

00:00:00	Sound Effect	Transition	<i>[Three gavel bangs.]</i>
00:00:02	Jesse Thorn	Host	Welcome to the <i>Judge John Hodgman</i> podcast. I'm Bailiff Jesse Thorn. We're in chambers this week, clearing the docket. And with me... is... the man known best for his Brooklyn General Store hat.
			<i>[John laughs.]</i>
			Of which my six-year-old son also has one.
00:00:21	John Hodgman	Host	That's right!
00:00:22	Jesse	Host	Judge John Hodgman.
00:00:23	John	Host	That's right! I can <u>see</u> you, Jesse Thorn. And you are looking well.
00:00:28	Jesse	Host	I'm wearing a summer—summer cardigan.
			<i>[Both laugh.]</i>
00:00:31	John	Host	Yeah, well, I mean, you—please bundle up. It's gotta be all the way down to a hundred degrees out there in Los Angeles!
00:00:37	Jesse	Host	There's only one climate zone in my house.
00:00:39	John	Host	Mm-hm.
00:00:40	Jesse	Host	<i>[Stifles laughter.]</i> And so when we set the thermostat to like, 78 or 80, which is usually what we do in the hottest parts of the year—
00:00:47	John	Host	Yeah.
00:00:48	Jesse	Host	—uh, somehow still in my office it is... 32 degrees. <i>[Laughs.]</i>
00:00:52	John	Host	Yeah.
00:00:53	Jesse	Host	So I am currently wearing shorts and a T-shirt, but over my T-shirt, I'm wearing a cashmere cardigan, and I'm also wearing, like, a—a—wool-lined slippers.
			<i>[Both laugh.]</i>
00:01:06	John	Host	You know, I think that that's the outfit of the pandemic. Like, we don't know what's happening.
			<i>[Jesse laughs.]</i>
			We don't know what we're preparing for. We don't know what's happening next. But I love a summer cardigan. That's why I call you Summer Cardie T!
00:01:18	Jesse	Host	Yeah. Thank you. <i>[Laughs.]</i>
00:01:19	John	Host	Yeah. You're welcome. I'm a dad.
00:01:22	Jesse	Host	Also outside my window right now, thanks to the current disaster situation in California, uh, they appear to be using red filters on the sky like they were shooting <i>Dune</i> .
00:01:32	John	Host	Yeah! Yeah. Well—
00:01:34	Jesse	Host	It may just be that they've got a few shots left for that Timothée Chalamet <i>Dune</i> .
00:01:39	John	Host	I—look. I will go on and on and on about that trailer.

[Jesse laughs.]

00:03:42 Emily Guest Um... Well, I mean, "discover" is an interesting word. What do you mean by "discover"?

00:03:48 John Host I don't know. Why don't you look it up?

[Emily laughs.]

00:03:49 Jesse Host Yeah. Look it up in the frickin' dictionary.

00:03:52 John Host *[Laughs.]* Alright, look. I'll explain—I'll explain. We've got a lot to cover today, and we're gonna have a lot of fun with words. But when I say, Emily, 'cause I have great respect for you, even though the Merriam-Webster Dictionary Twitter account is at war with me, once a month posting that a hotdog is a sandwich, that's okay. I'm gonna let that go. Gonna let that go.

But Emily Brewster and I have roots back in Western Massachusetts. Are you still out there in the Pioneer Valley, Emily?

00:04:16 Emily Guest I am!

00:04:18 John Host How are things out there? Hot? Hot and hazy?

00:04:19 Emily Guest They're beautiful! It's a rainy day today, and the rain feels really nice.

00:04:21 John Host Yeah. Terrific. And Emily—Emily works at the dictionary, the Merriam-Webster Dictionary. She is an editor there. And when I say she discovered the word "a," what I mean is, Emily, you realized that there is a usage of the word "a" that was not currently covered in the dictionary, and you got it in there. And it was, as you described, in the term—in the usage of, um... Well, why don't you give me an example that would be appropriate?

00:04:49 Emily Guest The example that's actually in the definition is "A triumphant Ms. Jones greeted her supporters." So the "a" there tells you that she's not always triumphant. That she is different from a—

00:05:00 John Host Right.

00:05:01 Emily Guest —a former, usual, or hypothetical condition.

00:05:04 John Host Right. And that's the example of usage in the dictionary. You put that in that dictionary.

00:05:08 Emily Guest That's right.

00:05:09 John Host When I say "an extremely talented Emily Brewster," first of all, you are always extremely talented, so it's—that doesn't even make sense. But an extremely talented Emily Brewster is researching "infodemic" for the dictionary. Is "an"—is that usage of "an" in the dictionary currently, or do I get one now?

00:05:30 Emily Guest No, that's in—you know, "an" is really just a variant of "a" (*ay*) or "a" (*uh*).

00:05:31 John Host Ugh. Augh. I thought I got—I thought I got one. Alright.

00:05:38 Emily Guest The dictionary's not really about glory... really.

[John and Jesse burst out laughing.]

00:05:45 John Host I strongly dis—I strongly disagree. You don't know the number of letters we got, and get every week! With people pedantically seeking glory by correcting my grammar and usage. We're gonna dig into it in

a moment, but first I need to say... you have a new podcast! Called *Word Matters*. Is that correct, Emily?

00:06:04 Emily Guest That is correct!

00:06:05 John Host Tell me about the podcast.

00:06:08 Emily Guest The podcast is for editors, chatting about things we uncover in the work of lexicography. So lexicography is—is really always a very solitary work. We don't generally talk to one another.

00:06:21 John Host Mm-hm.

00:06:22 Emily Guest When I first arrived at Merriam-Webster, you—we didn't use email that much yet. People were still passing around these slips of paper.

00:06:30 John Host Mm-hm.

00:06:31 Emily Guest Because you would never want to interrupt somebody while they were working.

00:06:32 John Host Mm-hm.

00:06:33 Emily Guest So it's very solitary work. But this podcast is for editors, talking about things we've discovered in the course of our work!

00:06:45 John Host So, like grammar rules, surprising word origins, the hidden weirdness of the English language?

00:06:51 Emily Guest Yes. Yes.

00:06:52 John Host That's amazing.

00:06:53 Emily Guest New words like "infodemic," or the use of "matriculate" that means "to proceed forth." Like, "The football player matriculated down the field." That is a—

00:07:03 John Host Whoa, whoa, whoa. That's an—?

00:07:05 Emily Guest Yeah! Yeah.

00:07:06 John Host That's a thing that happens in sports?

00:07:07 Jesse Host You've never—John, you've never heard Al Michael say that while calling Monday night football? *[Stifles laughter.]*

00:07:12 John Host No, I—I've gotta—I gotta start watching the sports!

00:07:15 Jesse Host *[Laughing]* "Herschel Walker matriculating down the field!"

00:07:18 John Host Matriculating down the field! Alright. So where and when can we listen to it? Is it "when" or "whem" can we listen to it?

00:07:24 Emily Guest *[Laughs.]* Um—uh—"whem"?

00:07:27 John Host *[Laughs.]* I just don't wanna—I don't wanna get in trouble.

[Emily laughs.]

Maybe—I mean—whem—?

00:07:31 Emily Guest It's available on all the platforms that people use to get their podcasts, or also at NEPM.org. That's New England Public Media—

00:07:41 John Host Ohhh!

00:07:42 Emily Guest —which is our local public radio and TV station. They just merged and became New England Public Media.

00:07:48 John Host Yeah! I—I fire up my smart speaker regularly to listen to New

England Public Media. Just to have a taste of the old, uh—the old public radio station that I used to listen to out there in Western Mass.

00:08:02 Emily Guest Aw.

00:08:03 John Host That's great. Yeah, I say, um... "Alexa? Play Huey Lewis and the News on New England Public Media."

[Jesse and John laugh.]

00:08:12 Crosstalk Crosstalk **John:** That's your running bit, Jesse, and I just stole it! *[Laughs.]*

Jesse: We should mention—*[laughs]*—

00:08:15 Jesse Host Alexa is the program director of New England Public Media. *[Laughs.]*

00:08:18 John Host That's right. So before we begin to clear the docket, I just wanna say here, I've been spending a lot of time at the Merriam-Webster website. Um, and a hotdog is defined as, "A frankfurter with a typically mild flavor, that is heated and usually served in a long, split roll." Says nothing about a sandwich. Terrific. Let's move on.

[Everyone stifles laughter.]

Jesse Thorn? Let's clear the docket.

00:08:42 Jesse Host Well, we're talking word origins. Here's something from Karen. She says:

"My husband insists on pronouncing the word 'origin' with the accent on the second syllable. Or-IJ-in."

[John laughs.]

"That is indeed how it's pronounced when it has an ending, such as 'original,' 'originally,' and 'originated.' Can his pronunciation be defended? Or may I continue to correct him when he says it?"

00:09:08 John Host So Emily, as a lexicographer, do—how much do you personally involve yourself in pronunciation issues? Or is that a separate team at the dictionary?

00:09:20 Emily Guest That is separate. We have a pronunciation editor, and he is in charge of all the pronunciations.

00:09:28 John Host And what do you think this person would say about "or-IJ-in"?

00:09:30 Emily Guest Well, it's not an established pronunciation. That is very clear.

[Jesse laughs.]

00:09:34 John Host Mm-hm. I, uh—I was about to come down hard on this person, 'cause I have always said "OR-ij-in", as in Stan Lee's Secret Origins of Marvel Comics. That's where every... white man my age learned that term. That's where—that's how you learn how all the people got their superpowers originally.

So Emily, do you agree that "OR-ij-in" is the way to say it? I know this is not your job.

00:09:58 Emily Guest It's not my job, but it's very clear that "OR-ij-in" is the only

established pronunciation, and that this shift in related words—you know, the—which syllable is stressed in a particular word for groups of words—this is really common, that they change.

- 00:10:13 John Host Yeah. How does the pronunciation editor (*edih-tor*)—did I say—*[laughs]*—"edih-tor." Now I have to say it wrong. How does the pronunciation editor (*edit-er*) track and update pronunciation? What do they do, go around and just listen to people talk?
- 00:10:27 Emily Guest Yeah, basically. I think he mostly stays in one place and listens to people talk.
- 00:10:32 Jesse Host Does he ever use one of those, uh, ear horns?
- [John and Jesse stifle laughter.]*
- Like—like sort of like you would imagine, like, an elderly Cyrano de Bergerac would use or whatever? With like a handle.
- 00:10:47 Emily Guest He actually has a door on his office. Most of us just have cubicles. But because he has to listen to audio—and I'm talking, like, back in the old days, when we were in the office together.
- 00:10:57 John Host Right. Together.
- 00:10:59 Emily Guest He has a real office, with a door that closes. So I have no idea. Maybe he's got ear horns. Maybe he has people coming in and out of there just very surreptitiously. I really don't know.
- 00:11:10 John Host Whoa. What is he listening to in there?
- 00:11:12 Emily Guest Probably this podcast.
- 00:11:14 John Host Yeah, I suppose so. So if I say "or-IJ-in, or-IJ-in, or-IJ-in, or-IJ-in, or-IJ-in," enough times, if I spam the machine, it could get into the dictionary?
- 00:11:22 Emily Guest *[Chuckles.]* No, I mean, it's gotta spread. It's gotta be widespread. It can't just be one very influential person using it. You know, they—
- 00:11:31 John Host I think you overestimate (*over-est-AH-mate*) me.
- 00:11:33 Emily Guest *[Laughs.]* But they—you know, this is—it's such a—this feature of the language, going from "origin" (*OR-ij-in*) to "original" (*or-IJ-in-uhl*) and "originated" (*or-IJ-in-ated*)...
- Like, if you wanted—if this man wants to always say "or-IJ-in," he's really setting himself up for some real difficulties! Like, he's going to have to say—we've got "simple," "simplify..." (*SIM-puhl*, *SIM-plih-fy*.) He's gonna have to say "simplicity" (*SIM-pliss-ih-ty*.)
- 00:11:58 John Host If only to be consistent.
- 00:12:00 Emily Guest Well, yeah! I mean, and why just stop at "or-IJ-in"?
- 00:12:04 John Host Yeah.
- 00:12:05 Emily Guest And you get to, like—you—like, "create," "creative," "crea...tivity"? (*Cree-ATE*, *cree-ATE-ive*, *cree-AY...tiv-ity*.)
- 00:12:10 John Host I don't think, in the experience of this podcast, it's really a priority among the men who listen to be consistent in their schemes. They mostly want attention. Let me give you an example similar to this. It's a pronunciation issue.

Nick wrote in saying, "I know and I am fine—" [*Laughs.*] Thank you. Very generous of you.

"I know and I am fine with the way people pronounce the word 'flaccid.' (*Flass-id.*) But I would appreciate it if the court would recognize it's supposed to be pronounced 'FLAK-sid.' As in 'accident' (*ax-ih-dent*) or 'accelerate.' (*Ek-sel-er-ate.*)"

Emily... I threw my computer into the garbage when I got this email.

[Emily laughs quietly.]

I was so mad. [*Laughs quietly.*] I had to go down to the recycling room and get it back. 'Cause you know what? I looked it up in the dictionary.

00:13:00 Emily Guest

Yeah.

00:13:01 John Host

"Flak-sid" is a—is an accepted pronunciation!

00:13:05 Emily Guest

It's true.

00:13:07 John Host

Had you known that?!

00:13:09 Emily Guest

I—well, yeah.

00:13:11 John Host

[Sighs.] I guess 'cause you work there.

[Jesse and John laugh.]

00:13:14 Jesse Host

John, you've seen her eyeglasses! You know—*[laughs]*—you know by her signature eyewear that she knows that there's multiple pronunciations that are acceptable for the word "flaccid"! (*Flass-id.*)

[John sighs.]

00:13:24 Emily Guest

Well, and the fact that "flass-id" is the normal—and it is the dominant pronunciation, "flass-id."

00:13:30 John Host

Right. Right.

00:13:31 Emily Guest

That is the dominant pronunciation. But it really—it really is kinda problematic, because one of the few rules that English pronunciation has that is really consistent, or almost entirely consistent, is that the letter C says "sss" when it has an I, E, or a Y after it. This is almost a sacred rule. It is so—it is just so consistent. Not—you know, not 100%.

00:13:56 John Host

Is it—is it—

00:13:57 Emily Guest

But the fact that this one word bucks that trend, I—I agree! It's kinda problematic.

00:14:03 Jesse Host

So you don't think this word should be allowed to get out there and do its thing.

00:14:08 Emily Guest

Oh, well—I mean, of course it should, and it is, and it does, and that's that. But I think the writer has got a point.

00:14:16 John Host

Ugh. I hate it when the writer has a point.

[Jesse laughs quietly.]

Nick? You have a point. Nick said:

"I know language evolves and grows, and that pronunciations are like dictionary definitions, descriptive, not proscriptive. But I say it the way it's spelled, with a hard and soft C, and I don't correct folks who say it with two soft Cs, and I would appreciate the same."

I have to afford him that grace. Or "grah-kay," as I say it.

00:14:41 Emily Guest *[Laughs.]* I think it's a pretty noble approach. Also, it's—I did notice that the OED only gives the "flak-sid" pronunciation—
[John makes a pained sound.]
—but that entry has not been touched since 1896.

00:14:55 John Host *[Sighs.]* So "flak-sid" is the or-IJ. That's the OR-ij-in-al version.

00:14:59 Emily Guest It is. It is.

00:15:00 John Host Right.

00:15:01 Emily Guest It wasn't "flass-id"—the now-dominant pronunciation was not in the Merriam-Webster Dictionary until, like, 1961.

00:15:08 John Host That was an incredible year.
[Everyone laughs quietly.]

00:15:10 Jesse Host Yeah.

00:15:11 John Host Well, alright, Nick. You won that round. What else do we got, Jesse?

00:15:12 Jesse Host That was what Bob Dylan, uh, wrote the song "The Times They Are a-Changin'" about.
[John and Emily laugh.]

00:15:19 John Host That's right, he was—oh, no, I was thinking of "Subterranean Homesick Blues." Why do I know even two Bob Dylan songs?

00:15:25 Jesse Host *[Laughing]* You're a middle-aged white man, John.

00:15:28 John Host I know, but it's not—I don't have that DNA receptor. Alright.

00:15:33 Jesse Host But it's like the AARP invitations. They just start appearing in your mail. Bob Dylan songs start appearing in your mail when you turn 40.
[Bursts out laughing.]
[Beat.]
Let's move on.

00:15:45 Jesse Host Would you even know—I can't move on right now.
[John snorts.]
Would you even know what someone was talking about if they said "flak-sid" to you? 'Cause I don't think I would. Even—

00:15:55 John Host No.

00:15:56 Jesse Host Like, it would have to be very specific context for me to even know what word they were saying.

00:16:02 John Host I—I—I... It—first of all, to the young people who are listening, go get

the dictionary and look up the word. I'm not gonna tell you what it means.

- 00:16:12 Jesse Host Yeah. And don't just Google it.
- 00:16:16 John Host But it's as gross as it sounds in either pronunciation.
- 00:16:18 Jesse Host Yeah. *[Laughs.]*
- 00:16:20 John Host "Flass-id" and "flak-sid." If someone said "flak-sid," I would think they were trying to say "flaxseed."
- 00:16:23 Jesse Host Yeah.
- 00:16:25 John Host But I guess if you're out there saying "schedule" (*shed-ju-al*) instead of "schedule" (*sked-jule*), and you're spelling "jail" G-A-O-L... If you're an OED person, "flak-sid" is the way to go.
- 00:16:37 Jesse Host Here's something from Heather. She says:
- "I wanna file suit against anyone who uses the word 'curate' to mean 'organized,' 'thoughtfully considered,' 'well thought-out,' etc. As someone who works in a museum and does real curation, the misuse of the word is degrading against my profession—"
- [John stifles laughter, or starts to say something.]*
- "—and belittles the stuff I actually do! Curation is more than being thoughtful. It's the physical care of artifacts, art, literature archives, and other items. A playlist is not curated."
- 00:17:10 John Host Emily Brewster, what do you think? What does the dictionary have to say? What do you have to say?
- 00:17:15 Emily Guest The broad use of "curate" that she's objecting to is only about 20 years old.
- 00:17:20 John Host Right.
- 00:17:21 Emily Guest So part of the problem with it is that it's new.
- 00:17:24 John Host Right.
- 00:17:25 Emily Guest And... new uses are—are bothersome. And I understand someone who has this, uh—who has the narrower, older use as part of their identity, that it then being used in this kind of broad way that seems so imprecise...
- 00:17:43 John Host Yeah.
- 00:17:44 Emily Guest I mean, I feel for her. But... there's also a long history of this kind of thing happening in English. You know, "cultivate" started out as being about farming. And in the late 16th century, you could reliably say that that's what it meant. But it was being used figuratively by the late 17th century. And, you know, "fiddle" originally meant to like, play a fiddle.
- 00:18:05 John Host Right.
- 00:18:06 Emily Guest Fourteenth century. And then, you know, give it a couple hundred years, and all the sudden "fiddling" has—is—like, you know, it's derogatory, and it's for, like, doing something that isn't very meaningful.
- 00:18:18 John Host Yeah, like playing the violin.

[Emily and Jesse laugh.]

I'm a—I'm a violist.

00:18:22 Jesse Host Yeah.
00:18:23 John Host So I accept—I accept that derogatory, uh, terminology.
00:18:27 Emily Guest My nine-year-old is playing the violin now, and—but he prefers to just fiddle around on it.

[Jesse laughs quietly.]

00:18:33 John Host Yeah! That's what you do with a violin.
00:18:34 Emily Guest Yeah.
00:18:35 John Host It's a weaselly, whiny instrument with no gravity. Tell your nine-year-old... "Get a viola."

[Emily and Jesse laugh.]

00:18:47 Jesse Host Everyone's gonna love—everyone loves a violist! *[Laughs.]*
"Everybody loves a violist." It's that legendary truism.

[Emily laughs.]

00:18:51 John Host Look. Look. Also, small pond. When I was playing in the youth orchestra at the extension school of the—uh, Boston—of the New England Conservatory of Music, there were like hundreds of fiddleists. How many violists were there? Five. Guess who—how good a musician was I? Medium.

[Emily chuckles.]

Was I first chair viola? Yeah!

[John and Jesse laugh quietly.]

That meant I sat on the outside.

[Emily laughs.]

I could see the—from the stage. That's where I got my chops as a performer. Viola's the way to go.

So yeah, language moves from the specific to the figurative all the time.

00:19:26 Emily Guest Yeah.
00:19:28 John Host And I don't think, uh, even the finest museum curator could put this genie back into this antique bottle while wearing conservation gloves.
00:19:37 Emily Guest Yeah. It seems like a—this—it feels like this ship has sailed. But I still—I understand why someone would object!
00:19:43 John Host I'm mad that you just said "This ship has sailed," on behalf of actual sailors!

[Emily laughs.]

I feel for Heather as well. That's—that must be hard. Because I don't think... I mean, being a museum curator is valuable work that has real meaning, that people devote their lives to and do not always get a ton of attention or cash for. And I appreciate your curation, Heather. But, uh, I'm just gonna say my adult daughter... curates the heck out of a Spotify playlist. It's incredible. And guess what? She also wears those white conservation gloves while doing it.

[Everyone laughs.]

To protect them.

00:20:23 Jesse Host Protect the Spotify playlist from oils.

00:20:25 John Host *[Laughs.]*

[Imitates a series of high-pitched beeps.]

Uh, Emily, Jesse, I just received a—a breaking pronunciation question over the email this morning that I forgot to add. But—and it's from a celebrity guest! But I'm not gonna talk about it until we come back from the break. That's called a tease.

00:20:47 Jesse Host Okay, let's take a quick break! More items on the docket coming up in just a minute on the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast.

00:20:53 Sound Effect Transition *[Three gavel bangs.]*

00:20:55 Jesse Promo The *Judge John Hodgman* podcast is of course always supported by the members of MaximumFun.org. All the folks who've gone to MaximumFun.org/join to support us, and grateful we are to every single one of you. Thank you very much.

We're also, this week, supported by our friends at Sun Basket. The only meal prep service... co-founded by my friend Tyler from college.

00:21:21 John Promo *[Laughs.]* Jesse... you know, I love to cook. And I've always loved it, since I was a kid, until... about five weeks ago, and then my brain broke. I couldn't do it anymore! *[Laughs.]* I've been cooking so much! I've been cooking and cooking and cooking and cooking and cooking! I'm out of—I'm out of ideas. Like, I don't even know what to make anymore. Like, my repertoire has been tested and re-tested. And I'm like, "Where can I get new ideas?"

Cookbooks? Sure. Cookbooks are amazing. But let's face it: they're aspirational. You read a cookbook, you look at a picture, you make a list in your mind or on a piece of paper, maybe you get to the store, and then—buhhh—or maybe you just sorta eat toast again for dinner, or popcorn. 'Cause you're tired of cooking.

But! Sun Basket not only provides you with delicious meals right to your door, it gives you ideas, and the materials to put them into action! Sun Basket's incredible!

00:22:16 Jesse Promo They're made with organic fresh produce, sustainable seafood, and meats that are free of antibiotics, hormones, and steroids. They're really focused on being responsible in their sourcing. And you can make really great meals! Like try, uh, pappardelle with wilted

spinach, sweet peas, and fresh ricotta!

00:22:37 John Promo Mm-hm!

00:22:38 Jesse Promo Or—I actually ate this one—the Southwestern turkey and sweet potato skillet.

00:22:42 John Promo Yeah.

00:22:43 Jesse Promo That one was easy to make, and savory, delicious, and it went down smooth, John. Went down smooth. With my whole family!

00:22:50 John Promo Right now I'm waiting on my shipment of larb.

00:22:52 Jesse Promo Ohhh!

00:22:53 John Promo They've got chicken larb lettuce cups with carrots and fresh mint. And if you don't know what larb is—

00:22:57 Jesse Promo I can tell you what larb is! Because my dad used to work in Laos, and I worked for him for a little while. And the co-founder of the NGO that he ran, Boontan, would come visit us from Minnesota where she lived once in a while. And she would show up at our door—
[laughs]—from Minnesota, with two, uh—uh, what do you call those butcher knives? The kind that you go "clonk, clonk, clonk, clonk, clonk" with?

[Beat.]

00:23:22 John Promo Yeah—

00:23:23 Jesse Promo You know what I'm talking about, the big rectangular-shaped ones, with the straight edge?

00:23:25 John Promo Yeah! Yeah, yeah, yeah.

00:23:27 Jesse Promo And then a chicken with its head still on.

00:23:31 John Promo *[Stifling laughter]* Mm-hm.

00:23:32 Jesse Promo And a big bag of, uh, to us, unidentifiable herbs.

00:23:36 John Promo Uh-huh.

00:23:37 Jesse Promo And then she would just pile them all—we would be like, "Boontan, you're our guest. We're supposed to cook for you." And she'd be like, "No way! Absolutely not."

And then she'd go in the kitchen, and you would just hear, "chunk-chunk-chunk-chunk-chunk-chunk-chunk-chunk-chunk-chunk-chunk-chunk-chunk-chunk!" as she diced everything into little tiny pieces, because it's a Southeast Asian, particularly Lao and Vietnamese, dish of a—that's sort of like a chopped salad. A tiny chopped salad of mostly meat and herbs, along with vegetables. Very herbaceous. Very spicy, in Laos, at least. And really delicious.

00:24:14 John Promo Yeah. But you can't have someone come to your house and go "chunk-chunk-chunk-chunk-chunk-chunk-chunk."

00:24:18 Jesse Promo No, you don't know Boontan!

00:24:20 John Promo You don't know Boontan! But you can go to SunBasket.com and check out their chicken larb (*larb*)—which is actually pronounced "lahb"—lettuce cups with carrots and fresh mints. I was never gonna think of larb to make! Also they got shrimp diablo tacos with roasted peppers and queso fresco. Shrimp diablo, that's tacos of the devil!

That—of course I'm gonna eat that! Boom!

[Jesse laughs.]

One thing that's not in my repertoire is enough vegetarian and pescatarian dishes. So I didn't even know that you could make a cassoulet out of mushroom. But Sun Basket reminds me that I could be making mushroom cassoulet and arugula salad with lemon vinaigrette within the week, if I just order it.

And there's one other thing I gotta mention. I didn't even know that this was even possible. Sun Basket has this section—I don't know if this is brand new, or if I'm just a dope who missed it. They have this section called Market. These are like, some prepared products. Some snacks. Some individually wrapped items. Some dips. You know. They have a sauce—I've tried this once. I can't say the name of the sauce on the podcast. Because children are listening.

It's this incredible vegan almond-based dip. That's creamy lemon and garlicky, and you dip vegetables in it, or crackers. I've only ever seen it at one store in Brooklyn once. And they don't have it anymore. And... just go to SunBasket.com. Go down to the market. And check out the B-sauce. That's all I'm gonna say. It's incredible.

00:25:50 John Promo

[John and Jesse laugh quietly.]

This—it's a wonderful, wonderful dip and condiment, and it is totally vegan. And it's totally delicious. And I'm so excited I have a source for it now.

00:26:01 Jesse Promo

Well, right now SunBasket's offering \$35 off your order when you go right now to SunBasket.com/hodgman, and enter promo code "Hodgman" at checkout.

00:26:13 John Promo

That's SunBasket.com/hodgman, and enter promo code "Hodgman" at checkout for \$35 off your order.

00:26:21 Sound Effect Transition

[Three gavel bangs.]

00:26:23 Promo Clip

Music: Three bouncy beats.

Graham Clark: Hi! My name's Graham Clark, and I'm one half of the podcast *Stop Podcasting Yourself*, a show that we've recorded for many, many years. And, uh, at the moment, instead of being in person, we're recording remotely. And, uh, you wouldn't even notice. You don't even notice the lag.

[Long pause.]

Dave Shumka: That's right, Graham! And, uh, the great thing about this—

Graham: Uh—

Dave: Go ahead.

Graham: No, you go ahead.

Dave: Okay, and—

Graham: Okay, go ahead.

[Someone stifles laughter.]

Dave: And you can listen to us, uh, every week on MaximumFun.org.

Graham: Or wherever you get your podcasts.

Dave: Your podcasts.

Music: Three bouncy beats.

00:27:06 Sound Effect Transition

[Three gavel bangs.]

00:27:08 Jesse Host

Welcome back to the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast. We're clearing the docket with lexicographer Emily Brewster. She's the host of Merriam-Webster's new podcast, *Word Matters*. Hodgman, before we took a break, you mentioned that you had received a pronunciation (*pro-nun-see-a-sin*)—pronunciation (*pro-nun-see-at-shin*) question. A pronunciasin queshun.

00:27:28 John Host

[Stifling laughter] Yes.

00:27:29 Jesse Host

From a celebrity guest. Uh, can you clarify for our audience? Expand, expound?

00:27:35 John Host

I don't know... if this is gonna be as meaningful to you as it is to me. And my dear friend from high school, Sam Potts.

[John stifles laughter, Jesse laughs quietly.]

Who walked me through the bookstore, and pointed out the jacket designs done by this famous book jacket designer way back. Must have been 1989. When did *Jurassic Park* the book come out? I'll tell you. I don't know. But it was around that time that I learned the name of Chip Kidd. Emily, do you know who Chip Kidd is?

00:28:06 Emily Guest

I do not.

00:28:07 Jesse Host

John, I know who Chip Kidd is! He was a guest on my radio show once.

00:28:10 John Host

Yeah, of course he was! He's an incredible—an incredibly influential and virtuosic book designer. He designed the famous book cover for *Jurassic Park* that you still see in all the *Jurassic Worlds*. He's a *Batman* aficionado and collector. A person of exquisite taste. And, um—and somebody I've been lucky to meet a few times in my life.

You—if you look up "book jacket designer" in the dictionary, Emily, and you don't have a picture of Chip Kidd there, you guys have done it wrong. No offense.

00:28:44 Emily Guest

[Chuckles.] Okay.

00:28:44 John Host

He's—this guy's the real—alright. So, but here's the thing. And this is what he writes in. He just wrote in this morning. So excited. So Chip writes:

"I always contended that the term—" And I won't pronounce it. I'll

spell it. Because this is the point. "The term N-É-E—" That is N, É with an accent, and then E, as in a woman's birth name before getting married, if they change their name. "That this word has two syllables, and is pronounced 'nee-ay.'"

As in, um... My mom would have been Eileen Hodgman "nee-ay" Callahan. But Chip says:

"My late husband, the writer J. D. McClatchy, begged to differ. Can you settle this?"

I'm gonna look up—it up in the dictionary. Have you ever heard of a pronunciation of that word as "nee-ay," Emily?

00:29:35	Emily	Guest	I have not.
00:29:36	John	Host	Yeah. Yeah. And it does not seem to be here in the dictionary. But, um... Emily. Chip Kidd is my—is one of my heroes. And I don't wanna tell him that he's wrong. Will you please do it for me?
00:29:48	Emily	Guest	<i>[Laughs quietly.]</i> "Nee-ay" is not an established pronunciation of N-É-E.
00:29:55	John	Host	N-É-E. It's a great Scrabble word!
00:29:58	Emily	Guest	Yeah!
00:29:59	John	Host	Especially since N-É, with an accent aigu above the E—I think it's an accent aigu. That's the <u>masculine</u> version. And then if someone drops that N-É on the Scrabble board, you just <u>bang</u> in another E there, build right off of it.
			But Chip... I gotta tell you. Just because there are those two Es... <i>[Sighs.]</i> You're my hero, and I know that "nay," N-É-E, has two Es. But that's just how it goes. I don't say "Chip Kih-duh-duh" 'cause you've got two Ds in "Kidd"! It's "Chip Kidd!" (<i>Kid.</i>) Icon!
00:30:30	Jesse	Host	Here's a letter from Steven. He says: "My co-workers and I are having a dispute over the meaning of the phrase 'next Wednesday.' Or, for that matter, any day of the week. My co-worker says it always means the literal next Wednesday. I assert that the meaning changes depending on when in the week it is said. For example, if I say 'next Wednesday' on a Thursday, it wouldn't be 'tomorrow.' Rather, it would mean 'eight days from now.' <u>Please</u> help us define this."
00:31:00	John	Host	So, Emily Brewster. We actually have ruled—I feel like in the long history of <i>Judge John Hodgman</i> , I've ruled on this before. Does the dictionary take a position on this? Or is this—or do you have a common sense position on it that is not covered in the dictionary?
00:31:16	Emily	Guest	The dictionary allows for the fact that there is ambiguity in the use of this, <u>but</u> —
00:31:21	John	Host	Well, then what is the dictionary even <u>for</u> ?
			<i>[Emily laughs quietly.]</i>
00:31:25	Jesse	Host	Yeah. Maybe if—if the dictionary's all about ambiguity, <u>Emily</u> , maybe

all the definitions should just say, "You know, whatever."

00:31:33 John Host *[Snorts.]* Sorry, Emily. We—I—we apologize. I apologize.

00:31:36 Jesse Host Yeah. We're jealous of your signature eyewear.

[Jesse and Emily laugh.]

00:31:40 John Host What is the ambiguity that the dictionary attempts to describe here?

00:31:43 Emily Guest Well, it's like with "biannual." Right? Where it can mean—or "biweekly" is the more common word.

00:31:49 John Host Right.

00:31:50 Emily Guest It can mean "twice a week," or it can mean "every other week." And when both usages are fully established, the dictionary has to report that they are both established.

[John or Jesse exhales thoughtfully.]

And with the word "next," it's—you know, it sometimes means "the one immediately following," but sometimes it means, you know, something a little bit further out. I think that the most common usage is for it to be—when the day is the very next day? The—that would be "this Tuesday."

00:32:20 John Host Right. Or "tomorrow."

00:32:22 Emily Guest Right, or "tomorrow." And that when we say "next Tuesday," we—most often people mean "in eight days."

00:32:32 John Host Yeah. That is the ruling of this court, as well. Phew.

00:32:36 Jesse Host This directly affected my life the other day, John.

00:32:39 John Host Oh?

00:32:40 Jesse Host Yeah. I, uh—I inherited my late aunt's record collection, and it's been sitting at my cousin's house in Washington, DC.

00:32:46 John Host Mm-hm.

00:32:47 Jesse Host I had planned to go out and collect it at her memorial service, but her memorial service was canceled because of the pandemic, so it's just been sitting in my cousin's apartment, and she's about to move. So I asked my other cousin's husband to get one of his landscaping dudes—he has a landscaping crew—and go and pack them up for me, and ship them to here, to California.

And he agreed to do it... "next Saturday." He said, "We're gonna come over next Saturday."

00:33:19 John Host Uh-oh.

00:33:20 Jesse Host And, uh, when the following Saturday arrived—

00:33:23 John Host And you opened up the dictionary and you were like, "I don't know what he means!"

[Everyone laughs.]

00:33:27 Jesse Host My cousin texted me from her apartment, "I thought your cousin and your cousin's friend were gonna be here, and they're not. What's up, do you know?" And we figured out that when he said "next Saturday," he meant ten days from then.

00:33:41 John Host Mm-hm.

00:33:42 Jesse Host And we had both—both my cousin and I had presumed that he meant three days from then. Or I guess four days from then? Whatever.

00:33:48 John Host You mean "this Saturday."

00:33:50 Jesse Host Yeah, "this coming Saturday." The next Saturday. Because it was in the—in that middle region. It wasn't tomorrow.

00:33:58 John Host Right.

00:33:59 Jesse Host It was three or four days out. And, uh, it turned out he meant later.

00:34:03 John Host I appreciate why there is this ambiguity. Because the proximity of day does tend to affect how people think about time. I—I—the opinion of this court is that if you refer to "this Day," you are talking—and I can understand why it's confusing. 'Cause you are talking about the next incidence of that day. So if it is a Monday, and you say "this Wednesday," you mean the next time Wednesday comes around. But if you say "next Wednesday," you are talking about the Wednesday of the following week, in my opinion.

And this shall forever be. No ambiguity. Settled law in the dictionary of the court of *Judge John Hodgman*. Two entries! "An," the word I discovered, and... "this" and "next." I guess that's three entries.

00:34:58 Emily Guest Now, I will actually go on the record and say that I think this is a great idea, and I hope that your ruling really days hold, and that we then have to revise the dictionary to accommodate this ruling. Because I think it makes a lot of sense!

00:35:11 John Host How do we get it into the dictionary?

00:35:14 Jesse Host You gotta know somebody, John.

[Emily and John laugh.]

Here's a letter from Casey. They write:

"I teach high school English. And I've noticed that people have started to use the word 'utilize' to replace the word 'use.' This is a major pet peeve of mine."

I'm glad, John, that on our show, we're finally getting down to what really matters: *[stifling laughter]* the pet peeves of high school English teachers.

00:35:36 John Host *[Laughs quietly.]* That is what matters!

[Jesse laughs.]

How dare you?

00:35:40 Jesse Host "First of all," writes Casey, "they are not synonyms. 'Utilize' is a specific word that should only be used—"

00:35:48 John Host Mmm.

00:35:49 Jesse Host "—when describing chemical processes. Second, the pretentious use of the word 'utilize' has taken hold in education by dumb people who want to sound smart."

00:36:01 John Host Harsh.

00:36:02 Jesse Host "Please, Judge Hodgman, rule that people need to stop using 'utilize' as a synonym of the word 'use.'"

00:36:11 John Host Emily, does this come up a lot in lexicography?

00:36:15 Emily Guest Yes. People don't like 'utilize.' They don't generally like words that end in I-Z-E.

00:36:20 John Host Whoa.

[Jesse laughs quietly.]

That's—nothing ambiguous about that at all! I wasn't expecting such a firm ruling! *[Laughs.]* Who are the people, the lexicographers? Or just in general, people get upset about this?

00:36:30 Emily Guest In general, people get upset about it. Think about the word "incentivize," for example.

00:36:34 John Host Eugh, I don't—

00:36:35 Emily Guest Or "finalize." It doesn't really bother so much any—people so much anymore, but for most—for the entire second half of the 20th century, people were very upset about "finalize."

00:36:45 John Host Mm-hm. Mm-hm.

00:36:46 Emily Guest Even Noah Webster in 1828, he put "demoralize" in his 1828 dictionary, and people hated it.

00:36:52 John Host What do people hate about "ize"?

00:36:56 Emily Guest I don't know! I don't know. It dates to like the 17th century, I think.

00:37:00 John Host Mm-hm.

00:37:01 Emily Guest And it's very effective for turning a noun or an adjective into a verb. And, um, it's efficient. It was created—it was coined by—was it Thomas Nashe, I think? I'm not positive. Um, specifically because he didn't want there to be so many monosyllabic words. So—*[laughs]*.

00:37:19 John Host Ohhh, interesting! *[Laughs.]*

00:37:22 Emily Guest So maybe that's part of why people hate it. But as far as it—and it does, I guess, sound kind of pretentious. It sounds like a word that has been unnecessarily lengthened, I guess?

00:37:31 John Host Yeah. Yeah. I mean, it's interesting. Because Casey says that "utilize" is a specific word that should only be used—point taken—when describing chemical processes. But that is not the definition of "utilize" in Merriam-Webster. I didn't see a chemical process definition in the dictionary.

00:37:54 Emily Guest No, the word is in no way linked so specifically only to chemical processes.

00:37:59 John Host So what is the difference between—according to the dictionary—between "use" and "utilize"? How would you distinguish the usage?

00:38:07 Emily Guest "Utilize" is defined as "To make use of. To turn to practical use or account."

00:38:13 John Host Mm-hm.

00:38:14 Emily Guest Kind of like a step away in "utilized." Right?

00:38:17 John Host Yeah.

00:38:18 Emily Guest There's like a distance in it. And "use"—like, "I'm gonna use this fork."

00:38:22 John Host Mm-hm.

00:38:23 Emily Guest But "I'm going to... utilize this... fork"? That—you might be—if you're utilizing the fork, it's probably because you're gonna do something that is not the typical thing to do with a fork.

00:38:36 John Host Right. It does sound pretentious, and I think—what's interesting to me, and I don't know where Casey picked up this idea that it had a specific scientific, uh, connotation, but—

00:38:46 Jesse Host High school English teachers have an annual meeting where they gather to share pedantries.

00:38:52 John Host *[Stifles laughter.]* Well, I do think that it might have something to do with the classic rivalry between high school English teachers and high school chemistry teachers. *[Laughs.]* They hate—

00:39:01 Emily Guest But in this case, she's actually sanctioning the use by the high school chemistry teacher, so that's interesting.

00:39:06 John Host Right, but don't you get the sense that Casey is, uh, *tch*, not "demonizing"—although there's another "ize." Uh, not "demoralizing..." Discrediting the term, as being part of the sciences. And that people are using it outside of the specific scientific context, which we now know it doesn't have, are what Casey calls "dumb people trying to sound smart," by trying to science up their language, and make it seem more technical. And, um—and, uh—and edumacated. Do you know what I mean? Like, I think that that might—I wonder if that's where Casey picked up this idea.

In any case, I agree with Casey in the sense that using the simplest and clearest version of the word is probably the best. Here on the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast, when people are having difficulty expressing themselves, we often encourage them to speak as bluntly and as plainly as the Incredible Hulk. In fact, why did I even say "Incredible"? The Hulk! You know who I'm talking about.

00:40:02 Jesse Host Yeah.

00:40:03 John Host Hulk smash, Hulk talk, Hulk use. Hulk—Hulk no utilize! Puny human utilize! Hulk use.

[Jesse laughs quietly.]

I think that's clearer. I'm with you there, Casey.

You know, Casey also identified themselves as a grammar Nazi. Is this an issue of grammar, or usage, Emily? Or utilization-age.

00:40:23 Emily Guest Yeah, this falls into the category of usage, for sure.

00:40:27 John Host Mm-hm.

00:40:28 Emily Guest As opposed to grammar. And people use the words interchangeably, but there actually is a distinction between them that certainly linguists hold, and lexicographers hold.

00:40:38 John Host And that distinction would be what?

00:40:40 Emily Guest I like to think of it like this. Grammar is the stuff that a native speaker learns by virtue of being a native speaker.

00:40:46 John Host Mm-hm.

00:40:47 Emily Guest Usage is more like the manners of the language. So the way you conjugate verbs, that's grammar.

00:40:52 John Host Right.

00:40:53 Emily Guest Right. And the—you know, you—putting your pronouns in the right place. That's stuff that no native speaker ever has to think about. But what the meaning of "ironic" is, for example, is a usage issue. That's something that everybody has to learn. But, um—

00:41:09 Jesse Host Yeah. Eventually, all native speakers learn that it's like rain on your wedding day.

00:41:14 John Host Right.

[Emily laughs.]

00:41:18 Emily Guest Settle for once and for all... "ironic."
Oh, man. You know—*[sighs]*. The ironic thing about that...

[John and/or Jesse sigh.]

...is that it's kind of un-settleable.

00:41:28 John Host *[Stifling laughter]* You really problematized that. As I learned my—my first year of literary theory.

[Emily and Jesse laugh.]

You really trope-ified and problematized the—that "ironic" usage. Yeah. Iro—look. Usage is how it's used, right? And grammar is how it's *[uncertain]* proscriibed? And the two don't often work together.

And I'll say this, Casey. Thank you for being an English teacher. "Use" is clearer than "utilize." Your definition of "utilization" is wrong. Sorry. And you're not a—in this case—a grammar Nazi. You are a usage pedant.

And because I think especially in the year 2020, uh, I—*[laughs]*—I—just as Heather the curator felt bad having her specific job generalized, Nazis are a real thing. I don't—*[laughs]*—let's just call Nazis "Nazis." And let's just call grammar and usage pedants "pedants." And let's get Nazis outta here.

[Short, weary/relieved sigh.]

[Jesse laughs quietly.]

Let's move on.

00:42:33 Jesse Host Here's something from Ben:

"I petition the court for a writ of Shut Your Piehole against my boss, who will not stop using the phrase 'hone in on.'

'Hone' means 'sharpen.' You can't 'hone in' on an issue any more than you can sharpen in on an issue. I ask she be required to avoid the phrase, or to use correct phrasing, which is 'home in on.'"

Just as you can say "house in on" something.

[John and Emily laugh.]

00:43:06 John Host Emily, Ben's gotta be right on this one, right?

00:43:09 Emily Guest Yeah, I'm afraid so.

00:43:11 John Host "Home"!

00:43:12 Emily Guest I mean, "hone in" is so commonly used that we do cover it in the dictionary—

00:43:15 John Host Oh.

00:43:16 Emily Guest —but we recognize that "home in" is older, more established, and that people really hate "hone in." So you're wise to go with "home in." Like a homing pigeon! They're both pretty new, though. Both phrases are. "Hone in" is about ten years newer. But it only dates to, what, 1965.

00:43:39 John Host Wow.

00:43:40 Jesse Host Wow.

00:43:41 Emily Guest So "home in—" They're both like mid-20th century phrases.

00:43:44 John Host So—and you—like, this is what happens, right? People, like—"hone in" comes from "home in" just because someone said it the wrong way one time, and it sounded okay. And they didn't realize where it came from. "Irregardless" is driving everyone up a tree. That just got in the dictionary, right?

00:44:02 Emily Guest No, no. It's been in the dictionary for a long time, but there was just a big to-do about it.

00:44:07 John Host *[From a whisper to regular volume]* Ohhh, I thought it just got in!

00:44:09 Emily Guest No, no no no. It's been in a very long time.

00:44:12 John Host So I brought it up because Molly just wrote in from Somerville, Massachusetts—uh, also part of the commonwealth, Emily, where you and I once shared residence. Now I—not—well, we didn't live in a home together.

[Emily and John laugh.]

We didn't—

00:44:26 Jesse Host You shared a hone.

00:44:27 John Host We shared a hone! *[Laughs.]* We shared a tiny hone—a tidy hone together.

[Emily laughs.]

We were—but we were both residents of the commonwealth. At one point I was.

"My partner Jack corrects others when someone uses a word in a way that isn't correct according to the dictionary. Such as 'literally,'

'irregardless,' 'itching' vs. 'scratching,' 'less' vs. 'fewer,' 'by accident' vs. 'on accident.'"

The dictionary's gotta stay on top of all of these different uses, correct?

00:44:54 Emily Guest

Yes.

00:44:56 John Host

And when does the dictionary reach a consensus that a usage, like "by accident" vs. "on accident" deserves to be in the dictionary? Do you have, like, a meeting every year saying, "Are we gonna let—are we gonna finally let people say that they are literally on top of the world?"

00:45:15 Emily Guest

[Laughs.] No, and again, I go back to the lexicography being very solitary, quiet work. There are no meetings. Nobody talks to anybody.

[John sighs.]

Like, that's actually true. But it's all—we write it all down. So you make a case for it. I as a definer will, you know, write out the evidence that I have reviewed that has led me to draft a particular definition, or revision. And then some—another editor above me will review that, and say yes or no, and then that's that.

00:45:42 Jesse Host

Let's take a quick break. We'll be back in just a second.

00:45:45 Sound Effect Transition

[Three gavel bangs.]

00:45:47 Jesse Promo

Judge Hodgman, we're taking a break from clearing the docket. What have we got upcoming?

00:45:50 John Promo

Jesse, last week I reminded our listeners to please register to vote, and then vote in November. And before then, join me if you can in taking some time, if possible every day, to get involved and to volunteer with the election. And if you're joining me, it'll be in support of democrats. Volunteering, phone banking, talking to family, donating time and resources, canvassing. I think the democratic party is the best tool for winning the White House this year, the Senate, the House, safeguarding the Supreme Court, the Post Office, the rule of law, and holding the GOP generally to account for literally making—literally making its election platform whatever Donald Trump wants this year. Which is not just dangerous in my opinion, but also in my opinion un-American and... gross.

Some of you disagree with my support of the democratic party. Uh, I—I get it. There are democrats we love. There are democrats we don't love. Greg wrote me saying he disagreed with me. I appreciated that. I owe him a letter back. I will write back. While we don't agree on every point, I'm glad to hear Greg's words, and your words. If you wanna write me at hodgman@maximumfun.org, let's engage. And thank you for hearing my words.

But Jesse, two folks wrote in with inspiring, nice letters that include some direct action you can take if you want to. And I just wanna, I don't know, shout out to them. Meg is a listener in Chicago who helps run a chapter of Swing Left, which is a national organization that's been working on swing races in targeted states and districts since 2017.

They have a new initiative called The Last Weekends. Which includes a coalition of other groups, including Indivisible and Color Of Change. And this initiative is to remind people that this year, voting isn't enough. And they're trying to recruit people to commit to volunteering, especially during the last three weekends before the election.

00:47:41 John Promo

And I checked out the Last Weekends website. It looks fantastic. There are all sorts of opportunities to phone bank, to write personal letters to voters in states. They help you every step of the way. To host events if you wanna host events. I am full up for my phone banking this weekend, but I did commit to volunteer to write personal letters to persuadable voters in North Carolina in honor of Jon Kimball and David Rees of *Election Profit Makers*.

If you wanna check out the Last Weekends initiative from Swing Left and Indivisible and Color Of Change, I made a Bitly in honor of Meg. It's [Bit.ly/gogetemmeg](https://bit.ly/gogetemmeg). That's G-O-G-E-T-E-M-M-E-G, all small letters. We'll put that up on the show page.

And finally, Zach wrote in. Zach is not only an activist in Somerville, Massachusetts—the commonwealth of Massachusetts—he is also a former, like me... DJ at WMFO 91.5 on the FM dial. Live atop beautiful Curtis Hall on the campus of Tufts University. And a former *Judge John Hodgman* defendant. And he is personally running a recurring phone bank, getting people to call voters in Pennsylvania. That's being run out of the Victory2020.org organization. And he recommended that I give it a try, and so I am going to do it next Sunday. I'm going to join that phone bank next Sunday, and if you wanna join me there—I mean, we won't get to talk to each other. But you'll get to talk to voters to remind them to register and vote.

And in honor of Zach, you can check that out at [Bit.ly/gogetemzach](https://bit.ly/gogetemzach). That's G-O-G-E-T-E-M-Z-A-C-H. Go get 'em, Zach.

00:49:25 John Promo

Zach also turned me onto another regular phone bank, where the people of Somerville are calling their neighbors in the former Massachusetts territory known as Maine! Now, I've signed up to do it this Tuesday, and if you wanna join me there, you can go to [Bit.ly/gogetemzachspal](https://bit.ly/gogetemzachspal). G-O-G-E-T-E-M-Z-A-C-H-S-P-A-L.

Of course, Jesse Thorn, you are completely politically neutral. So this is only an expression of my opinions and beliefs. Thank you for indulging me. But what have you got going on?

00:49:58 Jesse Promo

Well, we just launched the fall collection in the Put This On Shop. That includes not just, of course, handmade pocket squares from vintage textiles—are probably our signature product. But also all kinds of amazing vintage Americana and internationally-ana. Uh, among them, a collection of vintage miniature hats.

So in the olden days, when you bought a hat, it would be made for you to your specifications. And so if you wanted to buy a hat as a gift, you would get a—they would give you a miniature hat to put under the Christmas tree or whatever while the hat was being made.

00:50:38 John Promo

Oh!

00:50:39 Jesse Promo

And I recently obtained an entire collection of these miniature hats.

00:50:42	John	Promo	Wh—!
00:50:43	Jesse	Promo	There are like a dozen of them, of different styles, and they all also have miniature hatboxes that they come with.
00:50:49	John	Promo	Whoa. Whoa!
00:50:50	Jesse	Promo	From, you know, real, legendary hat brands like Stetson and Dobbs and so forth.
			We also have a collection of mid-century clothing brushes that come in figural holders. So little dogs, and little bears, and, uh, little golfers and monkeys, and all kinds of shapes. This was also another collection that I obtained. To keep your clothes clean, and ready to wear.
			And of course, the classic 1884 book, <i>Surnames as a Science</i> .
00:51:26	John	Promo	<i>[Cracks up.]</i> Yes!
00:51:30	Jesse	Promo	Among many other things. Oh, and guess what? A big collection of production scripts from <i>The Simpsons</i> season six and seven. So those are all in our shop at PutThisOnShop.com now, and if you use the code "Justice," you get free shipping on almost everything, uh, in the good old US of A.
00:51:47	John	Promo	Yeah!
00:51:48	Jesse	Promo	So go to PutThisOnShop.com , and use that code "Justice," and get yourself or a friend or a loved one some treasures.
			We'll be back in just a second on <i>Judge John Hodgman</i> .
00:51:58	Sound Effect	Transition	<i>[Three gavel bangs.]</i>
00:52:00	Promo	Clip	Music: Intense sci-fi music.
			Narrator: Fairhaven's a city in a bubble. An actual bubble. It keeps the monsters out. Most of them, anyway.
			<i>[Sounds of a crowd panicked and shouting in the background.]</i>
			Justin McElroy: I never liked the look of movies on Blu-ray! For my money, Betamax is the superior format!
			Travis McElroy: I'm thinking of deleting Facebook and going back to MySpace!
			Griffin McElroy: As far as beverages go, I'm just kind of over water!
			Narrator: Though, I guess at any given party, you're gonna meet some dudes like that, even if you're <u>not</u> in the middle of a nightmarish wasteland. <i>Bubble</i> . The sci-fi comedy from MaximumFun.org . Just open your podcast app and search for <i>Bubble</i> .
			<i>[Music finishes.]</i>
00:52:48	Sound Effect	Transition	<i>[Three gavel bangs.]</i>
00:52:50	Jesse	Host	Welcome back to the <i>Judge John Hodgman</i> podcast. We're clearing the docket this week, of language disputes! And several folks wrote

in about phonetic spelling errors which have become commonly used.

Jed doesn't like the use of "nother," as in, "That's a whole nother can of worms."

- 00:53:11 John Host Right. So that one is—that's like "hone in." That's just... a mispronunciation that has now become part of everyday language for a lot of people, right, Emily?
- 00:53:20 Emily Guest It's actually technically a new coinage—
- 00:53:25 John Host Ohhh.
- 00:53:26 Emily Guest —through a process called metanalysis. Which is when a phrase is broken in such a way that a new word is understood, or a new pronunciation of a word is granted. This is the process by which we ended up with the word "nickname," which originally was "an eke name."
- [Pause.]*
- 00:53:45 Jesse Host An eke name?!
- 00:53:46 John Host An—a what?! *[Laughs quietly.]*
- 00:53:48 Emily Guest An eke name. E-K-E. And I am—
- 00:53:52 John Host "Eke"? What is "eke"? Like, "to eke out a fortune"? No.
- [Someone is typing.]*
- 00:53:56 Emily Guest No, I mean, this is Middle English. We're talking like—it's super old. Right?
- 00:53:59 John Host Right.
- 00:54:00 Emily Guest An eke name was—I don't know, unfamil—like a familiar name, or... I don't even remember what "eke" means.
- 00:54:05 John Host An eke name...
- 00:54:06 Emily Guest Yeah. Yeah.
- 00:54:07 John Host Well, you—
- 00:54:08 Emily Guest Something happened with "orange." Right? If you think of what the word is in other familiar languages. Right—what is it in Spanish?
- 00:54:16 Jesse Host Naranja.
- 00:54:17 Emily Guest Yes. Exactly. So it comes from this Arabic word, N-Ā, with a macron over it, R-A-N-J. And people—English-speakers understood it as, instead of "a nāranj," (*nare-eeenj*) or "nāranj" (*neer-eeenj*)—um, understood it as "an orange." Right, like...
- 00:54:34 John Host Ohhh!
- 00:54:35 Emily Guest It's like a fifth division. So this is what happened with "nother." I think the—the unfortunate thing for "nother" is that it is—it really sticks out because "other" has also stuck around. Because "other" isn't always preceded by "an." Your coinage, John, right? Your discovery?
- 00:54:53 John Host Right! Yeah, yeah, yeah.
- 00:54:54 Emily Guest Right.
- 00:54:55 John Host Trademark pending.

00:54:57 Emily Guest *[Laughs.]* Good luck with it. Let me know how it goes.

[John laughs.]

We pay attention to trademarks. We really do.

00:55:01 John Host Mm-hm.

00:55:02 Emily Guest But "nother," this was—this was shocking to me. "Nother" dates back to the 14th century.

00:55:07 John Host What?!

00:55:09 Emily Guest I know! I know. These things can be totally shocking.

00:55:12 John Host Jed, you're wrong! You're so wrong! What about "should of" instead of "should have"?

00:55:17 Emily Guest We enter this use of "of." It's an auxiliary verb. And we define—we label it as non-standard. Because it is not typically found in published, edited text.

00:55:30 Jesse Host There's also one more here, which is, uh—Gabriel has a beef. Which is that one can say, "I have a plethora of podcasts to listen to," or "I have plethora podcasts to listen to," and they're both correct.

00:55:45 John Host What?!

00:55:46 Jesse Host Emily, what do you think about this? Also, similarly, "myriad"!

00:55:51 Emily Guest I am not familiar with "plethora" used as an adjective in the way that he describes.

00:55:56 John Host 'Cause "myriad" is—is, like—even I can get pedantic about "myriad" sometime. 'Cause people will say, "I have a myriad of options." But isn't it technically correct to say, "I have myriad options"?

00:56:09 Emily Guest They're both correct.

[John exclaims in surprise.]

The noun dates to about... middle of the 16th century, and the adjective dates to the beginning of the 18th century. So the noun is actually older.

00:56:19 John Host You're just robbing me of my pedantry! *[Laughs.]*

00:56:21 Emily Guest *[Laughing]* I'm so sorry.

00:56:22 John Host But "plethora" is a noun, and looking here in the dictionary, I do not see an adjectival form of "plethora." I have plethora—I have plethora podcasts.

[Emily laughs quietly.]

I don't know—Gabriel is really messing with my mind! Let's say "a plethora of podcasts," and "myriad of" or "myriad podcasts." Let the ambiguity continue.

Alright. Let's move on.

00:56:46 Jesse Host *[Laughs quietly.]*

Here's something, finally, from Charlotte:

"This is a quick dispute. I lived in San Francisco for seven years. My friends from California often call the ground 'the floor.' For example, if we're outside and one of them drops something on the sidewalk, they'll say, 'It fell on the floor!' If we're in a park, they'll call something on the grass 'on the floor.'

I've looked up the definition of 'floor,' and while an ocean floor and a cave floor maybe negate my "floor" equals indoors and "ground" equals outdoors understanding, we're very rarely at the bottom of the ocean or in a cave. So I don't think those apply.

Am I wrong to think this is weird? I don't want them to change how they speak. I just wanna be able to stare at them knowingly each time they say it, until they realize what they've said."

[John laughs, Jesse stifles laughter.]

"My friend from the East Coast agrees. Thank you."

00:57:35 John Host

"I just want to silently disapprove of them!"

[Emily laughs quietly.]

"Until they are ashamed." This person really is from San Francisco.

Emily, you're from the commonwealth of Massachusetts in New England, which is a region of the Northeastern United States. Jesse claims to be from San Francisco, which is a Brigadoon-like magic place that supposedly exists on the West Coast. I've never heard of it myself.

How does the dictionary deal—before we talk about what a floor is—how does the dictionary deal with regionalism?

00:58:02 Emily Guest

Well, we... ignore it, to some degree, until it becomes widely-enough known—

00:58:11 John Host

Right.

00:58:12 Emily Guest

—that it kind of expands to enough readership. But we don't—I mean, we're not a—there is—there is an amazing publication called the *Dictionary of American Regional English*. And if you really wanna know about regionalisms, that's where you go.

00:58:25 John Host

Can you say that if something's in the grass, it's on the floor, Emily?

00:58:30 Emily Guest

That... sounds crazy to me.

00:58:31 John Host

[John cracks up, laughing and clapping, then winds down and sighs.]

I agree. *[Laughs quietly.]* I don't think that that's a supportable definition. If that's a regionalism in California—Jesse, you're—you say you're from San Francisco. If you drop your burrito in the Presidio...

00:58:52 Jesse Host

[Stifling laughter] Uh-huh.

00:58:53 John Host

You remember that old Tony Bennett song, "I Dropped My Burrito in the Presidio"?

00:58:55 Jesse Host

Sure. Sure.

00:58:58 John Host *[Fighting laughter]* If you're outside, is it on the floor of the Presidio? The Presi—

00:59:00 Jesse Host I'm marinating the nub.

00:59:00 John Host *[Laughs.]* No.

00:59:05 Jesse Host The only—no. I would—this is not familiar to me. I think Charlotte just has a couple of weird friends, and has extrapolated falsely. The only real regional usage issue that exists in San Francisco is that, uh, in San Francisco, the word "cutty" is an adjective meaning, like, "dicey" or "shady"?

00:59:27 John Host Mm-hm?

00:59:29 Jesse Host And E-40 told me that in Vallejo, uh, it means, like, your buddy. Like, your cousin. Like, your—your boy. Your man. Your main dude.

00:59:40 John Host What about "hyphy"?

00:59:42 Jesse Host Oh, "hyphy" is an adjective that means, like... It means, like, uh... "wild," "funky," "good." Like an up-tempo "good." Sorta like "crunk," but with a different intoxicant.

01:00:03 John Host I just looked it up, Emily. "Hyphy," the San Francisco slang for "wild" and "good," is not in the dictionary. So we get—we get that one. Jesse—

01:00:13 Jesse Host But you have—Emily, you have "thizz" in there, right? *[Stifles laughter.]*

01:00:17 Emily Guest "Phys" as in—

01:00:18 Jesse Host The verb "to thizz"?

01:00:20 Emily Guest Oh, I thought you meant "physiognomy." It means "face."
[John laughs.]

01:00:23 Jesse Host No, no, no. "Thizz." Th-th—T-H. "Thizz."

01:00:25 John Host T-H? T-H-I-Z-Z?

01:00:28 Jesse Host Yeah, "thizz"! Eughhh.

01:00:30 John Host Let's just focus on—

01:00:31 Jesse Host This is—I'm thizzing right now. Eughhh!

01:00:33 John Host Let's just focus on "hyphy." Emily—look.

01:00:36 Emily Guest How do you spell that?

01:00:38 John Host H-Y-P-H-Y. Please make a case for "hyphy." It means "wild" and "good" in the parlance of San Francisco, and when you put it in your dictionary, as I'm sure—I'm sure they will agree—just put in a picture of, um, me and Jesse Thorn arm in arm. Next to the word.
[Emily laughs quietly.]

You don't even have to define it. Just put the picture in.

01:00:58 Emily Guest Okay.

01:00:59 John Host Emily, what a pleasure to have you here with us again. Tell us again about your podcast *Word Matters*. We can find it anywhere you find podcasts, and it's starting up now?

01:01:09	Emily	Guest	Yes! It's been live for a few weeks, and we've got new episodes that are released every Wednesday, and it's—it is conversations about language, and about words, and about misconceptions that people have. I think it's a lot of fun!
01:01:22	John	Host	Thank you, Emily, so much for being here, as always. Emily Brewster, lexicographer, editor at the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, and a host of <i>Word Matters</i> podcast wherever you get podcasts!
01:01:34	Jesse	Host	Yeah, that's my cuddy!
01:01:35	Emily	Guest	<i>[Laughs.]</i> Thanks so much for having me.
01:01:38	Jesse	Host	The docket's clear! That's it for another episode of <i>Judge John Hodgman</i> . Our producer is Jennifer Marmor. Follow us on Twitter @JesseThorn —by the way, Jennifer liked it when I was thizzing. <i>[John snorts.]</i> You couldn't hear her, 'cause her mic's off, but I could see in the thing that she liked it when I was thizzing. Our producer, Jennifer Marmor. Follow us on Twitter at @JesseThorn and @hodgman . We're on Instagram at @judgejohnhodgman . Make sure to hashtag your <i>Judge John Hodgman</i> Tweets #JJHo , and check out the Maximum Fun subreddit—that's at MaximumFun.Reddit.com —to discuss this episode . Submit your cases at MaximumFun.org/jjho , or email hodgman@maximumfun.org . We'll talk to you next time on the <i>Judge John Hodgman</i> podcast.
01:02:21	Sound Effect	Transition	<i>[Three gavel bangs.]</i>
01:02:24	Music	Transition	A cheerful guitar chord.
01:02:25	Speaker 1	Host	MaximumFun.org .
01:02:26	Speaker 2	Host	Comedy and culture.
01:02:28	Speaker 3	Host	Artist owned—
01:02:29	Speaker 4	Host	—audience supported.