

2nd June 2022

Words

“A very great part of the mischiefs that vex this world arises from words.”

Edmund Burke, *Letter* (c 1795)

Wordle is a web-based word game owned and published by the *New York Times*. Since the paper bought the rights to the game earlier this year for an undisclosed seven-figure sum, it has gained world-wide popularity. Players have six attempts to guess a five-letter word and can share their results through social media. And it can become addictive, believe me ...

A number of “clones” have appeared. There’s *Absurdle*, where the target word changes with each guess; *Redactle*, a “Wikipedia” article with most of its text hidden till a player chooses which words to reveal in order to identify it; *Airportle*, guessing airports based on the IATA code; *Tradle*, identifying a country depending on its exports; and the basis of *Sweardle* is self-explanatory. I’m looking for someone to come up with *Theordle*, where the chosen word is some theological term; or *Trartanarmydle*, the task being to name someone who played football for Scotland.

It’s fun playing with words, as *Wordle* illustrates. It’s fun inventing word-games as these variants suggest. Words matter. The way we communicate, explain, advise, offer comfort matters all the time.

Letitia Elizabeth Landon, the 19th century English poet and novelist, wrote this in *Ethel Churchill* in 1837:

*'Tis a strange mystery, the power of words!
Life is in them, and death. A word can send
The crimson colour hurrying to the cheek,
Hurrying with many meanings; or can turn
The current cold and deadly to the heart.
Anger and fear are in them; grief and joy
Are on their sound; yet slight, impalpable:
A word is but a breath of passing air.*

If words matter, and if they have the power Landon suggests, how might we use them today? Will they be clear and helpful, or will they be wrapped up in a puzzle, just as *Wordle* does with its words?

A prayer for today

*The Psalmist tells me about God’s words: “Your Word is a lamp for me feet
and a light for my path.” No puzzle there, then! Amen*