

## **Shit.**

Shit! Oh shit! No shit! No shit? Holy shit! Pick up your shit. Put down your shit. Take your shit. Take a shit. Clean up that shit. I feel like shit. You must be shitting me? You're a piece of shit. You're a lazy shit. You're shit out of luck. He's strong as shit. He's weak as shit. He's shit-faced. He has shit for brains. It's a shit-storm. It's a giant shit sandwich. That's hard as shit. That's easy as shit. That's stupid as shit. That's my shit. That's the shit. That's bullshit. That smells like shit. That looks like shit. That's just for shits and giggles. Now what's up with this shit? More specifically, what's up with this word shit? What does this shit mean?

I had always thought that shit was just a “bad word” for fecal matter or the process of expelling fecal matter. But if you look at all those phrases above, they can't all possibly be referring to fecal matter can they? There's no way. A lot of the phrases up there in fact, not only are ironic in regards to the meaning of shit, but also contradict the meanings of other phrases up there. So what's the deal?

The phrases “Hard as Shit” and “Easy as shit” are prime examples of irony. These phrases contradict the traditional meaning of shit, meaning fecal matter. The phrase hard as shit is commonly used to describe something that was very hard, whether it be a solid object or something you do: “That test was hard as shit.” Based on that sentence, that person obviously thought the test was very difficult. Pretty straight forward, or is it? Let's consider its counterphrase: “Easy as Shit.” This phrase much like its counterpart is used to emphasize the degree of something, only this time it's to say how easy something is. “That test was easy as shit!” So based on that use, the person obviously thought the test was easy. Wait, what? How can shit be both easy and hard? That makes no sense. First off, what fecal matter is hard? In all my experiences with the shit, it has been soft. Second, how is shit easy? In all of my experiences,

shit has been anything but easy all the time; especially on those days when the fiber in my diet is lacking. So what people are really saying is either that the test they thought was hard was easy, or the test they thought was easy wasn't all that easy. There has to be something going on here. Like what does shit mean?

Upon research, I found in an academic dictionary the top definitions for the word shit when it's pronounced one way: "1. a vulgar term for excrement, 2. a vulgar term for an act of defecation, 3. nonsense/crap, 4. any of several intoxicating or narcotic drugs." The meaning does differ depending on pronunciation too: "1. to defecate in, 2. to deceive (bullshit)." The conclusion here is that while that shit has a couple definitions that are pretty different, it seems clear that there is a standard definition between the two pronunciations, and that standard definition is defecation or excrement depending on that shit's part of speech (at least by the dictionaries view). So that's it then right. If those are all the meanings that the dictionary gives, then the assumption that all those shits up there must follow one of them has to be true. False.

Upon further research, I found the fat of the land, shit, a gold mine, shit, the end of the rainbow, shit, the promised land if you will, shit, I found Urban dictionary. Endless phrases and definitions of shit. A lot of the definitions in there refer to shit as the most powerful word in the English language! Wow! I never would have imagined that. They also say that shit is basically a word that can describe anything conceivable from nouns to emotions and everything in-between. In addition to giving the definitions, the Urban dictionary also provides more than several not only common phrases that use shit, but also common names for different types of shit (shit referring to fecal matter and the type of fecal matter: i.e. constipation, diarrhea, stuff like that).

So as you are beginning to see, this shit really has no set meaning and can pretty much be used in any and every situation. But, not only that, this shit is international too! Upon even

further research I've found that shit is used in a bunch of other languages, and they all use the shit in some of the same ways we do.

Kak! Ah zmal! Ne'merde! Ne'merde? Puta que o pariu! Procures-vous votre merde. Spustite sranja. Tolle quod tuum stercore. Alu ki'o. Limpie esa mierda. Jegil. Musite byt mi prdel? Pedazo de mierda. Liny hovno. Cac ádh. On sil'nyy, kak der'mo. Jotbab. Passé emba la roue avion. Skit fyrir gáfur. É um merda tempestade. Es un bocadillo gigante de mierda. Taai kak. Maklik kak. C'est conneries. Geugeon nae ttong. Kaka a. Chush'sobach'ya. Minh kee. Eto vyglyadit kak der'mo. Skitfjörkálfur. Cuál está para arriba con está mierda? Mais especificamente, o que há com a palavra merda? Qu'est-ce que signifie la merde?

Now if the paragraph above looked familiar (I'm not sure why it would, that shit is not even English), that's because it's the same paragraph that's at the beginning of this paper. This time though, this shit is in 12 different languages. There are phrases in African, Arabic, Creole, Czech, French, Icelandic, Korean, Laotian, Portuguese, Russian, Samoan, and Spanish—shit. That's quite a trek around the world if you ask me. Now it is true that I said that other languages use shit in some of the same ways we do. But while looking through all the common shit phrases of these different languages, there was one thing that I couldn't help but notice about all the non-English languages: for the most part, the common shit phrases in every other language are all negative and used as insults. This surprised me just a little as there were a lot of phrases that were pretty explicit (too explicit to repeat). I think this is partially because shit isn't the most popular swear word in other countries like it is here. In fact, when you compare how much we use shit to how much other countries do, can we Americans really even call it a “swear word?” A

swear word is supposed to be obscene. When it's used in other countries it is. Here, as said above, it is meant to mean anything conceivable.

Now there's so much shit-talking and so many shitty phrases in this country that shit could be positive or negative or even just neutral. With that being said, I feel the best way to attack and figure out what is meant by these phrases is to categorize them by their connotation.

We'll start with the negative. When shit is being used negatively, it is either describing a person or a situation. From there we can break it down into a couple more subcategories. When used on a person it is either by comparing them to shit, or directly calling them shit. "I feel like shit. You're a piece of shit. You're a lazy shit. He's weak as shit. He's shit-faced. He has shit for brains." Just by looking at these phrases and saying them to yourself, you can tell they are phrases that don't exactly seem too nice. Like shit for brains. I'm not trying to have shit for a brain, I would be dead, as shit would not be able to adequately perform the functions of a brain. Nor would I want to be called a lazy shit. Yes, I'm lazy, I know. That doesn't mean I need to be, let alone want to be, reminded of that. Now as far as being shit faced goes, I'm not sure how I feel about this phrase. While it has a negative connotation, everyone knows that achieving shit-facedness is quite the feeling. And so, yes it is not necessarily a good thing to be told you're shit-faced, but if you are called it, you're probably having a great time. Now who can argue with that?

"He's strong as shit. That's easy as shit. That's my shit. That's the shit." Obviously the positive phrases aren't very strong in numbers, but be aware that just because these are the only phrases listed doesn't mean that they are the only ones out there. So to dive right in, he's strong as shit, pretty self-explanatory. Even though we are not exactly sure how strong shit is, to be called as strong as it, well that has to be better than being called as weak as it. So at least you have that

going for you, and you never know, shit could be really strong resulting in a very flattering comment. That's easy as shit. This phrase is pretty self-explanatory as well because it is usually used to describe something that was really easy. That's my shit. That's the shit. These two phrases mean the same thing pretty much. In my opinion these are two of the most positive, best, most complimentary shitty phrases out there. When you call something the shit, you are referring to it as good, great, awesome, sweet, and all that. Oatmeal cream pies are the shit. LeBron James is the shit. Workshop in composition is the shit. This shit is awesome. So if you are ever called the shit, react with nothing but a huge smile on your face because you are good at something and being recognized for it.

Lastly, we have the neutral phrases which really have no connotation one way or the other: "Shit! Oh shit! No shit! No shit? Holy shit! Pick up your shit. Put down your shit. Take your shit. Take a shit. Clean up that shit." The common theme with all of these phrases is that they are all more or less, demands or interjections. Shit, oh shit, no shit, no shit (?), and holy shit are all phrases that are just said to express feelings of immediate anger or surprise at something. "He missed the field goal! Shit!" Perfect example there, obviously the speaker didn't want him to miss the field goal and was angry when he did. "Oh shit! The cops are here! Run!" The speaker is obviously surprised and maybe even a little angry as well that the cops have shown up without proper notice. Clean up your shit. This is a pretty easy phrase to get a grasp on. It is also kind of funny when you realize that the shit that you have to clean up or pick up could be just some things that are out of place, or they could be literal shit, fecal matter that you have to clean or pick up. So be careful with that one. Another one you should probably be careful with, while I'm thinking about it, is "holy shit." There's nothing wrong with its meaning per say, but anytime you use the word holy or any other divine term, you're always running the risk of receiving some

backlash from using these phrases in vain. You most certainly do not want to mess with those forces.

Well shit. We have finally come to the end of this shit. Together we have conquered a lot of shit together: we have heard a shit load (I've been saving that one) of common phrases that use shit, we have dissected and discussed multiple upon multiple known definitions of the word shit from resources such as books and computers, we have categorized and analyzed a handful of shitty phrases, and shit, we had a few laughs as well. So with the hope that I will not be seen as a shitty friend or a piece of shit if you will, I now have to leave you. For what it's worth though, I'm letting you go on your own way with full confidence that you now know your shit.

#### Work cited

"Shit." *Urban Dictionary*. N.p., n.d. Web. 08 Dec. 2014.

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