



The A-Z of writing

X-y

Why do many of our favourite words end in 'y'? Does yours? What makes these words so appealing? Next in the series revisiting John Simmons' book *The Invisible Grail*. Follow our weekly series for a workout in writing agility that will influence and improve your words for work. Next week the final chapter – Y to z, published on Friday 25 September.

Xerxes is a favourite name from my childhood reading. My imagination was stirred by tales of the ancient world. Perhaps that's why I quite like Xerox: it reminds me, deep down, of an almost legendary figure.

We all have favourite words as well as favourite names. In workshops I often ask people to think what their favourite word might be. This was spurred by a survey many years ago, which was aimed at finding out 'the nation's favourite word'. Bob Geldof launched it on a website and, some months and thousands of votes later, 'serendipity' was announced as the winner. I've probably used that word a few times in this book but I'm not sure if I would have done 10 years ago. Which reminds me that I really like 'probably'.

If the survey were to run again now, I wonder what the favourite word would be? What's yours?

“What's yours?”

Of course, the survey forced me to think of my own favourite word. I voted for 'Blimey' because it's a word with good memories from my childhood (an early example of 'expletive cheated' too). I like Blimey because you say it to express frustration but, having said it, there's no chance of any anger developing. It just makes you smile because actually you know it's quite silly.

My colleague Mark Griffiths voted for 'gravy' for his own reasons. I then came across a poem by Raymond Carver that seemed to support his case for gravy to be seen as a word meaning something special. He then kept the poem called *Gravy* taped to his desk. The first line is

No other word will do. For that's what it was. Gravy.

Serendipity. Probably. Gravy. What can I say? Does every favourite word end in 'y'? Why? Blimey.

With a new chapter released weekly, look out for the final chapter in the series, Y-z, arriving with you on Friday 25 September. Follow us on [Linked In](#) or via our [Insights page](#) to find your weekly dose of writing inspiration.

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