

ABOUT OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

Oxford University Press (OUP) is dedicated to improving communication through an understanding of, and a passion for, language around the globe.

As experts in children's language, OUP is constantly listening to Australian children and reflecting on their use of language in order to develop an understanding of the challenges they are facing.

The Oxford Children's Word of the Year competition is one of the ways OUP engages with the ever changing language of Australian children.

The [Oxford Australian Children's Word of the Year](#) was announced Thursday, 8 November, 2018.



AUSTRALIAN CHILDREN'S WORD OF THE YEAR THE PROCESS

OUP invited primary school students from their Foundation year to Grade 6 to write about a word that best reflected their lives and interests today, whether in the playground or wider community.

Students from primary schools in rural, regional and metropolitan Australia provided their entries, informing OUP of the words and themes that interest, inspire and concern them in their everyday lives.

From 500 entries completed in September 2018, the shortlist and Australian Children's Word of the Year were chosen.

The judges of the competition represented the Australian National Dictionary Centre, Oxford University Press, and academics. They were presented with lists of the most common words and themes from all of the entries, and after reading the entries, they provided their feedback on the most significant words used by the children.

MEET OUR EXPERT JUDGING PANEL

LEE WALKER

Lee Walker is Director of School Publishing for Oxford University Press in Australia. She is also President of the Australian Publishers Association. Lee has worked in the Australian educational publishing industry for 27 years, and has extensive publishing experience in primary literacy and mathematics.

MARK GWYNN

Mark Gwynn is a researcher and editor at the Australian National Dictionary Centre (ANDC) at the Australian National University. The ANDC edits Australian Oxford dictionaries for Primary and Secondary schools, and is Australia's premier research centre on the Australian English lexicon. Mark is the editor of numerous dictionaries including the *Australian Concise Oxford Dictionary* and the *Australian Pocket Oxford Dictionary*.

JAMES ARVANITAKIS

Professor James Arvanitakis is Pro Vice-Chancellor of the Graduate Research School at Western Sydney University. He is also a lecturer in Humanities and a member of the University's Institute for Culture and Society. James was the founding Head of The Academy at Western Sydney University that received an Australian Financial Review higher education excellence award (2016) and the Western Sydney Leadership Dialogue Excellence in Education Award (2017).

James is internationally recognised for his innovative teaching style and was the recipient of the Prime Minister's University Teacher of the Year Award in 2012 and an Eminent Researcher Award from the Australia India Education Council in 2015. James' research areas include citizenship, resilience, trust and the future of universities, and he has authored over 100 articles and several books. James is a regular media commentator appearing on ABC TV.

DAVID ASTLE

David Astle is a full-time word nerd, making crosswords, columns and books, including *Wordburger* and *The Gargantuan Book of Words*. David is a regular presenter on ABC Radio Melbourne, as well as the language guru on ABC's *News Breakfast*. You may also recognise David as the dictionary man on SBS's *Letters and Numbers*.

OXFORD
AUSTRALIAN
CHILDREN'S
WORD OF THE YEAR
2018



CREATIVITY

In their entries, children referenced **CREATIVITY**
in relation to:

Drawing &
writing

Music

Games

Make-
believe

Woodwork

Play

AUSTRALIAN CHILDREN ON 'CREATIVITY'

"Creativity is important to me because it makes me feel like I can do anything. When I draw it feels like I'm free because I can draw whatever I want. Writing is good too because I can write whatever is going on in my head and it won't bother me anymore."

Harper, Year 6

"My life is full of creativity like building lego cities from scratch! Doing experiments and failing at building rafts and getting drenched in the river!"

Callan, Year 5

AUSTRALIAN CHILDREN ON 'CREATIVITY'



“Courage is provided
Remember to always believe in creating
things
Every day you will find something to create
Always think you can do it
Take risks and you’ll get better
I know it can be hard
Very hard to believe
In everything you do on creativity
Turns out to be amazing
You know if it doesn’t work try again”
Zoe, Year 3



“Being creative can mean lots of different
things to different people. Creative should
be the word of the year because you can
always make mistakes and turn those
mistakes into your amazing artwork.”
Lexie, Year 2

AUSTRALIAN CHILDREN ON 'CREATIVITY'

"My life is about creativity. It is because there are so many places you can see creativity. You see it on the street when they do paintings on the walls on the streets. Also when you go to the playgrounds at school and you see creativity in games people play. You see creativity in stories children write."

Chloe, Year 5



To be creative means to me to be full of ideas and to think outside the box ... When I am being creative I feel like there are no rules holding me back, and the possibilities and ideas flow freely. There is no one there to judge or criticise my work, so there is no pressure to get it right the first try."

Harper, Year 6



CREATIVITY ACROSS THEMES

Creativity was also present in entries in which other words were nominated, from the pieces on dance and ballet to one on being artistic ("Art calms me down and I become silent. Art inspired me to illustrate books," Jenna, Year 4) and another on imagination ("Imagination is part of being creative! People use it to make movies, food, drinks and buildings ... imagination is the beauty of being creative. It is two brains stuck together. It brightens up my day," Grace Year 1).

Creativity was also expressed in the wildly imaginative works of fiction the students produced.

EXAMPLES OF CHARACTERS CREATED BY STUDENTS

- The hen who does magic when she sneezes
- Jeffrey, the psycho who was plotting world domination, and his arch-nemesis, Zook
- Valkyrie who has magic in her blood
- Intergalactic Boy who shoots lasers from his hand
- The El Corsair gang, living on the outskirts of Los Angeles in 2020
- A fox named Jeff who lives with a panther named Madox
- An adventurous snail in New York
- Grumpy Gerald from Happyland
- Competitors in the 2099 Gymnastics Galaxy Games, a mermaid called Ava, Cassidy Comet and Princess SnaggyPuss
- The Box who lives in Toy Galaxy
- Breeze, the son of Windy and Wind
- Phoena the phoenix who brings laughter to the jungle
- Pink unicorns
- The heroic children of Hercules, who sailed from Olympus to bring back Poseidon's Trident from the Island of Happiness
- And spies, aliens, ninjas, skeletons and vampires

THE JUDGES' COMMENTS ON 'CREATIVITY'

LEE WALKER, DIRECTOR OF SCHOOL PUBLISHING, OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

The theme creativity came through strongly in children's writing samples from all over Australia. Children wrote about 'a ticking mind of ideas ready to come out to the real world', attributed 'creative thinking' to becoming a times table master in year 3, and wrote about how 'being creative can mean a lot of different things to different people'. The children's writing submissions show us how motivated they are to think about the world and how best to express their individuality.

JAMES ARVANITAKIS, PRO VICE-CHANCELLOR, THE GRADUATE RESEARCH SCHOOL, WESTERN SYDNEY UNIVERSITY

Creativity has become the skill that we are all speaking about. It can be used to confront some of the world's greatest challenges in new ways – and this is our hope for this generation.

MARK GWYNN, EDITOR, AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL DICTIONARY CENTRE

It was pleasing to see the words creativity and creative feature so prominently in children's responses this year. The responses reveal the absolute joy that children find in all manner of creative endeavours—writing stories, making things, inventing games, drawing and painting, dancing, and playing music. The words the children used to describe creativity show a deep understanding of the role the imagination plays in both artistic and physical expression. The responses also reveal an appreciation of the role of creativity in the experience of learning and education more generally.

DAVID ASTLE, AUTHOR AND ABC MELBOURNE PRESENTER

Creativity is strongly linked to fun and beauty, whether that's drawing, music or Lego-play. One writer coined the term 'sand building', which seems a more imaginative label for the old-school phrase of making sandcastles. Using words in different ways is also found under the creative umbrella.

THE SHORTLISTED WORDS

ENVIRONMENT

“Stop! We are killing nature. We are killing it because: 1. We are throwing out plastic. 2. Littering. 3. Hunting... we need to protect our nature and environment!”
Lilly, Year 2

“Bobo Bushbanger had felt that had finally done something in his life. He had contributed to saving marine life, an achievement that many could not complete. Bobo drifted into sleep dreaming of the lives he saved.” Sai, Year 5

“There are delightful waterfalls and amazing sights to see. There is the smell of freshness, tropical fruit and destruction of trees. That is depressing. We need to stop for the lives of us and other animals. Go enjoy rainforests while they’re still there!” Scarlett, Year 3

THE JUDGES' COMMENTS ON 'ENVIRONMENT'

LEE WALKER

It is not surprising to see a lot of children’s writing focussed on the environment, and while this theme was approached by many kids within the context of how we need to do better to look after our world (including a very strong opinion piece about hunting protected species), it also inspired a lot of children to write imaginative stories, including a fabulous adventure story set in the Amazon Rainforest and being bitten by an anaconda while lying on a leaf that was as big as an elephant’s ear.

JAMES ARVANITAKIS

The environment remains the major challenge of our time! It is amazing that young people see the vulnerability of the planet in a way the rest of us do not – maybe it is because they themselves are vulnerable!

MARK GWYNN

The environment has once again featured prominently in the words that Australian children choose to write about. This is not a surprise given the ongoing debate over tackling climate change. This year has also seen severe drought in eastern Australia, as well as vocal opposition to the introduction of bans on plastic shopping bags in a number of states. In the meantime Australian children continue to voice their love of nature and the need to reduce waste and pollution. A number of the stories written by children this year not only demonstrate their understanding of environmental issues, but a desire to become part of the solution. One young writer’s story on the topic of pollution included an invention for cleaning up plastic from the world’s oceans.

DAVID ASTLE

The environment is foremost the home of animals, from lions to eagles to turtles. Living in the same space – the forest and oceans – is the human animal, the culprit behind pollution, most notably plastic. We all need to be more responsible, from picking up litter to preparing nude food (food with next to no packaging).

TECHNOLOGY

“One day there was an iPad that was always played and a computer that was never played. The computer was sad and lonely. Everybody said, “Computers are gross!” William, Year 2

“Bam! Billy stared at the technology and he could not take his eyes off it. He was hypnotised and the technology switched on and Billy played it but he was still hypnotised. Billy was so addicted to it” Blake, Year 2

THE JUDGES' COMMENTS ON 'TECHNOLOGY'

LEE WALKER

Technology pervades Australian children’s lives, and based on the writing submissions, is especially appealing to boys of all ages, but also interests girls. I learned that a ‘pixel laser is a massive plasma canon’ (Jesse, Year 1); that there is a camera that spies use that has very special powers (Ella, Year 3); and that time travel is possible if you mix ‘thrilloxide’, ‘dioxide’, ‘comboxide’ and, most importantly, demonoxide (Jensen, Year 3).

JAMES ARVANITAKIS

Technology is everywhere – in everything we touch. Our lives are almost impossible to envisage without technology and these words capture how this plays out.

DAVID ASTLE

Technology is often bundled up with games. Pixels and lasers pop up a few times, but the underlying action is to play, where videos and computers offer the escape of games. Colours and sound effects, as well as numbers and exclamation marks, are all prominent across this topic.

MARK GWYNN

Many of the responses relating to the theme of technology demonstrate how the world of computing and the Internet have become integrated into the lives of Australian children today. The choice of the word gaming comes as no surprise – as a child of the 70s and 80s I loved the escape and entertainment provided by video game consoles like Atari, and arcade games at the local shops. But let's face it—the dazzling graphics, diversity, and sophistication of games today, combined with their accessibility, make them even more ubiquitous in the lives of children. Many of the responses relating to technology reveal an interest in the imaginative possibilities of this field: cameras that destroy, a pixelated universe, and memes that have agency. My favourite story is of a sad underutilised computer and popular iPad who live together in a 'boring office' in Sydney.

RESILIENCE (INCLUDES BRAVERY, CONFIDENCE AND PERSISTENCE)

"Confidence is a feeling inside of you, your confidence helps you achieve things. Your confidence is also a part of you, you need your confidence otherwise you would not be able to do much." Erin, Year 3

"Bravery lets you be free and do what you want to do, not letting other people tell you all the time. Bravery can help you with your courage with writing, sports and other things you do." Goldie, Year 3

"Lucy grins at me with delight and we bounce over to join the other girls playing chasey. I feel like I will enjoy school I lot more now I'm growing my resilience!" Matilda, Year 4

THE JUDGES' COMMENTS ON 'RESILIENCE'

LEE WALKER

Resilience: My favourite submission was an acrostic story called 'Be Brave, Gillian Wong!' and is about the character's experience of being bullied and how her resilience pulled her through. Its opening paragraph hooked me straight in: 'Being different is hard. My name and where I'm from is the hardest part. Gillian Wong: I hate that name because people call me names'.

Confidence: I read a terrific narrative illustrating that just because you're not the most popular kid in school doesn't mean that you should have the confidence to express yourself, and that you should never give up on your dreams. A classic story about school and friendships, and how to confidently express your individuality.

MARK GWYNN

The words associated with resilience that were chosen by children this year — persistence, courage, bravery, and confidence— certainly resonated with some of my experiences growing up: the persistence required to reach your goals, the courage and bravery to stand up to bullies and to face your fears, and the confidence that can develop as a result of these. The resilience expressed in the children's responses often hints at very personal experiences in overcoming adversity and fear. The words persistence, courage, bravery, and confidence are used in the stories to encourage and motivate, and denote qualities that children aspire to.

DAVID ASTLE

Resilience and confidence and bravery (or courage) are all about facing challenges, the secret ingredients to coping, to growing. Dreams are mentioned, those things we desire, and how we need to find that inner strength to reach them. That dream might be claiming a trophy, making the dance team, or reaching the safety of home when surrounded by the unfamiliar.

OTHER COMMON THEMES

Family &
friends

Sport &
activity

Love,
happiness,
hope & joy

Fantasy

Adventures

School &
learning

WORDS THAT STUDENTS SEE AS IMPORTANT

INTEGRITY

“There was a girl, one day she met a stranger who wanted her to do the wrong thing! She did the right thing which was integrity by saying no.” Ava, Year 1

RESPECT

“Definition of respect: a feeling of deep admiration for someone or something elicited by their abilities, qualities, or achievements. Are you born with respect? I question that every day of the week.” Ryan, Year 6

KINDNESS

“Kindness is more than a thing. Kindness is an action that can start with just one person picking up someone else’s rubbish.” Niamh, Year 3

CARING

“Caring to me is being kind to each other and not being a bully ... Caring is also getting along with each other.” Timothy, Year 3

HOPE

“Hope makes a good mood in me. For me hope is caring, connecting, being courageous to the world. When you have hope in your heart you will never give up.” Thom, Year 3

TRENDS BY AGE GROUP

Early years

- Many younger students wrote about animals, including dogs, rabbits, orangutans and horses.
- Students in the younger years also used many words of resilience and empowerment, including persistent, resilience, confidence, motivation, bravery and aspiration.

Middle years

- Middle year students wrote about family and friendship, with some more creative themes of aliens, magic, fairies, mermaids, unicorns and pirates.
- Gaming emerged as a significant interest in the middle years.
- Words on the theme of the environment and the natural world commonly appeared in this age group's writing.

Upper years

- In the older age group, sport appeared prominently in writing samples. Some of the most popular sports mentioned included gymnastics, football, soccer, dance and basketball.
- The older students used more dramatic words, which point to a preference for fiction writing. These included unexpected, unpredictable, surprised, spontaneous, amazing, awesome, fantastic and chaos.

