First Recorded Lexical Usage in English, with Particular Reference to Charles Dickens

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This paper discusses the convention of ‘first recorded usage’ in lexicography, using the resources of the Oxford English Dictionary. It shows the way the notion has been applied to Shakespeare, and illustrates further from a selection of authors, focusing on the prefix un-. A classification of lexical innovation is provided by the first recorded usages found in the writing of Charles Dickens.

1. Introduction

Where do English words come from? This apparently simple question is extraordinarily difficult to answer. It is only a partial answer to say that, for example, bonsai or emoji come from Japanese. A more interesting question is: who first used these words in English, and why?

The publication of a literary work has been the usual means of establishing the year in which a new word is introduced to the world. Catch-22 arrived in 1961, following the publication of Joseph Heller’s novel of that name. Chortle appeared first in Lewis Carroll’s Through the Looking-Glass in 1872. Blurb was invented in 1906 by the American humorist Gelett Burgess, who introduced it on the dust jacket of his latest book.

Cases of this kind are the closest we can get to the origins of a word. Usually all we can say is that a word appeared ‘in the early 1990s’ or ‘in the late 18th century’. The Internet, of course, is establishing new possibilities, allowing a text to be time-stamped to the second, so that if I coin a new word, or use an old word in a new sense, this information will in principle be available for future lexicographers. But for the lexicon as it currently stands, we are reliant on historical lexicography to do the best it can, using traditional methods.
2. First recorded usages

The basic method, used most famously by the *Oxford English Dictionary*, is to establish a word’s first recorded usage (FRU). If we look up any entry in the online *OED*, we will see the various senses of a word displayed, with citations illustrating its use in chronological order. The Advanced Search function can then be used to search the vast database to find all the FRUs relating to an individual author, allowing us to establish in seconds what would formerly have taken months to determine.

The author whose lexical usage has been most often researched in this way is, of course, Shakespeare, as people are especially interested in knowing how many words he invented or used in a novel sense. The task immediately brings to light the limitations of the notion of FRU, as any list of instances needs interpretation before we can say anything definite about personal creativity. Many Shakespearean FRUs are there simply because he happened to be the first person we know to have written them down. ‘Sblood, the euphemism for God’s blood, is first recorded in *Henry IV Part 1*, but such an everyday expression would never be called an invention. On the other hand, when we encounter such FRUs as *unsex* (in *Macbeth*) and *uncurse* (in *Richard II*), we feel that here is a personal and dramatic use of the prefix.

The results of an FRU search are also continually in need of revision. When the *OED* began, Shakespeare was seen as a privileged source of data, and many words were given their first illustration from his plays and poems. The *OED* was in effect Shakespeare-biased for that period of linguistic history. As more sources have come to be studied - and especially after more texts from the period have come to be available online - several of the FRUs attributed to him have been antedated. An example is *lonely*, long given its first citation from *Coriolanus*, whose FRU is now known to be a few decades before. In a recalculation of FRUs for the Shakespeare section in the third edition of *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language* (2019), I took into account the ongoing updating of the *OED*, which has so far brought to light 349 items where earlier usages have been found - 16 per cent of the total traditionally attributed to Shakespeare. Ten of these are un- coinages (see below): *unlink, unmuzzle, unnuzzled, unparagoned, unpitifully, unpolluted, unreal, unrecounted, unreversed*, and *unscorched*. This total will undoubtedly continue to grow. Of the 2150 entries that remained FRUs in mid-2017, 70% (1506) were still to be updated; so, if the 16 per cent rate of attrition continues, a further 245 or more entries are going to lose their FRU status over the next few years. This will still leave Shakespeare far and away the leading lexical creator for English; but it raises the question: how far ahead is he? How do other authors fare? Comparisons are not usually made, because few other authors have had their entire oeuvre scrutinized by lexicographers. And even when this has happened, it is not specially meaningful from a linguistic point of view to compare overall totals. More illuminating is a comparison of a particular creative strategy, such as the use of a particular prefix or suffix, or of a particular process of compounding.

3. Un- uses

Shakespeare’s favourite prefix is un-. There are 612 different lexemes beginning with un- in the First Folio alone, and just over a third of these (199) are recorded in the *OED* (at the beginning of 2019) as FRUs. A complete list is given in the APPENDIX. It should be noted, however, that the *OED* is no longer a good guide to Shakespearean FRUs. For its third edition, the editors have replaced the dates of individual plays by an uninformative *a1616* (that is, ‘ante 1616’, Shakespeare’s death year). While there are certainly some uncertainties about play dating, the majority of the plays do have a scholarly consensus as to when they were written, and it is regrettable that this is no longer recognized by the *OED*. Anyone wanting to carry out FRU research into Shakespeare will in future have to supplement any *OED* search with a chronology of their own choosing - bearing in mind that a change from (for example) *1597 to a1616 may result in a genuine Shakespearean FRU being obscured. There are eight un- examples in the APPENDIX which have lost their status because of the new methodology: *uncropped, ungarnered, unhospitable, unpremeditated, unrivalled, unseconded, unshown*, and *unspeak*.
Uncropped, for example, is used in All's Well that Ends Well, which is thought to have been written at some point between 1603 and 1605; dating it as a1616 now places it later than a usage by Fletcher. The Two Gentlemen of Verona is an early play (1589–93), but the 1591 date formerly used by the OED is now replaced by a1616, a distant 25 years later. And one of Shakespeare's most vivid usages, unspeak, used in Macbeth in 1605 (one of the most clearly dated of all the plays) is now placed behind a later occurrence in 1610.

How do other authors fare, compared to Shakespeare? Totals vary greatly, but are usually quite low. For example, works written by Thomas de Quincey, the subject of another paper in this issue, have been included in the OED. He has a total of 133 FRUs, eight of which are un-forms: uncatatrized, uncular, unfactual, unmyetical, unsimulated, unsnakny, untransquilized, and unwordy. Eight of Jane Austen's writings (including her letters) have been included: she seems not to have been so lexically innovative, with 39 FRUs. Her three un- uses are unfastidious, unfeudal, and unrepsusbable. Modern authors are even less represented: Dylan Thomas has 18 FRUs with just one un- usage, unskated; T S Eliot has 12, with none.

I wondered which of the 19th-century novelists would be the most represented. I thought it would be Charles Dickens, given the scale of his writing (some 4 million words). He turns out to have 252 FRUs, with 15 un- usages. But he is far exceeded by Walter Scott, with 449, including 43 un- usages:

- unannounced, unballast, unbonnet, unbusiness-like, uncarpeted, unchampioned, undegrade, undilapidated, undiminishing, undimplesd, undiscipline, unencountered, unexplicitly, unfatiguing, unforcibly, unfrosted, unfurbished, ungunsaying, unhap, unhelmet (the citation is 'he was compelled to ... unhelmet himself'), unhelmeted, uninaugurated, uninspring, uninvested, uninvestigated, un locomotive ('I am getting very un locomotive'), un molest, unmullioned, unpale, unpoetized, unrecked, unrefreshful, unsaint-like, unsalvable. unscrupled, unscythed, unstercorated, untentrety, unterminating, untransmigrated, unturbid,

unvacillating, unwire

From these two cases, we get a clear impression that the 19th-century novel is distinctive for the propensity of its authors to create or record neologisms.

4. The case of Dickens

FRUs also provide an additional perspective into the nature of an author's style and creativity, as can be seen from the following broad classification of the examples attributed to Charles Dickens. As with Shakespeare, the items are a mixture ofDickensian linguistic creations and items where he is simply the first person we know to have written them down - words that reflect the Victorian world in which he lived, or words that he heard in the streets around him. My Shakespearian caveat obtains: it is always possible that further lexicological survey will find earlier instances. I have paraphrased the entries as they appear in the OED, giving glosses for the less transparent items; spellings, dates, and locators are as found in the OED.

4.1 Word-class conversion

All bar one of Dickens' FRU word-class conversions are instances of nouns becoming verbs. The one exception, of a verb becoming a noun, is:

sell, act of betraying, 1838, Oliver Twist, II. xxvi. 100, I say... what a time this would be for a sell!

There are 22 noun-to-verb citations recorded by the OED. Most are of a familiar kind, but his compound-noun coinages (such as mother-in-lawed and mustard-poulsticed) are distinctive.

aprorn, 1866, Our Mutual Friend, II. iii. iv. 25, I mean to apron it and towel it.

beeswax, 1836, Sketches by Boz, 1st Ser. I. 17, The table-covers are never
taken off, except when the leaves are turpentine and beeswaxed.

cab, 1835, Letters, ? 29 Oct, Worth your while to walk or Cab so far East.

charcoal, 1839, Nicholas Nickleby, xxxvii. 364, Because she wouldn't shut herself up in an air-tight three-pair-of stairs and charcoal herself to death.

corkscrew, 1837, Pickwick Papers, xxxiv. 380, Mr. Bantam corkscrewed his way through the crowd.

counter, furnish with a counter, 1843, Martin Chuzzlewit, xxvii. 324, The offices were... newly countered.

flannel, 1834, Sketches by Boz, 1st Ser. I. 189, The second-floor front was scrubbed, and washed, and flanelled. [sense 2: to rub with flannel]

manslaughter, 1843, Martin Chuzzlewit, iv. 46, Those who hooked and crooked themselves into this family by getting on the blind side of some of its members before marriage, and man slaughtering them afterwards by crowing over them to that strong pitch that they were glad to die.

mantrap, 1851, Mr Nightingale's Diary, i. 82, Which the blessed innocent has been invagyld of, and man-trapped—leastways boy-trapped.

mother-in-law, 1857, Little Dorrit, ii. xiv. 443, I will not... submit to be mother-in-lawed by Mrs. General.


nutcracker, 1861, Great Expectations, xxiii, Are infants to be nutcrackered into their tombs?

First Recorded Lexical Usage in English, with Particular Reference to Charles Dickens

odd-job, 1859, Tale of Two Cities, iii. ix. 206, A gentleman like yourself wot I've had the honour of odd jobbing till I'm grey at it.

oh, 1837, Sketches by Boz, 2nd Ser. 241, All of them talking, laughing, lounging, coughing, o-ing, questioning, or groaning.

patroness, 1865, Our Mutual Friend, I. ii. xiv. 297, Why am I to be Patroned and Patronessed as if the Patrons and Patronesses treated me?

polka, 1846, Letters, 5 July, The common people waltzed and polka'd, without cessation, to the music of a band.

pompey, 1860, Great Expectations, vii, When I was old enough, I was to be apprenticed to Joe, and until I could assume that dignity I was not to be what Mrs. Joe called 'Pompeyed', or (as I render it) pampered.

rough-dry, 1836, Pickwick Papers, xvii. 173, The process of being washed in the night air, and rough-dried in a close closet.

geruler, 1849, David Copperfield, vii. 66, I think he was caned every day that half-year, except one holiday Monday when he was only ruler'd on both hands.

turpentine, 1836, Sketches by Boz, 1st Ser. I. 17, The table-covers are never taken off, except when the leaves are turpentine and beeswaxed.

water-cart, 1851, Our Watering Place in Household Words, 2 Aug. 433/1, The great metropolis is...so much more water-carted...than it usually is.

whoosh, 1856, Letters, VIII. 162, The boys...whooshing, and crying, (after Tigerish Cat No. 2) 'French! Here she comes!'
4.2 Words created with suffixes

There are 22 suffixes used, and although this total is very small it is immediately noticeable how Dickens seems to have a particular penchant for coining words ending in -y (10 instances), with -ed, -er, and -ing also noteworthy, each having 7.

admonitorial, 1848, Dombey and Son, ii. 511, Miss Tox...in her instruction of the Toodle family, has acquired an admonitorial tone.

apronless, bibless, 1865, Our Mutual Friend, II. iii. iv. 27, Bibless and apronless.

bandiness, being bandy-legged, 1841, Old Curiosity Shop, i. xxxvi. 298, If... any moral twist or bandiness could be found, Miss Sally Brass's nurse was alone to blame.

beadlehood, 1838, Oliver Twist, I. xvii. 273, Mr. Bumble... was in the full bloom and pride of beadleism. [Later edd. read 'beadledom,' and 'beadlehood.]

beamer, one who beams, 1857, Little Dorrit, ii. xxxii. 603, The form of words which that benevolent beamer generally employed...

boredom, 1853, Bleak House, xxviii. 277, [Her] chronic malady of boredom.

cellarous, like a cellar, 1856, Little Dorrit, i. xx. 173, He... crept forth by some underground way which emitted a cellarous smell.

coachfulness/coachlessness, 1863, Uncommercial Traveller in All Year Round, 1 Aug. 540/2, The Dolphin's Head, which everywhere expressed past coachfulness and present coachlessness.

complexionless, 1863, Uncommercial Traveller in All Year Round, 12 Sept. 64/2, Four male personages... complexionless and eyebrowless.

conductorial, of a conductor, 1853, Letters, 17 Nov, Keep 'Household Words' imaginative! is the solemn and continual Conductorial Injunction.

confusingly, 1863, Letters, 17 May, He feels the school to be confusingly large for him.

connubiality, characteristic of marriage, 1836, Pickwick Papers, xx. 207, 'Think, Sir!' replied Mr. Weller; 'why, I think he's the victim o' connubiality.'

conspiratorial, 1856, Little Dorrit, i. xxv. 221, To unite [glasses] in a general conspiratorial clink.

consularity, consulship, 1857, Little Dorrit, ii. xv. 458, The British Consul hadn't such a marriage in the whole of his Consularity.

convulsing, 1843, Martin Chuzzlewit, ix. 113, Gander, in a convulsing speech, gives them the health of Bailey junior.

copying, 1836, Sketches by Boz, 1st Ser. II. 198, Low copying-clerks in attorneys' offices.

dissective, of dissecting, 1860, Letters, 7 Jan, The three people who write the narratives in these proofs, have a dissective property in common.

distributionist, one who advocates a system of distribution, 1836, Sketches by Boz, 1st Ser. I. 76, The distributionists trembled, for their popularity was at stake.
divulgence, 1851, Our School in Household Words, 11 Oct. 51/2, The Chief 'knew something bad of him', and on pain of divulgence enforced Phil to be his bondsman.

drabbish, 1842, American Notes, II. ii. 56, Dressed in a dusty drabbish-coloured suit.

earthquaky, 1837, Pickwick Papers, xlii. 486, Legs shaky—head queer—round and round—earthquaky sort of feeling—very.

effaceable, 1839, Nicholas Nickleby, vi. 42, Washed off all effaceable marks of the late accident.

embowerment, 1846, Dombey and Son, viii. 72, Plants... of a kind peculiarly adapted to the embowerment of Mrs. Pipchin.

emetically, 1863, Uncommercial Traveller in All Year Round, 2 May 229/2, Sneaking Calais, prone behind its bar, invites emetically to despair.

essayical, like an essay, 1860, Letters, 25 Sept, Remarks... a little too essayical for this purpose.

fluey, covered with flue, 1861, Great Expectations, xxii, I went upon 'Change, and I saw fluey men sitting there under the bills about shipping.

fluffiness, 1860, Uncommercial Traveller in All Year Round, 24 Mar. 514/1, An air of mingled fluffiness and heeltaps.

fretty, 1844, Letters, 15–16 Sept, O'Connell's speeches are the old thing: fretty, boastful, frothy.

galvanizing, 1854, Hard Times, i. ii. 5, He seemed a galvanising apparatus,

First Recorded Lexical Usage in English, with Particular Reference to Charles Dickens too.

gasper, person who gasps, 1845, Letters, 27 Sept, When I think of the possible consequences—of little gaspers like Papa—... a chill runs through my blood.

gingerous, ginger-coloured, 1864, Our Mutual Friend, i. i. x. 93, Mr. Lammle takes his gingerous whiskers in his left hand, and... frowns furtively at his beloved, out of a thick gingerous bush. [of hair etc.]

hunchy, 1841, Old Curiosity Shop, i. v. 105, I'm a little hunchy villain and a monster, am I?

jostlement, 1859, Tale of Two Cities, ii. xii. 94, To the jostlement of all weaker people.

invalided, 1837, Pickwick Papers, xliii. 486, Mr. Pickwick cut the matter short by drawing the invalided stroller's arm through his, and leading him away.

jowled, 1861, Great Expectations, xliii, Drummle glanced at me, with an insolent triumph on his great-jowled face.

jungled, 1842, American Notes, II. iii. 84, Primeval forests... where the jungled ground was never trodden by a human foot.

knifer, one who uses a knife as a weapon, 1870, Edwin Drood, xxiii. 188, Jacks. And Chayner men. And hother Knifers.

meltability, 1865, Our Mutual Friend, II. iv. vii. 225, The brittleness and meltability of wax.
messiness, 1836, Letters, 5 Feb, I shall consequently be in great confusion and messiness.

metropolitaneously, 1852, Letters, 19 Oct, Are you never coming to town any more? Never going to drink port again, metropolitaneously, but always with Fielden?

millinerial, relating to millinery, 1844, Letters, 29 Mar, Ask her to save the dress... Let it never grow old, fade, shrink, or undergo millinerial alteration.

narratable, 1852, Letters, 22 Nov, If you should think of any other idea, narratable by an old man.

newspapered, 1857, Little Dorrit, ii. xvi. 462, Mr. Dorrit, dressing-gowned and newspapered, was at his breakfast.

oyster, 1844, Letters, 2 Jan, I... opened the despatch, with a moist and oysterly twinkle in my eye.


petful, peevish, 1852, First Fruits in Household Words, 15 May 190/2, Sitting with petful impatience in the parlour.

Pickwickian, 1836, Letters, 18 Feb, Believe me (in Pickwickian haste) Faithfully Yours Charles Dickens.

Podsnappery, blinkered self-satisfaction, 1864, Our Mutual Friend, I. i. xi. 98, These may be said to have been the articles of a faith and school which the present chapter takes the liberty of calling, after its representative man, Podsnappery.

polygamically, 1863, Uncommercial Traveller in All Year Round, 4 July 448/1, To suppose the family groups of whom the majority of emigrants were composed, polygamically possessed, would be to suppose an absurdity.

ponging, projecting, 1854, Hard Times vi, Missed his tip at the banners, too, and was loose in his poning.

prisonous, streety, 1856, Little Dorrit, i. vi. 47, His son began... to be of the prison prisonous and of the street streety.

prodding, 1864, Our Mutual Friend, I. ii. vii. 231, Whether I gave myself up to prodding, or whether I gave myself up to scooping, I couldn’t do it with that delicate touch so as not to show that I was disturbing the mounds.

pruney, prim, 1857, Little Dorrit, ii. xix. 486, Notwithstanding what may be called in these pages the Pruney and Prismatic nature of the family banquet, Mr. Dorrit several times fell asleep while it was in progress.

punchy, 1843, Letters, 2 Mar, A complication of Punchy smells.

pupil-less, 1865, Our Mutual Friend, II. iii. x. 95, Sometimes accompanied by his hopeful pupil; oftener, pupil-less.

rampacious, rampageous, 1836, Pickwick Papers, xxii. 228, A stone statue of some rampacious animal with flowing mane and tail, distantly resembling an insane cart-horse.

rulering, 1849, David Copperfield, vii. 77, Tear-blotted copy-books,
canings, rulerings.

saucepanful, 1868, *Holiday Romance* ii, in *All Year Round*, 8 Feb. 206/2, The other Princes and Princesses were squeezed into a... corner to look at the Princess Alicia turning out the saucepan-full of broth...

shriven, 1846, *Pictures from Italy*, 114, I had my foot upon the spot, where... the shriven prisoner was strangulated.

slinking, 1841, *Barnaby Rudge*, xxxv. 137, His manner was smooth and humble, but very sly and slinking.

sniggerer, 1860, *Uncommercial Traveller* in *All Year Round*, 5 May 87/1, The sniggerers tempt him to secular thoughts of marbles.

snobbish, 1841, *Old Curiosity Shop*, ii. lvi. 112, This form of inquiry... he held to be of a disrespectful and snobbish tendency.

soupy, 1869, *Uncommercial Traveller* in *All Year Round*, 2 Jan. 109/1, The dirty table-cloths, the stuffy soupy airless atmosphere.

spectacularly, 1859, *Tale of Two Cities*, ii. i. 34, Then only was he permitted to be seen, spectacularly poring over large books.

spiffication, total destruction, 1839, *Nicholas Nickleby*, xxvii. 262, Conjecturing... that smifigation and bloodshed must be...one and the same thing.

spoffish, fussy, 1836, *Sketches by Boz*, 1st Ser. II. 124, As a little spoffish man... entered the room.

spongeless, 1863, *Uncommercial Traveller* in *All Year Round*, 12 Sept.

62/1, My sponge being left behind at the last Hotel...I went, spongeless.

squashed, 1856, *Little Dorrit*, i. ix. 66, Such squashed hats and bonnets... never were seen in Rag Fair.


Suffolk, 1849, *David Copperfield*, xi. 117, The men generally spoke of me as... 'the young Suffolk'.

swarmer, 1844, *Martin Chuzzlewit*, lii. 598, 'Oh, vermin!' said Mr. Pecksniff. 'Oh, bloodsuckers!... vermin and swarmers.'

toussed, 1847, *Dombey and Son*, xxv. 250 Rob the Grinder...stood then, panting at the Captain, with a flushed and touzled air of Bed about him.

trembly, 1846, *Dombey and Son*, i. 5, So trembly and shakey from head to foot.

trucker, labourer who uses a truck, 1853, *Down with Tide* in *Household Words*, 5 Feb. 484/2, The Truckers... whose business it was to land more considerable parcels of goods than the Lumpers could manage.

wagonful, 1846, *Pictures from Italy*, 179, A waggon-full of madmen, screaming and tearing to the life.

waxy, angry, 1853, *Bleak House*, xxiv. 250, It would cheer him up more than anything, if I could make him a little waxy with me.

willed, disposed of by will, 1865, *Our Mutual Friend*, II. iii. ix. 80, I am the willed-away girl.
In addition, there are two instances where a suffix has been upgraded to word-level - noun and adjective:

-ization, 1864, *Our Mutual Friend*, I. i. xi. 107, He was not aware that he was driving at any ization.

-ological, 1854, *Hard Times*, i. xv. 120, I hope you may now turn all your ological studies to good account.

4.3 Words coined using prefixes
In this group, the preference for un- is very clear:

a-smear, 1861, *Great Expectations*, xx, All asmear with filth and fat.

out-sharpen, 1864, *Our Mutual Friend*, I. ii. i. 168, She would glance at the visitors with a look that out-sharpened all her other sharpness.

retelegraph, 1839, *Nicholas Nickleby*, vii. 62, 'Ale, Squeery?' inquired the lady, winking and frowning to give him to understand that the question propounded was, whether Nicholas should have ale, and not whether he (Squeers) would take any. 'Certainly,' said Squeers, re-telegraphing in the same manner. 'A glassful.'

unassertive, 1861, *Great Expectations*, lvii, He would sit and talk to me in the old unassertive protecting way.

unbear, free a horse from the bearing-rein, 1853, *Bleak House*, lvi. 543, Unbear him half a moment to freshen him up.

uncertificated, 1836, *Bleak House*, 1st Ser. II. 199, A disappointed eighth-rate actor... a retired smuggler, or an uncertificated bankrupt.

First Recorded Lexical Usage in English, with Particular Reference to Charles Dickens

uncolonial, 1861, *Great Expectations*, xlv, A certain person not altogether of uncolonial pursuits.

under-sawyer, subordinate, 1864, *Our Mutual Friend*, I. i. xii. 109, There were no top-sawyers; every passenger was an under-sawyer.

undiscussible, 1860, *Great Expectations*, viii, She said it so finally, and in such an undiscussible way.

undistinctive, 1851, *On Duty with Inspector Field*, in *Household Words*, 14 June 270/2, As undistinctive Death will come here, one day, sleep comes now.

unhooped, 1860, *Bleak House*, i, Like an unhooped cask upon a pole.


unruffiable, 1837, *Pickwick Papers*, xxxii. 339, Sam... obeyed all his master's behests with... unruffiable composure.

unsavengered, 1846, *Pictures from Italy*, 18, The undrained, unsavengered, qualities of a foreign town.


unsnap, 1862, *Somebody's Luggage: His Boots in All Year Round*, 4 Dec. 771, As if nothing should ever tempt her to unsnap that snap [of the fingers].

unsoaped, 1837, *Pickwick Papers*, xxiv. 253, The unsoaped of Ipswich
brought up the rear.

unsoufling, 1857, *Little Dorrit*, ii. xxx. 588, She... with an unsoufling
face, looked at the worked letters within.

un-swanlike, 1837, *Pickwick Papers*, xxix. 311 Mr. Winkle... was being
assisted over the ice by Mr. Weller, in a very singular and un-swan-like
manner.

unyielding, 1847, *Dombey and Son*, xl. 402, Looking upon him with
neither yielding nor unyielding, liking nor hatred.

5. **Compound words**

This list includes noun, verb, and adjective compounds:

*allwork*, domestic work of all kinds, 1838, *Oliver Twist*, II. xxviii. 140,
Brittles was a lad of all-work.

deadlong, 1843, *Martin Chuzzlewit*, xxiv. 297, Through half the deadlong
night. [a playful coinage based on *livelong day*]

draggle-haired, with wet and untidy hair, 1865, *Our Mutual Friend*, II. iii.
x. 96, Draggle-haired, seamed with jealousy and anger.

half-baptize, baptise privately, 1836, *Sketches by Boz*, 1st Ser. I. 14, He
got out of bed... to half-baptize a washerwoman’s child in a slop-basin.

new boy, 1847, *Dombey and Son*, xli. 410, Here is the table upon which he
sat forlorn and strange, the ‘new boy’ of the school.

offsetting, 1857, *Perils Eng. Prisoners* in *Household Words*, 7 Dec. 30/2,
The off-settings and point-currents of the stream.
Short-Timers, in a writing competition, beat the Long-Timers of a first-class National School.

6. Words reflecting the culture of the time

As with other published works from the 19th century, such as *Punch* magazine, Dickens’ FRUs provide an invaluable insight into Victorian life and times.

*Blondin*, tightrope, 1863, *Uncommercial Traveller in All Year Round*, 15 Aug. 588/2, An appalling accident happened at the People’s Park near Birmingham... the enterprising Directors... hanging the Blondin rope as high as they possibly could hang it.

*Bramah*, machine inventor, 1836, *Sketches by Boz*, 2nd Ser. 46, Testing the influence of their patent Bramahs over the street-door locks to which they respectively belonged.


*clobber*, type of cobbler paste, 1853, *St. Crispin in Household Words*, 26 Mar. 79/1, If there are crevices and breaks in an old pair of shoes... he insinuates into them a dose of clobber, which seems to be a mixture of ground cinders and paste.

*coach-horser*, one who provides horses for stagecoaches, 1837, *Pickwick Papers*, xlii. 463, The embarrassed coach-horser was ordered to be discharged forthwith.

*commoney*, type of marble, 1837, *Pickwick Papers*, xxxiii. 358, Whether he had won any alley tors or commoneys lately.

*crush hat*, hat that can be crushed flat, 1839, *Nicholas Nickleby*, xix. 180, Folding his crush hat to lay his elbow on.

*Cuba*, type of cigar, 1837, *Pickwick Papers*, xxix. 308, He... emitted a fragrant odour of full-flavoured Cubas.

*Denmark*, 1836, *Sketches by Boz*, 2nd Ser. 107, A pair of Denmark satin shoes.

*drysaltery*, drysalter’s store, 1847, *Dombey and Son*, xxiii. 234, The smell of which dry-saltery impregnated the air.

*hopping*, hop-picking, 1860, *Uncommercial Traveller in All Year Round*, 16 June 234/2, The whole country-side... will swarm with hopping tramps.

*Kensal Green*, type of cemetery, 1842, Letters, 26 Apr, What would I give if the dear girl whose ashes lie in Kensal-green, had lived.

*Loddon*, type of lily, 1882, *Dickens’s Dict. Thames*, 28/3, It [sc. the summer snowflake] is very abundant in the meadows by the Loddon, and hence called ‘Loddon lilies’.

*mairie*, town hall, 1864, *Mrs. Lirriper’s Legacy in All Year Round*, 1 Dec. 8/2, The Major went down to the Mairie.

*manty-making*, dressmaking, 1839, *Nicholas Nickleby*, xxi. 195, This here’s the mantie-making con-sarn, a’nt it?

*paybox*, box office, 1851, *Flight in Household Words*, 30 Aug. 531/2,
He darts upon my luggage... pays certain francs for it, to a certain functionary behind a Pigeon Hole, like a pay-box at a Theatre.

*psychograph*, type of medium, 1854, Letters, 7 Mar, A thing called a Psycho-grapher, which writes at the dictation of spirits.

railway *time*, standard time used by a railway system, 1847, *Dombey and Son*, xv. 155, There was even railway time observed in clocks, as if the sun itself had given in.

*Scheherazade*, 1851, Letters, 25 Nov, My Dear Scheherazade—for I am sure your powers of narrative... must be good for at least a thousand nights and one.

tagliarini, egg noodles, 1846, *Pictures from Italy*, 49, Real Genoese dishes, such as Tagliarini...

tip-cheese, type of game, 1837, *Pickwick Papers*, xxxiii. 360, He forgets the long familiar cry of 'knuckle down', and at tip-cheese, or odd and even, his hand is out.

utilitarianism, 1839, *Nicholas Nickleby*, xxxvi. 347, But knockers may be muffled for other purposes than those of mere utilitarianism.

7. Colloquialisms and slang

These FRUs do not illustrate any personal lexical creativity. We might have expected most of them to have been common in print previously (and perhaps some will be antedated in due course), but the fact that they appear for the first time in Dickens illustrates his wide-ranging social awareness (from circuses to law-courts) as well as his ear for colloquial speech.

demnition, damnation, 1839, *Nicholas Nickleby*, lxiv. 617, It is all up with

First Recorded Lexical Usage in English, with Particular Reference to Charles Dickens

its handsome friend, he has gone to the demnition bow-wows.

'ere, here, 1837, *Pickwick Papers*, xlv. 489, I'm very much mistaken if that 'ere jingle won't a doin' some thin' in the vater-cart way!

gonoph, pickpocket, 1853, *Bleak House*, xix. 188, He's as obstinate a young gonoph as I know.

gorm, God damn, 1849, *David Copperfield*, xxi. 220, Gorm the t'other one.


heavens, very, 1858, *House to Let in Household Words*, 7 Dec. 21/1, A shy company through its raining Heavens hard.

ickle, little, 1846, *Dombey and Son*, i. 5, I came down from seeing dear Fanny, and that tiddy ickle sing.

jeff, circus slang for rope, 1854, *Hard Times*, i. vi. 37, Tight-Jeff or Slack-Jeff, it don't much signify: it's only tight-rope and slack-rope.


missis, 1839, *Nicholas Nickleby*, xlii. 414, 'Don't Missis me, ma'am'... returned Miss Squeers.

m'lad, 1853, *Bleak House*, i. 4, 'Mr. Tangle,' says the Lord High Chancellor... 'Mud,' says Mr. Tangle.

mo, month, 1836, Letters, 7 24 Aug, 25£ per mo: after Nov. 8th.
nohows, nohow, 1848, *Dombey and Son*, lvi. 566, I'm gone about and adrift. Pay out a word or two respecting them adventurs, will you! Can't I bring up, nohows?

oner, an expert, 1841, *Old Curiosity Shop*, ii. lviii. 121, Miss Sally's such a one-er for that.

oo, who, 1857, *Little Dorrit*, ii. xiii. 433, 'I have seen some one,' returned Baptist, 'I have rincontrato him.' 'Im? Oo him?' asked Mrs. Plornish.

participled, damned, 1862, *Somebody's Luggage in All Year Round*, 4 Dec. 8 11/1, 'But these people are', he insisted... 'so,' Participled, 'sentimental!

prop, piece of jewellery, 1850, *Three 'Detective' Anec. in Household Words*, 14 Sept. 579/1, In his shirt-front there's a beautiful diamond prop, ... a very handsome pin indeed.

sawbones, 1837, *Pickwick Papers*, xxix. 307, 'What! don't you know what a Sawbones is, Sir?' enquired Mr. Weller; 'I thought every body know'd as a Sawbones was a Surgeon.'

swarry, soiree, 1837, *Pickwick Papers*, xxxvi. 393, A friendly swarry, consisting of a boiled leg of mutton with the usual trimmings.

tcha, 1844, *Martin Chuzzlewit*, xxxvii. 435, 'Tcha, Mr. Pinch!' cried Charity, with sharp impatience.

toke, bread, 1843, Letters, 7 June, Now, we don't want none of your sarse—and if you bung any of them tokes of yours in this direction, you'll find your shuttlecock sent back as heavy as it came.

First Recorded Lexical Usage in English, with Particular Reference to Charles Dickens

way, 1836, *Sketches by Boz*, 370, Away went the donkey... 'Way-way! WO-o-o-o!' cried Mr. Cymon Tuggs.

wimick, 1850, *David Copperfield*, ii. 518 'Wen Mrs. Gummidge takes to wimicking,'—our old county word for crying.

yaw-yaw, 1854, *Hard Times*, ii. ii. 147, They liked fine gentlemen... They became exhausted in imitation of them; and they yaw-yawed in their speech like them.

8. Later standard usages
Most of the above words are not part of present-day standard English. But the following fifteen have come to be more widely used:

bulgy, 1847, *Dombey and Son*, xxix. 290, A man with bulgy legs.


dustbin, 1847, *Dombey and Son*, xvii. 161, The Captain's nosegay... was swept into the dust-binn next morning.

egg-box, 1854, *Hard Times*, i. iv. 20 That was the cot of my infancy; an old egg-box.

flummox, 1837, *Pickwick Papers*, xxxii. 345, He'll be what the Italians call reg larly flummoxed.

kibosh, 1836, *Sketches by Boz*, 2nd Ser. 149, 'Hoo-roa,' ejaculates a pot-boy in a parenthesis, 'put the kye-bosh [later edd. read kye-bosk] on her, Mary.'
pay-off, 1864, Our Mutual Friend, I. i. ii. 32, Twemlow received an invitation to dine at Veneerings, expressly to meet the Member, the Engineer, the Pay-off of the National Debt...

rampage, 1860, Great Expectations, ii, She’s been on the Ram-page this last spell, about five minutes.

ringing up, of a theatre curtain, 1836, Sketches by Boz, 1st Ser. II. 205, Let us take a peep ‘behind,’ previous to the ringing up.

scrunched, crushed, 1836, Sketches by Boz, 2nd Ser. 304, He had compromised with the parents of three scrunched children, and just ‘worked out’ his fine, for knocking down an old lady.

sharp practice, 1836, Pickwick Papers, xx. 209, ‘Dodson and Fogg—sharp practice their’s—capital men of business is Dodson and Fogg, Sir.’ Mr. Pickwick admitted the sharp practice of Dodson and Fogg.

sit-down, 1836, Sketches by Boz, 1st Ser. I. 264, Jemima thought we’d better have a regular sit-down supper, in the front parlour.

slow-coach, 1837, Pickwick Papers, xxxiii. 359, What does this allusion to the slow coach mean?.. It may be a reference to Pickwick himself, who has... been a criminally slow coach during the whole of this transaction.

strop, sharpen, 1841, Barnaby Rudge, xxv. 80, The raven... after a long inspection of an epitaph...would strop his beak upon the grave to which it referred.

tin-tack, 1839, Nicholas Nickleby, xxxv. 346, A... parcel of tin tacks and a very large hammer.

9. Conclusion

Lists of this kind have a value that goes beyond the insight they provide into the nature of an author’s personal creativity. They contribute to our awareness of the social milieu in which people wrote. And they are evidence of the way these processes of linguistic innovation are part of the way the English language works, for we continue to coin new words along the same lines today. But I suspect that FRU lists will one day make a more general contribution to linguistic studies. Once more authors and periods come to be treated in this way, it will be possible to develop a comparative perspective, both synchronic and diachronic, and thus a field that one day might be called stylistic etymology.

REFERENCE


APPENDIX

First Recorded Uses of Shakespeare’s un- words, as reported in the OED at the beginning of 2019.

- The first date is the first recorded use, according to the original chronology used by the OED. For a more up-to-date chronology, based on that used in the Oxford Complete Works (1988), see the Plays page at <www.shakespeareswords.com>.

- The date in round brackets shows the next recorded instance of the word. The longer the gap between the first and second instance, the more likely the word is a genuine Shakespearean creation.

- A date in square brackets shows an earlier recorded use of the same word with a different sense.
unaccommodated adj 1608 (1627) King Lear
unchaching adj 1607 (1729) Coriolanus (a1616)
unacted adj 1594 (1613) The Rape of Lucrece
unaneled adj 1604 (1746) Hamlet
unappeased adj 1594 (1597) Titus Andronicus
unattainted adj 1597 (1602) Romeo and Juliet
unauspicious adj 1601 (1656) Twelfth Night (a1616)
unaware adj 1593 (1667) [1598] Venus and Adonis
unbacked adj 1593 (1613) Venus and Adonis
unbated [= unabated] adj 1600 (1611) The Merchant of Venice
unbated [= unblunted] adj 1604 (1815) Hamlet
unbefitting adj 1598 (1659) Love's Labour's Lost
unbegot adj 1597 (1599) Richard II
unbless adj 1609 (1631) Sonnets
unbloodied adj 1593 (1791) Henry VI Part 2 (a1616)
unbonneted adj 1608 (1818) King Lear
unbookish adj 1604 (a1644) Othello (a1616)
unbosom v 1598 (1645) [1610] Love's Labour's Lost
unbraided adj 1611 (1821) The Winter's Tale (a1616)
unbred adj 1609 (1622) Sonnets
unbreeced adj 1611 (1800) The Winter's Tale (a1616)
unbuild v 1607 (1642) Coriolanus (a1616)
uncape v 1598 The Merry Wives of Windsor (a1616)
unchanging adj 1595 (a1640) Henry VI Part 3
uncharmed adj 1599 (1757) Romeo and Juliet
unchary adj 1601 (1818) Twelfth Night (a1616)
uncheck v 1607 Titus Andronicus (a1616)
unclaimed adj 1600 (1783) As You Like It (a1616)
uncle v 1597 (1872) Richard II [1585]
unclog v 1607 (1678) Coriolanus (a1616)
unclue v 1607 (1681) Titus Andronicus (a1616)
uncolted adj 1598 Henry IV Part 1

uncomfortable adj 1599 (1615) [1592] Romeo and Juliet
uncompassionate adj 1591 (1627) Two Gentlemen of Verona
uncomprehensive adj 1609 [1694] Troilus and Cressida
unconfinable adj 1602 (1669) The Merry Wives of Windsor
uncontemned adj 1613 (1685) Henry VIII (1623)
uncropped adj 1601 (1610) All's Well that Ends Well (a1616)
uncuckolded adj 1606 Antony and Cleopatra (a1616)
uncurbarble adj 1606 Antony and Cleopatra (a1616)
uncurbed adj 1600 (1621) Henry V
uncurl v (1602) Titus Andronicus
uncurrent [= of money] adj 1601 (1639) [a1625] Twelfth Night (a1616)
uncurrent [= unrecognized] adj 1611 The Winter's Tale (a1616)
uncurse v 1597 (1831) Richard II
undeaf v 1597 (1933) Richard II
undeck v 1593 (1598) Richard II [OED error has 1608]
undeeded adj 1605 Macbeth (a1616)
underserver n 1597 (1630) Henry IV Part 2
undinted adj 1606 (1636) Antony and Cleopatra (a1616)
undishonoured adj 1590 (a1625) The Comedy of Errors (a1616)
undistinguishable adj 1600 (1645) A Midsummer Night's Dream
undistinguished adj 1608 (1666) [1595] King Lear (a1616)
undivulged adj 1608 (1854) King Lear
undreamed adj 1611 (1827) [1636] The Winter's Tale (a1616)
undress v 1596 (1674) [1598] The Taming of the Shrew (a1616)
unduteous adj 1598 (1645) The Merry Wives of Windsor (a1616)
uneartly adj 1611 (1795) The Winter's Tale (a1616)
uneducated adj 1588 (a1676) Love's Labour's Lost
unexperient adj 1609 (1750) A Lover's Complaint
unexpressive adj 1600 (1645) As You Like It (a1616)
unfair v 1609 Sonnets
unfamed adj 1609 (1724) Troilus and Cressida
unfathered adj 1600 (1726) Henry IV Part 2
unfeed adj 1608 (a1628) King Lear
unfilial adj 1611 (1659) The Winter's Tale (a1616)
David Crystal

unfirm adj 1599 (1625) [c1450] Romeo and Juliet
unfix v 1600 (1775) Henry IV Part 2
unfledged [= unfeathered] adj 1611 (1717) Antony and Cleopatra (a1616)
unfledged [= immature] adj 1603 (1669) Hamlet
unfledged [= inexperienced] adj 1611 (1769) The Winter’s Tale (a1616)
unfolding adj 1603 [1821] Measure for Measure
unfool v 1598 (1632) The Merry Wives of Windsor (a1616)
unforced adj 1604 (1665) [1605] Othello (a1616)
unforfeited adj 1600 (1667) The Merchant of Venice
unfrequented adj 1594 (1653) Titus Andronicus
ungained adj 1609 (1860) Troilus and Cressida
ungalled adj 1590 (1621) The Comedy of Errors (a1616)
ungartered adj 1591 (1607) Two Gentlemen of Verona (a1616)
ungenitureted adj 1603 Measure for Measure (a1616)
ungored adj 1604 (1647) Hamlet
ungoverned [= of feelings] adj 1597 (1606) Richard III
ungoverned [= of youth] adj 1591 (1622) Two Gentlemen of Verona
ungravely adj 1607 (1698) Coriolanus (a1616)
ungrown adj 1593 (1633) Venus and Adonis
unhacked adj 1595 King John (a1616)
unhairy adj 1595 King John (a1616)
unhand v 1603 (1655) Hamlet
unhappy v 1597 (1605) Richard II
unhardenend adj 1600 (1608) A Midsummer Night’s Dream
unhatched [= figurative sense] adj 1601 (1635) Hamlet (a1616)
unhatched [= unhacked] adj 1601 (a1625) Twelfth Night (a1616)
unhelpful adj 1593 (1644) Henry VI Part 2 (a1616)
unhidden adj 1599 (1829) Henry V (a1616)
un hospitable adj 1601 (1612) Twelfth Night (a1616)
unimproved adj 1604 Hamlet
unkinged adj 1608 (1661) Richard II
unkingly adj 1611 (1748) Antony and Cleopatra (a1616)
unlicensed adj 1609 (1685) [1653] Pericles
unlicked adj 1593 (a1630) Henry VI Part 3 (a1616)

First Recorded Lexical Usage in English, with Particular Reference to Charles Dickens

unlive v 1594 (1621) The Rape of Lucrece
unmeritable adj 1597 (1731) Richard III
unmitigable adj 1610 (1644) The Tempest (a1616)
unmitigated adj 1600 (1762) Much Ado About Nothing
unnmusical adj 1607 (1692) [1603] Coriolanus (a1616)
unnerved adj 1603 (1659) Hamlet
unowed adj 1595 (1775) King John (a1616)
unpathed adj 1611 (1694) The Winter’s Tale (a1616)
unpay v 1600 Henry IV Part 2 (1842)
unpeg v 1604 (1611) Hamlet
unpinned adj 1596 (1797) The Taming of the Shrew (a1616)
unplausible adj 1609 (1937) Troilus and Cressida
unpolicied adj 1606 (1654) Antony and Cleopatra (a1616)
unpossessing adj 1608 (a1783) King Lear
unpregnant adj 1604 (1680) Hamlet
unpremeditated adj 1591 (1597) Henry VI Part 1 (a1616)
unprevailing adj 1604 (1693) Hamlet
unprizable adj 1601 (2008) [c1400] Twelfth Night (a1616)
unprofited adj 1601 (1668) Twelfth Night (a1616)
unprovoked v 1605 Macbeth (a1616)
unpruned [= unrestrained] adj 1598 (1619) Love’s Labour’s Lost
unpruned [= of woody plants] adj 1597 (1621) Richard II
unpublished adj 1608 (1646) [1587] King Lear
unqualified adj 1606 Antony and Cleopatra (a1616)
unquestionable adj 1600 (1641) [1587] As You Like It (a1616)
unquestioned adj 1603 (1655) [1595] All’s Well that Ends Well
unraked adj 1598 (1683) The Merry Wives of Windsor (a1616)
unrecalling adj 1594 (1600) The Rape of Lucrece
unrecurring adj 1594 Titus Andronicus
unreleing adj 1588 (1621) [1590] Titus Andronicus
unrespective adj 1588 (1648) [1593] Troilus and Cressida
unrivalled adj 1591 (1607) Two Gentlemen of Verona
unsafe [= exposed to danger] adj 1605 (1618) [1597] Macbeth (a1616)
uncarred adj 1597 (1601) Richard III
unscissored adj 1608 (1633) Pericles [not in OED]
unscratched adj 1595 (a1667) King John (a1616)
unseem'd adj 1597 (1608) Henry IV Part 2
unseeming v 1588 Love’s Labour’s Lost
unseminared adj 1606 Antony and Cleopatra (a1616)
unsettle v 1608 (1624) [1598] King Lear
unsettled [= disturbed] adj 1611 (1693) [a1593] The Tempest (a1616)
unsettled [= mentally afflicted] adj 1611 (1768) [a1593] The Winter’s Tale (a1616)
unsex v 1605 (1657) Macbeth (a1616)
unshout v 1607 Coriolanus (a1616)
unshown adj 1606 (1614) Antony and Cleopatra (a1616)
unshrinking adj 1605 (1706) Macbeth (a1616)
unshrubbed adj 1610 The Tempest (a1616)
unshunnable adj 1604 (1839) Othello (a1616)
unshunned adj 1603 (1648) Measure for Measure (a1616)
unsifted adj 1604 [1854] Hamlet
unsisting adj 1603 Measure for Measure (a1616)
unsllipping adj 1606 (1822) Antony and Cleopatra (a1616)
unsmirched adj 1604 (1785) Hamlet
unsolicited adj 1594 (1680) Titus Andronicus
unsounded [= unfathomed] adj 1591 (1616) Two Gentlemen of Verona (a1616)
unsounded [= figurative use] adj 1594 (1607) Henry VI Part 2
unspeak v 1605 (1615) Macbeth (a1616)
unsphere v 1611 (1643) The Winter’s Tale (a1616)
unstooping adj 1597 (1816) Richard II
unstrung adj 1597 (1599) Richard II
unsullied adj 1598 (1621) Love’s Labour’s Lost
unsunned adj 1611 (1795) [1607] Cymbeline (a1616)
unsured adj 1595 King John (a1616)
unswayable adj 1607 (a1945) Coriolanus (a1616)
unswayed adj 1597 [1615] Richard III
unswear v 1595 [1596] [1591] (a1616)
untainted [= not attainted] adj 1597 [1590] Richard III
untainted [= unaffected by physical taint] adj 1609 (1651) [1590] Sonnets
untalked adj 1599 (1670) Romeo and Juliet
untempering adj 1599 Henry V (a1616)
untender adj 1608 (1678) King Lear
untent v 1609 (1611) Troilus and Cressida
untented adj 1608 (1822) King Lear (a1616)
unthread v 1595 (1637) King John (a1616)
untimbered adj 1609 (1814) Troilus and Cressida
untirable adj 1607 (1607) Titus Andronicus
untired adj 1597 (1616) [1600] Richard III
untitled adj 1605 [1612] Macbeth (a1616)
untread v 1594 (1615) Venus and Adonis
untreasure v 1600 (1819) As You Like It (a1616)
untrim v 1609 (1611) Sonnets
untutored [= uneducated] adj 1595 (1605) Henry VI Part 3
untutored [= not improved by instruction] adj 1593 (1644) The Rape of Lucrece
unurged adj 1590 (1623) [1594] The Comedy of Errors (a1616)
unvarnished adj 1604 (1780) Othello (a1616)
unveil v 1609 (1638) [1599] Troilus and Cressida
unvenerable adj 1611 (1616) The Winter’s Tale (a1616)
unvulnerable adj 1607 (1667) Coriolanus (a1616)
unwedgeable adj 1603 (1837) Measure for Measure (a1616)
unweeded adj 1604 (1624) Hamlet
unweighing adj 1603 Measure for Measure (a1616)
unwept adj 1597 (1633) Richard III
unwhipped adj 1608 (1732) King Lear
unwillingness n 1597 (1615) [1591] Richard II
unwish v 1599 (1658) [1591] Henry V (a1616)
unwit v 1604 Othello (a1616)
unwring adj 1604 Hamlet
unyielding 1594 (1724) Venus and Adonis

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