



# **Dewdroppers, Waldos, and Slackers: A Decade-by-Decade Guide to the Vanishing Vocabulary of the 20th Century**

*Rosemarie Ostler*

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Ever encountered a *blatherskite*? How about a *darb*? When was the last time you got the *straight skinny* at a *rap session* or told someone to *keep on truckin'*? How many once-popular American words aren't you using these days? Quite a few, if you're like most people.

Thousands of words and expressions entered American English between 1900 and 1999. Every era from the "Roaring Twenties" to the "Me Decade" brought its own fads and trends and the language to go with them: fresh youth slang, up-to-the-minute buzzwords, and colorful catch phrases. Most of this new vocabulary exploded into the vernacular, only to fizzle a few years later as trendier trends and more current events demanded new terminology.

Giving yesterday's words another chance to sparkle before they retire to the archives for good, *Dewdroppers, Waldos, and Slackers* focuses on language that still resonates with the mood of its times. These are words that most Americans would once have recognized, if not actually used. Nothing says Sixties like *groovy*, even though this resilient piece of slang was heard as early as the 1940s, lingered into the 1970s, and amazingly, is making a twenty-first century comeback.

A nostalgic word trip through the highs and lows of American English from the last century, this book pays special attention to words that enjoyed a brief vogue only to end up abandoned and nearly forgotten: *one-reelers*, *bulls*, *jet jockeys*, *keypunch operators*, the *bugged-out* and the *slackers*. They all have a place in this book in engaging essays--arranged by decade--that put these words in their historical and sociological context. The twentieth century is over, but we can still appreciate the words we left behind.

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