

From *bathing beauty* (1920) to *pin-up* (1941) to *supermodel* (1977)...

From *cornflakes* (1907) to *Spam* (1937) to *freedom fries* (2003)...

From *conspiracy theory* (1909) to *Big Brother* (1949) to *cash for questions* (1994)...

...Take a fascinating journey through 105 years of the English language.

Movers and Shakers

A chronology of words that shaped our age

John Ayto

Mention *ice cubes* and *air conditioning*, *surrealism* and *totalitarianism*, *hunger marches* and *rat-races*, *terrorists* and *paparazzi*, and there is nowhere else we could be but the 20th century.

The fabric of our environment (*nylon*, *plastic*), how we get around (*motorways*, *traffic jams*, *spacecraft*), how we entertain ourselves (*movies*, *cinema*, *radio*, *television*), how we communicate with each other (*cyberspace*, *Internet*, *mobile*), how we fight each other (*world war*, *air raid*, *genocide*) – all these elements of human life, and many more, have produced certain key words that instantly locate themselves as post-1900.

And many terms can also pinpoint a precise period: *angry young man*, *beatnik*, *skiffle*, *sputnik*, *Teddy boy* could be nothing more than the 1950s. Perhaps you were you one of the original *teeny boppers* or *flower children* of the 1960s? Or a *flying picket*, a follower of the *loony left* or a *punk rocker* in the 1970s? And do you remember - with love or loathing - the *yuppies*, *ghetto-blasters* and *power dressing* of the 1980s?

Movers and Shakers tracks the trends across 105 years of language innovation with this fascinating account of words we now take for granted, but which were once linguistic newcomers. Each decade of the twentieth century has its own chapter, and master of words John Ayto paints a vivid picture of the events, preoccupations and influences which helped shape the words of that era.

Each chapter includes an A-Z listing of words which were first recorded in the decade, together with a definition and an explanation of their origin. A final chapter includes vocabulary developments in the new millennium.

Can you guess which decade these words first appeared in the *Oxford English Dictionary*? (answers at the end of this release).

1. **Tabloid journalism:** 1900s/1930s/1950s?
2. **Soap opera:** 1930s/1940s/1970s?
3. **Streaking:** 1950s/1960s/1970s?

4. **Sunday supplement:** 1900s/1950s?/1980s?
5. **Boat people:** 1960s/1970s/1980s?
6. **UFOs:** 1930s/1950s/1970s?
7. **Sliced bread:** 1920s/1940s/1950s?
8. **Sloane Ranger:** 1930s/1970s/1980s?
9. **Essex Girl:** 1980s/1990s/2000+?
10. **Senior citizen:** 1920s/1930s/1940s?

John Ayto is one of Britain's most established dictionary writers, the editor of *Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*, and author of several books about the English language. Oxford books by John Ayto include *The Oxford Dictionary of Rhyming Slang*, *The Oxford Dictionary of Modern Slang*, and *20th Century Words*.

Movers and Shakers is based on John Ayto's critically acclaimed *Twentieth Century Words* (OUP, 1999). Full of surprises, this book is both a glimpse of the past and a handbook for today.

Publishes 12 October 2006, price £12.99 paperback

For more information or to interview John Ayto, please contact Kate Farquhar-Thomson on 07967 099456 or kate.farquhar-thomson@oup.com

Answers to the quiz: 1. 1900s (1901), 2. 1930s (1939), 3. 1970s (1973), 4. 1900s (1905), 5. 1970s (1977), 6. 1950s (1953), 7. 1950s (1958), 8. 1970s (1975), 9. 1990s (1991), 10. 1930s (1938)