

**But What's a Dictionary for?**

Wu Qiong

# Warming-up:



**brr:** informal. an exclamation used to suggest shivering.  
(《柯林斯词典》)

Raise the brrrrr:  
raise the bar (set a higher standard)

# Warming-up:

人类命运共同体:

A community of shared destiny?

A community of shared future



Build a China-Vietnam community with a shared future that carries strategic significance

*Destiny:* (connotation: predetermined / inevitable fate);

*Future:* malleable, open-ended, humble

The Chinese term literally means "common destiny", but its translation in English and Vietnamese is "common future", which may be seen as less demanding. (Dec. 12, 2023, Reuters)

a "community with a shared future" would be significant for the two countries — a hint, perhaps, of phrasing that might serve as a compromise. (Dec. 12, 2023, NYT)

# Warming-up:

详讯：习近平会见美国国务卿布林肯

新华社 2023-06-19 18:19 北京



6月19日下午，国家主席习近平在北京会见美国国务卿布林肯。

“中国尊重美国的利益，不会去挑战和取代美国。同样，美国也要尊重中国，不要损害中国的正当权益。任何一方都不能按照自己的意愿塑造对方，更不能剥夺对方正当发展权利。”

Neither side **should try to** shape the other side by its own will, still less deprive the other side of its legitimate right to development. （外交部官网）

Neither party **can** shape the other according to its own wishes, let alone deprive the other of its legitimate right to development. (Financial Times)

What's a Dictionary for?

This text is excerpted from an article of the same title in the book *The Play of Language*. *The Play of Language* is a collection of essays on language and usage edited by Leonard Dean and Kenneth Wilson, published by Oxford University Press in the United States of America.

Born on Oct.16th, 1748, in West Hartford, Connecticut;

Died on May.28th, 1843, in New Haven, Connecticut.

American lexicographer, textbook pioneer, English spelling reformer, political writer, editor, prolific author.



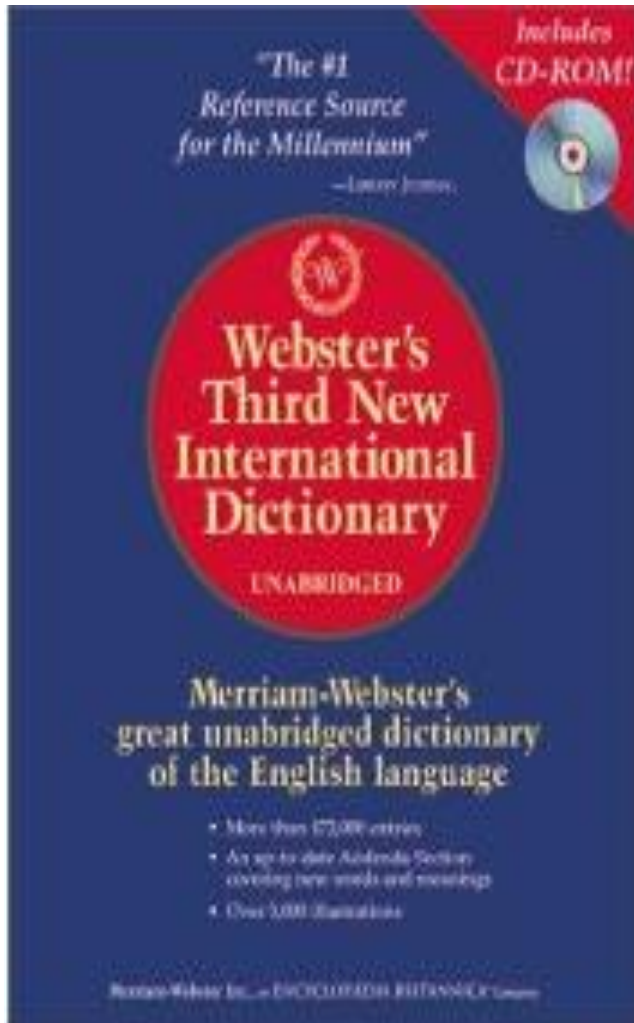
The Father of American Scholarship and Education

Founder; First published a dictionary named *An American Dictionary of the English language* (the origin edition of Merriam-Webster dictionary).

# Noah Webster



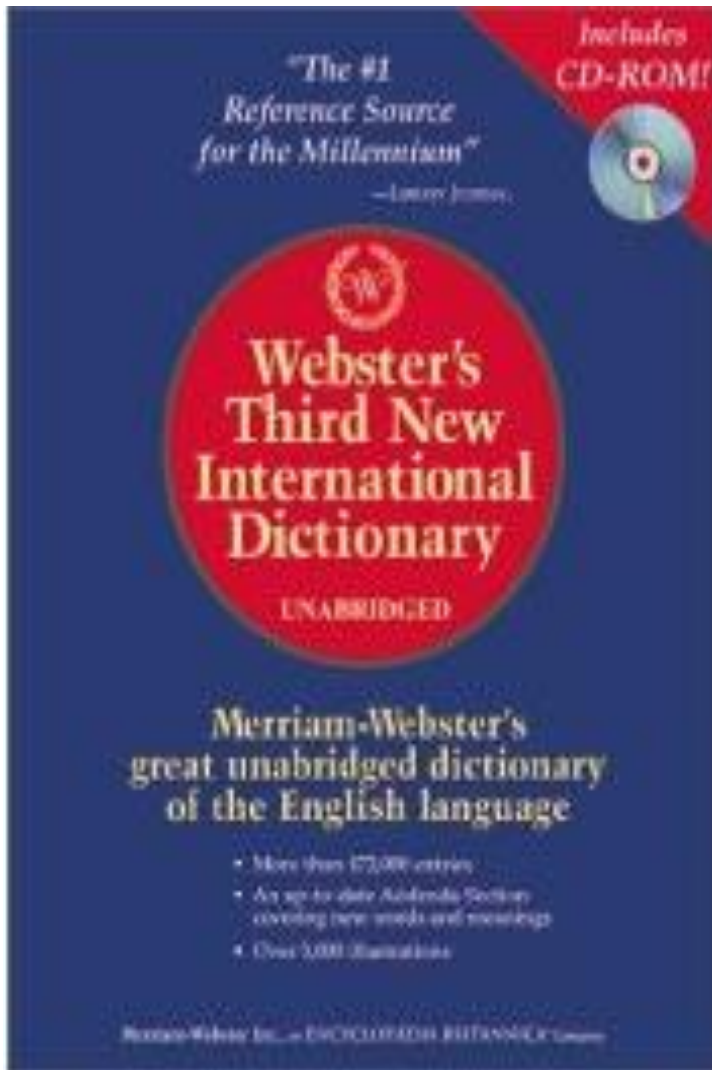
A quick glance at the background



*Webster's Third New International Dictionary* has its beginning in *Noah Webster's American Dictionary of the English Language*, 1828.

In 1840, the second edition of Noah Webster's *American Dictionary of the English Language* was a failure and he had to sell the copy right to Merriam Publishing Company which thereafter became the Merriam-Webster Incorporation.





*The Third International*, whether in content, size, shape, and design, this dictionary of 2752 pages **is the great library of the English language**. It has over 460,000 entries, 200,000 usage examples, over 3000 pictorial illustrations, and more than 1000 synonym articles. In a single volume, it defines the English language as it is written and spoken today.

The editors of this new edition have held to the three virtues of dictionary making: **accuracy**, **clearness** and **comprehensiveness**. Accuracy is put first under any circumstance. In striving for clearness, the editors have tried to make the definitions as readable as possible. The comprehensiveness of this dictionary is borne out by the addition of 100,000 new words or new definitions that were not included in the Second International.

**Title Study:** What does the title of the text tell us about its genre?

But What's a Dictionary For?    c.f.

What's a Dictionary For?

Argumentation: two  
conflicting views;  
argue for or against  
the views--refutation

Exposition: to  
explain or expound  
sth.

# The Textual Development (1)

**Part I:** (Para1-3): Introduction: clash of views between the popular press and dictionary makers on the publications of the Third International Dictionary;

**Part II.** (Para 4-17): Two inserted statements with emphasis on the new science.

- Para 4-5: two inserted statements;
- Para 6-11: chief points of Bloomfield's new science
- Para12-17: reasons why new dictionaries are needed: record new language

# The Textual Development

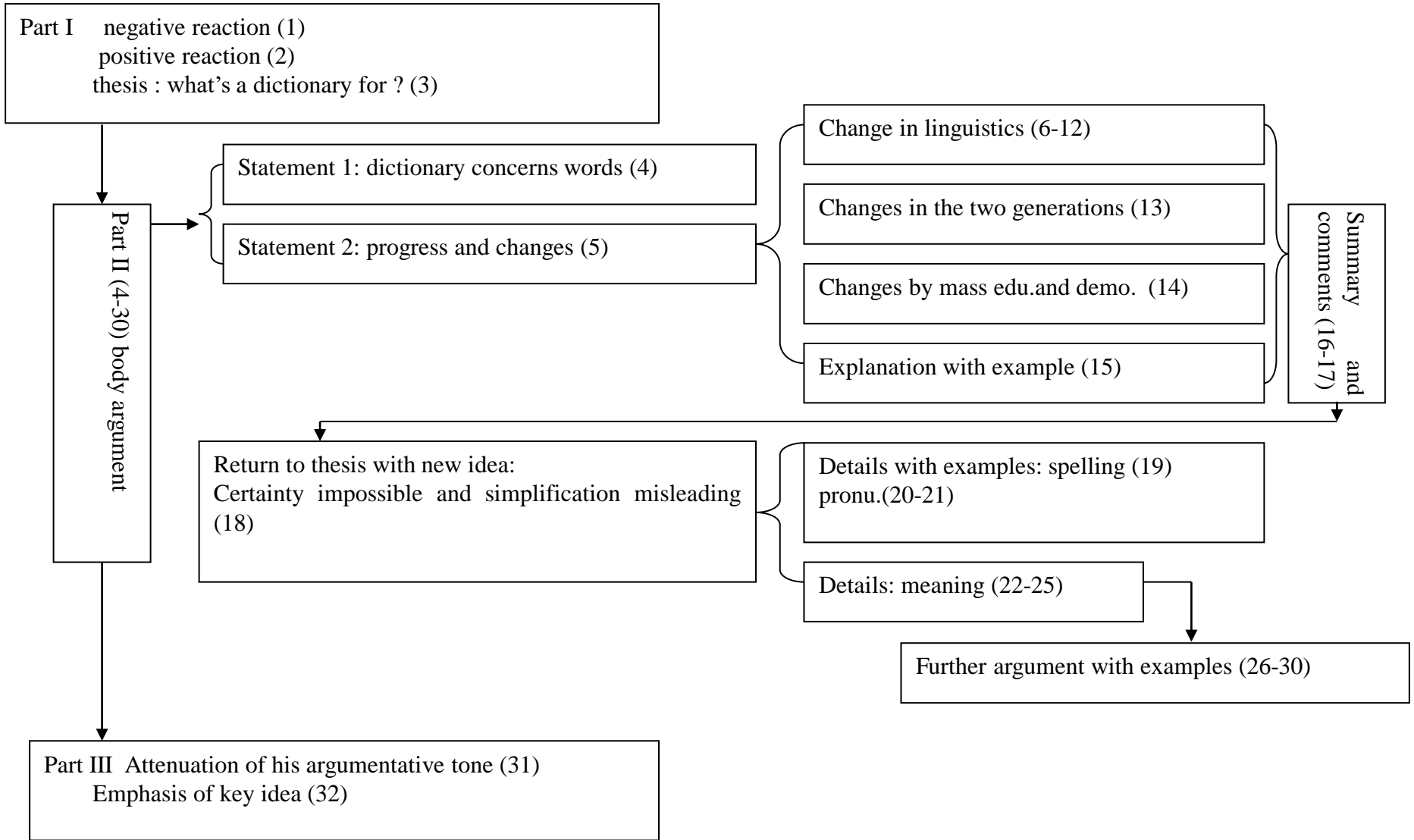
**Part III.** (Para 18-29): point by point refutation of the views of the popular press

- Para 18: truth about language: there is no certainty and simplification is misleading.
- Para19: example with spelling
- Para20-21: example with pronunciation
- Para22-29: example with definition of a door.

**Part IV.** Para 30: possible faults of the new dictionary.

Conclusion: In terms of language use, one should be guided by the usage of today.





**Para. 1** A lead-in paragraph, introducing the current media fury at the publication of *Webster's Third New International Dictionary*

**Question:** How does the paragraph achieve its unity and coherence?

## Topic Sentence

The storm of abuse in the popular press that greeted the appearance of *Webster's Third New International Dictionary* **is a curious phenomenon.**

## Why a curious phenomenon?

Never has a scholarly work of this stature been attacked with such unbridled fury and contempt.

## What kind of unbridled fury and contempt? (supporting facts/data)

# The Influential Newspapers in America

1. *The New York Times*
2. *Washington Post*
3. *The Wall Street Journal*
4. *The Los Angeles Times*
5. *The New York Daily News*



# The Influential Newspapers in America

1. *Time*
2. *Reader's Digest*
3. *Life*
4. *Playboy*
5. *Fortune*



# What kind of unbridled fury and contempt?

(supporting facts/data)

1. **Atlantic Monthly** — a disappointment, a shock, a calamity, a scandal, a disaster
2. **The New York Times** --- (the work) accelerate the deterioration (of the language), accused the editors of betraying a public trust
3. **The Journal of the American Bar Association** --- deplorable, a flagrant example of lexicographic irresponsibility, a serious blow to the cause of good English
4. **Life** --- a non-word deluge, monstrous, abominable, a cause for dismay



1. **The storm of abuse in the popular press that greeted the appearance of Webster's Third New International Dictionary is a curious phenomenon.**
  - 1) The **storm** of abuse: metaphor, a large amount of cursing, angry or violent attack in words.  
*a storm of applause; a storm of tears*
  - 2) **popular press**: newspapers suited to the general readers. Popular means suited to the tastes, needs, educational level, etc. of the general public.  
*e.g. popular science, meals at popular prices.*  
*c.f. popular hero, popular songs, etc.*
  - 3) **appearance**: publication, coming out

2. Never has a scholarly work of this stature been attacked with such unbridled fury and contempt.

1) 'Never' is put at the beginning of the sentence for emphasis.

2) **scholarly**: concerned with serious detailed study--- opposite POPULAR e.g. *His name is known in scholarly circles throughout the world.*

3) **stature**: originally a person's bodily height. e.g. *She was rather small in stature.* 身材, 身高

Here it is used figuratively, meaning **mental or moral quality, development, growth, or level of attainment**, especially as worthy of esteem. 声望, 名望

Not to be confused with *statue* or *status*.

*e.g. a musician of international stature*

a scholar of great stature 一位了不起的学者

a politician of considerable stature 一位具有非凡  
气质的政治家

**4) unbridled:** not controlled or restrained

e.g. Mr. Wilson made unbridled attacks against this  
policy. 威尔逊先生对这个政策进行了肆无忌惮的攻  
击。

**fury:** violent or very strong anger;

**contempt:** lack of respect

**5) Paraphrase:** we have never seen a product of this high  
quality to be attacked so wildly and without restraint.

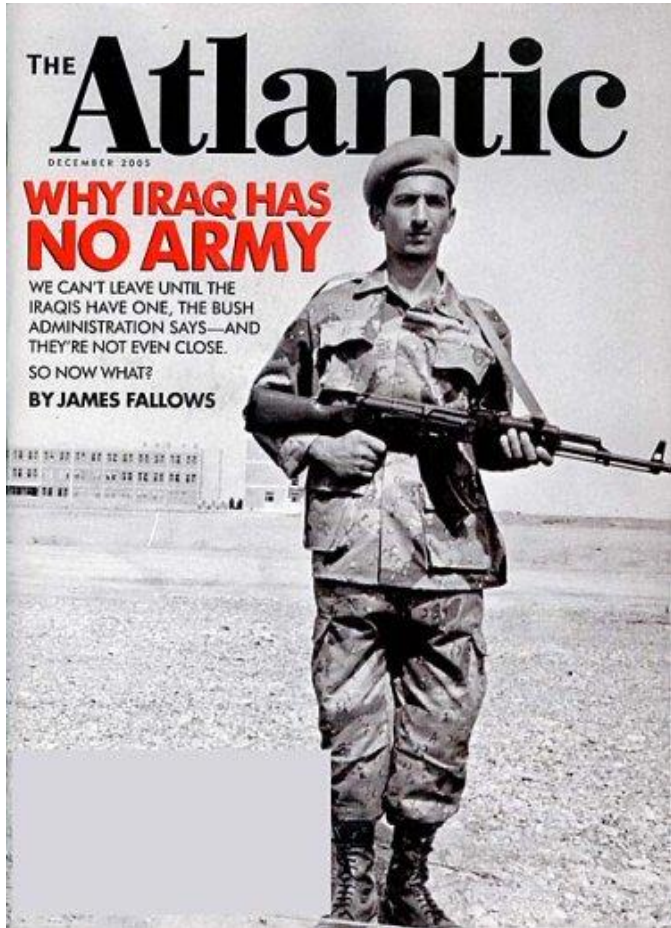
3. An article in the Atlantic viewed it as a ‘disappointment’, a ‘shock’, or a ‘calamity’, a ‘scandal and a disaster’.

The Atlantic: American monthly journal.

**calamity**: an event that causes a great deal of damage, destruction, or personal sadness and distress; serious misfortune 灾难、不幸

e.g. The recent flooding in the south was a calamity. 最近南方的洪水是一场灾难

A hurricane would be a *calamity* for this low-lying coastal region. 对于这地势很低的海滨地区，飓风将是一场灾难



3. An article in the Atlantic viewed it as a ‘disappointment’, a ‘shock’, or a ‘calamity’, a ‘scandal and a disaster’.

2) **scandal**: disgrace

e.g. The way that official wastes public money is a scandal.

She brought scandal to her family by her outrageous behaviour.

He was involved in a scandal of corruption and embezzlement(贪污).

4. The New York Times, in a special editorial, felt that the work would ‘accelerate the deterioration’ of the language and sternly accused the editors of betraying a public trust.

The New York Times:  
American morning daily  
newspaper.

1) accelerate the  
deterioration of the language:  
speed up the lowering of the  
quality of the language.





4. The New York Times, in a special editorial, felt that the work would ‘accelerate the deterioration’ of the language and sternly accused the editors of betraying a public trust.

**accelerate:** speed up

e.g. The leader is losing ground as the rest of the runners accelerate.

领先者在其余赛跑者加速时就逐渐失去了优势。

We will accelerate the reform of the financial system under these circumstances. 在这一背景情况下,我们将加快金融体制改革。

The decline of her health seemed to suddenly accelerate. 她的健康状况好像突然提前衰退了。

**deteriorate:** (n. deterioration) to grow worse; become weak 恶化, 变得更坏, 退化:

The weather *deteriorated* overnight.

His health had deteriorated while he was in prison.

His deteriorating health forced him to retire.

4. The New York Times, in a special editorial, felt that the work would ‘accelerate the deterioration’ of the language and sternly accused the editors of betraying a public trust.

2) **betraying a public trust**: failing to meet the hopes of the public; failing to live up to the expectations of the public; fall short of...

Eg. She betrayed her promise.

I am sorry that I have betrayed your trust.

Her eyes betrayed her sadness.

His accent betrayed the fact that he was foreign.

**5. The Journal of the American Bar Association saw the publication as ‘deplorable’, ‘a flagrant example of lexicographic irresponsibility’, ‘a serious blow to the cause of good English’.**

- 1) **American Bar Association:** Bar here means lawyers collectively; or the legal profession.
- 2) **deplorable:** worthy of severe condemnation or reproach: 应受谴责的; 悲惨的  
a deplorable act of violence. 应受谴责的暴力行为
- 3) **lexicographic irresponsibility:** lexicographic means the act, process, art, or work of writing or compiling a dictionary. A lexicographer is a person who writes or compiles a dictionary.  
**Lexicographic irresponsibility means irresponsibility in making the dictionary.**

**5. The Journal of the American Bar Association saw the publication as ‘deplorable’, ‘a flagrant example of lexicographic irresponsibility’, ‘a serious blow to the cause of good English’.**

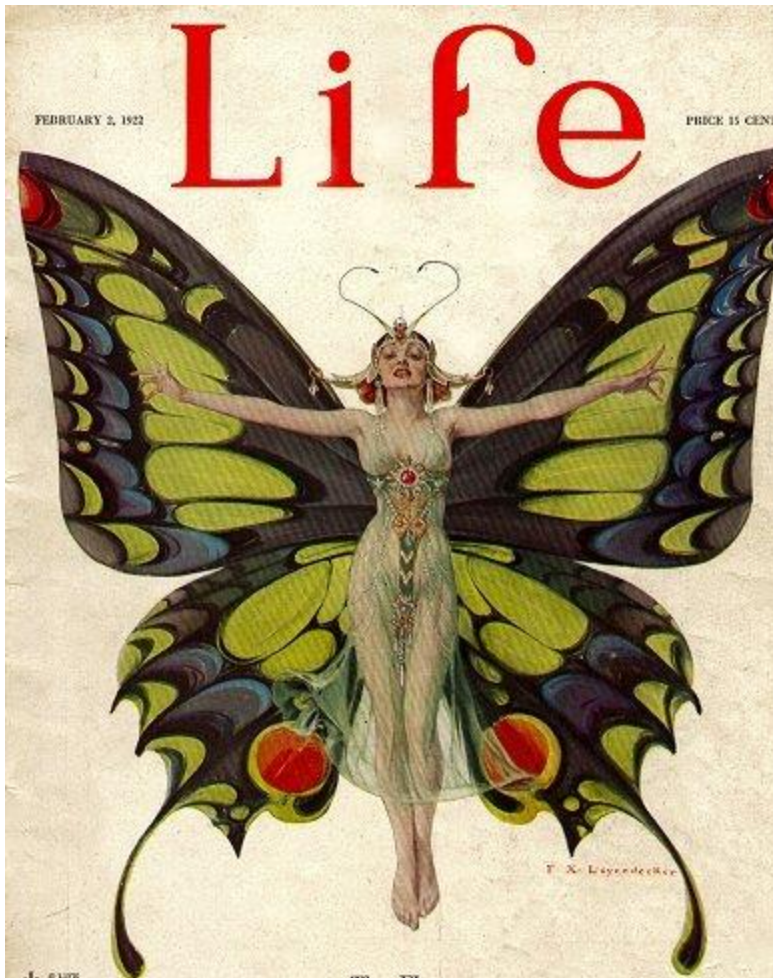
**4) flagrant:** notoriously bad, offensive;

flagrant disregard of the law 明目张胆地置法律于不顾

a flagrant miscarriage of justice; 可耻的审判不公

**5) cause of good English:** the object for enhancing English, the efforts to maintain a high standard for English.

6. Life called it ‘a non-word deluge’, ‘monstrous’, ‘abominable’ and ‘a cause for dismay.



Life: American popular pictorial magazine.

1) non-words: are words not yet established, not acceptable, such as new slangs or newly-coined words.

2) **deluge**: used metaphorically, meaning an overwhelming, flood-like rush of anything;  
e.g. a deluge of visitors;  
a deluge of abuse

3) **monstrous**: quite absurd (荒谬的) ;  
scandalous (可耻的)

4) **abominable**: disgusting

5) **dismay**: feeling of fear and discouragement,  
disappointment, distress 沮丧、灰心、气馁 (基本意思是指因前景可怕、不乐观或因受挫折而失去干某事的力量)

*e.g. be struck with dismay at the news*

*We are dismayed at the unbridled fury of the people in charge.*



7. They doubted that ‘Lincoln could have modelled his Gettysburg Address’ on it—a concept of how things get written that throws very little light on Lincoln but a great deal on Life.

1) model...on: take as a model, or example  
e.g. *She modelled herself on her mother.*

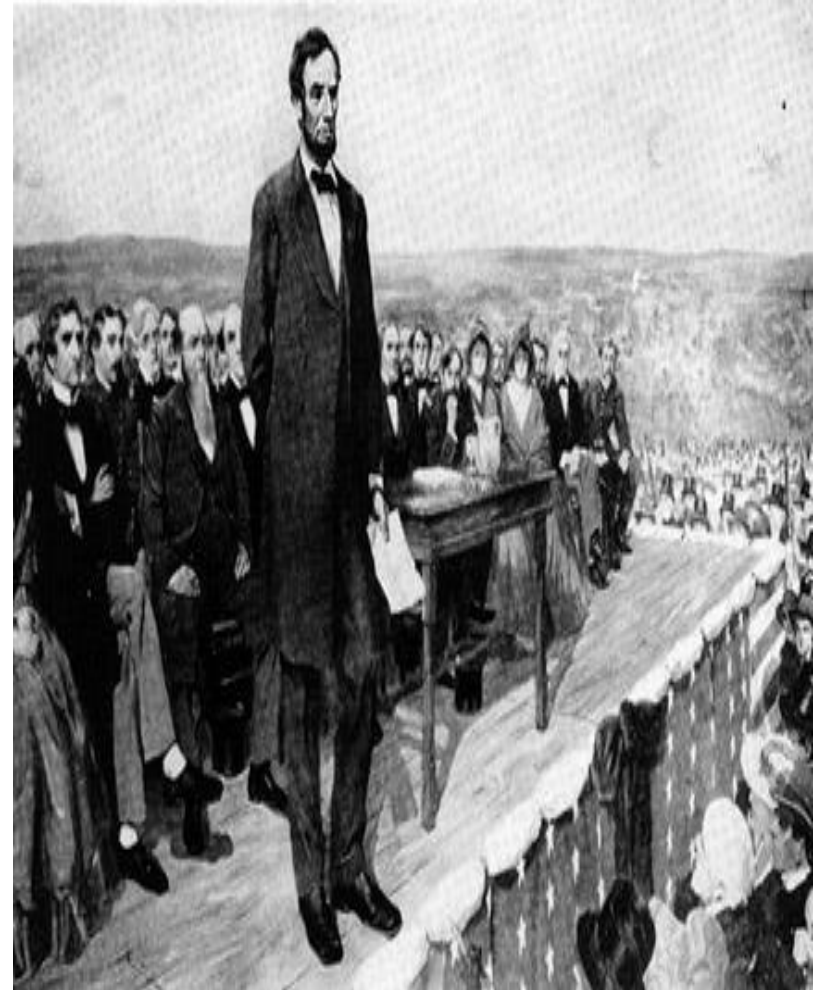
2) **throw light on=shed light on** : clarify or explain,  
I was hoping the professor would shed light on how he arrived at his theory.  
Can anyone throw some light on where these plants came from?

3) What is the writer’s tone here?  
Sarcastic tone. What is the writer satirizing? –the foolish idea of Life’s editors.

4) Rhetorical device: little light on Lincoln –alliteration  
antithesis

7. They doubted that 'Lincoln could have modelled his Gettysburg Address' on it—a concept of how things get written that throws very little light on Lincoln but a great deal on Life.

5) Editors of Life magazine didn't believe that Lincoln could have written his famous Gettysburg Address with the language described in the Third International as a model. This concept can provide little information on how Lincoln wrote his Address, but it does explain how the editors of Life write their articles. They are ignorant enough to suggest writing with a dictionary as a model.



**Para. 2** What underlies all this sound and fury? Is the claim of the G.R. C. Merriam Company, probably the world's greatest dictionary maker, that the preparation of the work cost \$3.5 million, that it required the efforts of three hundred scholars over a period of twenty-seven years, working on the largest collection of citations ever assembled in any language—is all this a fraud, a hoax?

**Para. 2** The claim: the endeavor and the cost in making the dictionary

1) The **first question**: What underlies all this sound and fury?  
( refers to the abuse in the popular press)

\*\*\*A quotation from Shakespeare's Tragedy:

... *It is a tale*  
*Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury*  
*Signifying nothing.*

— Macbeth (Act 5, Scene 5, lines 17-28)

**Para. 2** What underlies all this sound and fury? Is the claim of the G.R. C. Merriam Company, probably the world's greatest dictionary maker, that the preparation of the work cost \$3.5 million, that it required the efforts of three hundred scholars over a period of twenty-seven years, working on the largest collection of citations ever assembled in any language—is all this a fraud, a hoax?

1) Analyze the second sentence:

Since the sentence is too long, the verb “*is*” is repeated and *all this* is used in summing up what has gone before.

The **claim** of the G & C. Merriam Company:

1. Preparation cost \$3.5 million
2. Three hundred scholars working over 27 years to complete it
3. The largest collection of citations in any language so far

**Para. 2** What underlies all this sound and fury? Is the claim of the G.R. C.

Merriam Company, probably the world's greatest dictionary maker, that the preparation of the work cost \$3.5 million, that it required the efforts of three hundred scholars over a period of twenty-seven years, working on the largest collection of citations ever assembled in any language—is all this a fraud, a hoax?

- 1) citations: quotations;
- 2) fraud: criminal deception; 欺诈
- 3) hoax: mischievous trick played on somebody for a joke. 欺骗; 愚弄

e.g. *To defraud the immigrants by selling them worthless land deeds.* 通过把毫无价值的地契卖给移民欺骗他们

**The second question:** Is all this a fraud, a hoax? (building a tension)

**\*\*\*Writing technique:** Raise a question and answer it  
(Easily and naturally draw attention from the reader)

# Sound and Fury

The writer is using a quotation from Shakespeare's  
*Macbeth*, Act V, Scene IV, L: 26-28

“..it (life) is a tale  
Told by an idiot, full of  
Sound and fury  
Signifying nothing.”

生活(人生)犹如痴人说梦，  
充满了喧嚣与骚动，  
却没有任何意义。

This monologue, to some extent, embodied the theme of  
the novel *Sound and Fury*, the great classic created by  
the American writer ---William Faulkner (1897—1962).

# Sound and Fury

- The “**Sound and Fury**” is a good example to illustrate Faulkner’s concern in creative writing. The novel is a complex account of the breakdown of the once distinguished and honored *Compson* family. Four sections are included in the novel largely reliant on *stream of consciousness*.
- 这段独白在某种意义上说体现了<<喧嚣与骚动>>的主题思想.小说主人公是南方没落贵族康普生一家.中心人物是康的女儿凯蒂.虽然作者没为她专门写一章,但她是一根线,将四大部分连成一体.作者打破传统小说着重刻画主人公的做法,从其他人物的眼光和他们的生活经历来展示凯蒂的浮沉和她在家族中的地位.它既是家族成员,又是家族破落的象征.

**Para 3. So monstrous a discrepancy in evaluation requires us to examine basic principles. Just what's a dictionary for? What does it propose to do? What does the common reader go to a dictionary for? What has the purchaser of a dictionary a right to expect for his money?**

1) The function of this paragraph: transitional paragraph.

*So monstrous discrepancy in evaluation* is a brief summary of the conflicts between the storm of abuse from the mass media and the big claim from the world's greatest dictionary maker.

Paraphrase: In evaluating this dictionary, two opposing views exist, and the **disagreement** is so **great** that it is necessary for us to examine basic principles for dictionary making so that we shall be able to see which side is right.



**Para 3. So monstrous a discrepancy in evaluation requires us to examine basic principles. Just what's a dictionary for? What does it propose to do? What does the common reader go to a dictionary for? What has the purchaser of a dictionary a right to expect for his money?**

**discrepancy: n.**

divergence or disagreement, as between facts or claims; difference.

矛盾，不相符不符合或不一致，如在事实和宣称之间；差异

e.g. There was a discrepancy in the two reports of the accident.

在该事件的两个报告中有不一致之处。

**discrepancy between A and B**

e.g. There were many discrepancies between the two versions of the affair. 这件事的两种说法有很大出入.

**Para 3. So monstrous a discrepancy in evaluation requires us to examine basic principles. Just what's a dictionary for? What does it propose to do? What does the common reader go to a dictionary for? What has the purchaser of a dictionary a right to expect for his money?**

*...requires us to examine basic principles* tells the readers what the following part of the text is about.

- 2) Again, by asking a series of questions here, the author intends to catch the readers' attention and evoke their thinking.

**But What's a Dictionary for?**

**A Close Study of Paragraph 4-6**

**Part II.** (Para 4-17): Two inserted statements with emphasis on the new science.

- Para 4-5: two inserted statements;

Para 4:

1. Before we look at basic principles, it is necessary to interpose two brief statements. The first of these is that a dictionary is concerned with words.
- 1) The topic sentence: tells what the following part is about.
- 2) **interpose**: to introduce or interject (a comment, for example) during discourse or a conversation. 插话,在交谈或谈话中添入或插入
  - The reporter interposed a few questions into the minister's speech.部长讲话时记者插进了几个问题。

2. Some dictionaries give various kinds of other useful information. Some have tables of weights and measures on the flyleaves . Some list historical events and some, home remedies . And there's nothing wrong with their so doing.

1) What do dictionaries do?

2) flyleaves: a blank or specially printed leaf at the beginning or end of a book.

扉页:书的开头或末尾的空白处或特别印制的一页纸

3) **home remedies**: medicines for common dispositions such as colds, headache, fever, indigestion, etc. They are called home remedies because most families keep these medicines at home.  
家用医方

3. And there's nothing wrong with their so doing. But the great increase in our vocabulary in the past three decades compels all dictionaries to make more efficient use of their space. And if something must be eliminated , it is sensible to throw out these extraneous things and stick to words.

- 1) What has happened in the past three decades? --the great increase in our vocabulary.
- 2) What do dictionaries need to do? --They are compelled to make more efficient use of their space.

**compel:** make sb. do sth. by or as if by force

*e.g. There is no possible method of compelling a child to feel sympathy or affection.*

*But nobody emerged, and he was compelled to carry the bag himself.*

3. And there's nothing wrong with their so doing. But the great increase in our vocabulary in the past three decades compels all dictionaries to make more efficient use of their space. And if something must be eliminated, it is sensible to throw out these extraneous things and stick to words.

3) How to make efficient use of the space? –If something must be eliminated, it is sensible to throw out these **extraneous** things and stick to words.

**extraneous:** not essential, irrelevant

e.g.

-- In our essay writing, we need to eliminate those extraneous words or sentences.

--Please eliminate those extraneous remarks in your report.

## Para 5. The second statement

1. **Topic sentence:** The second brief statement is that there has been even more progress in the making of dictionaries in the past thirty years than there has been in the making of automobiles. analogy

--followed by an example to illustrate:



2. The difference, for example, between the much-touted Second International (1934) and the much-clouted Third International (1961) is not like the difference between yearly models but like the difference between the horse and buggy and the automobile.
- 1) **much- touted**: much- praised; **much -clouted**: much – attacked
  - 2) **buggy**: a light carriage pulled by one horse (the period before motor vehicles came into use.)
  - 3) **Paraphrase**: The difference between the Second and Third International is not **superficial** (like the difference between the yearly models of the same car) but **substantial** (like the difference between two entirely different means of transportation).

4) between the much-touted Second International (1934) and the much-clouted Third International (1961): **assonance and antithesis**

Assonance takes place when two or more words, close to one another repeat the same vowel sound, but start with different consonant sounds. 腹韵

e.g. “I must confess that in my quest I felt depressed and restless.”

Assonance is primarily used in poetry, in order to add rhythm and music, by adding an internal rhyme.

Para 5. The second statement

3. Between the appearance of these two editions a whole new science related to the making of dictionaries, the science of descriptive linguistics, has come into being.

1) The topic sentence of this paragraph says that ‘**There has been even more progress in the making of dictionaries.**’. This sentence is an explanation of the topic sentence, telling the readers why there has been such great progress—the science of descriptive linguistics.

2) Pay attention to the coherent development of the text. The latter part of the sentence ‘*the science of descriptive linguistics, has come into being*’ works as a transitional sentence, which introduces the following paragraph.

## Descriptive linguistics(描述性语言学) / Prescriptive linguistics (规定语言学)

In the study of language, description or descriptive linguistics is the work of **objectively analyzing and describing how language is actually used** (or how it was used in the past) by a group of people in a speech community. ---regularity

Prescription seeks to define standard language forms and give advice on effective language use. --rule

**Para. 6** Leonard Bloomfield and his masterpiece *Language* (1933)

1. Modern linguistics gets its charter from Leonard Bloomfield's *Language* (1933).

\* Indicating his contribution to modern linguistics

1) **charter**: originally, it means a written or printed statement of specified rights to a person or corporation from a ruler or government. 宪章、特许

Here it is used figuratively implying that Bloomfield is regarded as their authority.

**Para. 6 Leonard Bloomfield and his masterpiece *Language* (1933)**

2. Bloomfield, for thirteen years professor of Germanic philology at the University of Chicago and for nine years professor of linguistics at Yale, was one of those inseminating scholars who can't be relegated to any department and don't dream of accepting established categories and procedures just because they're established.

1) time-honored profession:

\* **professor of Germanic philology:**

Germanic philology – 日耳曼语 (philology = linguistics)

Germanic philology = German language

**Germanic:** a principal branch of the Indo-European family of languages, subdivided into North Germanic (Norwegian, Icelandic, Swedish, Danish, etc.), West Germanic (German, Dutch, Modern English, etc. ), East Germanic (the extinct Gothic)

\* **inseminating scholars who can't be relegated to any department:**

scholars who implant new ideas in the minds of people and who can't be classified as a scholar of just one particular field of knowledge (implying that he was an all-round scholar)

**-relegate:** to assign to a class, sphere, realm, etc.; classify as belonging to...

*e.g. The book can be relegated to philosophy.*

**-department:** a field of knowledge

2) **academic character: don't dream of accepting established**

**categories and procedures:** never think of accepting established concepts and ways of doing things just because they are already established.

**- dream:** to imagine, think, or suppose possible

**-categories:** various basic concepts into which all knowledge can be classified.

**Para. 6** Leonard Bloomfield and his masterpiece *Language* (1933)

3. He was as much an anthropologist as a linguist, and his concepts of language were shaped not by Strunk's *Elements of Style* but by his knowledge of Cree Indian dialects.

1) He was an anthropologist as well as a linguist.

\* Being special for his being both a linguist and an anthropologist

2) Strunk's *Elements of Style*: *stereotyped book knowledge*

Cree Indian dialects – 克里印第安人方言 (languages spoken by Cree Indians living both in Canada and America)

**Paraphrase:** His ideas of language were not based on stereotyped book knowledge but on personal observation of existing language including Cree Indian dialects.



These great books have recorded both the changes in **English language** and the changes in the **minds** who speak / study English.

# The Elements of Style

"Buy it, study it, enjoy it. It's as timeless as a book can be in our age of volubility."

— *The New York Times*

THE ORIGINAL EDITION

William Strunk, Jr.

COYOTE CANYON PRESS  
LANGUAGE SERIES


# Language

*'Much of the book can certainly be read with pleasure and profit. . . . Dialect Geography gives an astonishing idea of the infinite variety of human speech, even within comparatively restricted areas. Most palatable of all are Chapters 24, Semantic Change, and 25, Cultural Borrowing, in which we get right away from the mechanics of language and can follow the play of the human mind. . . . A work of amazing erudition, by a writer who seems equally at home in primitive Chinese, pre-Irish, Samoan, Sumerian and Tagalog. It will be regarded as an indispensable aid to all students of comparative philology.'*

NEW STATESMAN

Leonard  
Bloomfield

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## Webster's Third New International Dictionary

UNABRIDGED

Merriam-Webster's  
great unabridged dictionary  
of the English language

Merriam-Webster Inc., a/ ENCYCLOPEDIA BRITANNICA Company

**But What's a Dictionary for?**

**A Close Study of Paragraph 7-14**

## Para 7-11: New science: descriptive linguistics

1. All languages are systems of human conventions, not systems of natural laws. The first and essential step in the study of any language is observing and setting down precisely what happens when native speakers speak it.

**convention:** a **customary** practice, rule, method...

**natural laws:** a body of law or a specific principle held to be derived from nature – *truth, tested by scientific experiments, fixed*

## **Para 7-11: New science: descriptive linguistics**

1. All languages are systems of human conventions, not systems of natural laws. The first and essential step in the study of any language is observing and setting down precisely what happens when native speakers speak it.

**Paraphrase:** All languages have rules, rules about how to form words and how to pronounce them, how to put words in their places next to one another, and how words and especially combinations of them are related to the meanings that the speakers wish to communicate. These rules, however, are different from natural laws. They are determined by usages and practices of the people who use the given language.

## Para 7-11: New science: descriptive linguistics

2. Each language is unique in its pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary. It cannot be described in terms of logic or of some theoretical, ideal language. It cannot be described in terms of any other language, or even in terms of its own past.

**Paraphrase:** One can't use the principles of logical reasoning or the rules and principles of a theoretical, ideal language to describe a living language. Since each language has its own peculiar and unique rules, and since the rules of a particular language keep changing with the passage of time, we can't use their rules and principles in the past to describe any particular language that is in use today.

3. All languages are dynamic rather than static, and hence a 'rule' in any language can only be a statement of contemporary practice. Change is constant and normal.

**Paraphrase:** All languages (living languages) are in a metabolic (新陈代谢的) process of constant change. Nothing (including pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar) remains the same.

4. 'Correctness' can rest only upon usage, for the simple reason that there is nothing else for it to rest on. And all usage is relative.

**Correctness can only be based on usage.**

**usage: how sth. is used 用法, 惯用法**

5. From these propositions it follows that a dictionary is good only insofar as it is a **comprehensive** and **accurate** description of **current** usage. And to be comprehensive it must include some indication of social and regional associations.

- 1) proposition: statements, assertions,
- 2) Insofar as (U.S.)= in so far as, to the extent that...
- 3) What are the principles of a good dictionary? --  
**comprehensive, accurate, current.**
- 4) What are the principles based on? –**The new science of Descriptive Linguistics.**
- 5) What does the writer further explain here? –**comprehensive:**  
some indication of social and regional associations:  
*something that points out social and regional connections, for example, using such usage labels as slang, vulgar, dialect, etc.*

## **Para 13-17 : Why are new dictionaries needed?**

**Para 13-14 : A need for new dictionaries: Changing English and mass education + democracy = utilitarian and informal**

- English** changed by
- 1) Cultural and technological changes
  - 2) Two world Wars
  - 3) Changes in transportation and communication
  - 4) Unprecedented movement of population
  - 5) Mass education
  - 6) Growth of democracy

Examples: housewife --- **homemaker**

chairman --- **chairperson**

be fat --- **be huge**

old people --- **senior people**

blacks --- **Afro-Americans**



### Para 13:

1. New dictionaries are needed because English changed more in the past two generations than at any other time in its history.

1) **generations**: the average period (about 30 years) between the birth of one generation and that of the next.

2. It has had to adapt to **extraordinary** cultural and technological changes, two world wars, **unparalleled** changes in transportation and communication, and **unprecedented** movements of population.

1) **adapt to**: to adjust to new or changed circumstances, *not to be confused with adopt or adept*.

2) **unparalleled**: having no equal or match, unique in kind or quality  
e.g. an unparalleled victory  
rains of unparalleled intensity

3) **unprecedented**: never having happened before  
e.g. Some economists showed their anxiety on unprecedented level of unemployment. 一些经济学家对失业率达到前所未有的程度表示忧虑。

### Para 14:

1. More subtly, but pervasively, it has changed under the influence of mass education and the growth of democracy.

1) **subtly**: in a way that is difficult to be detected

e.g. His whole attitude had undergone a subtle change.

a subtle difference

Teachers will exert a subtle influence on students.

2) **pervasively**: spreading through every part

e.g. TV is the most powerful and pervasive of the media.

A sense of social change is pervasive in her novels.

3) What is the function of this sentence? –topic sentence

## Para 14:

2. As written English is used by increasing millions and for more reasons than ever before, the language has become more utilitarian and more informal.
  - 1) **utilitarian**: characterized by usefulness rather than by beauty, truth, goodness.

e.g. The buildings were utilitarian rather than decorative. 这些建筑是实用性的，而不是装饰性的。

He is very down to earth and is a real utilitarian. 他那个人很现实，是个十足的功利主义者。
  - 2) This sentence is an explanation of the first sentence. That is, one of the changes of English is that it has become more utilitarian and more informal.

### Para 14:

3. Every publication in America today includes pages that would appear, to the purist of forty years ago, unbuttoned gibberish.

1) This sentence is a further explanation of the previous sentence, that is the language has become more utilitarian and informal.

2) **purist**: a person who insists on precise usage or on application of formal, often pedantic rules, as in language.

2) **unbuttoned gibberish**: uncontrolled or free // rapid and incoherent talk, unintelligible nonsense

4) **Paraphrase**: In every publication in America today, there are pages that would be considered by those who insist on formal, precise, pedantic (学究式的) usage of language to be uncontrolled, incoherent and unintelligible nonsense.

#### **Para 14:**

4. Not that they are; they simply show that you can't hold the language of one generation up as a model for the next.

- 1) **Not that they are:** They are not pages of unbuttoned gibberish.
- 2) **you can't put forward the language of one generation as an example for the next generation to follow.** We cannot use the language of forty years ago as an example for current generation to follow.

**But What's a Dictionary for?**

**A Close Study of Paragraph 15-17**

删除好友：

*New Oxford American Dictionary: unfriend: remove someone from a list of friends, or contacts on a social networking site.*

拉黑：

block sb. I had no choice but to block her.

取关：

unfollow

点赞

hit the like button

**Para. 15** Supporting examples of the language change between *the Second New International* and *the Third New International*

... they simply show that you can't hold the language of one generation up as a model for the next.

1. It's not that you **mustn't**. You **can't**.

1) 'mustn't' and 'can't', which is stronger in tone?

2) What is the function of the use of ellipsis?

2. For example, in the issue... in this sense, at all.

**Life:** Over forty words, constructions, and meanings from the Third International but not in the second.

**New York Times:** Used one hundred and fifty-three separate words, phrases, and constructions listed in the Third International and nineteen others condemned in the Second International

**The Washington Post:** “don't throw it away”, “hang on to it”





3. The issue of the New York Times which hailed the Second International as the authority to which it would adhere and the Third International as a scandal and a betrayal which it would reject used one hundred and fifty-three separate words, phrases, and constructions which are listed in the Third International but not in the Second and nineteen others which are condemned in the Second.

1) Analyze the sentence structure.

2) hail: praise

e.g. The people lined the streets to hail the returning heroes. 人们夹道而立,为凯旋的英雄们喝彩。

3) adhere to: follow strictly

e.g. We must adhere to those fundamental principles.

## Zeugma (轭式修饰法)

Definition: the use of a word to modify or govern two or more words usu. in such a manner that it applies to each in different sense or makes sense with only one.把适用于某一事物的词语顺势用到另外一事物上的方法。在同一个句子里一个词可以修饰或者控制两个或更多的词。

- *He lost his coat and his temper.* (他丢了上衣, 发了脾气。)
- *She opened the door and her heart to the homeless boy.*
- *As I left home after breakfast, I shivered inwardly as well as outwardly.*

2) The *Washington Post*, in an editorial captioned "Keep Your Old Webster's, " says, in the first sentence, "don't throw it away," and in the second, "hang on to it." But the old Webster's labels don't "colloquial" and doesn't include "hang on to," in this sense, at all.

- *Washington Post*: American daily newspaper, more critical than *New York Times*.
- **editorial**: an article giving opinions or perspectives
- columnist
- **captioned**: entitled, with the heading of...
- e.g. Have you read the essay captioned 'The Youth'?
- **hang on to**: retain, not sell or give to others

## Metonymy 借代, 借喻

**Definition:** Metonymy is a figure of speech in which the name of one thing is used to stand for another. This substituted name may be an attribute of that other thing or be closely associated with it.

e.g. (1)The Washington Post, in an editorial captioned “Keep Your *Old Webster’s* ”.(Para.11)

(2) in short, ...written in the language that *the 3rd International* describes...(para12)

## A. *Names of persons* 用人名指代某些概念

1. *John Bull*: England, or the English people
2. *Uncle Sam*: The United States of America
3. *Ivan*: the Russian people

## B. *Animals* 用动物替代某些概念

1. British *Lion*: England or the English government
2. the *bear*: The former Soviet union or the Soviet government

## C. *Parts of the body*

1. Her *heart* ruled her *head* (heart: feelings or emotions; head: wisdom, intelligence, reason)
2. Use your *brains*.

**Synecdoche** The head of the department: the manager of the department.

## D. Objects for *Professions* (具体事务代替职业)

- |                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| 1. <i>the bar</i> :   | the legal profession;                     |
| 2. <i>the bench</i> : | position (office) of judge or magistrate; |
| 3. <i>the veil</i> :  | vocation of a nun;                        |
| 4. <i>the press</i> : | newspapers; newspaper reporters;          |

1. He has been called to *the bar*.

2. He has been appointed to *the bench*.

3. She took *the veil* at 20.

4. He's meeting *the press* this morning. What has *the press* to say to this?

## ***E. Locations of government, of business or industrial enterprises*** **地点代替某种概念**

1. *Downing Street*: the British government or cabinet
2. The White House: the President or Executive branch of the U.S. government
3. *Capitol Hill*: the Legislative branch of the U.S. government
4. *the Pentagon*: the U.S. military establishment
5. *Kremlin*: the government of the former Soviet Union
6. *Wall Street*: U.S. financial circles
8. *Madison Avenue*: American advertising industry
9. *Hollywood*: American film-making industry

**Para. 16** The main source of the changed language: the famous journals and newspapers in USA ( *Life*, *Washington Post*, *New York Times* )

1. In short, all of these publications are written in the language that the Third International describes, even the very editorials which scorn it.

**Question:** What is the function of this sentence? --A brief summary of the previous paragraph.

2. And this is no coincidence, because the Third International isn't setting up any new standards at all; it is simply describing what *Life*, *the Washington Post*, and *the New York Times* are doing. Much of the dictionary's material comes from these very publications, *the Times*, in particular, furnishing more of its illustrative quotations than any other newspaper.

1) What does 'this' refer to?

2) **coincidence:** an occurrence of events that happen at the same time by accident.

3) What is highlighted about the Times?

4) **furnish:** provide

e.g. The shop furnishes everything that is needed for camping. 这家商店供应各种野营用品。



**Para. 17** The dilemma faced by the big journals and newspapers ( to use the language used by the people today, not those of yesterday)

All the journals and periodicals and newspapers would have perished if their articles had been written in the American English of twenty-eight years ago.

### **Reasons:**

1. They couldn't discuss the things people today are interested in
2. The writing styles would be stiff and cumbrous (cumbersome)
3. The reading public and the stockholders of these major publications would be angry.



1. And the papers have no choice. No journal or periodical could sell a single issue today if it restricted itself to the American language of twenty-eight years ago.

- 1) journal: a periodical dedicated to a particular subject 专刊
- 2) periodical: a publication coming out at regular intervals, as weekly, monthly, quarterly, etc. 期刊

2. It couldn't discuss half the things we are interested in, and its style would seem stiff and cumbrous.

- 1) What is the connection between this sentence and the previous sentence?
- 2) **cumbrous**: cumbersome; burdensome; difficult to handle because of weight or bulk; **not elegant or graceful in expressions**. 累赘的, 笨拙的  
e.g. cumbrous in writing style.

This arrangement is cumbrous to manage. 如此安排繁琐得难以管理。

3. If the editorials were serious, the public -- and the stockholders -- have reason to be grateful that the writers on these publications are more literate than the editors. (editors / writers of columns)

- 1) If the editorials were serious: If the editorials were serious about their comments on the third international dictionary
- 2) literate: well-educated; showing extensive knowledge, learning or culture. 反义词: illiterate
- 3) It is a lucky thing that the writers on these publications are not as ignorant as the editors. If the editorials were serious, the editors would stick to the language described in a dictionary compiled in the 30s, and if they did so, their publications would be unreadable and nobody would subscribe to (订阅) them and as a result, they would cease to bring profits to their shareholders.
- 4) The **sarcastic** tone.

## Revision:

1. 赞美...为... / 高呼... 2. 遵从, 拥护; 3. 耻辱和背叛;
4. 摒弃; 5. 保留; 6. 绝不是巧合; 7. 订立新标准;
8. 提供例证; 9. 限制在。。。 10. (文风) 刻板、呆滞;
11. 比...有文化/ 有学识

His success is no coincidence. Instead, it is an outcome of years of hard work and perseverance.

I received a message from her to the effect that my photos had furnished them with illustrative examples.

I suggest you (should) not restrict your choices to colleges in north-east of China.

**But What's a Dictionary for?**

**A Close Study of Paragraph 18-21**

## Revision:

33. 令人误解的简化; misleading simplification 34. 坚持立场、观点; take an unyielding position 35. 打赌支持。。。的观点; wager in support of 36. 同样正确 with equal correctness

1. 无论做什么事情，他都能坚持自己的观点，这让我很欣赏。但我也建议他去多听听别人的意见，以便做出更合理的选择。
2. 如果有必要，我们可以去图书馆查阅一些权威文献。快速而有效地剔除那些无关资料是非常重要的。
3. 我敢打赌，我的想法一定是对的。我百分之百相信你会成功的。 I dare to wager in support of my conviction. I do not have the slightest doubt that you will succeed.

**Para. 18.** Readers turning to a dictionary for the truth (spelling, pronunciation, meaning, and proper use of words)

1. This paragraph begins with the two questions which have been raised in the previous paragraphs: What's a dictionary for and how, in 1962, can it best do what it ought to do?

**What's a dictionary for?** –Why do people need a dictionary? For what do people turn to a dictionary?

**How, in 1962, can it best do what it ought to do? –Descriptive linguistics:** language is dynamic; a rule in any language can only be a statement of contemporary practice; change is constant;

Language in 1962 is quite different from that of 30 years ago, when the second Webster dictionary was published.

**Para. 18. Readers turning to a dictionary for the truth (spelling, pronunciation, meaning, and proper use of words)**

2. The following part of the paragraph is an answer to the questions.

- The common reader turns to a dictionary for the truth (spelling, pronunciation, meaning, and proper use of words) .
- He wants to know what is current and respectable. **But** he wants --- and has a right to —the truth, the full truth.
- And the full truth about any language, and especially about American English today, is that there are **many areas** in which certainty is impossible and simplification is misleading.

**What is the function of the last sentence of this paragraph? ---**  
leads to the following paragraph

(spelling, pronunciation, meaning of words)



## **Para. 19. Point-by-point refutation: spelling**

1. “Even in so settled a matter as spelling, a dictionary cannot always be absolute.

1) What is the function of the first sentence of this paragraph? –topic sentence.

2) A dictionary cannot always be absolute ---There is no single certainty.

2. Some supporting examples are given.

BE

AE

1. theatre --- theater

2. plough --- plow

3. catalogue --- catalog

4. travelled---traveled

Scores of other variants: e.g. Favor" is the American variant of the British "favour".

## Para. 19. Point-by-point refutation: spelling

3. The reader may want a single certainty. He may have taken an unyielding position in an argument, he may have wagered in support of his conviction and may demand that the dictionary 'settle' the matter.

1) a single certainty: sth. definite with no alternatives

2) take an unyielding position: do not give in;

e.g He refused to back away from his position(an opinion or judgement on a matter). 他拒绝放弃自己的立场。

He stood **unyielding** and unafraid against the enemy. 他面对敌人，英勇无畏。

3) wager: bet

4) conviction: strong belief (*take an unyielding position*)

## Para. 19. Point-by-point refutation: spelling

4. But neither his vanity or his purse is any concern of the dictionary's; it must record the facts. full truth

1) A dictionary should record the fact without bothering whether it can satisfy the vanity of those who use a dictionary to prove their unyielding position in an argument or help those who bet some money in support of their conviction. It is none of the dictionary's business.

2) **purse:** (synecdoche) represents money

- **part for the whole:** All *hands* on deck.

- **the whole for the part:**

  - name of country for group of people of that country: *Australia beat Canada at cricket*

  - vehicle for engine, machine for mechanism of machine itself, etc. e.g. *The plane has flamed out!*

- **Name of material for the thing made** e.g. *She was dressed in silks and satins. (dresses made of silk and satin)*

**Para. 19. Point-by-point refutation: spelling**

- **The container for the thing contained or vice versa.** *E.g. The kettle is boiling. (kettle=the water in the kettle); Two beers, please. (beers=two glasses of beer)*
  - **The thing worn for the wearer.**  
e.g. *The playground roared like a rodeo(牛仔竞技比赛), ... Old boots, ragged stockings, torn trousers and skirts, went skating and skidding around. (old boots, ragged stockings, torn trousers and skirts=children dressed in such apparel*
5. And the fact here is that there are many words in our language which may be spelled, with **equal correctness**, in either of two ways.

**Certainty is impossible.**

**Para. 19. Point-by-point refutation: spelling**

5. And the fact here is that there are many words in our language which may be spelled, with **equal correctness**, **in either of two ways**.

**Certainty is impossible.**

**Para. 20. Point-by-point refutation: pronunciation**

1. So with pronunciation.

1) **What is the function of an elliptical sentence? –clear and concise**—A dictionary cannot always be absolute in the matter of pronunciation, either.

2. A supporting example for pronunciation  
economics / ECKuhnomiks/ /EEkuhnomiks

3. He turns to the dictionary to see which of the two pronunciations is ‘right’ and finds that they are both acceptable.

## **Para. 21. Point-by-point refutation: pronunciation**

1. The paragraph, again, begins with several questions.

Has he been betrayed? Has the dictionary abdicated its responsibility? Should it say that one must speak like the president of Harvard or like the president of Yale, like the thirty-first President of the United States or like the thirty-fourth?

- 1) **Has he been betrayed?** Has he been let down? Has the dictionary failed to meet his hopes?
- 2) **abdicated its responsibility:** given up or neglected its responsibility, failed to do its duty;

e.g. When King George abdicated, his brother succeeded him on the throne. 国王乔治退位时, 其弟继承王位。

## **Para. 21. Point-by-point refutation: pronunciation**

2. Surely it's none of its business to make a choice. **Not because** of the **distinction** of these particular speakers; lexicography, like God, is no respecter of persons. **But because** so wide-spread and conspicuous a use of two pronunciations among people of **elevation** shows that there are two pronunciations. Their speaking establishes the fact which the dictionary must record.

1) It's none of the dictionary's business to make a choice between the pronunciation of the president of Harvard University or that of Yale, or between the pronunciation of the 31<sup>st</sup> president of the United States or that of the 34<sup>th</sup> president.

2) 'Not because....': elliptical, with the main clause omitted. The missing part might be "it avoids making a choice...". This sentence, together with the next sentence constitutes a complete complex clause, that it avoids making a choice not because... but because ....



**Para. 21. Point-by-point refutation: pronunciation**

2) **distinction:** high social position; fame; eminence

3) **Lexicography, like God, is no respecter of persons:**

Lexicography is a science and its judgment, like the judgment of God, can't be swayed by anybody no matter what high social position he may occupy.

**Compare:** Lexicography, like God, **is no** respecter of persons.

Lexicography, like God, is not a respecter of persons.

4) **elevation:** a high place or position

5) **Paraphrase:** The dictionary avoids making a choice because the two pronunciations are used commonly among people with high social positions, which indicates that there are two pronunciations that the dictionary must record.

**But What's a Dictionary for?**

**A Close Study of Paragraph 22-24**

## Para. 22-30 Point-by-point refutation: meaning of words

### Revision:

In the previous part of the text, the writer has asked the question of what's a dictionary for. The common reader turns to a dictionary for information about the spelling, pronunciation, meaning and proper use of words. In Para 19-Para 21, the writer has argued that a dictionary must record the variants in spelling and different pronunciations as they are used conspicuously and widely among people of elevation.

Para 22: The **average purchaser** of a dictionary uses it most often, probably, to find out **what a word 'means'**.

**As a reader**, he wants to know what an author intended to convey.

**As a speaker or writer**, he wants to know what a word will convey to his auditors.

And this, too, is **complex, subtle, and forever changing**. (Here, 'this' refers to the meaning of the word)

--*subtle: difficult to detect or grasp by the mind or analyze*

## Para. 23. An illustration by an editorial in the Washington Post

1. The first sentence of the paragraph is the topic sentence : An illustration is furnished by an editorial in the Washington Post.

**furnish:** provide

e.g. The shop furnishes everything that is needed for camping.

2. After a ringing appeal to those who ‘love truth and accuracy’ and the usual bombinations about ‘abdication of authority’ and ‘barbarism’, the editorial charges the Third International with ‘pretentious and obscure verbosity’ and specifically instances its definition of ‘so simple an object as a door. ’

1) **ringing:** thunderous ; appeal: earnest request

2) **bombination** means the unpleasant buzzing of flies.

It refers to some people’s complaint about “Webster’s Third” has given up its role as an authority on the use of words and therefore has degraded the English language.

3) **barbarism** means the use of words and expressions not standard in a language

## Para. 23. An illustration by an editorial in the Washington Post

2. After a ringing appeal to those who ‘love truth and accuracy’ and the usual bombinations about ‘abdication of authority’ and ‘barbarism’, the editorial charges the Third International with ‘pretentious and obscure verbosity’ and specifically instances its definition of ‘so simple an object as a door.’

4) **pretentious**: affectedly grand and superior;

**obscure**: not clear, confusing

**verbosity**: wordiness

5) **instances**: cites as an example

这篇社论先是向那些热爱真理和准确性的人们发出了大声的呼吁，并照例抱怨第三版词典放弃权威和用词不标准，接着便指责字典矫揉造作、晦涩难懂、繁冗累赘，特别引用门这么一个简单的物体所下的定义为例进行说明。

## **Revision:**

1. 放弃责任;
2. 使用广泛和显著;
3. 强烈呼吁; 大声呼吁;
4. 热爱真理和准确性;
5. 对...例行的抱怨;
6. 放弃权威;
7. 指控;
8. 矫揉造作、晦涩难懂、繁冗累赘;
9. 以...的定义为例
10. 地位高的人; people of this/ such elevation/distinction;

## Revision:

33. 令人误解的简化 34. 坚持立场、观点； 35. 打赌支持。。  
。的观点； 36. 同样正确

1. 无论做什么事情，他都能坚持自己的观点，这让我很欣赏。但我也建议他去多听听别人的意见，以便做出更合理的选择。
2. 如果有必要，我们可以去图书馆查阅一些权威文献。快速而有效地剔除那些无关资料是非常重要的。
3. 我敢打赌，我的想法一定是对的。我百分之百相信你会成功的。 I dare to wager in support of my conviction. I do not have the slightest doubt that you will succeed.

**But What's a Dictionary for?**

**A Close Study of Paragraph 25-29**



## Para. 25: one of lexicography's biggest booby traps: the obvious is easy to define

1. But if so, he has walked into one of lexicography's biggest booby traps: the belief that the obvious is easy to define.

But if he does so (*a door is so simple a thing that any damn fool knows that*), then he has fallen into one of the biggest traps in dictionary making, that is, believing that the obvious things are easy to define.

**booby:** an ignorant or foolish person

2. Whereas the opposite is true. Anyone can give a fair description of the strange, the new, or the unique.

But in contrast, the obvious things are difficult to define, as is illustrated by 'door'. For those strange, new or unique things, people can define them more easily.

## Para. 25: one of lexicography's biggest booby traps: the obvious is easy to define

3. It's the commonplace, the habitual, that challenges definition, for its very commonness compels us to define it in uncommon terms. Dr. Johnson was ridiculed on just this score when his dictionary appeared in 1755.

### 1) common / ordinary / commonplace

- \* happening often, and to many people and in many places
- \* not different or special

2) **habitual** 定语形容词, doing sth. from habit, and unable to stop doing it

3) **challenges the definition**: defies definition, offers great difficulties for definition

4) **ridicule**: laugh unkindly at, cause sb. to appear foolish

Why do you ridicule my proposal?

5) **on just this score**: for just this reason, on just this point

I am perfectly capable of looking after myself, so please don't worry about me on that score.

6) **Dr. Johnson**: Samuel Johnson (1709-1784), English lexicographer, writer and critic; known as *the* Dr. Johnson who, almost singlehandedly compiled the first influential dictionary in England in 1755.

**Para. 25: one of lexicography's biggest booby traps: the obvious is easy to define**

4. For two hundred years his definition of a network as ‘anything reticulated or decussated, at equal distances, with interstices between the intersections’ has been good for a laugh.

**reticulated:** divided into small squares or intersecting lines 成网状的

**decussated:** crossed or cut so as to form an X. It is not a commonly used word.交叉成X型

**interstice:** a small or narrow space between things or parts.空隙

**intersection:** the point of line where two lines or surfaces meet or cross 交集，交叉点

**good for a laugh:** sure to result in a laugh

两百年來，他給network 一詞下的定義“任何以同等距離呈網狀或交叉成X狀，並在交叉線之間留有空隙的物體”，一直是人們的笑料。

## **Para. 25: one of lexicography's biggest booby traps: the obvious is easy to define**

5. But in the merriment one thing is always overlooked: no one has yet come up with a better definition! Subsequent dictionaries defined it as a mesh and then defined a mesh as a network. That's simple, all right.

1) **In the merriment:** while laughing at the definition

2) **No one ... definition:** no one has yet proposed or produced a better definition.

3) **That's simple, all right.**

Paraphrase: That is certainly simple, but that leads us nowhere. 'all right' is added with **sarcasm**, it is frequently used in retorts(反驳, 反击).

## Para. 26:

1. Anyone who attempts sincerely to state what the door means in the United States of America today can't take refuge in a log cabin.

Anyone who attempts to define the word *door* can't go back to the age of log cabins. In those days when people lived in log cabins, the definition of the word 'door' could be very simple, but it is not so now.

**take refuge in:** resort to, trace back to 逃到...中；避难；求助；躲避

## Para. 26:

2. There has been an enormous proliferation of closing and demarking devices and structure in the past twenty years, and anyone who tries to thread his way through the many meanings now included under *door* may have to sacrifice brevity to accuracy and even have to employ words that a limited vocabulary may find obscure.

1) **proliferation**: multiplying rapidly, increasing rapidly;  
China advocates to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons. 中国主张防止核武器扩散。

1) **demark**: demarcate, delimit

2) **Anyone who tries to thread his way through many meanings now included under *door***: anyone who tries to sort out the many meanings now included under *door*

**thread one's way**: 穿过、绕行 (used figuratively) thread的基本意思是将一根线穿进针眼中,指在比较狭窄或拥挤的地方穿梭(如在人群中挤过去),即“穿线,穿过”,常与介词 into, on, through等连用。

## Para. 26:

2. There has been an enormous proliferation of closing and demarking devices and structure in the past twenty years, and anyone who tries to thread his way through the many meanings now included under *door* may have to sacrifice brevity to accuracy and even have to employ words that a limited vocabulary may find obscure.

4) **sacrifice brevity to accuracy**: sacrifice A to B: give up/ yield A in favor of B.

e.g. He has sacrificed himself to the nation's interest. 他为了国家的利益而牺牲了自己。

5) **even have to employ words that a limited vocabulary may find obscure**.

The writer here is satirizing the *Washington Post* who charged the third international dictionary with ‘pretentious and obscure verbosity’.

## Para. 27: enormous proliferation of closing and demarking devices

1. Is the entrance to a tent a door, for instance? And what of the thing that seals the exit of an air plane? Is this a door? Or what of those sheets and jets of air that are now being used, in place of old-fashioned oak and hinges, to screen entrances and exits? Are they doors? And what of that accordion-like things that set off various sections of many modern apartments? The fine print in the lease takes it for granted that they are doors and that spaces demarked by them are rooms -- and the rent is computed on the number of rooms.

- 1) **What of:** what about?
- 2) **jets of air:** air doors. A curtain of air blows across the threshold where a door usually is. It is used in combination with an air conditioner in hot climates to prevent hot air from coming in and cold air from going out.
- 3) **oak and hinges:** refers to 'door', *synecdoche*
- 4) **screen:** v. to shield, to protect
- 5) **lease:** contract by which a landlord gives a tenant the use of a room or rooms for a specified time and for fixed payment  
e.g. I have a lease on this house for three years.
- 6) **fine print:** in small letters/ characters
- 7) A series of questions to arouse the readers' thinking.



## **Para. 28: the definition of 'door' by the second international**

1. Was I gypped by the landlord when he called the folding contraption that shuts off my kitchen a door? I go to the Second International, which the editor of the Post urges me to use in preference to the Third International.

1) gyp: cheat

2) folding contraption: contraption: a device or control that is very useful for a particular job 新奇的、奇怪的装置。Here it refers to the 'accordion-like thing that can be folded back'.

3) shut off: close off, isolate, separate  
e.g. She was shut off from the friends.

4) in preference to: rather than  
I'd choose face-to-face teaching in preference to online teaching.

## **Para. 28: the definition of 'door' by the second international**

2. “The movable frame or barrier of boards, or other material, usually turning on hinges or pivots or sliding, by which an entranceway into a house or apartment is closed and opened; also, a similar part of a piece of furniture, as in a cabinet or book case.”

用木板或其它材料制成的可移动的框架结构或障碍物。通常绕着合页或轴转动，或者滑动，通过这种东西，一所房子或公寓的入口处得以关闭和打开；另外，也指一件家俱如衣柜或书柜等的与此相似的部分。

3. This is only forty-six words, but though it includes the cellar, it excludes the barn door and the accordion-like thing.

**Question:** According to the writer, what's wrong with the definition? Is it comprehensive?

## **Para. 29: going back to the Third International**

1. So I go on to the Third International. I see at once that the new definition is longer. But I'm looking for accuracy, and if I must sacrifice brevity to get it, then I must.

--sacrifice brevity to accuracy

2. And sure enough, in the definition which raised the Post's blood pressure, I find the words 'folding like an accordion.' The thing is a door, and my landlord is using the word in one of its currently accepted meanings.

1) raised the Post's blood pressure: which made the Post angry. Euphemism is used.

The Third International dictionary is not setting up any new standard at all. It is simply describing the language used by people and much of the dictionary's material comes from the publications which have attacked it.

### **Para. 23. Definition given by the 3<sup>rd</sup> International.**

2. Then follows a series of special meanings, each particularity defined and, where necessary, illustrated by a quotation.

- **Analyze the sentence structure.**

(The nominative absolute)

**particularity:** particular usage

e.g. He laid special stress on analyzing the particularity of the contradiction. 他重点分析了这一矛盾的特殊性。

## Para. 24.

Since aside from roaring and admonishing the "gentlemen from Springfield" that "accuracy and brevity are virtues," the Post's editorial fails to explain what is wrong with the definition. We can only infer from "so simple" a thing that the writer takes the plain, downright, man-in-the street attitude that a door is a door and any damn fool knows that.

1. aside from: apart from

2. **admonish**: reproach, warn 责备, 警告

e.g. He has admonished the assistant very sternly.

His wife has admonished him not to drive fast.

3. **Gentlemen from Springfield**: referring to the makers of Webster's Third New International Dictionary

4. **man-in-the-street attitude**: attitude held by the average, ordinary person.

5. Pay attention to the writer's tone—sarcastic; *Sarcasm is used.*

## *admonish /reprove/ rebuke/ reprimand /reproach*

These verbs refer to adverse criticism intended as a corrective or caution.

**admonish** implies the giving of advice or a warning so that a fault can be rectified (corrected) or a danger avoided:

- He admonished those frantic football fans to change their wicked ways.
- 他告诫那些疯狂的球迷们改变那种捣蛋的做法

**reprove** 责备 usually suggests gentle criticism and constructive intent:

- With a quick look, the teacher reproved the child for whispering in class.

- **rebuke** and **reprimand** both refer to sharp, often angry criticism; of the two “reprimand” more frequently implies formal or official criticism:
  - Some of the most heated criticism has come from the Justice Department, which rarely rebukes other agencies in public.
  - 许多最激烈的批评来自于平时很少公开谴责其他部门的司法部。
  - The committee at [the university] asked its president to reprimand a scientist who tested gene-altered bacteria on trees. (New York Times).
  - “校委会 要求校长申斥在树上做细胞基因变化试验的科学家”（纽约时代杂志）。

- **Reproach** usually refers to regretful or unhappy criticism arising from a sense of disappointment:
  - Even if I had done wrong you should not have reproached me in public---People wash their dirty linen (亚麻布)at home. (Napoleon Bonaparte).  
即使是我做错了事，你也不应该当众指责我-家丑不能外扬”（拿破仑·波拿巴）



**But What's a Dictionary for?**

**A Close Study of Paragraph 30-31**

### **Para. 30 Pardonable “mistakes” in making an English dictionary**

1. The new dictionary may have many faults. Nothing that tries to meet an ever-changing situation over a terrain as vast as contemporary English can hope to be free of them. And much in it is open to honest , and informed disagreement.

- 1) **terrain**: a geographic term, meaning a ground or a tract of ground with regard to its natural features. **Here it means a field, an area.** 任何一部字典想要适应当代英语这样一个广阔领域里的日益变化着的情况就不可能没有缺点。
- 2) **open**: free to be argued or contested;  
e.g. Our plan is tentative. It is open to suggestions and criticism.  
**honest**: not slanderous (诽谤的)  
**informed**: not biased, or ignorant
- 3) **Paraphrase**: It is unavoidable that there may exist some faults in a dictionary, as it tries to meet the constant changes in contemporary English, which is so vast an area. Honest and educated people may have sufficient reasons to disagree with much of it.     inevitable

2. There can be linguistic objection to the eradication of proper names. The removal of guides to pronunciation from the root of every page **may not have** been worth the valuable space it saved. The new method of defining words of many meanings has disadvantages **as well as** advantages. And of the half million or more definitions, hundreds, **possibly** thousands, **may seem** inadequate or imprecise. To some (of whom I am one) the omission of the label 'colloquial' **will seem** meritorious; to others it will **seem** a loss.

1) **eradicate**: to pull up by the roots; destroy or put an end to;

e.g. eradicate disease / smallpox

Police work diligently to eradicate crime.

2) Though the removal of guides to pronunciation saved valuable space, the inconvenience caused by it seems not worth the space saved (implying the guides to pronunciation should not have been removed).

3) **meritorious**: deserving of honor, esteem, praise merit: the quality of deserving praise, reward, etc. personal worth.

e.g. "a lifetime of meritorious service"

"meritorious conduct"

### **Para. 31 A reason to have a new English dictionary**

But one thing is certain: anyone who solemnly announces in the year 1962 that he will be guided in matter of English usage by a dictionary published in 1934 is talking ignorant and pretentious nonsense.

- The English dictionary of 1934 couldn't help the people of 1962 to talk properly.
- **talking ignorant and pretentious nonsense:** as if talking about something very important but in reality saying something ignorant and foolish.

*Transferred epithet is used.*