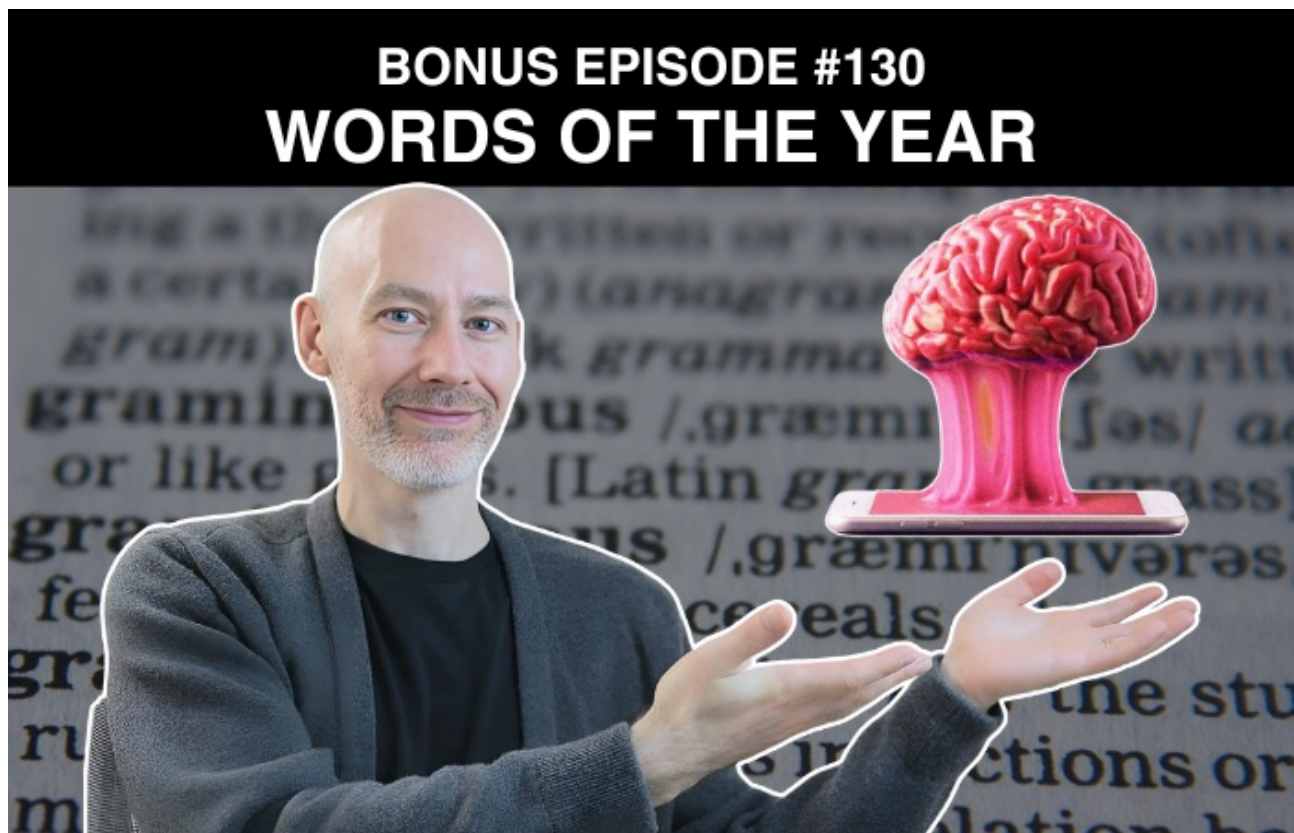


## Bonus episode #130 - Words of the year

### Episode description

In this week's bonus episode, Andrew talks about the Oxford Dictionary's top English words for 2024. Follow along as he breaks down each word, explains how to use it naturally, and shares why these words capture our changing culture. As a special treat, he even introduces a brand-new word he created himself!



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Note: The transcript has been edited for clarity.

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**Andrew:** Hello, and welcome to bonus episode number 130 of the Culips English Podcast. How's it going? My name's Andrew. I will be your host and your English study buddy for today. And here in our bonus episode series, I just hang out with you, and I chat with you, and I tell you some stories from my life.

And I hope that by listening to these stories, you will be able to B.I.G.B. That is our acronym, that is our motto for this series. It stands for build your English fluency, increase your cultural knowledge, grow your vocabulary, and become a better and clearer English communicator. So, if those are some of your goals with your English, then you're in the right place, and I'm going to try my best to help you achieve those goals.

Now for each and every episode in our bonus episode series, there is a 100% absolutely free interactive transcript and a vocabulary glossary. You can get those free tools just by clicking the link in the description for this episode, and I hope you'll check them out. I do think that they are very helpful tools, and that you'll really find them useful when you are studying with this episode.

Plus, if you're a Culips member, then you'll also get a comprehension quiz. So, you can take the quiz after you listen, just to see how much of this episode you were able to understand. And the quiz is nice because it highlights what you know and what you don't know. And knowing what you don't know can actually be really useful when learning English. It means like, oh, I missed this part of the episode. I should go back and listen to it again.

I know that when I study Korean, the foreign language that I'm learning, sometimes I convince myself that I understand something or that I know something, but then when I'm pushed about it, then I really find that I can't explain it too well at all, and that is always humbling. But it's also useful because I know that it means that I have to go back and study something again so that I can get stronger going forward. So, the quiz is useful for that, and if you're a Culips member, then we'll provide you with the link to the quiz for this

episode as well.

Speaking of Culips membership, if you're looking to take your English to the next level, then I highly recommend signing up and becoming a member. We have thousands of members from around the world who are improving their English fluency with us, and we'd love for you to join us. When you're a member, you will get access to the study guides and learning materials, including interactive transcripts and quizzes and discussion questions and more for all of our episodes. Plus, you'll get ad-free audio. You'll get access to our member-only series, The Fluency Files. You'll be able to join our weekly speaking classes as well, and even more.

So, if you'd like to learn all the details and sign up and become a member, just visit our website, [Culips.com](https://www.culips.com), or follow the link in the description for this episode.

So, this week, we have something just a little bit different. You know, usually, I tell you some stories from my everyday life, what I got up to over the last week. But this week, I decided to do something, yeah, slightly different, just because it's the end of the year. And also, just because here in my home, my wife and I have been talking about this topic a lot this week, which is the 2024 Word of the Year from Oxford Languages.

I guess the Oxford Dictionary folk. Each year, they compile a list of some of the top words, and they recently released this. And while I was doing some research, I saw that pretty much every dictionary creates their own Word of the Year list, and it varies from dictionary to dictionary to dictionary. Personally, I've always considered the OED, the Oxford English Dictionary, to be **the gold standard** of English dictionaries, so I went with the Oxford list. But later, if you Google and search for Word of the Year 2024, perhaps you'll find a different list.

But, guys, what I'm going to do in this episode is just go through some of the top words from this year's best-of list. And share them with you, share what they mean, how you can use them in a sentence, the cultural significance, this kind of information, which I think is a useful cultural lesson, it's a useful vocabulary lesson, and also just interesting overall.

I think if you are a word geek like me, an English geek like me, a language geek like me, then you'll enjoy this episode. So, we'll go through some of the top entries from the 2024 Word of the Year from Oxford Dictionaries. And then if you stay tuned until the very end, I'm also going to share with you a word that I **coined** this year, that I invented this year. And it will be a big reveal because I've never shared this word with anybody yet. This is its debut.

And I'd love to hear what you have to think about the word that I created. So, stay tuned until the end of the episode, and I'm going to share that word with you. And, yeah, without any further ado, I think we can get started with this episode. So, enjoy, everyone, and here we go.

Coming in at word number six is a word that went viral in the summer of 2024. It is: "Demure." Demure. And this went viral on TikTok. There's a TikToker named Jools Lebron, and she said this phrase, "Very demure, very mindful" when talking about fashion choices.

Very demure, very mindful.

And so demure means being quiet, shy, or dressing modestly, and it's usually used to describe the way that women dress and appear.

So, if you're not flashy, not showy, not over-the-top, not attracting attention, then you are dressed in a way that is demure. Now, frankly speaking, this word isn't too popular. It's like a very high-level word that I didn't really hear too many people say in daily conversations before this word went viral. But after it went viral, now you hear it often, and especially in this phrase, "Very demure, very mindful."

And I think these days, people are using it to talk about their attitude as well as their appearance, anything that is being considered and toned down. So, if your attitude or your appearance is being really thought about and some attention is put into it to try and make

sure that it's not over-the-top, not too flashy, not attracting attention, then you could say very demure, very mindful.

Now, to be honest with you, this just went viral in August, but I don't think it has too much of a lifespan going forward. I might be wrong about this prediction, but already when I hear this phrase, it kind of sounds a little bit **cheesy** already, especially the whole phrase, "Very demure, very mindful." Perhaps just the word "demure" will be used more frequently going forward, but I think pretty soon we're going to be **rolling our eyes** when we hear the full phrase because it's just like any fad or trend or something that goes viral.

It really peaks in popularity really, really quickly, but then drops off quickly as well. We say it "Falls off the cliff." It's just like standing on the edge of a cliff and then down into the ocean. So, yeah, that's my prediction for the word demure, I think, going forward. Perhaps demure is a good one to add to your vocabulary, definitely to recognize, but this whole longer viral expression, "Very demure, very mindful" perhaps you don't want to say that one too much in 2025.

Word number five on the list is "Dynamic pricing." Dynamic pricing. Wow, do I ever hate this one! Probably you do too. I think dynamic pricing is not so great from a consumer's perspective. Perhaps from a business perspective, it makes sense, but from a consumer's perspective, usually we don't really like this too much.

So let me explain. What is dynamic pricing? Well, have you ever bought an airline ticket and then just a week later, you checked the price of that same airline ticket, the same flight, the same seat class? You're not changing from an economy seat to a business class seat or anything like that. Everything is exactly the same, but the price is lower. That happened to me this year in 2024, and it really **makes my blood boil**.

It makes me a little bit angry because obviously flying is expensive and travel is expensive, and so we want to try and get the best deal we can when we fly. But you never know! When is the best time to buy a ticket? And that is because airline tickets are dynamically priced. So, they will **fluctuate**. They will go up and down based on economic trends,

maybe supply and demand, and there are probably some other factors that they consider in their pricing algorithm too.

I'm not really sure how it works, but this is what dynamic pricing means. It means that the price of something can fluctuate, go up or go down based on the way that the company is choosing to sell their product. Now, I think airline tickets are a really good example of this. Perhaps there are other transportation tickets as well. Maybe some train tickets are like this, and I think event tickets are like this also.

I've been thinking about going to a sporting event myself, and every time I look at the prices for the tickets, they're a little bit different. They go up and they go down. And I think closer to the start of the sporting event, they will be really expensive, but then as soon as the game starts, then often the tickets drop down as well.

So, I've heard even some hockey fans in Canada, what they wait to do when they want to watch a hockey game is they will wait until the game starts. And about five minutes into the game, then they will look and buy their ticket because it's way, way, way, way cheaper five minutes after the game starts. So, I guess you miss the first five minutes of the game, but then you get a really good deal on a seat.

So, the price drops dramatically once the game starts, but maybe a week, two weeks, three weeks before the game, well, then it could be up and down and up and down, and you never really know. So that's word number five, dynamic pricing.

Coming in at number four is the word, "Lore." L-o-r-e, lore. And I was a little surprised to see this on the list because I think I've been hearing this word used in a slang way for the last few years, I suppose, but perhaps it was this year where it really reached the mainstream and was used by many, many people.

So, what "Lore" means is it's a word to describe fantasy worlds. Think about big fantasy or sci-fi franchises like Star Wars or Lord of the Rings. There are many movies and books about these fantasy worlds and even fans talk about different characters from different

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areas of these fantasy worlds. And the lore is like the history or the backstory about these fantasy franchises.

And so that's, I guess, the original meaning of lore, it was to talk about these fantasy worlds. But now I even hear it used to talk about maybe rumors or stories from past events. To go back to ice hockey because I was just mentioning ice hockey and as a good Canadian guy, I'm a big ice hockey fan. My favorite team is the Vancouver Canucks and maybe like you'll hear a story about a Canucks player from the 1980s or the 1970s, like a long time ago in the team's history.

And that could be Canucks lore, like we're talking about Canucks history. Or even with Culips, if we were to talk about the early days of Culips, you know, we've been a podcast for a long time. If we were to go back to the early days in our early history, maybe we'd talk about Culips lore. And if you're a long-time Culips listener and you talk about those olden days of Culips, then you would be discussing Culips lore.

So, it started in the fantasy world to talk about big fantasy series and franchises, Harry Potter, Star Wars, Lord of the Rings, etc., etc. But now I think it can be used to talk about any series, team, podcast, TV show, especially when you're talking about the history or some information from the early days, long time ago days of that thing.

Coming in at number three is the word "Romantasy." Romantasy. This is a blended word that mixes two different kinds of genres of literature and movies, romance, and fantasy.

Now, I personally haven't read a romantasy novel or I don't even think I've seen a romantasy film before. But I heard on TikTok it is **gaining traction** and gaining a lot of attention and people are talking about it over on that platform, which personally I don't use. I haven't used TikTok before, so I don't know.

But I guess there are different corners of TikTok, and one corner is dedicated to books and literature and it's really gaining traction and gaining popularity over there. Romantasy mixes traditional elements of the romance genre and the fantasy genre. And I heard

sometimes it even features love stories between the hero or the heroine of the book and some mythical creatures.

So, it sounds pretty wild. I don't know if I would like it or not. I guess the best way to find out is to actually read a romantasy book and see if it would be my thing or not. What about you? Does romantasy sound like an appealing genre to you?

Let me know by leaving a comment on our Discord or on our YouTube page or Instagram page and let me know. And if you are a lover of this genre, of the romantasy genre, then you could maybe even recommend a title to me, and I'll add it to my to-read list.

Coming in at word number two is "Slop." Slop. S-L-O-P. Slop.

What is slop? Well, for the last few years now, we have been living with AI and technology like ChatGPT and Claude and Grok and Google Gemini, all of these different AI services that can generate a large amount of text very, very quickly. And as a result of that, this AI-generated content, including text and images and videos and all sorts of different things, this is **being flooded all over** the internet.

We have bots on social media. We have spam in our inbox. We have fake blog posts that were just written by AI. And all of this content really doesn't add any value to our lives. In fact, it's **watering down** the internet. It's making it a harder place to spend time. It's making it more difficult for us to find good information, reliable information, information we can trust, and we can believe in.

All of this AI-generated garbage content is called slop. And this word slop in English has another meaning as well. It's the kind of gross, watery, disgusting food that we would feed to pigs on a farm. So, if you've ever seen an image of a pig farmer just with a bucket of kind of wet food that they throw into a trough for a pig to eat at. And a trough is what we call the device that holds food for an animal so they can eat at it.

So, on a farm, you have a trough for the pigs where they go up to eat their slop, OK? So, it

is kind of like a disgusting word that we associate with pigs which are known to be maybe not the cleanest animal, especially a pig farm is not the cleanest place. So, when I think of this word slop, it just is a disgusting connotation, a disgusting feeling associated with this word.

And so, slop on the internet or slop on a farm feeding a pig, it's like not something that you want to encounter, not something you want to spend time with or come across, right? So, I think it's actually a very accurate way to describe this kind of low-quality content that the internet is being flooded with, unfortunately. Slop. So, if you hear it in the future, now you know what it means.

It's the time we've all been waiting for, the word of the year from Oxford for 2024 is "Brain rot." Brain rot. Now brain rot can be used in two different ways. The first way is we use it to describe really low-quality bad content on social media that often is very addictive but just takes up our attention and turns us into zombies where we just doom scroll on our phone. And I think most people who use social media, YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, we know all about brain rot.

These are the videos that are so addictive to us but don't really add any value to our lives. And in fact, they take away from our quality of life by occupying our time. So, this kind of really **low-bar**, low-quality content that we can see easily on social media, this is brain rot.

The second way that we use the term brain rot is to describe the symptoms that people can show if they spend too much time consuming really low-quality, low-bar content on social media. So maybe our attention spans are affected, and we can't focus or pay attention on anything. Perhaps we have a difficult time speaking or we use too much slang, and we have problems relating to other people or even we become totally addicted to these apps and we're always looking at them and, you know, you're out with your friends at a cafe or something and you find yourself opening your social media app instead of spending some time with your friends and connecting with them on a human level.

Well, these are all symptoms of brain rot. So, it works in two ways. It can describe the low-

quality content that we can see online plus it can describe the symptoms that we have or experience as a result of watching too much of this really, really bad content. So, there it is, everyone. 2024's Word of the Year, brain rot. Hmm, I don't know how I feel about that. It's not a very positive term to describe 2024, but that's what it is. Brain rot. Your Word of the Year for 2024.

One of the greatest **wordsmiths** of all time was William Shakespeare. He's credited for creating over 1,700 new words that weren't in English and he just invented them. Now, I don't want to say that I'm anything like William Shakespeare. Of course, that would be insanely over-the-top. He was an amazing writer, an amazing poet, an amazing playwright, a genius, and we still study his work all the time. There are students probably right now in high schools and universities across the world studying his work. Now, of course, I'm no William Shakespeare.

However, I did invent a word of my own this year and I want to share it with you because I want to get some feedback from you on my new word. What do you think of this word that I invented in 2024? In fact, I probably thought of this word maybe about six or eight weeks ago in my head and I haven't shared it with anybody yet. So, you will be the first to know and I want you to give me some feedback on whether this word is a good word or not. And whether you think it can go viral and can spread. And will people around the world, English speakers around the world, start using this word in the future.

Well, let me explain it to you and define it for you, OK? The word is: "Phonie". Phonie. It's a noun. So, we have to put it with "a." A phonie and the spelling is p-h-o-n-i-e. Phonie. OK, it is a blended word of phone plus zombie. So, I'm smashing together those two words phone and zombie. And what a phonie is is it's somebody who walks around outside glued to their phone.

So here in Seoul, unfortunately, this city is filled with phonies. Absolutely jam-packed with phonies and I know other big cities around the world are also jam-packed with phonies as well. I feel like it's an urban thing. Maybe in smaller towns, you don't get this as much but

in big cities all around the world, we can see people who are just absorbed with their smartphones, even when they are walking outside in a physical space.

Personally, and this is probably just because I'm a bitter old man now, but phonies really **grate my gears**. I think it's a little bit rude almost when you are walking on the sidewalk and you're not paying attention to the things around you. It's like dangerous. I've had people run into me. I've seen people run into telephone poles. I've seen people run into closed doors just because they're not looking where they're going. And especially in places like busy subway stations. This just gets on my nerves and sometimes it means that people walk very slowly as well because they're not looking ahead of them. They are just looking at their phone.

So, I think they are like zombies. They have been infected with a virus and the virus is their phone. They can't avert their eyes from their phone screen. They must continue watching the YouTube or playing the game even when they are walking to their destination. And hey, I get it. Like, phones are very addicting. I like to spend time with my phone as well.

And I also think that my perspective is somewhat of a privileged one because I have the luxury of having some free time in my day where if I need to watch YouTube or something, I can do that at home. But some people, maybe they don't have that luxury. Maybe they have to work several jobs, or they have to study from sunrise to sunset like Korean high school students unfortunately have to do. And maybe their only time to watch content on their phone is those gaps that they have in between a job or in between going from one academy to another academy for high school students.

So, in those situations, I get it. But I still think it's a little bit rude because there's a world around you. A physical world around you with people and animals and danger and all sorts of different things that you should be paying attention to, not just being stuck in your virtual world. So that's what I call somebody that is just living in the virtual world while navigating through the physical world, a phonie.

And it also has this added level of nuance where it is a **homonym** with the word phony

spelt P-H-O-N-E-Y. And that phony means fake or fraudulent. So, I don't want to say that somebody who is always using their phone while walking outside is a fake person, but in a little bit of a sense, I'm comparing it to a fake or fraudulent person. So, I don't know. What do you think? That's the word that I invented, a phonie.

And if you would like to use it going forward, I would love that. Let's try and make my word go viral. Maybe it can be the word of the year for 2025. You know, Shakespeare's got 1,700 words to his name. Can I just get one word to my name? I think that would be really cool.

So, if you like phonie and want to start using it in your own English going forward, I would appreciate that. But beware, because this is a word that I made up myself, maybe other people won't be able to understand it. You'll have to explain what it means to them. But that's a good conversation starter. And that's how things **pick up steam**, right? We'll **get the ball rolling** and then sooner or later, boom, it's going to be topping the Oxford Word of the Year for 2025. Or at least I can dream about that.

That brings us to the end of this week's bonus episode, everyone. Thank you for tuning in as always. I hope you enjoyed it and I hope you were able to improve your English skills here with me. Great job on completing this study session.

And now I'm going to share this week's completion code with you. And I'd like you to leave a comment or an example sentence using this week's completion code either on our YouTube page, on our Discord server, or on our Instagram. And that will signal to me and that will signal to other Culips listeners that you did it, that you finished this episode and listened all the way to the end. So, this week's completion code is: Zeitgeist. Zeitgeist. Because we've been talking about 2024 and some of the trends, the idiomatic and vocabulary trends from this year, which really captures the mood and the feeling of this year. The Zeitgeist of 2024.

So, you have your homework, OK? You know what you got to do. Go, go, go. Leave your

completion code on our Discord, our Instagram, or our YouTube. And I'm looking forward to seeing what you'll come up with.

All right, guys, I'm going to take off now. Have a great week of English learning up ahead. Please take care as always and I'll catch you in the next Culips episode. Bye-bye.

## Glossary

1. **Gold standard:** The best or highest quality version of something. Andrew uses it to describe the Oxford English Dictionary as the most trusted English dictionary. *Example: For many coffee lovers, that local café is the gold standard for fresh brews.*
2. **To coin:** This means to create a new word or phrase. Andrew uses it when talking about making up his own word. *Example: My younger brother likes to coin silly words that only our family understands.*
3. **Cheesy:** This means something is silly, corny, or not very stylish. Andrew uses it to talk about a phrase that has already started to sound old-fashioned and cringe-worthy. *Example: The movie's love scene was so cheesy that I rolled my eyes.*
4. **Rolling our eyes:** This means showing annoyance or disbelief by moving your eyes upward. Andrew uses it when predicting that people will eventually grow tired of "Very demure, very mindful" and react with annoyance. *Example: When my friend tells the same joke for the tenth time, I find myself rolling my eyes.*
5. **Makes your blood boil:** This expression means something makes you very angry. Andrew uses it to explain how changing ticket prices cause him strong frustration. *Example: When I see people littering in the park, it really makes my blood boil.*
6. **Fluctuate:** This means something changes or moves up and down. Andrew uses it to describe ticket prices going higher or lower over time. *Example: The temperature can fluctuate wildly between morning and night in the desert.*
7. **Gaining traction:** This means becoming more popular or accepted. Andrew uses it when talking about a new word or trend getting more attention online. *Example: Our idea for a community garden is gaining traction among the neighbors.*

8. **Being flooded all over:** This means something is spread out everywhere. Andrew uses it to describe how the internet is filled with worthless content. *Example: After the new album's release, the band's songs were being flooded all over social media.*
9. **Watering down:** This means making something weaker or less valuable. Andrew uses it to explain how too much low-quality content makes it harder to find good information. *Example: Adding too much water to the soup is watering down its rich flavor.*
10. **Low-bar:** This means having a low standard or low quality. Andrew uses it to describe bad content that adds little value online. *Example: The movie was so low-bar that even its special effects looked cheap.*
11. **A wordsmith:** This means someone who is skilled at using words. Andrew uses it when talking about famous writers like Shakespeare. *Example: My grandfather was a wordsmith who could turn simple stories into beautiful tales.*
12. **Grate my gears (grind my gears):** This means something annoys or irritates you a lot. Andrew uses it when describing how people who stare at their phones while walking frustrate him. Although Andrew says "grate my gears" a more common version of this expression is "grind my gears." *Example: It really grates/grinds my gears when drivers do not use their turn signals.*
13. **Homonym:** This means two words that sound the same but have different meanings. Andrew uses it when describing how his invented word "phonie" sounds like another word, "phoney." *Example: The words "pear" and "pair" are homonyms that can confuse English learners.*
14. **Pick up steam:** This means gaining speed, strength, or popularity. Andrew uses it when talking about a new word spreading and becoming more well-known. *Example: After a slow start, the petition began to pick up steam as more people signed it.*
15. **Get the ball rolling:** This means to start something happening. Andrew uses it to describe getting his new word started so others might begin using it. *Example: Let's get the ball rolling on the project by setting some clear goals and deadlines.*

### Episode credits

Host and preparation: Andrew Bates

Operations: Tsuyoshi Kaneshima