

Apostrophe Protection Society says goodbye

5th December, 2019

McDonald's or a
g's or the dog's?
e James's or James'
children's and not c

Image: BreakingNewsEnglish.com

A defender of the use of the apostrophe has quit his decades-long battle for the correct use of the punctuation mark. John Richards, 96, was chairman of the Apostrophe Protection Society, which was established in 2001 to campaign to

encourage better writing and understanding of the purpose of the apostrophe. Mr Richards wrote on the society's website: "Fewer organisations and individuals are now caring about the correct use of the apostrophe in the English language. We, and our many supporters worldwide, have done our best but the ignorance and laziness present in modern times have won." He added: "Over the years we have heard from thousands of supporters all over the world...but the barbarians have won."

Mr Richards started the society after seeing the "same mistakes over and over again". He wanted to highlight people's mistakes and get people to end the misuse of the apostrophe. He said he hoped half a dozen people would join him in his quest, but was heartened by the support he received worldwide. He received 500 letters from all over the world within a month of starting the website. Mr Richards' biggest beef was not people misusing the apostrophe, but people not using it at all. He called out big companies for this. In the UK, companies like Lloyds Bank and the bookstore Waterstones dispensed with the apostrophe in their names. Maybe Mr Richards was happy with the burger chain McDonald's.

Sources: metro.co.uk / independent.co.uk / news.com.au /

Writing

Punctuation isn't so important. Discuss.

Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

defender / apostrophe / decades / battle / campaign / purpose / society / website / mistake / highlight / dozen / quest / support / letters / companies / bookstore / happy

True / False

- a) The ex-head of the Apostrophe Protection Society is 96 years old. T / F
- b) The Apostrophe Protection Society was established in 1901. T / F
- c) The ex-boss said fewer organisations care about correct apostrophe use. T / F
- d) The ex-boss said people who misused apostrophes were barbarians. T / F
- e) The Apostrophe Protection Society started after someone saw mistakes. T / F
- f) The ex-boss said he didn't like beef. T / F
- g) A bank in the UK incorrectly omits the apostrophe in its name. T / F
- h) The article said the ex-boss might be happy with McDonald's. T / F

Synonym Match

(The words in **bold** are from the news article.)

- | | |
|---------------------------|---------------|
| 1. defender | a. complaint |
| 2. correct | b. encouraged |
| 3. purpose | c. heathens |
| 4. ignorance | d. point out |
| 5. barbarians | e. precise |
| 6. highlight | f. challenged |
| 7. heartened | g. omitted |
| 8. beef | h. protector |
| 9. called out | i. function |
| 10. dispensed with | j. illiteracy |

Discussion – Student A

- a) What do you think about what you read?
- b) How well can you use the apostrophe?
- c) How can a misused apostrophe change communication?
- d) How do you feel when you see mistakes in writing?
- e) How can people learn to use punctuation well?
- f) What is your biggest beef about English?
- g) Why might Mr Richards be happy with McDonald's but not Starbucks?
- h) What questions would you like to ask Mr Richards?

Phrase Match

- | | |
|----------------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. A defender of the use | a. writing |
| 2. quit his decades- | b. with the apostrophe |
| 3. encourage better | c. have won |
| 4. ignorance and | d. beef |
| 5. the barbarians | e. long battle |
| 6. seeing the same mistakes over | f. he received |
| 7. highlight people's | g. of the apostrophe |
| 8. heartened by the support | h. and over again |
| 9. Mr Richards' biggest | i. laziness |
| 10. Waterstones dispensed | j. mistakes |

Discussion – Student B

- What do you think of Mr Richards quitting?
- What do you know about the apostrophe?
- How important is the apostrophe?
- What is punctuation like in your language?
- What are the purposes of the apostrophe?
- Why do companies not use the apostrophe in their names?
- How important is good writing?
- Why did Mr Richards call people 'barbarians'?

Spelling

- A nddefeer of the use of the apostrophe
- his cadese-long battle
- rceoenagu better writing
- organisations and usaiidldvin
- nanorgeic and laziness
- the raarnaisbb have won
- ihlhigght people's mistakes
- end the smiseu of the apostrophe
- half a eondz people would join him
- neehrtdea by the support he received
- Waterstones sndpeside with the apostrophe
- the burger hanic McDonald's

Answers – Synonym Match

1. h	2. e	3. i	4. j	5. c
6. d	7. b	8. a	9. f	10. g

Role Play

Role A – Punctuation

You think punctuation is the most important are of English. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why their areas aren't as important. Also, tell the others which is the least important of these (and why): pronunciation, grammar or vocabulary.

Role B – Pronunciation

You think pronunciation is the most important are of English. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why their areas aren't as important. Also, tell the others which is the least important of these (and why): punctuation, grammar or vocabulary.

Role C – Grammar

You think grammar is the most important are of English. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why their areas aren't as important. Also, tell the others which is the least important of these (and why): pronunciation, punctuation or vocabulary.

Role D – Vocabulary

You think vocabulary is the most important are of English. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why their areas aren't as important. Also, tell the others which is the least important of these (and why): pronunciation, grammar or punctuation.

Speaking – Language

Rank these with your partner. Put the most important areas of language at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- | | |
|-----------------|---------------|
| • Pronunciation | • Punctuation |
| • Vocabulary | • Grammar |
| • Reading | • Writing |
| • Listening | • Speaking |

Answers – True False

a T	b F	c T	d T	e T	f F	g T	h T
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.