

"life"

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So often we use words without knowing the true origin or meaning of them, using them to the point where they begin to lose their meaning. For example, few know that the word life not only can serve as a noun or adjective, but also as a verb meaning “ to give life to.” I discovered this when I recently embarked on a journey to rediscover the true meaning and use of the word life in both the past and the present. While this journey proved interesting and enlightening, several problems arose in my search. To begin with, I found it difficult to find an article that I wished to use in my essay.

I could not use several articles because they lacked the appropriate length or surpassed the appropriate complexity. In order to find a usable article, I had to switch my search engine that I used, which proved to be probably the most helpful move I made during the course of my research. I also disliked the length of my dictionary entries because the shortest of my two entries took up approximately half a page, with my longest taking up nearly five full pages. Fortunately for me, however, the bulk of the latter entry comprised of examples that I did not have to copy or else my hand would likely have developed serious cramps and the whole process would have been thoroughly unenjoyable. Despite these complications, I had very few problems with my research.

To begin my research, I looked up my word life in the Webster’s Third New International Dictionary, edited by Philip Babcock Gove, finding my word on page 1306. I discovered that Old English first used the word life, spelling the word either libban or lifian. This use of the word meant “ to live.” Old Norse then adopted the word, spelling it lif. Middle English contained the most

recent use of life, spelling it just as Old Norse did. Of the entries for my word, I found that entry number seven interested me most.

The definition read “ someone held to be as dear to one as existence..... used as a term of endearment.” It had not occurred to me that calling a significant other one’s life had become so common in the English language that this use merited its own dictionary entry. To me, this just shows how humans have developed such intense feelings for the ones they love so much so that they have begun to consider their love as necessary to their lives. I then continued my research by finding life in The Oxford English Dictionary, which James A.

H. Murray edited, on pages 259-263. Unlike Webster’s Dictionary, The Oxford English Dictionary said that Old English used the word *belifan* meaning “ to remain.” Most other languages mentioned by this dictionary used a form of life spelled *lif*. Such languages included Old Frisian, Old Saxon, and Swedish. This dictionary contained several more pages worth of definitions.

The final definition of life proved to be the most intriguing of all the definitions I found. Prior to my research on this paper, I had thought of life as mostly a noun and occasionally an adjective, but, according to this entry, life can also mean “ to give life to.” Of all entries in this dictionary, this one stood out to me the most because of its rare use. Never before had I heard the life used like this. The use of life here shows the diversity of the English language and how words can have multiple meanings and how just about every possible object, action, quality, etc.

that one can think of has a word to describe it. Following the research that led me to this revelation, I looked for synonyms for life in Roget's International Thesaurus, edited by Robert L. Chapman, on page 536. Some of the synonyms found matched the definition of life almost perfectly, while others just barely fit the definition of "synonym." For example, I found the word vegetate listed as a synonym. While, yes, this word means "to live," it means specifically "to live in a dull state.

"When I think of life I think of ups and downs, grief and happiness, secrets and betrayal, and romance and laughter. Though I may not desire some things listed, none of them to me say "boring." The synonym energetic makes almost perfect sense to me because life requires energy, another word synonymous to life, and energetic describes the presence of energy. Soul also makes a decent synonym. Many people believe that one's soul links to one's life and that without one, the other can not exist. Due to this, one could say that life and soul equal each other.

After utilizing the thesaurus, I moved on to The Scripture Reference Study Bible, where I found the word life on page 619 in Proverbs 15: 4. The verse in which I found my word reads: "A wholesome tongue is a tree of life, but perverseness therein is a breach of the spirit." The book of Proverbs serves to tell Christians how to lead their lives, and this verse does just that. This verse tells how by speaking the truth and saying good things, one will have an enjoyable life. In the latter part of the verse, however, states that by speaking negatively and using the tongue for blasphemy and other actions that the Bible would frown upon, one's spirit will suffer.

Instead of using life as meaning the “state of being alive” or anything along those lines, here the Bible uses life to define a specific type of life, one of wholeness and fullness. This use of the word shows just proves the versatility of the word life. As I continue my research, I turned to the master story-teller William Shakespeare’s *The Winter’s Tale*, found in *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*, which George Lyman Kittredge edited, where I found the word life used on pages 464-465. Shakespeare used the word life in the following passage, which Leontes spoke: Prithee, no more! Cease! Thou know’st He dies to me again when talk’d of. Sure, Will bring me to consider that which may Unfurnished me of reason They are come. Your mother was most true to wedlock Prince, Your father’s image is so hit in you His very air, that I should call you brother, By us perform’d before.

Most dearly well come! And your fair princess- goddess! O, alas, I lost a couple that ‘twixt heaven and earth Might thus have stood begetting wonder, as You, gracious couple, do! and then I lost A mity too, of your brave father, whom, Though bearing misery, I desire my life Once more to look on him In this passage, Leontes attempts to convince Paulina of the legitimacy of her birth. Leontes then goes on to talk of Paulina’s father, who he wishes to see again as her father had died. To prove how much Leontes wishes to see her father again, Leontes expresses how he desires more than anything in his life to see him again. Here Leontes uses the word life to emphasize how much he wishes to see Paulina’s father. Had Leontes used another word, the emphasis would have been much weaker as most people hold their life dearest to them. The use here exemplifies the significance of the word life, not only in modern English, but also in the older Shakespearean English.

Upon finishing my research using Shakespeare, I found the word life in Kyle Steven Allan's poem, "Trying to Describe Life" in the anthology *New Coin Poetry* on page 26. The poem reads as follows: Perhaps trying to describe life is like trying to capture the reflection of something on water, making only ripples stirring only water stirring only an image This poem tells about the near impossible task of describing life by comparing it to an unsuccessful attempt to capture a reflection in water. So many different facets of life exist, as shown by the forty-one combined dictionary definitions in the two dictionaries I used earlier, that describing it requires great difficulty. When the Allan goes on to talk about stirring water and images, I interpret this as meaning that when one tries to describe life, he may find himself able to describe parts of life, but his description will not capture every facet of life due to the utter complexity of life itself. Any description will merely touch upon life, leaving very much uncovered. Continuing my research of people's use of the word life, I found a quote by Benjamin Franklin in *The Columbia Dictionary of Quotations*, edited by Robert Andrews, on page 524.

About life he stated " I should have no objection to go over the same life from its beginning to end; requesting only the advantage authors have, of correcting in a second edition the faults of the first." Benjamin Franklin made this statement in his autobiography in the first chapter. In his quote, Franklin implies that his life contained many mistakes and imperfections. He expresses that while he did enjoy his life, he would, should he live his life again, he would much like to do away with these mistakes and imperfections. This quote further shows the complexity of life because Franklins life contained enough good memories for him to want to repeat it,

but due to the negative memories associated with his life, he did not wish to repeat it exactly as he had experienced it. The quote displays that life has many desirable parts, but also several not-so-desirable parts.

To continue my research on this quote, I looked in the article " Benjamin Franklin" found in the Encyclopedia Americana International Edition on pages 8-12 where I learned much about the life of the speaker, Benjamin Franklin. After working as a printer for his brother, Benjamin Franklin went to England in 1724 where he worked as a printer leaving in 1726 to return to Philadelphia and continue his line of work. Not only did Franklin found several libraries and colleges while in America, but he also worked as a scientist, proposing several revolution experiments and inventing several important inventions. After years of working as a scientist, beginning in 1751 Franklin began a political career in America, primarily working in Britain to limit Britain's power in the colonies. In 1776, he served on the Second Continental Congress and signed the Declaration of Independence and, served as minister to France. Franklin returned to America in 1785 where he signed the Constitution.

He died on April 17, 1790. Not only did Franklin use the word life, but so did John R. Quain in his article entitled " Cool Tech Tools for a Carefree Life" found in the US News and World Report on pages 32-35. In the article he details how to improve the reader's life through the use of technology. " The right gadgets-and the services they connect to-can actually free you from some of the quotidian chores of the past (like spending the whole evening balancing your checkbook), giving you more time to enjoy life."

TheAppleiPad, though not a useful e-reader, makes a great community
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device for accessing online content. To prevent car wrecks due to distracted drivers, laws have been passed to make using hand-held cell phones while driving illegal, but using wireless devices such as the BlueAnt S4, a hands-free device with a built in Bluetooth speaker, can bypass these laws. The Barnes ; Noble Nook, unlike the iPad, makes an exception e-reader because the e-books often cost less and take up less room than physical books. T-Mobiles Garminfore, a touch-screen Android, offers exception GPS that never fails, regardless of whether or not the user's cell phone receives a signal. The widely used social-networking site Facebook allows users to interact online and share content relevant to their lives.

Mobile banking has become common in the lives of many Americans and several iPhone apps, including a JPMorgan Chase app, provide more safety to users than ATMs. GoogleVoice provides security assists users with multiple phones by connecting the phones with a single web-based voicemail. The Xbox 360 allows for a more interactive gaming system by using a sensor bar contained in the Kinect add-on that tracks the gamer's motion. Smart power strips save money for the user by eliminating wasted power, paying for itself in the process.

The Logitech Alert 750i Master system allows for keeping an eye on anywhere the user places the internet-connected camera. When I finished using the magazine article, I turned to Taylor Swift's song "Fifteen," found on her album Fearless, to next find the word life. In this song, Swift details life at the age of fifteen. She uses life in this verse: 'Cause when you're fifteen and somebody tells you they love you You're gonna believe them And when you're fifteen feeling like there's nothing to figure out Well, count to

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ten, take it in This is life before you know who you're gonna be Fifteen Here Swift tells how at the age of fifteen, life lacks much of the complexity that comes later in life. At this age, everything can seem so simple and carefree.

The rest of the song details how at the age of fifteen everything seems to have much more significance than it really does. It also shows that when someone reaches this age, she often does not think clearly and finds herself susceptible to believing things that she perhaps should not. This song details the different worlds of life at fifteen and at an older age. Sitting here and pressing enter to start my final paragraph of this essay I feel relieved. Yes this essay intrigued me and taught me that words contain a complexity that many of us never realize, but I can not help but feel grateful that now I near the end of my journey.

At times in the writing of this essay I found myself frustrated to the point where I would type out a sentence, dislike it, delete it, and repeat the process for nearly a half-hour. Other times, however, I found myself getting into the writing so much that I could write an entire paragraph in ten minutes. It did amaze me though that I could overcome my frustrations and get into the writing enough to write such a long and complex paper. Prior to this experience, I had only written one essay in MLA format so I knew I could handle the research, but I had no clue if I would find myself able to write such a long paper because the other paper I wrote only amounted to six pages. In the end when I look back upon this project and can forget how much difficulty I had writing this paper at times, I can almost think of this project as enjoyable to write because the knowledge I gained in such a short amount of time has taught me about the complexity of words.

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