

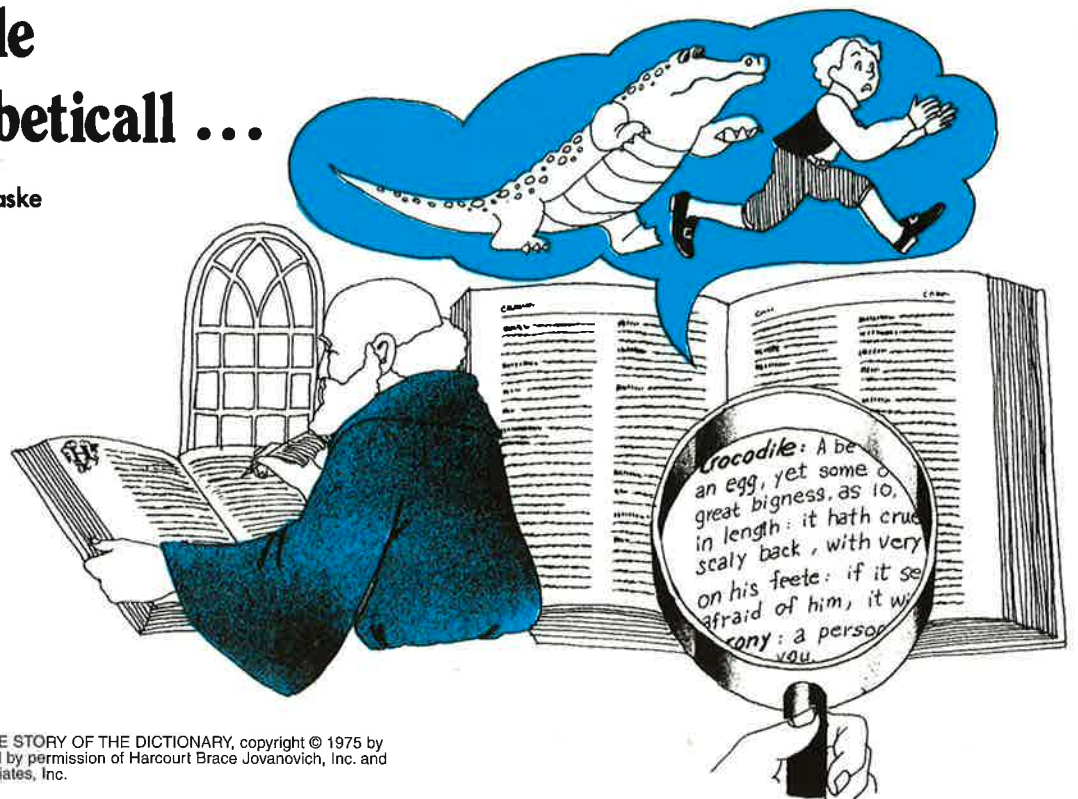
- 1 There is a good deal of myth and misunderstanding about people who make dictionaries. We generally think of them as dry, serious scholars who spend their days in quiet libraries paging through dusty books.
- 2 One legend tells of a dictionary maker at work in his study. A knock sounded on the door. He rose from his desk, opened the door, strangled the stranger, and returned to his beloved books.
- 3 Myths like this probably started with the early dictionary makers who really did spend their days in quiet libraries absorbed in books. They were monks, men who lived as members of a religious brotherhood. Sometime in the seventh century—nearly 1400 years ago, and before the printing press was invented—these monks working in church libraries began making notes in the margins of their beautiful hand-lettered books.
- 4 In those days all books were written in Latin because Latin was the language used in the church and schools. Common folk—farmers, shopkeepers, tradesmen, children—had no books of their own.
- 5 Why did monks mark up the pages of these beautiful books? Because the bright monks who wrote the books wanted to tell the not-so-bright monks who read them

what certain words meant. The notes came to be called *glosses*, from which we get our word *glossary*—a list of words with definitions.

- 6 For a thousand years these glosses stayed in the books in church libraries. Then, in the seventeenth century, some monks thought of making lists of these Latin glosses. Monks in other countries followed suit and compiled Latin-French, Latin-Italian, and Latin-Spanish glossaries.
- 7 In 1604 an English gentleman named Robert Cawdrey published a dictionary. He titled it *A Table Alphabeticall . . . of hard usual English Wordes*. His dictionary included only difficult words, but there is one principle of dictionary making that Cawdrey is remembered for today: he listed words in alphabetical order.
- 8 Nineteen years later another Englishman, Henry Cockeram, published his *New Interpreter of Hard English Words*. The purpose of his dictionary, he wrote, was to assist readers to "a speedy attaining of an Elegant Perfection" in their speech. Cockeram did no research on how people used words. He simply made up his own definitions. For *crocodile*, he wrote: "A beast hatched of an egge, yet some of them grow to a great bignesse, as

## A Table Alphabeticall . . .

by Robert Kraske



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- 10, 20, or 30 foot in length: it hath cruell teeth and a scaly back, with very sharpe clawes on his feete: if it see a man afraid of him, it will pursue him . . . ."
- 9 Cawdrey and Cockeram wrote their dictionaries for educated people only. Why write a dictionary for uneducated farmers and shopkeepers? They had no use for a dictionary anyway.
- 10 But in 1721, when Nathaniel Bailey wrote his *Universal Etymological English Dictionary*—a history of words rather than a wordbook dictionary—something unusual happened. The English people—the same shopkeepers, farmers, and tradespeople who Cawdrey and Cockeram said would never use a dictionary—began buying Bailey's dictionary. It became a best-seller and was reprinted thirty times, a remarkable record for any book even today.
- 11 Twenty-five years after it was published, Bailey's dictionary was still selling. This fact—and the enormous sums of money the book earned over those years—did not go unnoticed by a group of seven London booksellers. These booksellers had a leader, Robert Dodsley.
- 12 "Look here," Dodsley said to his friends. "If the common folk are so eager for a dictionary, let's give them a real dictionary!"
- 13 The dictionary he had in mind would list words in alphabetical order—Cawdrey's idea from years earlier—and provide a definition for each one.
- 14 "Splendid idea," his friends said. They could just see the money rolling in. But who could write such a dictionary?
- 15 Robert Dodsley smiled and said, "Trust me, I know just the man."
- 16 The man Robert Dodsley hired to write the new dictionary was Samuel Johnson. Large, fleshy, untidy, his powdered wig askew on his big head, he was a man of immense learning, self-confidence, and sharp—sometimes savage—wit.
- 17 Johnson had firm opinions about dictionary making. A dictionary, he said, should fix the pronunciation of words. It should preserve the purity of the language, save it from corruption and decay, and hold back the flood of "low terms" he heard all round him on London streets and in the taverns. The language of common people, he stated, was all too common! His dictionary would include only those words he thought good and leave out those he thought bad.
- 18 In writing definitions, Johnson introduced something new—he searched books for words to include in his dictionary and also for sentences to show how authors used these words. The written word, he believed, was the keystone of language, and all spoken language should sound like sentences in books.
- 19 For some words he wrote his own definitions, sometimes adding a touch of wit. A *dictionary maker*, he wrote, was "a harmless drudge." To illustrate the word *dull*, he wrote, "to make dictionaries is dull work."
- 20 Many of his definitions were hard to understand. For *cough*, he wrote, "a convulsion of the lungs, vellicated by some sharp serosity." For *network*, "anything reticulated or decussated at equal distances, with interstices between the intersections."
- 21 In 1755 Johnson finished *A Dictionary of the English Language*—eight years of "sluggishly treading the track of the alphabet," he told friends. And he wasn't at all satisfied with the work he had produced. But during those years he had learned a lot about words and how they make up language.
- 22 For one thing, he realized that relying on his memory for definitions wasn't good enough for dictionary making. One day a woman asked him why he had defined *pastern* as the "knee of a horse" (actually the bones just above the hoof). Johnson casually replied, "Ignorance, Madam, pure ignorance." But to friends he confided, "I trusted more to memory than memory can contain."
- 23 After his years of work Johnson concluded that it is not possible to "fix" the language. It is like trying to "lash the wind," he said. Language, he discovered, constantly changes. People use the same words to mean different things, and, in time, words take on new meanings.
- 24 But Johnson's most important conclusion was about the nature of language itself. Before beginning his dictionary he believed that the written word is the foundation of language. After finishing his work he realized that it is people and the way in which they use words—spoken English, not books—that determine how language develops. "The pen," he said, "must at length comply with the tongue."
- 25 Did Johnson let the defects in his work bother him? Not at all. "Dictionaries are like watches," he said. "The worst is better than none, and the best cannot be expected to go quite true."
- 26 Despite his doubts, *A Dictionary of the English Language*—in two huge volumes with 41,000 definitions—was a great success. Johnson's work was a landmark in the history of dictionary making. It was the first time anyone had put down on paper the words that made up the English language, and it set basic guides for the craft of dictionary making.

## How Well Did You Read?

Write *T* if a statement is true according to the story.  
Write *F* if a statement is false.

- 1 Review paragraphs 1, 2, and 3. The author's main purpose in writing those paragraphs was to show that all dictionary makers really are dry, serious, bookish people.
- 2 In the seventh century A.D. all books were written in Latin because that was the language spoken by the common folk.
- 3 Seventh century monks marked up the pages of their books so as to help readers understand some of the words.
- 4 Robert Cawdrey's dictionary was like modern dictionaries because it listed only hard words.
- 5 Review paragraph 8. The author's main purpose in writing that paragraph was to show how dangerous crocodiles are.
- 6 Review paragraphs 10 and 11. The author's main purpose in writing those paragraphs was to tell about the remarkable success of Bailey's dictionary.
- 7 Robert Dodsley probably formed his plan for a new dictionary because of the success of Bailey's book.
- 8 After Samuel Johnson had written his dictionary, he would have agreed that speech determines how language develops.
- 9 Review paragraphs 19 and 20. Both paragraphs were written to show that Johnson's definitions were witty.
- 10 Review paragraph 25. The author's main purpose in writing that paragraph was to show that Samuel Johnson considered his own dictionary to be a terrible failure.

## Learn about Words

### Vocabulary

- A** You can often tell the meaning of a word by reading the words around it.

Look at the number in parentheses. Find the paragraph in the story with the same number. Then find the word that fits the given meaning. Write the word.

- 1 made-up stories that may not be factual (3)
- 2 deeply involved; intent upon (3)
- 3 rule or standard practice (7)
- 4 not schooled or learned (9)
- 5 huge (11)
- 6 crooked; cocked at an odd angle (16)
- 7 freedom from taint (17)
- 8 base or basis (24)

- B** A word may have more than one meaning.

Look at each number in parentheses. Find the paragraph in the story with the same number. See how the word in **heavy type** below is used in the paragraph. Decide whether it has meaning **a**, **b**, or **c**. Write *a*, *b*, or *c*.

- 9 **notes** (3)
  - a brief written comments or explanations
  - b written signs in music
  - c short letters sent by mail
- 10 **record** (10)
  - a thin, flat disk used with a phonograph
  - b feat; achievement
  - c official, written account

## Word Study

C Many English words come from the Greek language and contain Greek word parts. For example:

**graph** = to write, draw (as in *autograph*)

**syn** = with, together (as in *synonym*)

**phil** = love (as in *philosophy*)

Knowledge of Greek word parts will sometimes help you unlock the meanings of new words. Read the sentences below. The word in **heavy type** is a clue. It will help you find the right word to complete the partial word. Complete the word and write it in full.

11 A **handwriting** expert is called a \_\_\_\_ologist.

12 A true \_\_\_\_osopher searches for truth because of a **love** of wisdom.

13 His **writing** and photo\_\_\_\_y convinced me of Maine's beauty.

14 Different chemicals are mixed **together** to form \_\_\_\_hetics.

15 The \_\_\_\_anthropist gave all he owned to charity because of his **love** of humanity.

16 The main points of the story were put **together** in a brief \_\_\_\_opsis.

17 The steno\_\_\_\_er **wrote** down most of what was said.

18 **Lovers** of music are invited to join the \_\_\_\_harmonic society.

D I love to read **Shakespeare**.

I put a lot of **sweat** into this assignment.

These sentences use a figure of speech known as metonymy. When we use the name of one thing to stand for something closely related to it, that is metonymy. "I love to read *Shakespeare*" really means ". . . to read *Shakespeare's plays and poems*." "I put a lot of *sweat* into this assignment" really means ". . . a lot of *hard work* . . ." Read the sentences below. If the word or phrase in **heavy type** is an example of metonymy, write *M*. If it is not, write *No*.

19 The **bench** ruled against our case.

20 The **hills** were crowded with skiers.

21 I lost my **suitcase** in the hotel lobby.

22 "The **redcoats** are coming!" Paul shouted.

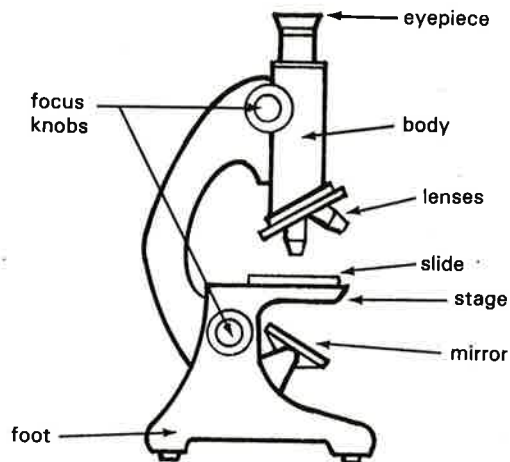
23 This is the tastiest **dish** I've ever eaten!

24 I am knitting a brown and blue **sweater**.

25 The **grandstands** roared as George crossed the goal line.

26 All rise and face the **court**.

E A *diagram* is a drawing or sketch that clearly shows how an object is put together or how it works. Below is a diagram of a microscope, showing where its basic parts are located.



Study the diagram to see whether the statements below are true or false. Write *T* for true or *F* for false.

27 The eyepiece is located at the top of the microscope.

28 The lenses are located below the stage.

29 The microscope rests on its foot.

30 The mirror is found above the stage.

31 There are two knobs to focus the microscope.

32 A microscope slide is placed on the stage.

33 The lenses are attached to the foot.