

Philip Pullman calls for boycott of Brexit 50p coin over 'missing' Oxford comma

Critics fume over the omission of Oxford comma from phrase 'Peace, prosperity and friendship' as new coin enters circulation

Early responses include His Dark Materials novelist [Philip Pullman](#)'s criticism of its punctuation.

"The 'Brexit' 50p coin is missing an Oxford comma, and should be boycotted by all literate people," wrote the novelist on Twitter, while Times Literary Supplement editor Stig Abell wrote that, while it was "not perhaps the only objection" to the Brexit-celebrating coin, "the lack of a comma after 'prosperity' is killing me".



The United Kingdom officially left the European Union on January the 31st, three-and-a-half years after the British people voted to leave. The U.K. government issued a special coin to mark the occasion. However, the coin is at the centre of an argument about punctuation.

The new 50-pence coin became available yesterday. It has the words: "Peace, prosperity and friendship with all nations" on its reverse side. A famous British writer, Sir Philip Pullman, is unhappy with the punctuation. He believes the phrase is incorrectly punctuated. Mr Pullman said

there should be a comma after the word "prosperity". Such a comma is called an Oxford comma. He said the coin, "should be boycotted by all literate people".

The Oxford comma gets its name from the Oxford University Press, which makes common use of the punctuation mark. In the USA, it is called the serial comma. It is used before the final "and" or "or" in a written list of three or more items. Many people say there is no need for an Oxford comma in the phrase on the 50-pence coin because the meaning is very clear. Word expert Susie Dent said the Oxford comma is useful if it makes it easier to understand the writer's meaning.

A U.K. citizen said the comma issue wasn't important. She tweeted: "It doesn't matter if there is a comma or not on the 50p coin. The most important thing is that there is peace, and prosperity, and friendship with all nations."

Interesting that she decided to use the Oxford comma, isn't it?

From <https://breakingnewsenglish.com/2002/200201-oxford-comma-brexit.html>

Mr Donoghue used the headline “Comma Commotion” for this article. However, he was debating several others. Find the meaning of the word in bold for each of these other potential headlines:

Headline	Meaning of word
Comma Commotion	
Comma Catastrophe	
Comma Conundrum	
Comma Controversy	
Comma Currency	

Which headline would you have selected and why? Challenge: Can you write your own (it does not need to use alliteration, there are other tricks you can try)

Paragraph 1

- | | |
|---------------|--|
| 1. officially | a. A particular time or instance of an event. |
| 2. voted | b. Able to read and write. |
| 3. mark | c. In a formal and public way. |
| 4. occasion | d. Do something special for an important event time of the year. |
| 5. reverse | e. Put an 'x' in a box or raised your hand to choose a new leader or make your choice known. |
| 6. boycotted | f. The other side; the opposite side. |
| 7. literate | g. Refused to join in or cooperate with a policy or event. |

Paragraph 2

- | | |
|----------------|--|
| 8. serial | h. Different connected items or names written or printed on paper one below the other. |
| 9. list | i. Things that are part of collection, list or set. |
| 10. items | j. Someone who belongs to a country and has the passport of that country. |
| 11. phrase | k. Something that is part of many related things that come one after another. |
| 12. expert | l. Being successful with money and wealth; being rich. |
| 13. citizen | m. Someone who knows everything about something. |
| 14. prosperity | n. A small group of words used together to mean something. |

1. How long ago did the article say British people voted to leave the EU?
2. What denomination is the coin to mark the UK leaving the EU?
3. What word is on the coin besides peace and prosperity?
4. What is the job of Sir Phillip Pullman?
5. Who did Sir Phillip Pullman say should boycott the new coin?
6. Where does the Oxford comma originate?

How good is your ability to punctuate? Try to put all the punctuation back into this paragraph. Only double-check the main article once you're sure you've finished!

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government issued a special coin to mark the occasion however the coin is
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became available yesterday it has the words peace prosperity and friendship
with all nations on its reverse side a famous british writer sir philip pullman
is unhappy with the punctuation he believes the phrase is incorrectly
punctuated mr pullman said there should be a comma after the word
prosperity such a comma is called an oxford comma he said the coin should
be boycotted by all literate people

Insert and circle any missing commas in the following sentences. Draw a line through any comma that should be omitted. If a sentence contains no errors, write *correct*.

1. We heard a roar of slow, mirthful laughter.
2. They lived on a dark sooty gloomy back alley.
3. Robin wore a durable, coarse, gray, wool coat.
4. We watched the desperate unruly angry mob storm through the city.
5. The old man drew together his thick, shaggy dark eyebrows and glared at me.
6. We thought the man's long, dull confusing speech would never end.
7. Most of the businesses in town are along the widest, busiest, best-lit street.
8. The thick, picture-filled, travel book made for interesting reading.
9. The loud, uncivilized home fans on the other side of the pitch offered a striking contrast to our normal fun-loving fans.
10. Hot humid August weather is something I would like to be able to escape this year.

Agree or Disagree: the comma is the most important punctuation mark.
