



## The A-Z of writing

### J-k

From J to k. Next in the series revisiting John Simmons' book *The Invisible Grail*. Finding joy in the diversity of words we use is the focus of this week's chapter. Follow the weekly series for a workout in writing agility that will influence and improve your words for work. Next week – K to I, published on Friday 19 June.

*Just as English advances, other languages fight back. But the ground the other languages are fighting back on is increasingly English-held territory.*

When I wrote those words twenty years ago I was making a point about English as the global language – which I think is still true. I'm just uncomfortable with the imperialist tone of my original words, particularly in the context of recent events.

Those events were triggered by a brutal act recorded on a mobile phone – and the three words 'I can't breathe'. George Floyd's death led to outrage around the world and mass street protests even in a time of restricted movement. The anger was raw among black people – and many white people too. 'Black lives matter' to us all. Together we've got to come to a better understanding of our shared history. The images of the dismantling of the slave trader Edward Colston's statue in Bristol were vivid. There is an unsettling history to face more honestly than we have done in the past. History shapes our attitudes and, therefore, the language we use – and we need to be aware of that, respecting other cultures and other languages.

On a very simple level I'm missing the habit of sitting in a coffee shop. My choice might have been an *espresso*, but I could have ordered a *latte* or *cappuccino*, a *macchiato*, *ristretto* or *mocha*, all served by a *barista*. Perhaps I would have a *pain au raisin* or a *croissant* with my coffee? We trade in words internationally and, as with other areas of life, we happily cross borders, even linguistic ones. Let's be open to the joyful possibilities of sharing other languages. Those languages enhance and enrich my own. Let's move beyond colonialism. Language flows like lava, driven by old habits and new possibilities, by patterns and history, but also by accident, emotion and luck.

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With a new chapter released weekly, look out for the next in the series, K-I, arriving with you on Friday 19 June. Follow us on [Linked In](#) or via our [Insights page](#) to find your weekly dose of writing inspiration.

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