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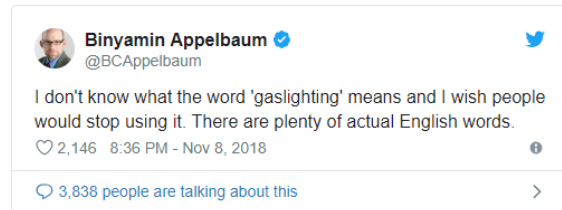
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Trending: 'gaslight'

Lookups spiked 14,000% on November 8th, 2018.

Why are people looking up *gaslight*?

Gaslighting shone much brighter than you would expect a gaslight to shine on November 8th, 2018, after *New York Times* writer Binyamin Appelbaum took to Twitter to vent about it, appearing to cast doubts on the existence of the word. Respondents to Appelbaum's tweet seemed uncertain as to whether he was attempting to *gaslight* them, or was merely displaying a deep and abiding ignorance of the way in which language functions.



What does *gaslight* mean?

We define *gaslighting* as "to attempt to make (someone) believe that he or she is going insane (as by subjecting that person to a series of experiences that have no rational explanation)."

Where does *gaslight* come from?

The modern sense of *gaslighting* comes from *Gas Light*, a play (1938) by British writer Patrick Hamilton, subsequently made into British and American films entitled *Gaslight* (1940 and 1944), in which a man attempts to trick his wife into believing that she is going insane. Used as a verb and verbal noun, *gaslighting* has been in this figurative use since at least 1956.

What is unusual about this use of *gaslight*?

Naturally, *gaslighting* may also be defined more literally as "lighting by means of gaslight." This older sense dates back to the beginning of the 19th century.

CITE

These, however, were but imperfect trials, when compared with those made in 1805 at Messrs. Philips and Lee's cotton mills at Manchester; and upon the results of which, all subsequent procedures, with regard to gas lighting, may be said to be founded.

— *The Analectic Magazine* (Philadelphia, PA), Jul. 1816

Trend Watch is a data-driven report on words people are looking up at much higher search rates than normal. While most trends can be traced back to the news or popular culture, our focus is on the lookup data rather than the events themselves.

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TEST YOUR VOCABULARY

Difficult Vocab Quiz



Which is a synonym of **discomfit**?

soothe

eliminate

nonplus

supersede



Can you spell these 10 commonly misspelled words?

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Trump & Acosta Spar Over 'Invasion'

CNN reporter questions President.



Grande: Davidson Clinging to 'Relevancy'

Ariana Grande slams ex-fiancé.



A Little 'Argy Bargy' in Tottenham/Man City Match

Commentator uses term during football match



Director Wray: Devices Were Brought to FBI 'Seriatim'

Chris Wray addresses recent spate of mail bombs

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ASK THE EDITORS



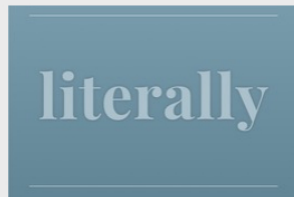
How Do You Pronounce 'Vase'?

And is one way more correct than the others?



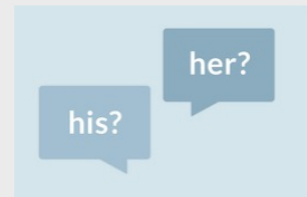
Ghost Word

The story of an imaginary word that managed to sneak past



Literally

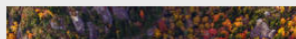
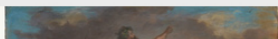
How to use a word that (literally) drives some people



Is Singular 'They' a Better Choice?

The awkward case of 'his or her'

WORD GAMES





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Autumn Words of the Day 2018

(Secret October WOTD Quiz)

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