

## Sources About Words and Their Uses

Dictionaries: College/Desk, Unabridged, Subject, Children's, Historical, Reverse, Slang, Translation; Thesauri, Style Manuals, Quotations

## sources about words

lots of these and lots of different kinds  
a fascination about words and the language—news articles about new words, changes to dictionaries, etc  
how we express ourselves  
used for the things you're used to: spelling, definitions, pronunciation, etymology, history, usage, part of speech, synonyms/antonyms, etc

## dictionaries

about as old as encyclopedias, maybe even older  
word lists (lexicons) in -7c Akkadia  
Greece & Rome (incl etymology 1c Rome)  
medieval glosses from 7-8c  
interlingual (translation) lists by 15c  
English-English glossaries for ease in understanding scripture  
16c <see ex>

## Tyndale's *Pentateuch* (1530)

Albe, a longe garment of white linnen.  
Boothe, an housse made of bowes.  
Brestflappe or brestflappe, is soche a flappe as thou seist in the brest or a cope.  
Consecrate, to apoynte a thinge to holy uses.  
Dedicate, purifie or sanctifie.  
Firmament: the skyes.  
Slyme was . . . a fattenesse that osed out of the erth lykeunto tarre/  
And thou mayst call it cement/if thou wilt.  
Tabernacle, an house made tentwise, or as a pauelion.  
Vapor/a dewymiste/as the smoke of a sethyng pott.

## more history

1<sup>st</sup> purely English-English dictionary Cawdrey 1604 (largely plagiarized) 3,000 words  
Samuel Johnson 1770s 43,000 words, 118K quotations  
Noah Webster 1828 1<sup>st</sup> American 12,000 words; usage emerges from spoken language  
*OED* 1884-1929, rev  
*American Heritage* 1969 usage panel  
*Encarta World English* labels  
Google

## why not the Web?

why choose one of these over a general-purpose search engine?

- importance of need, authority
- depth, sophistication, detail, specialization
- accuracy (? perhaps only historically)

## questions

1. How do you pronounce “chimera”?
2. What’s the origin of the phrase “Don’t touch that dial!”?
3. What does CIC stand for?
4. Is there a word that means to be buried alive?
5. I’ve heard a Dorothy Parker quotation about eternity and a ham; can you find the definitive version?
6. Does “eh” have specific meaning in Canadian English?
7. What are “calling hours” and where would you likely find them?
8. I’ve seen a couple of stories about people who are promoting anorexia as a lifestyle—is there a word or phrase for this? I think it’s a pretty new thing.

## questions

1. How do you pronounce “chimera”?

*American Heritage, Webster’s Third, Random House, Webster’s New World, etc*

### dictionary (unabridged, collegiate)

large, comprehensive, one-size-fits-all, for everybody, for everything (?), definitive (?)

descriptive v. prescriptive (*Webster’s Third* “ain’t” 1961)

pronunciation now online

## questions

6. Does “eh” have specific meaning in Canadian English?

*Oxford Canadian Dictionary*

### regional/national

variants, dialects

## questions

3. Is there a word that means to be buried alive?

*Bernstein’s Reverse*

### reverse dictionary

start with definition, lead to word

now a feature of searching online dictionaries

## questions

3. Is there a word that means to be buried alive?

*Oxford English Dictionary*

### historical dictionary

NOT a general-purpose dictionary, the Big Kahuna (1886)

history of the language, usage, illustrative quotations, etymology

500,000 words, 2.5 million quotes

now in Second Edition, work begun on Third

Tolkien (“walrus”), highly descriptive

## questions

7. What are “calling hours” and where would you likely find them?

*Dictionary of American Regional English (DARE)*

### slang/regionalisms

funky maps

## questions

8. I've seen a couple of stories about people who are promoting anorexia as a lifestyle—is there a word or phrase for this? I think it's a pretty new thing.

Word Spy

### neologisms

have to think of a Web source to get something that new  
<note ad>, cf OED etc

## questions

2. What's the origin of the phrase "Don't touch that dial!"?

*Encyclopedia of Word & Phrase Origins*

### etymology & origins

can be tricky, multiple, competing origins...or none at all

## questions

5. I've heard a Dorothy Parker quotation about eternity and a ham; can you find the definitive version?

*Bartlett's Familiar Quotations; Yale Dictionary of Quotations*

### quotation sources

notoriously difficult to be authoritative, unless something is written; who was "first", definitive phrasing, often misremembered

## questions

8. What does CIC stand for?

*Acronyms, Initialisms & Abbreviations Dictionary, Google*

### abbreviations, acronyms

context makes all the difference—so many kinds of abbreviations & acronyms, so many different fields

## selection

by audience or level

by subject

by availability

by features of searching, coverage, format, etc

(look familiar?)

## the story

### freezing and thawing

watching a language change, documenting, fostering, facilitating, stopping

fixity of spelling, usage

printing fixed language and spelling...will the Web break it apart again?

## others of interest

### *Alternative Dictionaries*

style manuals, thesauri, rhyming

concordances

specialized (eg *The Book of Gay & Lesbian Quotations*)

*Granger's*

*I, Rearrangement Servant/Internet Anagram Server*