Lexicographers - people who compile and edit dictionaries - are always on the lookout for neologisms that have made their way into the language. Words added to the 2007 edition of the Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary, Eleventh Edition included Bollywood, crunk, ginormous, hardscape, speed dating, and sudoku. Perhaps you can create a neologism that everyone will want to use!

You will work with your group to create a thematic word study poster. There are nine elements in the project, so each member of the group will be responsible for three of them. In addition, all members of the group will work together to create one neologism which follows basic etymological theory (see handout).

All of the words that you collect will relate to a theme that your group has chosen. Sample themes are: environment, education, health, business, merchandizing, and space exploration; many others are possible.

Your poster must include the following: (Examples = at least five, except where noted)
1. Examples of borrowed words from other languages (not as a root, the whole word, i.e., bouquet) with definition and etymology for each
2. Examples of compounds with explanation (briefcase comes from the need for a case to carry briefs, which are written documents)
3. Examples of words that have entered the language from proper names (Levis) or brand names (Kleenex)
4. Examples of words that came from mythology, with explanation (atlas comes from the name of Greek god who held up the world; an atlas pictures part of the world)
5. Examples of words that came from acronyms, with explanation (AIDS comes from Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome, which is a serious disease)
6. Examples of portmanteau words, with explanation (brunch comes from breakfast and lunch and means a meal eaten at a time of day between those meal times)
7. Examples of words that have been truncated, with definition (math for mathematics)
8. Examples of idiomatic expressions, with explanation (the expression par for the course means what should be expected because of past experience; it is based on the literal meaning of par for the course which is the expected number of times a good player in golf will hit the ball to get it in all the holes)
9. At least one word with the story behind the word (a red herring is something that diverts from the main issue; it comes from a practice of dragging a cured fish through the woods to train, and sometimes confuse, hunting dogs)
10. The neologism that all members of the group created together, with its definition, what technique was used to create the word, and an example sentence

Your group will present your poster to the class, so make it interesting and informative. The more visually creative and unique (i.e., not repeating examples used by other groups) your poster, the higher your grade. Be sure to put your name on each of the parts that you complete. Posters should be no larger than 22” x 28”.

You may use our classroom dictionaries as well as any of my personal reference books, though you may not take these out of the room. Additional information may be found at the web sites listed below.

Wordorigins.org
Word-detective.com
Etymonline.com
Libraryspot.com

Date assigned: 9/4/07
Date due: 9/11/07
Points value: 45