

# **CUTTHROAT BACKSTABBERS**

THE VULGAR WORLD OF  
VERB-NOUN COMPOUNDING

**LANGUAGE IS A TOOL,  
DON'T BE A TOOL ABOUT LANGUAGE.**

# WHAT IS A COMPOUND?

A compound is two words  
put together to express one idea.

**Firetruck**

**Strong man**

**Hovercraft**

**Ice cold**

**Blue-green**

**Kickstart**

# A COMPOUND JOKE



# SOME BOAT COMPOUNDS

**Longboat**    adj + noun

**Rowboat**    verb + noun

**Tugboat**    verb + noun

**Steamboat**    noun + noun

**Lifeboat**    noun + noun

**Gravy boat**    noun + noun

# COMPOUND “HEADS”

The **right-most** part of a compound is the **head**.

**Steamboat**  
                      
(the head)

The head tells you the category  
of the compound:

A **steamboat** is a type of **boat**.

# **BUT WAIT!**

Not all compounds work like that!

Some are:

**“agentive and instrumental  
exocentric  
verb-noun  
compounds”**

# EXCEPTIONS LIKE CUTTHROAT

cut + throat = verb + noun

row + boat = verb + noun

A rowboat is a **boat**.

A cutthroat is a **person**.



# “CUTTHROATS” STILL IN USE

Breakfast

Killjoy

Scarecrow

Breakneck

Lackluster

Skinflint

Breakwater

Makeshift

Spendthrift

Ceasefire

Passport

Spitfire

Cutpurse

Pastime

Spoilsport

Cutthroat

Pickpocket

Swashbuckler

Daredevil

Rotgut

Tattletale

Dreadnaught

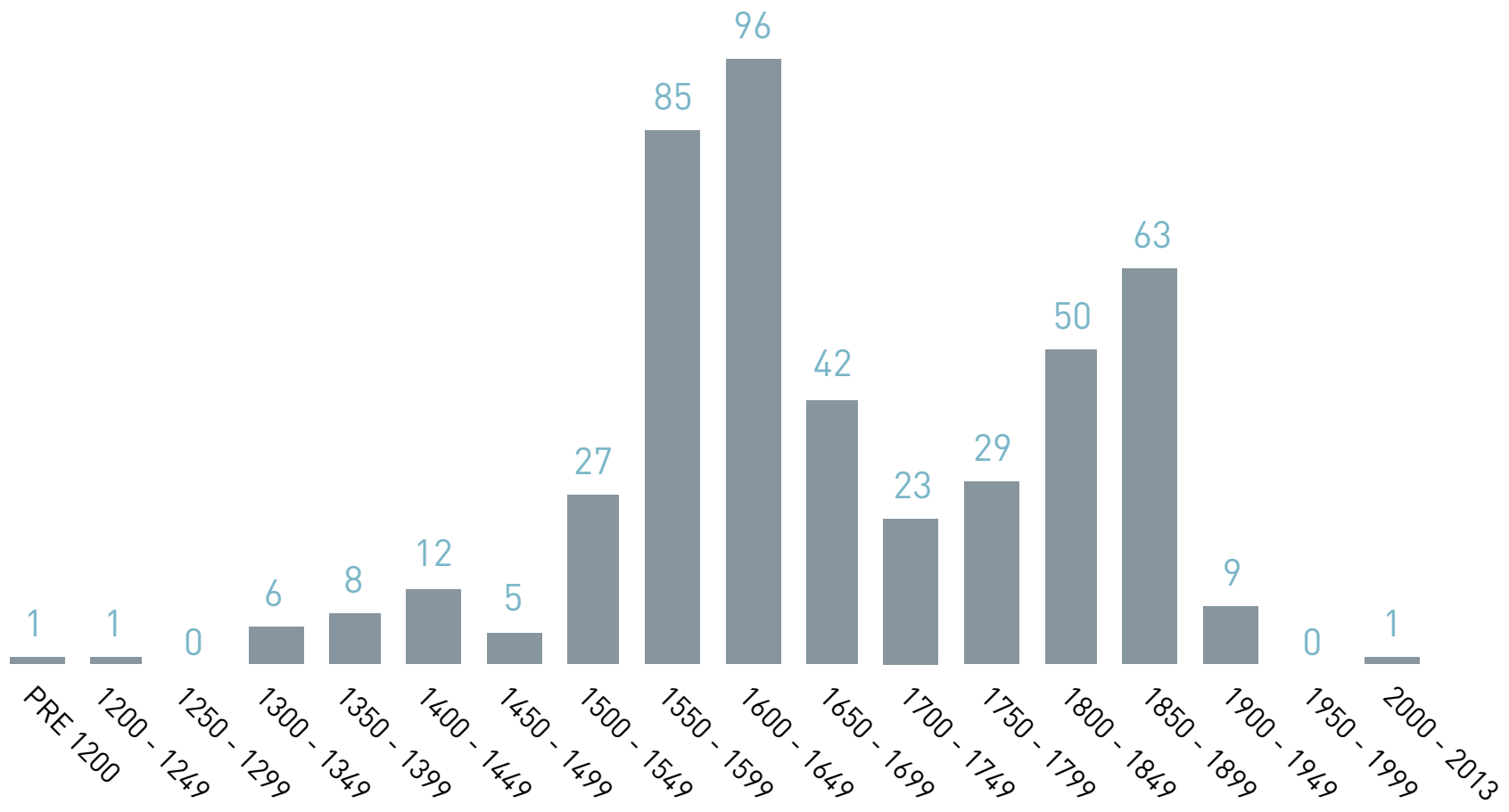
Sawbones

Turncoat

# **HISTORICAL CONTEXT**

Fashion has trends,  
and so does language.

# THE RISE AND FALL OF CUTTHROAT COMPOUNDS



# CLUMPING

Cutthroat compounds tend to describe the same few subjects again and again.

In Linguistics we call this  
**Clumping.**

# CLUMPS OF INSULTS FOR the dregs of society

Lack-Latin	1534	an uneducated person
Quakebreech	1584	a coward
Lacklooks	1618	an unattractive person
Squeeze-grape	1622	a drunkard
Clutchfist	1643	a miserly person
Spit-poison	1716	a malicious person

# CLUMPS OF INSULTS FOR professions

Watch-birth	1606	a midwife
Spoil-paper	1610	a bad writer
Split-fig	1700	a grocer
Mix-metal	1811	a silver smith
Thump-cushion	1827	a boisterous preacher
Scrapegut	1837	a fiddler
Stab-rag	1870	a tailor

# SOME COMPOUNDS INSULT

## alcohol

### Spirits

kill-devil 1590

rotgut 1632

ticklebrain 1639

strikefire 1725

tanglelegs 1860

### Wine

steelback 1609

kill-priest 1811

### Beer / Ale

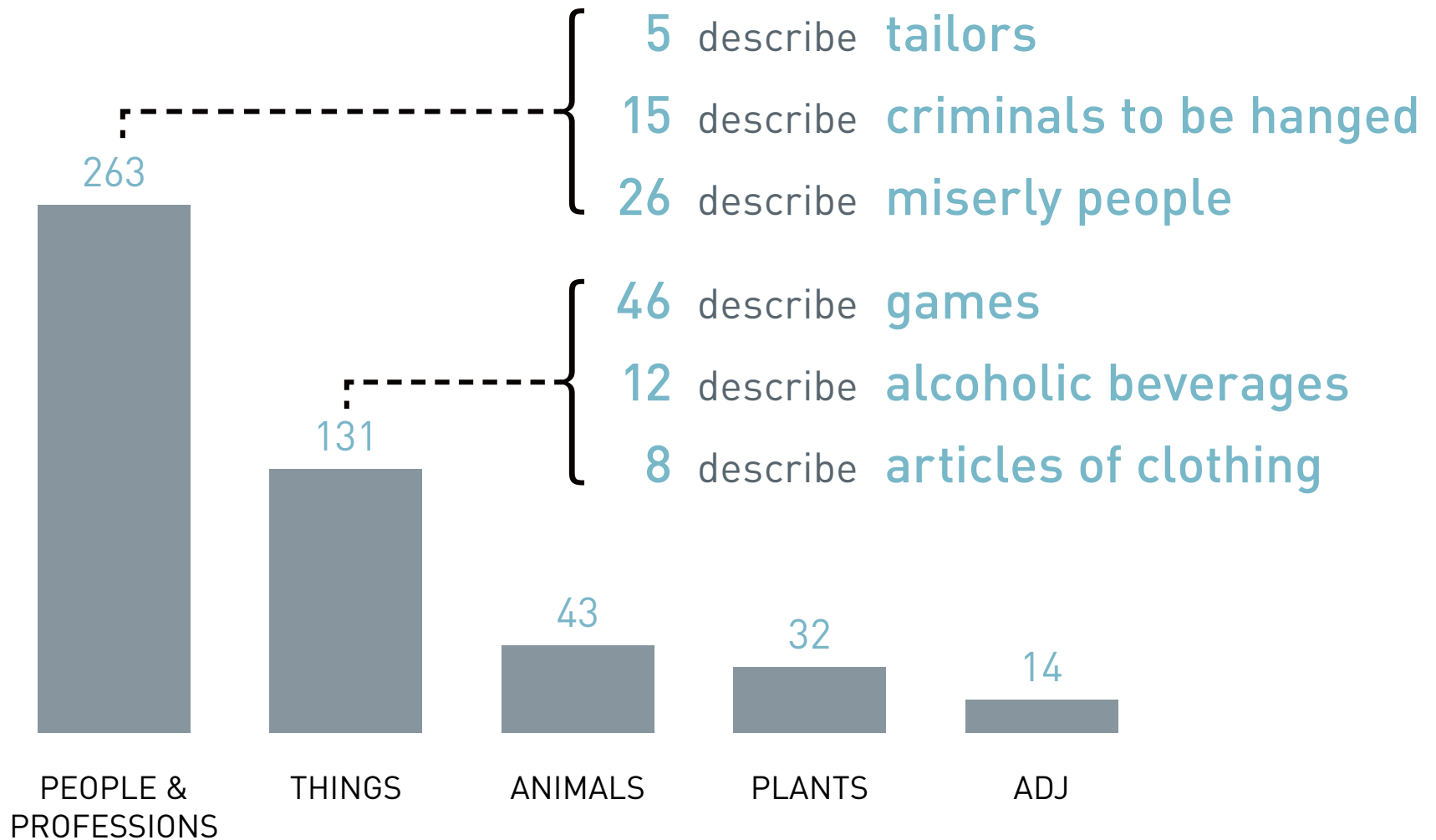
huffcap 1599

pinch-gut 1615

stitch-back 1671

whip-belly 1738

# GRAPHS OF CLUMPS





# CLUMPS OF VERBS

break	lack	make	pick	tear
catch	lick	mar	pinch	turn
draw	kill	nip	scrape	whip

Choke-priest	1848	a thick italian soup
Choke-dog	1870	a hard cheese
Choke-children	1885	a bony fish
Choke-sparrow	1888	bearded wheat

# HOW TO BE A MAKE-WORD

1. Think of someone to insult.

2. Use a common “cutthroat” verb like:

break	lack	make	pick	tear
catch	lick	mar	pinch	turn
draw	kill	nip	scrape	whip

3. Make sure it works like this:

someone who (verbs) (nouns)

4. Try it out!

“You, sir, are a verb-noun.”

**\* CREATE ONE TONIGHT AND RECEIVE A PRIZE! \***

# HOW TO BE A LOVE-WORD

## **OED.com**

Your Multnomah County Library Card gives you [free](#) access to the Oxford English Dictionary.

## **w♥rdnik**

A crowd-sourced dictionary that uses online resources like Flickr and Twitter.

## **Etymonline.com**

Quick answers for many word roots.

## **OneLook.com**

A useful dictionary with wildcard options: \*boat

## **Speculative Grammarian**

A satirical linguistics journal / podcast.

# HOW TO BE A STALK-BRIANNE

Brianne Hughes

You  Encyclopedia Briannica



@E\_Briannica

[www.tankhughes.com](http://www.tankhughes.com)

I'm a spitfacts. I'm a breathewords.