

NEWS LESSON

From the Manosphere to a Joke About Your Dog

BEFORE YOU READ

1 Warm up

Talk about these questions with a partner.

1. What does a word of the year actually measure?
2. Can teasing and ranking be told apart reliably?
3. Who decides what a word means: its first users or its current ones?

2 Key words

These words are in the article. Write the letter of the meaning (A to H) in each box.

1	**manosphere**	☐	A	an official opinion or judgement
2	**hardens**	☐	B	strict plans for diet or behaviour
3	**coined**	☐	C	in a clear and direct way
4	**upstaged**	☐	D	large in size or amount
5	**explicitly**	☐	E	online spaces where some men talk about status and dominance
6	**regimes**	☐	F	having your attention taken by someone else
7	**substantial**	☐	G	becomes fixed and less open to change
8	**verdict**	☐	H	invented a new word or phrase

3 Read

Read the article and underline the key words from task 2. The paragraphs are numbered.

Collins' word of the year has changed hands several times. What happens when the vocabulary of ranking people becomes a punchline?

1 Collins named mogging its word of the year on 3 November 2026, defining it as outperforming or outshining someone or something else, and reporting that its use rose 210% across the year. The dictionary notes that Generation Z and Alpha tend to deploy it playfully and ironically, for the moment somebody is upstaged. A dog can mog a family photograph. A teenager can mog an elite athlete.

2 The route it took is the interesting part. Mogging is thought to be a shortening of AMOG, alpha male of the group. It surfaces around 2016 as gym vocabulary for the most dominant man present, then hardens into a verb inside the manosphere, where to mog someone was to make them visibly inferior in appearance, confidence or status. It is difficult to imagine a less playful origin, and about a decade separates that usage from the dog.

3 Comparison is not an invention of the internet. People have always registered who runs faster, performs better or walks into a room more easily, and slang gives that a shorthand. Teasing between friends is harmless when everybody enjoys it.

4 A system that sorts people by their faces is a different proposition from a joke, and this word has lived in both. The difference is not always visible from outside, either: a comparison posted in public outlives the room it was made in, and the tone of voice and the friendship behind it do not travel with it.

5 The clinical concern attaches to the neighbouring trend, not the joke. Johns Hopkins All Children's Hospital has warned about looksmaxxing, and Dr Jasmine Reese, director of its adolescent clinic, reports a substantial rise in teenagers and pre-teens with eating disorders and body dysmorphia, often after following restrictive regimes learned online. Some apps score a jawline or cheekbones with artificial intelligence. The distinction is worth keeping: looksmaxxing concerns altering your own appearance, while mogging concerns outdoing somebody else's.

6 It does not follow that a teenager saying the word endorses any of this. Words detach from their origins routinely, and most speakers inherit a term without its history. Some newer uses are explicitly mocking the business of ranking people, which is a reasonable fate for a word that began by taking it seriously.

7 There is also the familiar complaint that young people are wrecking English, which this word complicates nicely. Mogging was not coined by teenagers. It was coined by grown men in gyms and forums, and teenagers are the ones who took the teeth out of it. Slang travels upward as often as down.

8 What a word of the year really records is attention rather than approval. Collins' shortlist this year included firewave, for a run of urban wildfires in quick succession, and P(doom), an estimate of how likely artificial intelligence is to end civilisation. Dictionary.com, separately, chose maxxing. There is no single official verdict, only organisations noticing what people said a great deal.

9 The question mogging leaves behind is not whether the word should exist. It is what a speaker is doing with it: admiring a performance, laughing with a friend, or entering somebody into a competition they never agreed to join.

Sources: Collins Dictionary, Word of the Year 2026; Associated Press, Collins Dictionary chooses mogging as its 2026 word of the year; Johns Hopkins All Children's Hospital, Looksmaxxing trend poses risks for boys and teens. Picture: .

4 True, false or not given

Circle **T** (true), **F** (false) or **NG** (the article does not say).

1. The earliest users of mogging were adults. T F NG
2. Collins and Dictionary.com chose the same word for the year. T F NG
3. The writer thinks a teenager who says mogging is endorsing its original meaning. T F NG
4. Maxxing was used more often than mogging this year. T F NG
5. Mogging was already in use around ten years before Collins named it word of the year. T F NG

5 Vocabulary

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed.

ambiguity	complicates	deploy	inherit	outlives	remnant	shorthand	surfaces

1. Advertisers often _____ youth slang in the hope of sounding current.
2. Children usually _____ their accent from the people around them.
3. A comment posted in public often _____ the mood in which it was made.
4. The discovery that adults coined the word _____ the claim that teenagers are damaging English.
5. A rumour that _____ on an obscure forum can reach millions within hours.
6. A text abbreviation is a _____ that saves time but can lose nuance.

6 Word forms

Use the word in brackets to make a word that fits the gap.

1. The _____ of the term from gym slang to a family joke surprised many. (EVOLVE)
2. Critics say some apps encourage an unhealthy _____ with appearance. (OBSESS)
3. The remark was meant as teasing, but its target found it _____ . (HUMILIATE)
4. There is a _____ difference between friendly banter and public ranking. (SIGNIFY)
5. _____ of a word's origins rarely worries the people who use it. (IGNORE)

7 Language focus: prepositions

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed. Some prepositions change the meaning of the whole phrase. Check whether the word before the gap links to a cause, an origin or a result.

beneath	between	by	from	into	to	toward

1. The clinical concern attaches _____ the neighbouring trend, not the joke.
2. Words detach _____ their origins routinely.
3. It then hardens _____ a verb inside the manosphere.
4. Mogging was not coined _____ teenagers.
5. The distinction _____ looksmaxxing and mogging is worth keeping.

SPEAK

8 Talk about it

Discuss in pairs or small groups. Give reasons for your answers.

1. The article says a word of the year records attention rather than approval. Is that right?
2. Is it fair to judge people by the slang they use?
3. Should a dictionary mention a word's uncomfortable origins?

9 Role-play: is it just a joke?

Work in pairs. Read your card, then have the conversation. Swap roles and do it again.

Student A · the parent

You read that mogging began in gyms and online groups that ranked people by looks. Your teenager uses the word all the time. Ask what it means to them. Decide if they can keep using it.

Student B · the teenager

You use mogging as a joke about dogs, football and photos. Explain why it's harmless. Say what your friends mean by it. Try to keep using it.

Useful phrases

I read where that word comes from.
What do you and your friends mean by it?
It's just a joke, I promise.
I'm not sure it's harmless, though.
Would you say it to someone who wasn't laughing?
Let's agree to be careful with it.

Afterwards, tell the class: did the parent change their mind, and why?

ANSWER KEY

2 Key words

1 E · 2 G · 3 H · 4 F · 5 C · 6 B · 7 D · 8 A

4 True, false or not given

1 T · 2 F · 3 F · 4 NG · 5 T

5 Vocabulary

1 deploy · 2 inherit · 3 outlives · 4 complicates · 5 surfaces · 6 shorthand

6 Word forms

1 evolution · 2 obsession · 3 humiliating · 4 significant · 5 ignorance

7 Language focus

1 to · 2 from · 3 into · 4 by · 5 between

This lesson is free. If it saved you time, you can support johnplusnews at **ko-fi.com/johnplusenglish**