

Preparation Outline

Specific Purpose:

To inform my audience about how slang words have evolved over time and what they reveal about culture.

Central Idea:

Slang changes with every generation and reflects the social trends, technology, and identity of the people who use it.

Introduction

I. Imagine hearing someone from the 1920s say 'bee's knees' or a teenager today say 'lit.' Both sound different, yet both express excitement.

II. Slang words shift constantly, and each era leaves its own mark on how people talk.

III. Understanding slang helps us see how language mirrors the culture that creates it.

IV. Today I'll explain where slang comes from, how it spreads, and what it tells us about social change.

(TRANSITION: LET'S START BY EXPLORING WHERE SLANG FIRST APPEARED AND WHY IT EXISTS.)

Body

I. Slang has existed for centuries as a form of identity and rebellion.

A. The Oxford English Dictionary lists slang usage as early as the 1700s.

B. Many early slang terms came from sailors, soldiers, and street merchants.

C. Linguists describe slang as a linguistic shortcut, an easy way to signal belonging to a group.

(TRANSITION: AFTER ITS EARLY ROOTS, SLANG BEGAN TO TRAVEL FASTER AND REACH MORE PEOPLE.)

II. Technology and pop culture transformed how slang spreads.

A. Radio, movies, and music brought regional phrases into national awareness.

1. The 1920s introduced phrases like 'the cat's pajamas.'

2. The 1960s popularized 'groovy' through counterculture movements.

B. The internet accelerated change.

1. Online forums and texting created abbreviations like 'LOL' and 'BRB.'

2. Social media turned viral slang into global expressions overnight.

(TRANSITION: BEYOND COMMUNICATION, SLANG SHOWS WHAT PEOPLE VALUE AND HOW THEY SEE THEMSELVES.)

III. Slang reveals generational identity and social change.

A. Youth communities often create slang to distinguish themselves from older generations.

B. Certain words reflect political or cultural shifts.

1. 'Woke' began as a term for awareness of injustice before becoming mainstream.

2. 'Cancel' evolved from activism into online slang for accountability.

C. Linguists note that slang acts as a cultural mirror, and it captures what a society finds funny, rebellious, or meaningful.

Conclusion

I. Slang is more than casual speech; it's a living record of human expression.

II. Every generation reshapes it, turning language into a reflection of shared experiences and values.

III. The words might change, but the impulse to create them remains constant.

IV. The next time someone uses a new slang word, think of it as history in motion, language evolving right in front of you.

Bibliography

Adams, Michael. *Slang: The People's Poetry*. Oxford University Press, 2009.

Eble, Connie. *Slang and Sociability: In-Group Language among College Students*. University of North Carolina Press, 1996.

Green, Jonathon. *Language! Five Hundred Years of the Vulgar Tongue*. Atlantic Books, 2015.

Oxford English Dictionary. 'Slang.' Oxford University Press, 2023.