

The cassell dictionary of slang

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I have chosen to analyse an article which concentrates on the use of slang and its origins. The article covers 'where slang comes from in the ages of sitcoms and graphic novels,' citing 'popular culture and the generation of language' as the source of information. The article is written by Jonathan Green, author of The Cassell Dictionary of Slang, as a result the article offers somewhat of an interesting and informative insight into the topic of slang. The purpose of the article seems to be offering a preview to The Cassell Dictionary of Slang with the intention of increasing awareness of the book and as a result selling more copies.

Other than simply publicising a book however, there is a lot of new content that is written informatively in an entertaining way. Thus it may be presumed that the article is targeted at those particularly interested in language and particular aspects of it, specifically students studying English Language or a similar course. Although due to the theme of the article it may appeal to a far wider spectrum. The article covers how language has progressed over the years and how particular words have changed to form a new meaning.

Such as 'illiterate' which was once defined as 'someone who wasn't fluent in Latin or Greek. ' Particular reference is also given as to why language has changed in the way it has, offering stages of developments for particular words and how they have evolved. The information is offered in an accessible way that uses no specific language that isn't defined somewhere in the text, hence allowing for a broader audience. A key aspect to the article is its appearance. Immediately apparent is a picture of the author alongside his name; beneath is the strap line, which I will go into further detail about later.

<https://assignbuster.com/the-cassell-dictionary-of-slang/>

The article takes ease of scansion into account, the layout is clear and approachable whilst offering a clear message on the content of the article. A definition box lies slightly to the right of centre of the article, clearly visible. Inside the box the subject 'Slang' is defined in a dictionary-esque manner, this sets the theme of the article and grabs the attention of the reader. Alongside the definition box is a picture of The Cassell Dictionary of Slang, which supports my theory that the aim of the article is to promote the book. It also makes the article far more interesting to look at and attract further readers.

The main body of text resides on the lower half of the article and probably covers just over half of the actual content. The text is well sized and clearly visible as to not put off potential readers. To the bottom-right hand side of the article are some examples of slang taken from The Cassell Dictionary of Slang, it appears that the extract is purposely under the image of the book. The majority of the examples are humorous in order to fetch interest. The positioning of the text is relevant as it is the last place that a reader typically looks at and as a result is the content that fills that space is the main drawer to the article.

I will now begin the analysis of actual content within the article. Instantly evident is the strap line of the article which reads, 'Where slang comes from in the age of sitcoms and graphic novels,' upon reading this the rest of the content within the article can be presumed. The content of the strap line is rather interesting, particularly the inclusion of 'sitcoms' as it appears that the writer of the article is trying to interest the reader in the article via

something they are familiar with. In this case a sitcom. Further examples of modern popular culture flood the article.

The opening paragraph of the article gives reference to a past study of slang, Eric Partridge and his work on the Dictionary of Slang first published in 1937. The paragraph heavily criticises the book and mocks it in a light-hearted way, "The stuff was there of course, but he missed it all" is how the novel is summed up. Examples of the failings from the Dictionary of Slang are then given, with particular notice given to the complete lack of any sort of inclusion from modern popular culture such as music and television.

Jazz specifically holds many cases that were left from the book, amusing examples are given such as 'sweet potato pies' and 'jellyrolls'. Further humour is injected into the article with the inclusion of slang references for the male and female genitalia. 'Pudendum' or literally 'That of which one is to be ashamed' and 'Membrum Virile' or literally 'the virile member' is taken from the Dictionary of Slang. Although the humour could be considered slightly vulgar and unnecessary it certainly livens up the article and adds a certain element of risk to it, whilst retaining the interest of the reader.

Jonathan Green then almost counters what he has written in the first paragraph when stating, "I'm the last to pretend I... Can hope to cover it fully" in reference to covering every aspect of slang. Again, there is an inclusion of modern popular culture as reasoning for the difficulty of recording slang. 'Gangsta rap, pulp fiction and adult animation' are just three given examples. It seems that the author is trying to strike a chord with the teenage audience and as a result is including as many examples of modern

popular culture as possible. Whilst not overdoing it to seem patronising, a well-fixed balance seems to have been found.

Jonathon Green then coins-a-term in his next paragraph, 'Counter-language' which he describes as the transition of initial slang to standard English along a gradual course of evolution. The subject raised is rather interesting and to term the discovery increases both profile and interest. A brief history of slang then proceeds the article or atleast the recordation of slang. 1676 is the given date for which a slang glossary first appears, the inclusion of this seems to be offering an informative interesting fact and an insight into the history of slang, which otherwise, it is highly unlikely that the reader would ever consider.

Further inclusion of risqui?? humour appears in the article as it is pointed out that the Oxford English Dictionary fails to include the words 'fuck' and 'cunt' despite other obscenities appearing. This could be seen as being a simple attempt to maintain involvement with the reader via the use of words that are considered to be inappropriate. Once again modern popular culture is brought up, this time stating that, " Until relatively recently popular culture was rarely acknowledged as a major source of slang... The dictionary... referred to check out grander origins. "

It appears that Jonathon Green is pointing out the mistakes of others in writing slang dictionaries, although it may be relevant that they are rivals after all and that he is simply trying to make his book more desirable via the inclusion of modern popular culture. Despite this controversy, a very good point is raised and that is the effect of modern popular culture on slang and

speech. Apparently, " Today's linguistic ball game works by very different rules... there are no rules.

This is an interesting point to be raised as it is debatable that almost any word can make it into slang and eventual common use, arguably just from being accessible to the public via some form of medium. Such examples of modern popular culture and it's effect on modern speech are cited; television programmes such as 'Neighbours' and 'NYPD Blue' show how language and slang can be spread from one particular environment to another. For example, 'Neighbours' will promote regional slang from Australia whilst 'NYPD Blue' may promote slang that is used within the police force.

As a result the slang is spread and may be used by viewers in a more common context. This point is well realised and conveyed by Jonathon Green and instigates a previously unnoticed thought by the reader. Further representations are given, music and the work of the 'Wu-Tang Clan' show how slang has made its way from 'the cutting edge of US ghetto life' into common slang around the world. A final point is then made in the article, with a cross-reference to the aforementioned 'counter-language' and how it can be decided whether a word is or is not slang or an accepted form of English.

It's not so much dumbing down, but broadening out" is how Jonathon Green expresses his views on the spread of slang into common phrase. It is then claimed that through the diversity of slang and due to the nature of it's ever-expanding potential, slang offers " An unparalleled richness and multiplicity of modern language. " It is on this point the article ends, its final ideology

conveyed. By offering an article that was immediately accessible, informative and humorous the ideas that the article wished to put across were successfully done so. As a result the article is memorable and may instigate a fair bit of thought onto the readers.