

Editor's notes:

Then sing, young hearts that are full of cheer
 With never a thought of sorrow;
 The old goes out, but the glad young year
 Comes merrily in tomorrow.

-- Emily Huntington Miller

January was named for the Roman god Janus, the god of doors and gates, who held the first day of the month sacred. Janus is often depicted with two faces, one looking forward and the other backward. This may have led to the practice of taking stock of oneself and making resolutions to change.

And speaking of resolutions, do you ever find yourself in a conversation with someone where all you're doing is thinking of what to say next even while the person is still talking? If I had just one resolution to suggest for the new year, I would suggest that we all become better listeners. Instead of mentally planning a rebuttal, commit to really focusing on the other person's true message. Perhaps, this might reduce many misunderstandings.

Although New Year's Eve can be pretty exciting, here are a few more dates in January to consider:

The Twelfth Night, January 6 -- This night marks the end of the 12 days of Christmas, that is, the last six days of the old year and the first six days of the new. It is said to commemorate the visit of the Magi to the infant Jesus. In medieval celebrations in England and Ireland, people drank "lamb's wool," a concoction of cider or ale mixed with spices and apples. Leftovers would be poured on apple trees to ensure a plentiful crop. In other cultures, a king's cake with a bean or trinket baked inside was served on this day. Custom held that whoever found the trinket would have good luck for the year. In Portugal, the lucky recipient was also charged with baking the cake the following year. While some still bake and eat king's cakes today, most people observe Twelfth Night by taking down their holiday decorations.

Old Christmas, January 7 -- In Eastern Christianity, Christmas is celebrated on January 7. This practice dates back to 1582, when Pope Gregory XII introduced the Gregorian calendar. This re-jigging of the calendar was not accepted by the Eastern Church which continued to use the Julian calendar. This refusal also meant that those following the eastern rites had Christmas falling two weeks later on January 7.

Organize Your Home Day, January 14 -- Held every year on the second Monday in January, it's a day to organize your home and clear out clutter. Increasingly, people are enlisting professionals to help bring order to their homes and lives.

St. Anthony's Day, January 17 -- While many Catholics know St. Anthony as the patron saint of lost items, this 2nd and 3rd century Egyptian hermit is also known as the patron saint of domestic animals and the patriarch of all monks.

100 Anniversary of the Boy Scout Movement, January 24 -- On this date in 1908, Robert Baden-Powell, a lieutenant-general in the British Army, published *Scouting for Boys*, the first book in a series of six. Many historians consider this the beginning of the Boy Scout movement which today boasts more than 28 million members (both boys and girls) in 155 countries. In the United States alone there are currently more than 2.8 million boys and 2.7 million girls in the scout movement.

Freethinker's Day, January 29 -- The Truth Seeker Co., a publishing firm established in 1873, sponsors this day as an annual celebration of the birth of Thomas Paine. He was one of the leaders of the American Revolution, as well as the author of *Common Sense* and *The Age of Reason*.



A Colourful Test: *Can you match these words and phrases to their “colourful” definitions?*

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|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. Faithful | A) White elephant |
| 2. An award given for excellence | B) Wearing rose-coloured glasses |
| 3. Discovered in the act | C) Gold star |
| 4. Jealous | D) In a black mood |
| 5. Flushed with embarrassment | E) Red as a beet |
| 6. Appearing scared | F) A gray area |
| 7. Optimistic viewpoint | G) Talking up a blue streak |
| 8. Having a negative frame of mind | H) In the red |
| 9. Cowardly | I) Caught red-handed |
| 10. Owing money | J) True blue |
| 11. Happy | K) Green with envy |
| 12. Chatting excessively | L) Yellow |
| 13. An expensive item of little value | M) White as a sheet |
| 14. Angry | N) In the pink |
| 15. An ambivalent issue | O) Seeing red |

Answers: 1J; 2C; 3I; 4K; 5E; 6M; 7B; 8D; 9L; 10H; 11N; 12G; 13A; 14O; 15F

New Year’s Dishonor List: January 1

On this first day of the first month of the year, the Unicorn Hunters of Lake Superior, Michigan release their list to banish hackneyed expressions from the Queen’s English.

The Unicorn Hunters, which proposed their first List of Banished words back in 1975, reside at Lake Superior State University. Their purpose in publishing the List over the last 32 years was to banish certain words for “Mis-Use, Over-Use and General Uselessness.”

Through the years, LSSU has received thousands of nominations for the List. Word-watchers target pet peeves from everyday speech, as well as from the news, fields of education, technology, advertising, politics and more. A committee makes a final cut in late December. The list is released on New Year’s Day.

Here are a few expressions that made the List last year, along with the names and commentary from some of the word-watchers involved:

List of Banished Words from 2006

SURREAL – One part opiate of the masses, 13 parts overuse. Oddly, news anchor and television small talk is becoming more surreal. “Dreams are surreal, not daily adjectives.” – Tracy from Murray, Ky.

HUNKER DOWN – To brace oneself, in anticipation of media onslaught. Trotted out in reports about everything from politics to hurricanes. “I have a hankering to ban all of this hunkering.” – Kate Rabe Forgach, Fort Collins, Colo.

PERSON OF INTEREST – Found within the context of legal commentary, but seldom encountered at cocktail parties. “People with guns want to talk with you.” – Melissa Carroll from Greensboro, NC. “Does this mean the rest of us are too boring to deal with?” – Patricia Johnson from Mechanicsville, Va.

COMMUNITY OF LEARNERS – A five-dollar phrase on a nickel-errand. Value-added into many higher education mission statements. “Not to be confused with ‘school.’” – Jim Howard from Mishawa, Ind.