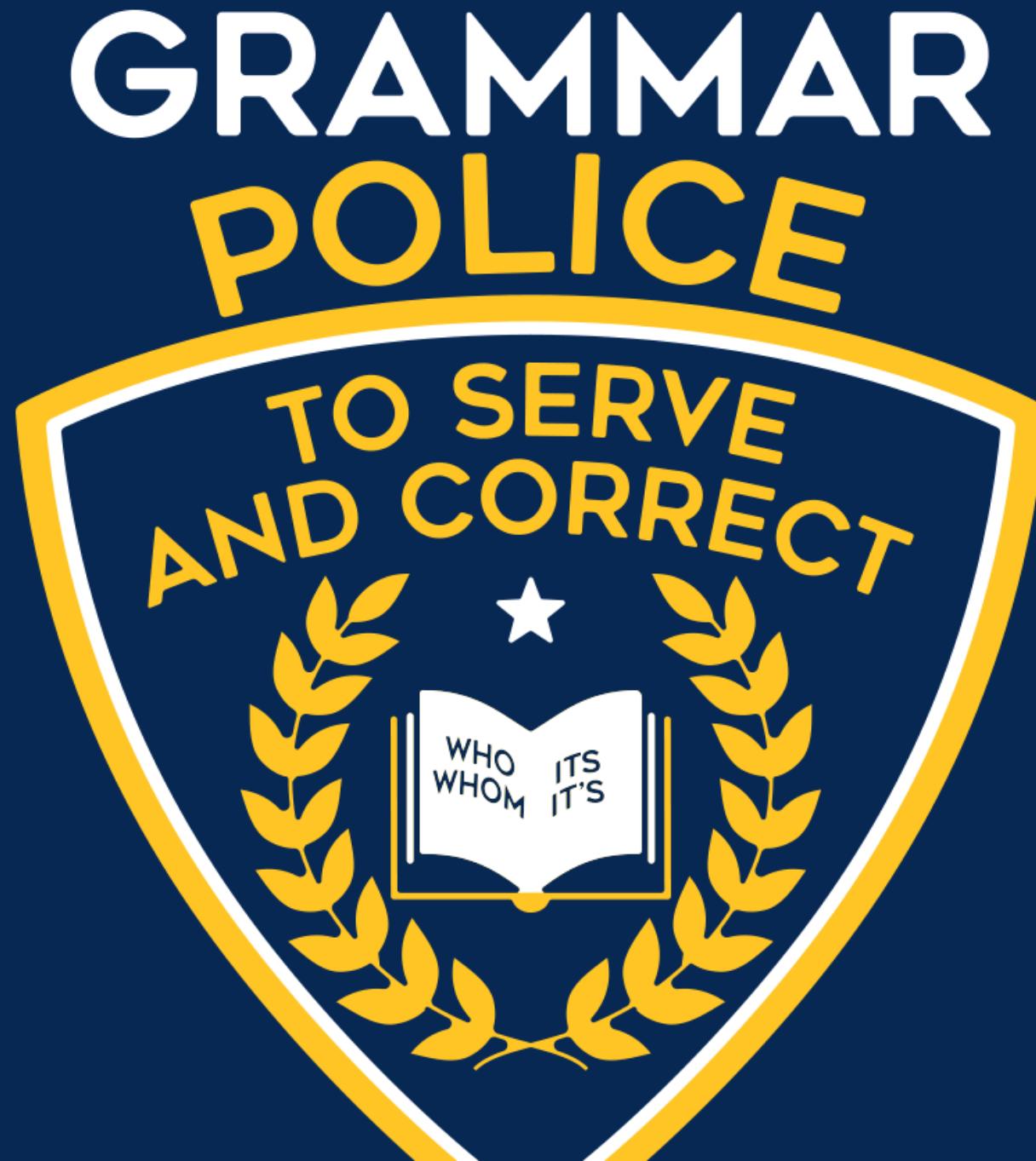




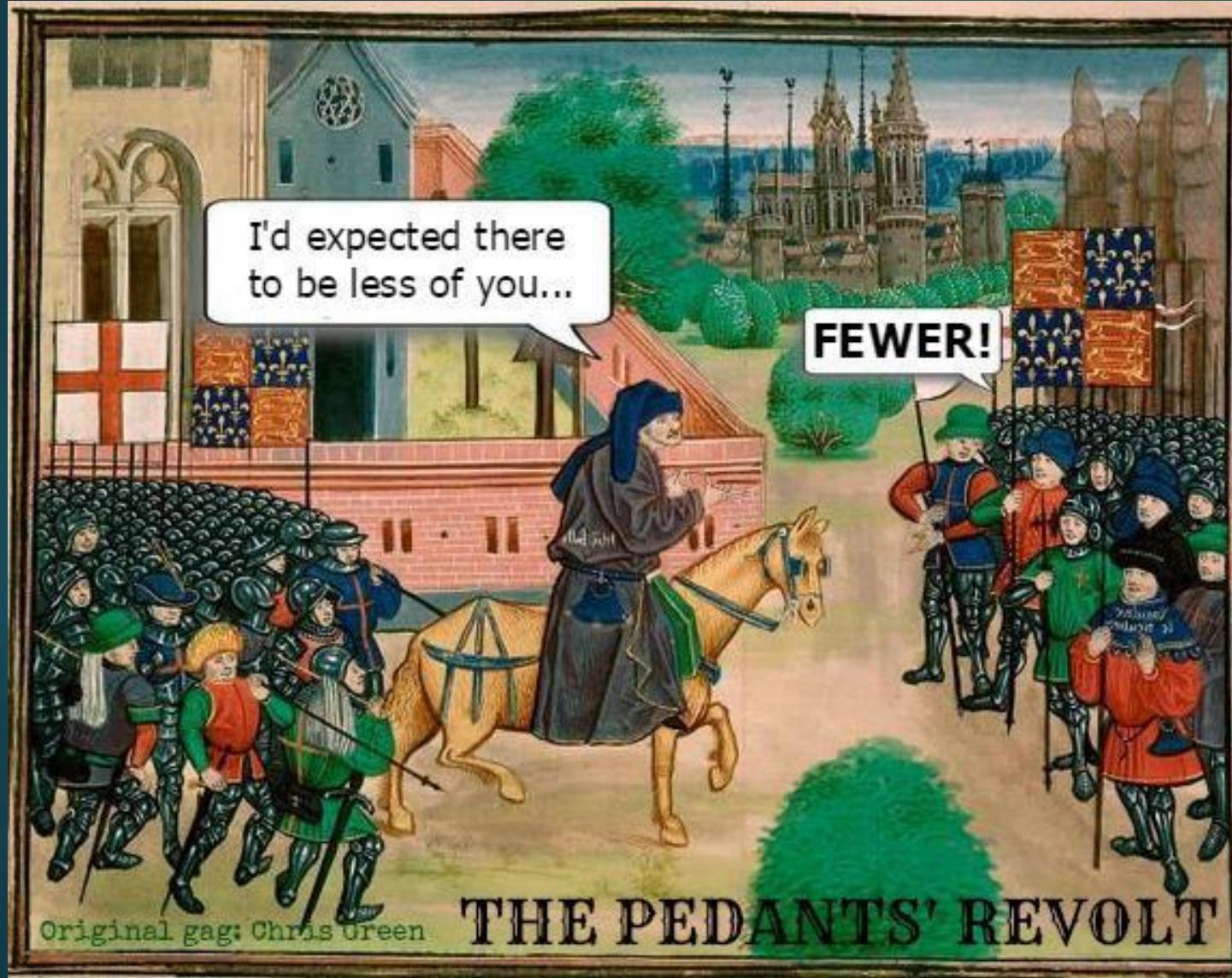
English-is-weird Series



GRAMMAR
NEWSFLASH



GRAMMAR NEWSFLASH



SINGULAR / PLURAL CONUNDRUMS IN ENGLISH



GRAMMAR NEWSFLASH

SINGULAR / PLURAL CONUNDRUMS, **QUICK TEST /20**

What is the plural form of the following words:

- Thesis
- Index
- Luggage
- Roof
- Hoof
- Fish
- Alumnus
- Person
- Shrimp
- Fruit
- Criterion
- Aircraft

Are these nouns singular or plural?
(sing/plural/depends...)

- Data
- News
- Mathematics
- Police
- Staff
- Family
- Means
- Species



GRAMMAR NEWSFLASH

SINGULAR / PLURAL CONUNDRUMS IN ENGLISH

BASIC LEVEL:

- Adding 's' modifies noun in the following cases (examples):
 - e.g. knife => knives. A few exceptions: proof, roof, etc.
 - city => cities (proper nouns and names excepted: Shelby => the Shelleys)
 - bonus => bonuses (but see below for exceptions)
 - potato => potatoes. Exception: 'loan words' consciously borrowed from foreign languages: simply 's' or special rules apply, cf. espresso/espressos).



GRAMMAR NEWSFLASH

SINGULAR / PLURAL CONUNDRUMS IN ENGLISH

Irregular plurals:

- From old and middle-English: child/children; mouse/mice; ox/oxen etc.
- From foreign languages - NB: for foreign “loan words”, it sometimes depends heavily on speaker pedantry...
 - Greek: topos/topoi (or toposes...); criterion / criteria phenomenon/phenomena (or phenomenons...)
 - Latin: curriculum/curricula; cactus/cacti, alumnus/alumni [but viruses not “viri”, and data “is” not “are” mostly nowadays =has become *uncountable* sometimes]
 - NB: words ending in –is, -ix or –ex (from either Greek or Latin, sometimes Greek-through-Latin or French) have specific plurals: analysis/analyses; thesis/theses; index/indices (sometimes indexes)
 - Hebrew: mitzvah/mitzvot(h); Italian: cello / celli (etc.)



GRAMMAR NEWSFLASH

SINGULAR / PLURAL CONUNDRUMS IN ENGLISH

Tricky situations:

- Some words **look plural** but are in fact **singular**: e.g. means (''a means to an end''), a species, a TV series, mathematics, ethics, news...
- **Countable/uncountable** (well known to you, I just mention it in passing): information, luggage, news, fruit (ambiguous nowadays) and countless other words.
- If uncountable = **never plural + never counted** (not even 'a'), specific grammar (less not fewer, etc.)
- Countable nouns that **keep the same form in the plural**: fish, deer, shrimp, trout, sheep (many animals in fact): a fish, two fish. But also words like aircraft (two aircraft, **not** two aircrafts).
- Can be plural (fishes) only if it means *different types/species* of fish or if you impersonate Italian-American mobsters (''sleep with the fishes'')



GRAMMAR NEWSFLASH

SINGULAR / PLURAL CONUNDRUMS IN ENGLISH

Tricky situations:

- Some words **look singular** but are in fact **plural**...
- Typically: “Cattle” or “police”: **never** singular in English: ‘The cattle are restless’; ‘The police are coming’.
- Individual members = add man/woman or officer: ‘Ten police officers were awaiting them in the lobby’. Reference to several groups that count as “police” = different police forces / departments.
- **Collective nouns = groups of people** are a special case: staff, family, team, squad, platoon, posse, Netflix, Paris 1, the government, etc.
- The associated verb can usually be singular or plural **depending on what you want to emphasize** = as a tightly-knit unit, or as several people.
- Example: “The McCoy family comes from Laredo” BUT “my family are coming over for Thanksgiving”.
- However, American English usually prefers singular over plural <> Brits...



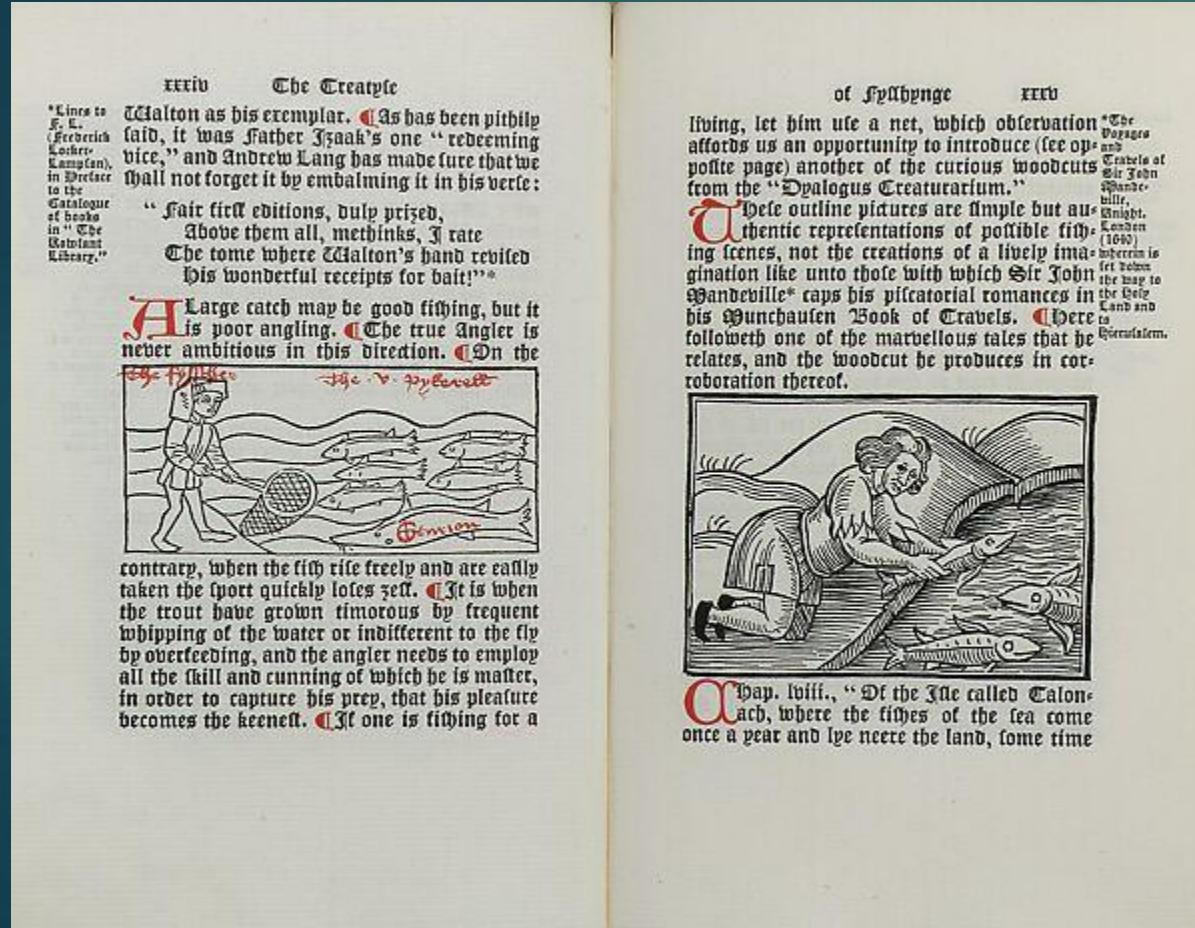
GRAMMAR NEWSFLASH

Bonus: specific nouns of groups of items/animals

Sheep
Wolves
Fish
Wild horses
Lions
Coyotes
Puppies
Crows
Ships
Flowers
bees

A **flock** of sheep
A **pack** of wolves
A **school/shoal** of fish
A **herd** of wild horses
A **pride** of lions
A **band** of coyotes
A **litter** of puppies/kittens
A **murder** of crows
A **fleet** of ships
A **bunch** of flowers
A **swarm** of bees

The BOOK OF SAINT ALBANS – THE BOKE OF SEYNT ALBANS [printed 1486] probably written by Dame Juliana Berners



Major medieval source for most playful collective names for animals, plus a few others...

e.g. a 'blast of hunters' / a 'superfluity of nuns'...



GRAMMAR NEWSFLASH

TEST RESULTS?

- Coronavirus
- [] SARS
- [] MERS
- COVID-19

COVID-19

Positive

c T



GRAMMAR NEWSFLASH

SINGULAR / PLURAL CONUNDRUMS, **QUICK TEST /20**

What is the plural form of the following words:

- Thesis/theses
- Index/indexes or indices
- Luggage / Uncount
- Roof / Roofs
- Hoof / Hooves
- Fish / Fish
- Alumnus / Alumni
- Person / People
(but not *always*...)
- Shrimp / depends
- Fruit / Uncount
- Criterion / Criteria
- Aircraft / aircraft

Are these nouns singular or plural?
(sing/plural/depends...)

- Data (depends)
- News (sing)
- Mathematics (sing)
- Police (plural)
- Staff (depends)
- Family (depends)
- Means (sing and plural)
- Species (sing and plural)