
BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

6 Minute Vocabulary

Adjectives from names



This is not a word-for-word transcript

Callum

Hello and welcome to 6 Minute Vocabulary with me, Callum.

Finn

And me, Finn. In this programme we're talking about an interesting type of adjective.

Callum

Yes, they're adjectives that are formed from the names of famous people such as authors, politicians and scientists. There'll be lots of examples.

Callum

But first, here's Ruth. She's talking about some common adjectives from names that we use.

Finn

And listen out for the answer to this question: Which adjective comes from the name of the author George Orwell? Here's Ruth.

INSERT

Ruth

Charles Dickens is regarded as the greatest novelist of **Victorian** England and many of his books describe the poverty of that time. So what do we mean by **Dickensian** social conditions? And what about an **Orwellian** future? Have you read the book *1984* by the author George Orwell? A **Churchillian** speech is clearly the kind of speech made by the politician Winston Churchill. And you can probably guess which famous people these adjectives come from: a **Freudian** slip and a **Thatcherite** outlook on life.

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Callum

So that was Ruth. And we asked you which adjective comes from the name of the author George Orwell?

Finn

And the answer is **Orwellian**. The suffix **-ian** is often added to the names of famous

writers and scientists to form new adjectives.

Callum

Now these adjectives describe something that person is famous for. Orwell wrote about a nightmare vision of the future in his book *1984*, so an **Orwellian** future or society is terrible like the one in the book, with no individual freedom.

Finn

And people sometimes say that reality TV programmes are Orwellian because they spy on what people are doing.

Callum

And I've heard politicians' views described as Orwellian too.

Finn

Listen for more of these adjectives in our first clip.

INSERT | CLIP |

Charles Dickens is regarded as the greatest novelist of **Victorian** England and many of his books describe the poverty of that time. So what do we mean by **Dickensian** social conditions?

Finn

Now which two adjectives came from the names of famous people in that clip?

Callum

Well, there was **Victorian**. **Victorian** England means England when Queen Victoria ruled, which was from 1837 to 1901.

Finn

Other queens and kings whose names are commonly used as adjectives include **Elizabethan**, **Edwardian** and **Georgian**.

Callum

And with kings and queens it's always their first names that are made into adjectives, not their surnames. Now that clip also used the adjective **Dickensian**. Ruth asked us what **Dickensian** social conditions are.

Finn

Yes, well, because Charles Dickens wrote a lot about the poverty of Victorian England, **Dickensian** social conditions are very poor, like those in his novels.

Callum

You could also say that a street or house is **Dickensian**, meaning that it is very old and in

poor condition. But onto our second clip:

INSERT 1 CLIP 2

A **Churchillian** speech is clearly the kind of speech made by the politician Winston Churchill. And you can probably guess which famous people these adjectives come from: a **Freudian** slip and a **Thatcherite** outlook on life.

Finn

A **Churchillian** speech. Now Churchill is famous for being a powerful, determined politician and a brilliant speaker.

Callum

So, a **Churchillian** speech is a powerful and brilliant speech. And we also heard a **Freudian** slip and a **Thatcherite** outlook on life.

Finn

Yes. **Freudian** from Freud, the psychologist. Freud wrote a lot about the unconscious mind. And a **Freudian slip** is a fixed phrase that means a mistake that you make, especially when speaking, caused by the thoughts in your unconscious mind.

Callum

Thatcherite comes from Margaret Thatcher, who was a Prime Minister of the UK. Adjectives from politicians' names are often formed with the suffixes **-ist** and **-ite**. Other examples are **Stalinist** from the Soviet leader Josef Stalin, **Maoist** from the Chinese Chairman Mao and **Reaganite** from former US President Reagan.

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Callum

And we're talking about adjectives that are formed from names.

Finn

And it's quiz time! Ready? Number one: Which of these nouns goes best with the adjective Orwellian? a) an Orwellian society b) Orwellian freedom.

Callum

The answer's a) an Orwellian society.

Finn

Good. Number two: Are Dickensian conditions a) the conditions in which Charles Dickens lived, or b) any poor social living conditions?

Callum

It's b) any poor living conditions.

Finn

Well done! Number three: Tony Blair was a Prime Minister of the UK and the adjective from his name is like that of Margaret Thatcher. So would we talk about a) Blairist policies or b) Blairite policies?

Callum

The answer's b) Blairite.

Finn

And that's the end of the quiz. And there's lots more about this and other things at bbclearningenglish.com. Do join us again soon for more 6 Minute Vocabulary.

Both

Bye!

Vocabulary points to take away:

1

New adjectives come into English formed from the names of famous people. They describe something that person is famous for:

an **Orwellian** vision of the future

a **Freudian slip** (something you say that shows your unconscious thoughts)

2

Some kings and queens first names are commonly used as adjectives. These adjectives mean 'from the time of that king or queen':

an **Edwardian** chair

3

We usually form adjectives from the names of writers and scientists with the suffix **-ian**:

The house was so old it was almost **Dickensian**.

4

Adjectives from politicians names are often formed with the suffixes **-ist** and **-ite**:

Stalinist Russia

Thatcherite conservatism