

## Nominations for Names of the Year, 2015

### Trade Names (and Miscellaneous)

**Tardigrada: Nominator writes:** *Tardigrada*, Anglicized as *tardigrade*, means "slow stepper" in Latin. Tardigrades are also known as 'little water bears' in German. They are microscopic animals that, though small, slow, and largely unnoticed, are among the toughest living things on Earth. They can survive unprotected in outer space, or without food or water for 10 years. In *Cosmos*, Neil deGrasse Tyson says that "A visitor from another world could be forgiven for thinking of Earth as the Planet of the tardigrades."

**Jaunt: Nominator writes:** The naming of Jaunt was featured in a lengthy article in the New York Times Magazine this year. Jaunt was profiled in the article, in part, because of the groundbreaking cinematic VR technology pioneered by the company. Since that naming article was published, Jaunt has received massive coverage across mainstream media in recognition of the significance of their technology. Even articles not about Jaunt mention them at least in passing, reflecting its influence across the nascent virtual reality industry. Given their innovations, velocity and trajectory — and recent investments from Disney and other heavy-hitters — it's reasonable to expect that the Jaunt name will become synonymous with cinematic virtual reality experiences. Is Jaunt linguistically innovative? As a linguist, I freely concede that at one level, it's not linguistically innovative as Jaunt is simply a real English word. But Jaunt was able to secure their name as a trademark, which is one objective measure of innovation.

**Kickstarter: Nominator writes:** not new in 2015, but has gained prominence this year, with verb as well as adjectival usage ("a Kickstarter campaign" used to mean crowdfunding)

**Alphabet: Nominator writes:** the new name for Google's holding company

**Tesla: Nominator writes:** the innovation company helmed by Elon Musk

**Serial: Nominator writes:** the name of the very popular podcast, now in its second season

**Airbnb: Nominator writes:** the popular lodging intermediary, also often used in verb form

**Charlie Hebdo: Nominator writes:** The French satirical magazine attacked by terrorists in January 2015, giving raise to the hash tag #jesuischarlie

### Place Names

**Lifta: Nominator writes:** Lifta is an abandoned Palestinian town that is situated off a major highway outside Jerusalem. Currently it is a ghost town because many Palestinians are not allowed to go there, but it is a reminder of both loss and resilience. Although the etymology has

not been traced, as far as I know, in Arabic *Lifta* can mean 'striking' in the sense of 'strikingly attractive' or beautiful. It may have morphed into (and/or out of) the Anglicized Latin *Clepsta*, which was the name of a Crusader village at the site in the middle ages. It may also be related to the Hebrew Mei Niftoah, 'corridor spring', which was an ancient town that is mentioned in the Bible. It is not entirely possible to directly link or translate the Arabic, the Anglicized Latin, and the Hebrew names into each other, yet it is also not possible to easily separate them. Still, unlike many towns in the area, Lifta continues to be widely known by its Arabic name.

**San Bernardino: Nominator writes:** the site of a recent mass shooting

**Molenbeek: Nominator writes:** The suburb of Brussels, where several of the terrorists committing the Paris attacks in November 2015 lived.

### Personal Names:

**Mr. Dumsor: Nominator writes:** "Dumsor is a popular term in Ghana, used to describe the frequent and erratic power outages. It is a compound word made up of two Twi (Akan) words: dum (to put/turn off light, fire or anything flammable) and sɔ (when pronounced sounds like "sor") which means "to put on/make light". Hence, dumsor is transliterated as "on-off". Nationally, the word dumsor carries with it, historical, economic, social, political and psychological implications for the citizens of Ghana. It also has comical connotations as it has been the subject of jokes and animated cartoons. .. The president of Ghana is even nicknamed Mr. Dumsor for his inability to correct the energy crisis.

**Ta-Nehisi Coates: Nominator writes:** Well-known writer and journalist Ta-Nehisi Coates has said that his first name comes from an ancient name for Nubia. His last name may come from an Old English word for *cot* or *shelter*, used to indicate a simple dwelling. The combination of a nation and a single home, of nobility and humility, Nubia and England, could be a broader metaphor for writing and research--working to transform horrendous legacies like slavery, and the knowledge that profited from it, into new and different forms of knowledge.

**Cecil (the lion): Nominator writes:** A lion killing in Africa made very big news in the United States. Part of the news was because the lion was named. Big game hunters kill many unnamed lions each year that make very little news. And, the news had big emotional reaction. Boycotts, demonstrations, and even threats to the hunter's safety and livelihood resulted. Even international legal action was called-for.

**Caitlyn Jenner: Nominator writes:** the name now used by the celebrity formerly known as Bruce Jenner

**Adele: Nominator writes:** the singer whose new album came out in 2015 and is known only by her first name

**Angela Merkel: Nominator writes:** I nominate her mainly for her generous and risky reaction in the European refugee crisis. She's also the "Person of the Year" of the Time magazine.

**Fictional/Literary Names:**

**Rey:**

**Finn:**

**BB-8:** (All three nominated simply as characters in *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*)

**Hamilton: Nominator writes:** the title of the extremely popular Broadway musical about Alexander Hamilton

**Atticus Finch: Nominator writes:** The newly published novel *Go set a watchman* gives the fictional character Atticus Finch a new image.