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Are People Clouting?

Kathy Bates admits during an interview called ‘I Never Was an Ingénue’ that she has been an actress with clout from the different movie roles that have come upon her acting career. “On my bad days I got tired of developing material for Sissy Spacek and other stars," she admits, her Southern accent blooming with earnestness. "I started to think, 'Well, what am I up here bustin' mah hump for, while they're out there picking the gardenias off the bushes?' So I told myself, 'Let me see what I can do with this.” “And people are always saying: 'Well, you go to Hollywood and you get yourself a film career or a TV series, and then you can do anything you want. Because then you've got the clout.' That had always sounded like a lot of hooey to me, but now I think it's true, unfortunately” (David Sacks). Until last year, I had never heard of the word ‘clout’. During lunch, I would casually overhear conversations using the term clout. However, I was always confused about what it actually meant. Then, I saw certain YouTube influencers, famous Instagram users, and some celebrities use the term as well. Now I really felt out of place! Everyone in my generation was using this term and I still had no idea of its literal meaning. Nevertheless, I had got on the internet to do some research on the new popular term.

Eagerly researching, I have found out that clout has many meanings and can be used as a verb and a noun. Used as a noun, clout means a blow, especially with the hand; cuff. Used as a verb, clout means to hit forcefully; strike, especially with the hand; cuff. Those are almost the exact same definitions. However, I did not think that those definitions of clout were what people were referring to.

Clout has many suggested meanings that are used in social media publicly. Clout means pull; strong influence; muscle, especially political power (merrian-webster.com). “The history of American politics is littered with bodies of people who took so pure a position that they had no clout at all. (Ben C. Bradlee).” Clout in terms of social media means being famous and having influence, power, money, and style (Urban Dictionary). The previous conversation of clout at the lunch table got quieter; I remember one thing that was said “He has no clout. He just wants people to like him.” Looking back at the suggested meanings, I am positive that the second definition is how clout was being discussed. Although this may be true, I was not satisfied that clout meant having money, power, and fame. Therefore, I still wanted to find out more about the meaning of this odd word.

Surprisingly, the term clout historically came from the Old English and Dutch language. In Old English clout translated as *clut*means a little cloth, piece of metal (dictionary.com). In the Dutch clout translated as *kluit* means lump, clod also to*cleat* and *clot* or *klutr*meaning a kerchief (dictionary.com). The new meaning, ‘heavy blow’, of clout dates from the late Middle English (dictionary.com) is considered hard to how it has come about. A few synonyms of clout are poke, lick, biff, slug, and clout nail. Authors have used clout in literature either in a poem or story. G.E. Milton used clout in “Round the Wonderful World”. It quotes, “Most of them look as if they had collected all the dish-clouts and dusters which had seen service and piled them on anyhow” (finedictionary.com). In poetry, Janet Hamilton used clout in her poem “Sketches of Villages Character in Days “O’ Langsyne”. It quotes, “The gude man cam' roun', but whan gangin' aboot, His stap it was feeble, his face like a clout; An' ne'er in the poopit again was he seen— In less than a towmond his grave it was green” (inspirationalstories.com). Nevertheless, many authors have used the different meanings of clout in their literature.

The new popular term ‘clout’ has several meanings to its name. Clout mean influence politically; hit; strike; cloth. It is only up to whomever to use the word wisely. I believe in the different meaning of the hyped term. I also agree with clout’s historical meaning. Before someone uses the word, I suggest that it is imperative to research the meaning in terms of what he or she is trying to say because it can be very confusing. Now people are more familiar with the popular term ‘clout’, how are they going to use it?

Works Cited

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