic language of four generations of Americans as of April 30th, 2025. That was the date when the collection of new material was closed. The collection hopes to bridge the communication gap between the new generations and their grandparents who were born in the 1950s and 60s.

Since the end of World War II, sociologists have identified four generations by age and demographics. These are:

GENERATION	BORN BETWEEN	AGE IN 2025
Baby Boomers	1946-1964	60-79
Gen X	1965-1980	44-60
Gen Y (Millennials)	1981-1996	28-44
Gen Z	1997-2012	12-28

Gen Z is followed by Generation Alpha, born in 2013 and later.

The last 25 years brought significant linguistic and cultural changes. Hundreds of new words and idioms have been created to accommodate the social and political trends permeating Western society. Most of the new terms are associated with the progressive ideology of wokeism.

Wokeism is the West's latest cultural revolution. It is also the main political agenda of young socialists, born in the 1980s and 90s. Because this dictionary is a study in linguistics, it makes no value judgment about the woke cultural movement or the new language it has created. The definitions are based on the activists' own description of their ideology and objectives. The readers can judge for themselves whether they agree with the aims and the ideology of the movement.

The "progressive" movement of the early 21st century rests on five pillars:

1. The exploitation of racial animosities. (Replacing class warfare with race warfare.)
2. The sexual liberation of the LGBTQ community. (Undue emphasis on gender and sexual identity.)
3. The permeation of the educational system with woke ideology. (Increasing intolerance to opposing viewpoints.)
4. Using global warming as a tool to increase the powers of government.
5. Bringing about demographic change by opening the borders to unrestricted migration.

Our dictionary incorporates the terms and idioms frequently used by the advocates of woke causes, such as social justice, environmental protection, the rights of the LGBTQ community, and democratic socialism. The new phraseology deals with sexual liberation, gender

equality and identity, critical race theory, global warming, racial equality, diversity, equity, and inclusion. Whether these pillars of wokeism can be shaken by the new, more conservative administration remains to be seen.

In addition to reflecting the latest cultural trends, this dictionary also contains a generous selection of politically correct phrases, popular political terms, examples of doublespeak, buzzwords, catchphrases, proverbs, clichés, euphemisms, metaphors, similes, phrasal verbs, weasel words, and Gen Z terms.

Politically correct phrase:	<i>affirmative action</i> (Preferential treatment.)
Popular political term:	<i>pork barrel spending</i> (Wasteful government projects.)
Doublespeak:	<i>collateral damage</i> (Non-combat civilian casualties.)
Buzzwords:	<i>circle back</i> (To return to a topic covered.)
Cliché:	<i>move in the right direction</i> (To act properly.)
Collocation:	<i>necessary evil</i> (An unpleasant imperative.)
Catchphrase:	<i>make America great again</i> (Restore the greatness of the US.)
Proverb:	<i>better late than never</i> (Delayed action is better than no action.)
Euphemism:	<i>pass away</i> (To die.)
Metaphor:	<i>life is a journey</i> (Try to enjoy every day of your life.)
Simile:	<i>as cool as a cucumber</i> (Composed, collected, self-controlled.)
Phrasal verb:	<i>drop by</i> (To visit briefly.)
Weasel word:	<i>that being said</i> (In spite of this.)
Gen Z:	<i>to ghost someone</i> (To ignore someone's messages.)
Banished word:	<i>cringe-worthy</i> (Embarrassing enough to make you cringe.)
Slang:	<i>pussy-whipped, be</i> (to be dominated by a woman.)

The dating of the material is based on standard publications, such as the *Oxford English Dictionary*, *The American Heritage Dictionary of Idioms*, and artificial intelligence. The words “probably used” mean that the first-use date is based on circumstantial evidence.

A typical entry lists the expressions in alphabetical order, starting with the first word, but without the articles (*the, a, an*) and the verb *be*. The phrase is followed by an abbreviation describing its grammatical function (*verb, noun, adjective, adverb*), and a stylistic reference (*informal, slang*). The definition explains the meaning of the phrase and may provide a reference to its origin. In case the phrase has interesting synonyms, these are also indicated. In most cases, there is an example showing how the phrase is used. At the end of the entry, there is a date showing when the phrase was first recorded.

Example:	burst at the seams (<i>v, inf</i>)	Idiom (<i>verb, informal</i>)
	1. Completely filled up, jam-packed with someone or something (i.e. theater, luggage.)	First meaning
	• <i>overflowing, bulging, jam-packed.</i>	Synonyms
	◆ <i>My suitcase is bursting at the seams.</i>	First example
	2. A bulging belly full of food.	Second meaning
	◆ <i>I ate so much that I am bursting at the seams.</i>	Second example
	Used in both senses since the 1860s.	Explanation and date

The readers will find several words and phrases in the dictionary which have been “banished.” Lake Superior State University has been compiling overused, vague, and misused words and expressions since 1976. The most common ones are listed here with the date when they were “banished.”

English grammar can be mastered relatively easily, but in-depth understanding of the language can be achieved only if the learner is familiar with the figurative expressions found in idiom dictionaries like ours. *American Idioms in Historical Perspective* can serve as an outstanding learning tool for students and an entertaining reference book for native speakers. It incorporates the newest words which have entered the language during the last 25 years, but also explains the traditional expressions shared by four generations of Americans.

ABBREVIATIONS

<i>adj</i>	= adjective	<i>joc</i>	= jocular
<i>adv</i>	= adverb	<i>lit</i>	= literary
<i>conv</i>	= conversational	<i>n</i>	= noun
<i>excl</i>	= exclamation	<i>OED</i>	= Oxford English Dictionary
<i>Gen Z</i>	= Generation Z	<i>pron</i>	= pronoun
<i>hum</i>	= humorous	<i>sl</i>	= slang
<i>inf</i>	= informal	<i>v</i>	= verb

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