The word *bonegar* was recently used in an advertisement to mean a mixture of honey and vinegar. It is not listed in my dictionary. Is that a new word?

Linguists call that combination of one word created from parts of two other words a blend—that is, if the word lasts. Many such combinations are products of one individual’s imagination and soon disappear. Then they are called nonce words—words that are used only for a short time and in a particular context. It appears that *bonegar* may be part of that group.

*Time* magazine recently created the adjective *mingy*, a blend of mean and stingy. It remains to be seen whether the new word is slated to become a nonce. The same is true of the blend *hiphoptionary*, an awkward blend of *dictionary* and *hip-hop*.

When such combinations do become popular, they become part of our language and are no longer recognized as the words are no longer recognized as popular, they become part of our language. It remains to be seen whether *stingy* may be part of that group.

Consider the word *prebuttal*. It denotes a refutation that is prepared in advance of the State of the Union Message and delivered immediately afterward. A *prebuttal* substitutes the prefix *pre-* for the prefix *re-* of rebuttal, a word so well-accepted as part of English vocabulary that almost nobody noticed that *rebuttal* itself was a blend.

Blends are not new. England experienced a huge immigration of French people after the Norman invasion and victory in 1066. One of the many words the French brought with them was *rebute* (*rebute* meaning “to bother, harass, argue, or fight”), seems to be overtaking *rebuttal* (*rebuttal* being treated as if it were a suffix. In the *Washington Post*, the blend was *Leakgate*; in *Business Week*, it was *Spygate*; and in speeches by Democratic politicians, it was *intimate*.

As for the noun *motel*: some “under-forties” cannot explain how that noun (motor plus *hotel*) came about. And if traveling with children (before back-seat televisions were available) used to affect you the way it did me, you may recall the adjective *frazzled* (a blend of the noun *fray* and the adjective *bassled*). Both parts of *frazzled* evolved from Middle English, *fray*, which meant “threadbare”; and *bassled*, which meant “tangled.” The verb *bassle*, with its current meaning (“to bother, harass, argue, or fight”), seems to be overtaking *frazzle* in popular usage.

**Potpourri**

A four-year-old in New York City, on his first trip to visit a relative who lived on a farm, asked, “How many blocks do we have to go?” His father said, “In the country we have miles, not blocks. A mile is much longer than a block, so it will be a while until we get there.” The boy thought for a few minutes. Then he asked, “What floor does he live on?”

Many blends that we have adopted have become a valuable part of the English language. The useful word *twirl*, for example, is seldom recognized as a blend of *twist* and *whirl*; the blend *flutter*, previously mentioned, which combines *flutter* and *burr* is well-established. The verb *chortle*, a combination of *chuckle* and *snort*, may be losing popularity, but it is still listed in dictionaries, which define the word as “a joyful chuckle.”

And what would we do without those familiar standbys: *brunch* and *motel*? The word *brunch*—the first meal of each day for some people—merges the words *breakfast* and *lunch*. Most Americans enthusiastically welcomed that word, but Emily Post intensely disliked it. She called it “a single-headed, double-bodied deformity.”

As for the noun *motel*: some “under-forties” cannot explain how that noun (motor plus *hotel*) came about. And if traveling with children (before back-seat televisions were available) used to affect you the way it did me, you may recall the adjective *frazzled* (a blend of the noun *fray* and the adjective *bassled*). Both parts of *frazzled* evolved from Middle English, *fray*, which meant “threadbare”; and *bassled*, which meant “tangled.” The verb *bassle*, with its current meaning (“to bother, harass, argue, or fight”), seems to be overtaking *frazzle* in popular usage.

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