Oxford Children's Dictionaries

BBC RADIO 2 500 WORDS / OXFORD CHILDREN'S DICTIONARIES

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS SUMMARY FINDINGS

(based on BeebOx2013*)

28 May 2013

*This is the sub-corpus of children's writing built by Oxford Children's Dictionaries from the 90,155 entries received by BBC Radio 2 in 2013.

Findings prepared by

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Oxford University Press is a department of the University of Oxford.
It furthers the University's objective of excellence in research, scholarship, and education by publishing worldwide.

INTRODUCTION

500 WORDS 2013

In 2013 BBC Radio 2 received 90,155 entries in the 500 Words short story writing competition run by the Chris Evans Breakfast Show. Oxford University Press included this data in their electronic language database, the Oxford Children's Corpus, for the purpose of linguistic analysis. The section of the database containing these stories is called BeebOx2103.

While analysing the data in a number of different ways, references were found to the 500 Words competition, Chris Evans and the judges of the competition, and the popularity of their first names noted.

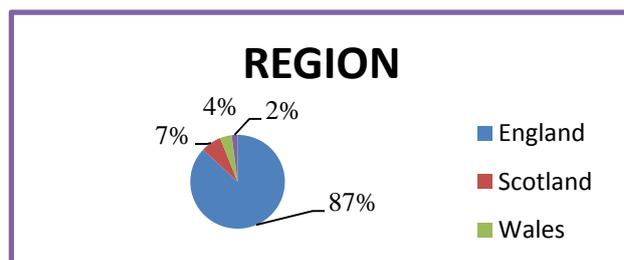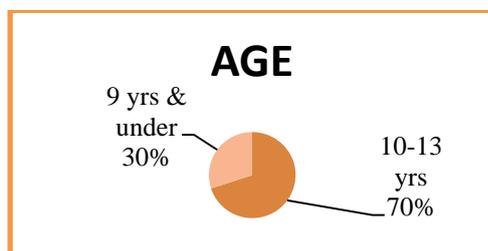| 500 WORDS AND JUDGES	No. of hits		FIRST NAMES	No. of hits
Chris Evans	448		Chris	3533
500 words	362			
Jacqueline Wilson	227		Jacqueline	463
Richard Hammond	167		Richard	2159
Charlie Higson	22		Charlie	8674
Malorie Blackman	14		Malorie	117
Frank Cottrell Boyce	7		Frank	1925

BeebOx2013

BeebOx2013, made up of the 90,155 entries received in the 500 Words competition in 2013, contains around 40 million words and has been analysed by:

age groups   9 years & under, 10–13   years

gender   boys and girls

region   England, Scotland, Wales, and N. Ireland, and broken down further by counties provided by BBC Radio 2

Below is an overview of the composition of BeebOx2013 according to the above categories:

AGE
9 yrs & under 30%
10-13 yrs 70%

GENDER
Boys 33%
Girls 67%

REGION
4% 2%
7%
87%
- England
- Scotland
- Wales

TOP WORDS

Below are the highlights of the results of analysing top words by frequency or the number of hits in BeebOx2013.

TOP NOUNS, ADJECTIVES, VERBS

NOUNS	No. of hits	ADJECTIVES	No. of hits	VERBS	No. of hits
mum	115627	good	50286	be	1810781
day	82183	old	49549	have	510151
door	75621	big	43114	go	330554
time	75380	little	39426	do	284720
house	64791	other	29622	get	250534

Commentary:
- The list of top nouns, adjectives and verbs is very similar to the list in 2012, with mum as the top noun in 2013 and good as the top adjective.
- Dad follows in the top fifteen, with around half the number of hits for mum.
- Sometimes a pair of nouns are used together to define one item, like 'ice cream'. Below is a comparison of children's and adult top two-noun groups:

BeebOx2013	Adult corpus
time machine	car park
ice cream	kitchen table
space ship	cell phone
tree house	ice cream
head teacher	eye contact

TOP BOY AND GIRL NAMES

BOY NAMES	No. of hits		GIRL NAMES	No. of hits
Jack	19900		Lucy	14420
Tom	18511		Lily/Lilly	14025
Bob	15458		Emily	9126
Sam	12750		Sophie	8200
James	12368		Amy	7433

Commentary:
- Jack and Lucy are still the top names in 2013, as in 2012.
- New boy name in the top 10 this year: Joe (Jake has dropped down).
- New girl names in the top 10 this year: Chloe, Ellie (Sarah and Alice have dropped down).

NAMES FROM AROUND THE WORLD

BeebOx2013 has a great variety of names from around the world. A few examples are given below:

African: Chima, Aku, Adebayo, Kofi, Kwame
Arabic (Middle Eastern): Aisha, Naima, Ibrahim, Maryam, Yasmin
Chinese: Li, Wang, Yao, Chen, Zhang, Liu
Egyptian: Abasi, Amenhotep
French: Jacques, Michelle

TOP ANIMALS

ANIMALS	No. of hits
dog	25461
cat	15219
horse	10416
bear	8757
monkey	6839

Commentary:
- The number of hits for the top twenty birds and animals totals 129521, close to the number of hits for fantasy and fairy tale words.
- Dogs, cats and horses remain the top animals in 2013 and 2012.
- Between the actual animals dog and cat, are mythical creatures monster (15790) and dragon (15775).
- Top pets are dog, cat and hamster followed by dragon. In 2012 top pets were dog, cat and rabbit followed by dragon.

TOP FOODS AND DRINKS

FOODS & DRINKS	No. of hits
chocolate	9954
cake	5148
sweet	3567
apple	3366
cheese	3329
banana	2990
milk	2567
candy	2525
ice cream	2523
fruit	2440

Commentary:
- Chocolate remains the top food and milk the top drink in 2013 and 2012.
- The top meal remains breakfast.
- Other favourite foods mentioned by children are bread, meat, pizza and chips.
- Top sandwiches: cheese, ham, (including ham and cheese), bacon, jam, tuna.
- Other favourite drinks mentioned: hot chocolate, coke, lemonade, orange juice, smoothies.

TOP CARS

CARS	No. of hits
Ferrari	412
Jeep	406
Ford	216
Lamborghini	181
Mercedes	135

Commentary:
- The number of hits for the top 20 cars mentioned totals 2210, more than the total hits for any set of top twenty celebrities.
- The word car occurs 26114 times, mentioned 14731 times by boys and 11369 times by girls.
- Ferrari remains the top car in 2013 and 2012, for boys and girls.
- Compared to children's writing, adults have the more affordable Ford as their top car in the adult corpus.

TOP CELEBRITIES

CELEBRITIES	No. of hits
One Direction	566
Chris Evans	448
Rooney	342
Usain Bolt	342
Tulisa	339

Commentary:
- The stories in BeebOx2013 mention a number of celebrities from different areas of interest: Singers/Bands; Footballers; Athletes and Olympics; and Radio/TV personalities.
- One Direction tops the list for the first time. In 2012 the number of hits for One Direction was 69 while in 2013 it is 8.5 times more frequent and has gone up by over 750%.
- Chris Evans remains the most popular individual in 2013 and 2012.
- Rooney remains the most popular footballer but is equalled by Usain Bolt this year.

FOOTBALLERS	No. of hits	ATHLETES	No. of hits
Rooney	342	Usain Bolt	342
Messi	232	Tom Daley	60
Ronaldo	182	Jessica Ennis	53
Van Persie	165	Mo Farah	46
Beckham	107	Andy Murray	36

Commentary:
- More boys than girls write about footballers, for example, boys have 309 hits for Rooney, girls 33.
- The Olympics remain as popular in 2013 as in 2012.
- The word Olympic/s occurs 1823 times this year compared to 1506 times in 2012.
- Top regions in which the words are used in 2013: Wales, Highlands & Islands, Devon, South Scotland, Northamptonshire, Humberside, Norfolk, Cumbria, Cornwall and Kent.
- Usain Bolt is the top athlete for girls and boys in 2013.
- Paralympics occurs 114 times compared to 54 last year.
- In the list for athletes mentioned for the first time in 2013 there are two paralympians: David Weir, Ellie Simmonds.

SINGERS/BANDS	No. of hits	RADIO/TV STARS	No. of hits	TV SHOWS	No. of hits
One Direction	566	Chris Evans	448	Top Gear	94
Tulisa	339	Richard Hammond	167	Tracy Beaker	79
Justin Bieber	170	Simon Cowell	117	Doctor Who	70
Rihanna	138	Alex Jones	46	Eastenders	51
Lady Gaga	107	Helen Skelton	38	Britain's Got Talent	50

Commentary:
- Girls talk about singers and pop stars more than boys do in their writing.
- The only singers that more boys mention than girls are Psy (gangnam style), Cheryl Cole and Tom Jones.
- One Direction is the top band and Harry Styles is the most popular member of the band, mentioned 65 times by girls and 6 times by boys.
- Tulisa is the top singer in 2013 and one of the top ten celebrities for girls and boys. In 2012 the top singer was Rihanna.
- New in the top twenty for 2013 are One Direction, Psy and James Arthur. Psy and James Arthur did not appear at all in 2012.
- Chris Evans is the top presenter and Richard Hammond the second most mentioned media personality in the stories in 2013.

NEW AND INVENTIVE WORDS

NEW WORDS IN BEEBOX2013

The words in the table below are new for 2013 and did not appear in the stories of 2012.

NEW WORDS	No. of hits
gangnam	287
onesie*	121
totes	14
yolo	9
directioner	3

*onesie did appear in 2012 but had 4 hits only; the significant increase in frequency this year makes it a new phenomenon for 2013.

THE LONGEST WORD

hippopotomonstrosesquippedaliophobia (fear of long words) – 36 letters
His mother had hippopotomonstrosesquippedaliophobia so she fainted because there was a word on the note that was so long she fainted. (The Football, boy 11+)

[For interest, currently the longest word in the dictionary in Oxford Dictionaries Online is: pneumonoultramicroscopicsilicovolcanokoniosis (name of a lung disease) – 45 letters]

The longest made-up words in BeebOx2013:
hingchangwangalangstoovletiggleworth – 36 letters
i met my 2 neighbours. on one side there was mr and mrs hingchangwangalangstoovletiggleworth and on the other side was mike! (Fantasmagoric, girl 11+)

hairthlessquipadoliciousphobioa – 31 letters
My fear was hairthlessquipadoliciousphobioa (fear of beards) but people don't believe me what so ever.
(Help I'm Scared, girl 11+)

mirangodangowangolopitis – 24 letters
Once upon a time in about 400,000,000,000BC, there was a mix up, earth wasn't actually called earth it was called ' mirangodangowangolopitis ' and there was no human in sight, so who lived there? It was being lived on by the Bringos. (The Kringos, boy 9+)

The longest story titles in BeebOx2013:
John the world famous, internationally most wanted, ham sandwich stealing Platypus (girl, 11+)
Jeff the Hippie and Mighty Mollusc; The Ancient Banana Blasters of Vindaloo* (boy, 10+)

The longest adjective used for 'mum' in BeebOx2013:
the most annoying-bedroom-tidying-nagging mum ever

MADE UP WORDS

Made-up adjectives
fabdabidabulous
My sunday dinner is fabdabidabulou. (The music diary which includes only one day, girl 10+)

This is one of the top 50 shortlisted stories in 500 Words 2013.

Made-up creatures

lumbagain

I told them that this ghost is one of a kind called a lumbagain ghost who makes people dull and boring. Shockingly he only gets children but when it gets mad he could get teachers and only comes to schools.
(Shocking day at school, girl 11+)

dulbodogfragonaffe

Dulbodogfragonaffe is very big animal with the head of a duck and the mane of a lion. The neck of a giraffe and the body of a horse. The wings of a bee and the front legs of a dog. The back legs of a frog and the tail of a dragon. The spikes on its back of a hedgehog and the ears of a rabbit. All over it is an orangey-pinky coloured.
(In the forest, boy 10+)

Made-up gadgets

disflomaticinator

He made a disflomaticinator .It would make stuff from the past come into the present and stuff from the future come into the present.I will sell this on Ebay he said.I will sell this for 123456789123456789 million billion trillion dollars.
(The Professor's Bad Invention, boy 9+)

shrinkinganator

Now was his chance to put things right with the all new shrinkinganator. It shrank anything but he made it to shrink his son James's homework. He kept complaining about the amount of homework he was getting.
(Honey I Shrunk the Teacher! boy 11+)

USE OF ADJECTIVES

altitudinous

I approached an altitudinous manor, that looked like a blackened statue of a ghost, damaged by the years of betrayal.
(The Thirteenth Manor, girl 11+)

antediluvian

As she began walking down the grass with an arched back and slumped shoulders the antediluvian oak tree came closer like it was walking to her to give comfort.
(Tears, girl 11+)

atramentous

Its hazy malachite skin gleamed with an amber slime, its emaciated tail propelling it through the tingling sea. It glanced only forward, its atramentous citron eyes fixating on its prey.
(A Mother's love, boy 12+)

melanistic

She's called Sheera and she's a melanistic clouded leopard (If you don't know what melanistic means, it means a darker shade of something.
(Sapphire the kung-fu Tiger (Tigersan), girl 11+)

GENRES AND THEMES

The stories in BeeBox2013 are based on a wide variety of topics and themes. Some of the main themes include:

- fantasy and fairy tales
- action/adventure and spy or crime writing
- horror, supernatural and ghost stories
- sci-fi and futuristic
- family, school and everyday life
- historical (war, slavery, Egyptians, etc.)

A selection of words used most frequently within some of these popular genres is given below.

FAIRY TALE AND FANTASY	No. of hits	HORROR, SUPERNATURAL AND GHOST STORIES	No. of hits
monster	15790	ghost	11254
dragon	15775	weird	7656
king	13659	zombie	7642
creature	12575	horrible	6688
magic	9959	beast	5900

Commentary:
- Fantasy is one of the most popular genres in BeebOx2013.
- The use of the word magic has gone up by 7.5% in 2013 from 2012.
- The highest frequency of the word is in stories by girls of 9 years & under.
- The word is also used as a verb: magick and magicked.
- Magic wands are very popular and have over 1500 hits, a much higher frequency than apps for instance, which have 144 hits.
- More girls than boys include fairy-tale words and references in their stories although girls and boys write equally about kings, witches, wizards and trolls.
- Fantasy writing includes references to Harry Potter and the Hobbit, as well as traditional fairy tales.
- Supernatural and ghost stories include words from the popular Twilight series, and Twilight character names such as Bella, Clearwater, Cullen, Edward, Jacob, Pattison, Renesmee, Rosalie.

ACTION/ADVENTURE/ SPY/CRIME	No. of hits	SCI-FI	No. of hits
police	14152	alien	15199
gun	9615	robot	7749
spy	3387	portal	3504
weapon	3376	spaceship	2342
mystery	2500	teleport	897

Commentary:
- The word spy (as a noun) is used 2473 times, mostly by children of 8–10 years, by boys more than girls.
- James Bond is the most popular fictional character in the stories with around 1000 hits.
- 007 and its variations (from 001 to 009) occur 368 times, MI6 352 times and MI5 120 times.

- In the sci-fi stories, along with Star Wars and Doctor Who, words and character names from the Hunger Games series are also popular: Primrose, Katniss, Capitol, Rue, Peeta, Everdeen, Haymitch, Peacekeeper, tracker-jacker, mockingjay, Panem.

TOP CHARACTERS FROM ALL GENRES

TOP CHARACTERS	No. of hits
Bond/James Bond*	971
Cinderella	451
Batman	419
Luna	418
Barbie	395
Superman	346
Harry Potter	300
Rapunzel	243
Red Riding Hood	241
Goldilocks	224

If the number of hits for 007 is added to this, we get an even higher figure of 1135.

TECHNOLOGY WORDS

TECHNOLOGY	No. of hits	GAMES	No. of hits	SOCIAL MEDIA	No. of hits
computer	3899	Minecraft	361	facebook	215
screen	2165	Angry Birds	117	youtube	158
text	1435	Black Ops	99	blog	70
mobile	1052	Temple Run	59	skype	67
laptop	1017	Call of Duty	55	twitter	38

TECH WORDS USED BY **BOYS** MORE THAN GIRLS	TECH WORDS USED BY **GIRLS** MORE THAN BOYS
PS3	text
xbox	email
download	ipod
network	laptop
Wii	website

Commentary:
- Boys and girls both use technology words in their writing with some differences – boys focus more on games consoles – PS3, Xbox, Wii, DS – while girls focus more on text, email, ipod, ipad and iphone.
- The top technology words which have significantly more hits in 2013 than in 2012, taking into account the larger number of stories this year, are: ipad, iphone, Xbox and email.
- Apps are mentioned 144 times.
- Many more tablets are mentioned in 2013 than in 2012: Samsung Galaxy is three times more frequent than in 2012, while Kindle Fire, ipad mini, Kobo and Nexus are new to 2013.
- Words relating to social media are used more frequently by girls than boys.

10.CONCLUSION

This document records the highlights of the analysis done on BeebOx2013 by the Oxford Children's Dictionary department. More detailed and further information can be provided if required.

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