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The word 'they' is now also a singular pronoun – 20th September, 2019

Level 4

Merriam-Webster added a new definition of the pronoun "they" to its Webster's Dictionary. It says "they" also refers to a "single person whose gender identity is non-binary". These are people who identify neither as male nor female. Many places use a gender-neutral option on official forms. Many local governments, schools and airlines have the choice of "X" for people who do not consider themselves as male or female, and for gender fluid people.

Merriam-Webster said using "they" for "he" or "she" recognizes people who did not "conform to an expected gender expression, or who seemed to be neither male nor female". It says the word "they" was used as a singular pronoun in the 1300s. Shakespeare used it in this way in the 17th century. Also, the 1898 play Antony and Cleopatra has the words: "No man goes to battle to be killed....But they do get killed." Many people use the singular "they" today.

Level 5

The company Merriam-Webster has added a new definition of the pronoun "they" to its Webster's Dictionary. It lists the word "they" as referring to a "single person whose gender identity is non-binary". This is good news for non-binary people - those who identify neither as male nor female. Many institutions already use a gender-neutral option on their official forms. More local governments, schools and airlines are introducing the choice of "X" for people who do not consider themselves as male or female, and for gender fluid people who switch between genders.

Merriam-Webster stated that the use of "they" for "he" or "she" recognizes people who did not "conform to an expected gender expression, or who seemed to be neither male nor female". It said it "struggled" to describe these people with the right pronouns. It says the word "they" was used as a singular pronoun in the late 1300s. Shakespeare used it in this way in the 17th century. In 1898, a playwright wrote in his play Antony and Cleopatra that: "No man goes to battle to be killed....But they do get killed." Many people use the singular "they" in casual conversation today.

Level 6

The reference book company Merriam-Webster has added a new definition of the pronoun "they" to its famous Webster's Dictionary. It now lists the word "they" as referring to a "single person whose gender identity is non-binary". This will be welcome news for those who identify neither as male nor female - people with non-binary identities. Many institutions have already incorporated a gender-neutral option into their official forms. A growing number of local governments, schools and airlines have introduced the gender choice of "X" to accommodate people who do not consider themselves as male or female, and for gender fluid people who switch between different genders.

Merriam-Webster stated that the use of "they" in place of "he" or "she" recognizes people who did not "conform to an expected gender expression, or who seemed to be neither male nor female". It added: "We've struggled to find the right language to describe these people, and in particular, the right pronouns." It points out that the word "they" has been used as a singular pronoun since the late 1300s. William Shakespeare used it in this way in the early 17th century. In 1898, the playwright George Bernard Shaw wrote in his play Antony and Cleopatra that: "No man goes to battle to be killed....But they do get killed." Merriam-Webster says that today, "nearly everyone uses the singular "they" in casual conversation".