

2017- The Year of Feminism

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Who knew there would be days like these? The Merriam Webster dictionary has declared an F word, the word of the year. Means, Feminism, because searches for the meaning of the word feminism went up by 70 per cent in 2017 as compared to 2016.

Isn't that just, well, cool and pleasing? Because feminism is one of those things that people love to argue about - or rather against - without ever having really looked at the histories of movements, theories, legal and political debates. They make up a definition retro-fitted to their fears and anxieties and argue away. They suggest other names for feminism - humanism, womanism and my favourite, heard most recently, equalism, which sounds a bit like a movement for putting sugar substitutes in your coffee. They take potshots at feminist earnestness (because to argue seriously is to engage. To take potshots is like pulling pigtaails, but, chalo, boyz will be boyz).

One might imagine that there was a gush in searches following the various sexual harassment revelations of the last couple of years . The largest spike in the search actually came after the women's march in Washington DC following Donald Trump's election. A second spike followed works like Wonder Woman and The Handmaid's Tale. It means people look at something - a women's march, a film, a book, a news report, or some arguments about these works and movements between feminists on social media - and think, "Hmm, maybe there's something there. What is that something?" And then, they search for that word. And that may start a journey for them. Maybe a journey which allows the swelling of discussion about sexual violence and chauvinism in Hollywood for example.

These journeys will be diverse, unpredictable as journeys are when one thing leads to another. The most frustrating and remarkable thing about feminism is that it may have one essence, but it has no one definition. I personally think of it as a philosophy about the gendered nature of how power is structured, used and misused, in spoken and unspoken ways. There are dozens of other perspectives. In fact, often, as soon as some feminist agendas become too settled or static, it is challenged by some section of people invested in the idea, kept moving along, hence being a constant, ongoing movement.

That's what makes it an interesting movement, because the very idea of movements is redefined every day in the doing of feminism, in trying it on for new sizes, mixing and matching it with other ideas. The argument about whether feminism should exist or not - which sometimes happens - is so silly, as are declarations about 'feminists think that' because you will need to ask, which feminists yaar ?

The nice things about dictionaries, is that they rarely provide just one meaning for a word, but rather many shades of meaning, acknowledging life's heterogeneity. Words describe the world, in its visible and sensory beauty, to set our experience of it free, in order to be sharable by many, not restricted in incoherence.

Feminism, too, like that, exists not in a fixed time and place but in the fact that people always try to exceed their boundaries - gendered, material, emotional, philosophical, and political. It exists also in so

many other F words - friendship, freedom, fighting among them - not to mention several other words under A to Z. Look it up sometime next year.

Article References ...

<https://www.merriam-webster.com/words.../woty2017-top-looked-up-words-feminism>

Merriam-Webster's Word of the Year is a quantitative measure of interest in a particular word. The online dictionary gives insight into the collective curiosity of the public, with millions of words looked up every month.

They say their largest spike in lookups for 'feminism' was after the Women's March on Washington.

Merriam-Webster's Word of the Year for 2017 is *feminism*. The word was a top lookup throughout the year, showing a 70% increase over 2016. It also saw several spikes in lookups that corresponded to various news reports and events during the year. The general rise in lookups tells us that many people are interested in this word; specific spikes give us insight into some of the reasons why.

Feminism was first entered in an English dictionary by Noah Webster in 1841 with the definition “the qualities of females.” Today's definitions read: “the theory of the political, economic, and social equality of the sexes” and “organized activity on behalf of women's rights and interests.”

No one word can ever sum up all the news, events, or stories of a given year—mainly a year with so much news and so many stories. But when a single word is looked up in great volume, and also stands out as one associated with several different important stories, inspires me to write on this. There is an ongoing international conversation on the Topic now. .