

The Sporting Life

Her fee tells you that she means business. It places her clearly **on the batter** (c. 1830), **on the grind** (19thC), **on the loose, on the business** (c. 1921), or **into the trade**.

What else would she be doing? Maybe **peddling her hips, fluttering her skirt** (c. 1850), **trading on her bottom, selling custom-house goods** (mid 18th–early 19thC), and **hawking her meat** (19th–20thC). “Get it while it’s hot!”

As a **well-rigged frigate**, she could be found **carrying the broom up** (c. 1820–90), from the time when it was customary to attach a broom to the masthead of a ship that was up for sale.

Some still missed the boat. When a judge asked the prisoner standing before him, “What are you, young lady?” she replied, “I am **in the way of life**, your honor” (c. 1823, Grose). Once she was **on the game** (17thC) or **in a mode of living** (movie newsreel: *News of the World*). Today, she’s **in the life** or **into the game**. Don’t trivialize it. Just because it’s a **game** doesn’t mean it’s not a serious matter. As a distinguished **pimp** once put it, “man, the **game** is deep!”

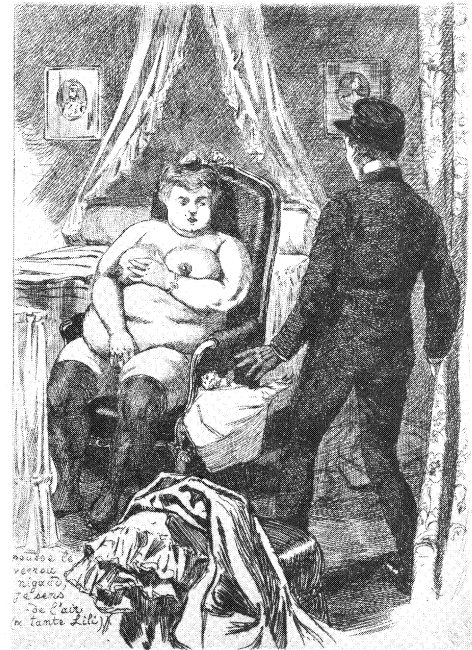
Ho, ho, ho!

’Tis a pity she’s a **whore**, but them’s the breaks of the **game**. She’s been one since before the twelfth century (Old English **hore**). We once considered the word polite, a euphemism for another expression long since forgotten. In fact, it’s a relative of the Latin *carus* for “dear.” But like all good euphemisms, it would in time become common, vulgar, and unacceptable.¹

Many were uncomfortable in her presence. In 1833, Noah Webster sounded an uncertain **strumpet** (c. 1327, from the Latin *strumpum*, “dishonor”), bowdlerizing the Old Testament by driving all **whores** to cover. **Hoores** had been present in the first English edition of the Bible in the fourteenth century, but Webster thought it best to replace them with **lewd women** and **harlots**.

Now that we have agreed on the principle, we must merely be haggling over the price.

—George Bernard Shaw



If you've got the money, honey, I've got the time.

—Popular song, 1940s