

Lene Bjerregaard

# Farveordbog

– farvernes skjulte universelle signaler





# Blue

This chapter includes **R90B**.

The names and designations of the blue tones similarly refer to nature. *There are three old names for strong blue:*

Azure blue, cyanic blue and cobalt blue. Azure blue comes from the blue stone azurite. It is one of the oldest known blue colours. In French, the Mediterranean Sea is actually called the: Cotê d'Azur. In Italian, blue is called: Azzurro. Later on, the manufacture of cyanic blue began. This is a cyan compound of iron. It was first produced in 1704, and the colour was called "Prussian blue". Cyan blue, however, is more greenish – please see B10G. Once the elements had been charted, cobalt was found, which in alloys with other metals generates a blue colour. It is known today as cobalt blue.

Blue is the coolest colour. In Norwegian experiments, people stayed in red and blue rooms respectively, where the heat was gradually turned down. It was discovered that the people in the experiment began to feel cold in the blue room at 15°C, while the group in the red room first felt the cold at 11°C. This finding is connected to the purely physiologi-

cal effects, which these two colours have on the neurological systems of the body, and the biochemical and physical reactions derived from them. Simply stated: blue curbs several autonomous bodily functions including blood pressure and pulse, as well as body temperature, and blue makes us relax. In this way, blue is emphatically a very cold colour to us.

The same applies at a purely physical level, when we are cold and the upper blood vessels contract in order to send the blood to underlying tissues. Our skin then looks blue because the blood is drawn back away from the surface of the skin. Moreover, shadows on ice and snow are blue.

We also use the concept of coolness, in a figurative sense, on human qualities when we say that a person is "cold", i.e. a dismissive, reserved person. In the same way, we can say that the general properties of blue, regardless of their tone, are: coolness and dismissive.

**(S 20.60-R90B)**

Blue is a very calm and peaceful colour. Just as blue gives the body calm and peace causing the musculature to relax, among other things, blue similarly calms the mind. Since clear blue is calm and peaceful in its foundation, it is also stable (as opposed to red and orange, which are movement and change). The stability is reliable, something we can count on, and which we have confidence in. Perhaps this is why blue is also used in connection with faithfulness and loyalty. *This is generally referred to as: "true blue".*

Both the aforementioned S 20.60-R90B and the shades up to S 30.65-R90B are "true blue" in my view = true and genuine blue perhaps because the latter is in the form of the natural stone azurite. In Chinese colour symbolism, blue is likewise described as a calm and peaceful colour, which produces an impression of seriousness and self-control. These are just other words for calmness, peacefulness and stability. One can say that pure clear blue is calm and peaceful in a carefully considered manner.

The clear blue tone shown S 20.60-R90B primarily radiates exactly these signals: coolness, clarity, calm, peace and stability. The derived qualities

thereby become: serene, serious, credible and confidence inspiring. That is why European Conservative parties used blue because they (originally) sought calm and stability as opposed to "the Reds" who wanted changes in society. In this way, blue also stands for tradition and constancy. This serious and credible aspect is seen mirrored in several expressions, which are mentioned under the next tone. I will just mention here that in Danish the term "to receive the blue stamp" of approval means to be recognized and get the top quality mark.

**(S 30.65-R90B)**

The tone here is the same as the stone azurite. It is therefore a true "azure blue". The Mediterranean is named after the colour: Cotê d'Azur. The basic signals of this deep blue tone are like the depth of the ocean.

This clear deep blue is also sometimes known as "cobalt blue" after the element cobalt or as "regal blue". Real cobalt blue is slightly more reddish though – in the NCS, it is the colour tint: R80B. *There are many verbal expressions, which symbolically use blue as a metaphor for: quality, seriousness, credibility, reliability and recognition:*

in Danish "to get the blue stamp" (to get the quality mark).

Bluestocking (a well-read or scholarly woman)

to have blue blood

to be registered in the Blue Book (in Denmark and the USA. In England, there is a similar book about prominent people called: Who's Who).

having blue chip stocks = "for sure" Securities (that are stable) quoted on the Stock Exchange

This is a blue-chip chair = this is a first class chair

Blue-ribbon = something of the highest quality

The Danish expression "to get the blue stamp" possibly originates from veterinarians using a blue stamp to approve the quality of newly slaughtered meat (they still use this). This mark has since spread to other forms of recognition regardless of what it relates to. A blue stamp is clearly visible on meat sold with fat on it so it is probably used for practical reasons. The expression is also used in association with other things, and I believe that this is due to the signal blue radiates in relation to reliability and credibility, as previously described. The English and the American proverbs likewise reflect blue as a metaphor for quality.

The saying "to have blue blood" similarly has both a practical and a symbolic origin, in my view. These were used in the Middle Ages by the nobility in southern Spain who had very



prominent, and therefore very visible blood veins. We know that veins look blue. Therefore, the expression with "blue blood" in one's veins was used as a description of finer persons. Today the expression is primarily used in relation to royals. As we mentioned earlier, it is also called "regal blue".

This meaning is directly transferred to The Blue Book, where you can only be registered if you are very well to do, or famous with the general public. In America, the Blue Book also means a book featuring prominent public persons; while in England it is an official government report (which preferably should be reliable).

The depth of the deep blue requires us to absorb ourselves in important questions. When the day draws to a close, the sky acquires a deep blue colour, and Danes talk in the same way about "the blue hour". In the

past, people sat down and reflected on the days events. Deep blue sends out a signal of reflection, and thereby these derived signals: carefully considered, diplomatic, patient and self controlled.

I believe Goethe's description of blue is entirely appropriate here: "Blue is longing and compelling. It does not intrude, but draws us towards it."

Both the sky and the ocean are blue and they can both appear infinite on the horizon. Blue appears to be actually further away than a red surface due to the light waves breaking differently in the lens of the eye. Optically, blue may appear distant and it seems coldly rejecting.

### (60.30-R90B)

Blue is a colour with a lot of darkness in it and consequently only a little lightness compared to the other colours. Goethe wrote: "Just as yellow always carries light with it, one can say that likewise blue always carries some darkness with it". If we measure the light reflection of blue surfaces, there will be less reflected light than from other colours with similar colour contents and the same degree of whiteness or blackness. Therefore, most of the blue tints contain some of the properties of the black colours and

signals. *They are first, and foremost darkness, heaviness and gloominess, which we know from some English expressions where blue stands for melancholy and sadness:*

feeling blue.

he's got the blues.

Blues music.

The blues is a very melancholy and sad type of music. To be in a "blue mood" means to be sad. The Blues also means being in a bad mood. In my experience, it is this dark blue tone that the blues refers to.

*In German, there is another expression, which also indicates sadness:*

Ein blauer Brief = (a blue letter) which means an unpleasant and sad message.

This can be a farewell letter, for example, or a message to a student informing that he or she cannot advance to next level.

The high content of black/grey also makes dark blue very anonymous and far more secluded than the previously shown blue tones. In addition, the content of black supplies some authority to dark blue. I believe this is why many uniforms are dark blue. A dark blue suit will not offend anyone.

The dark blue tone is also called navy blue or navy, obviously from the co-

lour of the great deep oceans. There is a great deal of depth in dark blue.

### (20.30-R90B)

When blue is mixed with grey, which are both recessive and sad colours, we get signals, which are actually twice as strong, recessive, and reticent. This colour is seen in nature on distant mountains, which appear grey blue. There is therefore also a strong signal relating to distance in this tone. Goethe wrote: "Just as the high heavens and the distant mountains look blue, so the blue surface appears to recoil from us."

This tone can also appear in a cloudy sky, which sends out the heavy, sad signal.

The colour is also called "antique blue" because the subdued greyish blue paint was very popular in the past. The toned down grey is just as anonymous as the dark grey-subdued navy. However, lightness makes it more pleasant than dark blue. The high grey content makes this blue unclear. There is therefore a built in signal of dimness as opposed to the clear blue. This is why there is also some uncertainty in the tone, figuratively speaking.

### (10.20-R90B)

This shade is sometimes called "pigeon blue" or "ice blue". The latter hints that this is the colour of shadows that falls upon ice or snow. It is therefore cold and rejecting. In addition, we see this colour in misty weather. However, the relatively high content of light in this light blue produces a ray of mild lightness and cautiousness. It is close to slightly noncommittal. The hue has a hint of grey in it, which results in it not being "baby blue". (It is in fact closer to 05.30-R90B). However, light blue has been generally used in baby clothes for boys.

### (10.50-R90B)

I call this tone clear light blue. On a bright sunny day, the sky can be this colour (among others). We talk about the pure clear blue air. Its signals are primarily: clarity, but also a happy, light, fresh and comfortable coolness as when children play in the snow on a cloudless winter day. Its high white content lends the colour tint lightness and joy.

When the sky is blue, it is due to the sunlight breaking in dust particles and the presence of water droplets in the atmosphere.



In addition, there are some expressions, where the meaning of blue is more diffuse, and therefore also more difficult to fit to a precise colour: that is completely out in the blue. It is plucked straight out of the blue air. to be a blue-eyed fool.

The first two expressions mean: It is completely crazy. It is airy, intangible and abstract (just like the air, which we see as blue). The Danish expression “to be a blue eyed fool” probably also falls into this category. Funnily enough, in English, “green-eyed” is the term for a naive and unrealistic person.

Since the sky is blue, it symbolised the Holy Spirit in the Christian Church. The Virgin Mary is for example always pictured wearing a clear blue cape. However, her cape is both painted in light tints as 10.50-R90B and more saturated blue tints as 20.60-R90B.

Clear blue nuances thereby also have a spiritual aspect.

*Then we have the expression: “Blue Monday”.*

“Blue Monday” was originally the Monday before Easter when prior to the Reformation, Church people decorated the churches with blue. I am not entirely sure which blue tint they used, however. The day was used as a national festival. Later, the expression came to symbolise a day with little work effort, as for example, the day after a party. Nowadays the term is mostly used for the day off after young people’s Confirmation into the church on the Sunday. It is also sometimes used when someone has held a party all weekend, and therefore takes a day off due to a hangover, and may be feeling a bit melancholy. The expression “blue Monday” is found in most European languages.

*In German a day off is actually called: Blau machen = (to make blue) taking time off.*

Blau sein = (to be blue) to be tipsy, to be drunk.

Finally, there is the expression “blue moon”, which is used when there is a full moon twice in a month. This only occurs rarely. In 2001, it happened on 1<sup>st</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> November. In 1999, it

occurred in January, and it also took place in September 1993.

*The following expression is used in English:*

once in a blue moon = (a rare occurrence).

I have done some research into whether there is a logical explanation for this term. However, the moon does not send blue light into space. The moon may look blue when volcanic eruptions send large quantities of ashes into the space. I've given this expression considerable thought, and I believe that it came to light in connection with the meaning: "distant". When something rarely occurs it seems "distant" and remote from the possible. There is a "distance" in the realism. As most blue tints are both cool and distant, this could be the reason why blue is used. In my judgement, however, the expression doesn't refer to one specific tint.

*Another expression I have tried to find an explanation for is:*

beard and blue glasses.

This expression is relatively new. It can only be traced in documentation back to 1959. It was originally used in connection with spies and intelligence activities during and after the Second World War. The people in the Intelligence Service were called "the Brigade of the Blue Glasses". This is

probably due to the fact they were wearing sunglasses or dark glasses, which they hid behind, and perhaps a false beard too. I presume "blue" glasses really meant "dark" glasses.

### **Overview of the most important expressions relating to blue:**

*Danish:*

get the blue stamp

= to get the quality stamp/mark

have blue blood in one's veins

= the Nobility.

the Blue Book

= known or prominent persons.

the blue hour = time for reflection.

blue moon = two full moons during the same month.

blue Monday = day off.

*German:*

Blau machen = take time off.

Blau sein = to be intoxicated (drunk).

Ein blauer Brief = a sad letter.

*English UK/US:*

true blue = credible, loyal.

blue Book = The Blue Book.

a blue chip = credible securities.

blue ribbon = of highest quality.

blue mood = sad mood.

once in a blue moon = seldom