

# NEW THINK

THE **AMAZING!** IDEAS THAT SHAPE OUR WORLD • EDITED BY JASON CHEN

ON LANGUAGE

## GLOSSARY

*Ammon Shea helps navigate a patois.*



### MANSPLAIN

*To condescendingly explain (a man to a woman).*

"Mansplain" is a word of decidedly recent coinage (often applied to subjects like sports or politics), which is not to say the concept it describes is a new one. The word has been used in blogs since 2008, although it was not until late in 2010 that it first appeared in a book or newspaper, when Canada's *The Globe and Mail* used it in an article titled "Putting the 'Men' in Menstrual."



### PREPPER

*A person concerned about incipient forms of disaster and whose level of preparedness is extremely high.*

Ranging from people who stash extra food to others who create underground shelters, "preppers" have been subject to much attention and derision in recent years (some of it due to the television show *Doomsday Preppers*). The group has its own rich tradition of jargon; TEOTWAWKI (the end of the world as we know it) and WROL (without rule of law) are just two examples.



### -OTUS

*A suffix, in wide use, appended to various initials and serving to indicate "of the United States."*

"Of the United States" may not seem like such an unruly mouthful, but variants of the shortened version, such as "POTUS" and "SCOTUS," have been in use since the 19th century. Recently, new "-OTUS" forms have sprung up, primarily on Twitter. They are "COTUS" and "TOTUS," with the initial acronym letters referring to "Constitution" and "teleprompter," respectively. These are often used largely in an opprobrious fashion when referring to President Obama.



### PAY FENCE

*An Internet payroll that is easily penetrated.*

"Pay fence" is a recent variation of "paywall" (in use since at least 2003), which denotes something that cannot be opened unless one pays. There is a trend with words to attach an affix that is less drastic as the concept changes; thus, "pay fence" refers to Internet content that is behind a fairly porous and ineffective payroll—it can be accessed but only with a certain degree of effort. One imagines that if this trend continues, we will have variants along the lines of "pay hedge" and "pay curb."



### #TBT

*A Twitter hashtag that is an abbreviation of "throwback Thursday" and used to designate photographs that were taken in the past.*

#TBT is yet another of those prickly little initialisms that Twitter spawns of which it is unclear whether the intended use is to help young people navigate the content of the site or to annoy older people who do not understand what it means. It should not be confused with #OOMF (one of my followers) or #TCOT (top conservatives on Twitter).