

THE RAVINGS OF A MAD MAN

by

Sam Aurelius Milam III
% 4984 Peach Mountain Drive
Gainesville, Georgia 30507

This essay was first completed on Tuesday, March 28, 1989 and was most recently revised on Saturday, March 17, 2012.

This document is approximately 10,325 words long.

| |
|--|
| <p>This essay is dedicated to me, without whose help its writing would not have been possible.</p> |
|--|

Other essays in this collection are available on [Pharos](#).

This essay is LiteraShare.

That means that it isn't for sale and that it isn't protected by a formal establishment copyright. As the author, I ask you to extend to me the courtesy that is customarily due. If you copy the essay, then copy all of it including my name and address as shown on each page, and this LiteraShare Statement. I invite you to provide such copies for other readers. If you quote from the essay, then do so accurately and give me credit. If you care to make a voluntary contribution to me, then I prefer cash. For checks, money orders, or PayPal payments, please inquire.

caveat lector

This page was intentionally left blank.

Mommy! Mommy! Can we go down the escalator?

We have a very strange language. *Giving* and *putting* are not necessarily synonyms and *in* and *out* are clearly opposites. How, then, can *giving in* and *putting out* mean the same thing? This is tricky. The modifier *quite* normally amplifies the meaning of any word that it modifies. *Quite big* is bigger than *big*. Why, then, is *a bit* small when *quite a bit* is large? The singular word *woman* undergoes a change of spelling in the second syllable only and a change of pronunciation in the first syllable only to become plural. And speaking of pronunciation, pronounce this: Wed-nes-day. How do you explain the pronunciation *Wensday*? While eating toast some time ago, I read on the label that the bread was “100% stone ground”. To the farmer who grew the wheat, that phrase might indicate poor farm land.

Guidance through the morass of language, if it’s sought at all, is usually sought in dictionaries. However, dictionaries might not be as helpful as they seem.

I meant to coin a phrase
But I couldn’t get the drift.
My mind was out of phase
I just didn’t have the gift.

Language can be dangerous terrain for the unwary and sources of guidance can be tricky. An attempt, for example, to discover from a dictionary the meaning of the little verse just above might lead one to suspect that I had been unable to obtain a mass of wind-blown snow (*I couldn’t get the drift*) that I had received as an endowment (*I just didn’t have the gift*). In fact, I was trying to say only that I couldn’t think of anything to say.

Spoken language, the last unlicensed possession of the people, has long been forced into dictionaries¹ and the makers of dictionaries readily acknowledge their sources.

.... As in all Merriam-Webster[®] dictionaries, the information given is based on the unparalleled collection of citations maintained in the offices of this company. These citations show words used in a wide range of printed sources, and the collection is constantly augmented through the efforts of the editorial staff. Thus, the user of the dictionary may be confident that entries in the Collegiate are based on current as well as older material....

—*Webster’s Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*, preface, page 6, 1987

Thus, the makers of dictionaries review, for the meanings of words, the current **written** uses of words. That reveals two important facts about dictionaries. First, they don’t define the meanings of words. The meanings of words are defined by custom and usage, that is, by the people. Second, the makers of dictionaries are looking at the written version of the language and not necessarily at the spoken version. It’s important to remember that, especially when somebody waves a dictionary under your nose and tries to insist that a word means a certain thing. For example, go look up *muff* in a dictionary.

1 *Funk & Wagnalls Standard Reference Encyclopedia*, Article *Dictionary*. See the References section for complete references.

THE RAVINGS OF A MAD MAN

You're back. Was one of the meanings (roughly) "the external portion of the human female genitalia"? Probably not. I presently own at least 13 dictionaries with publication dates ranging from 1889 to 1992. None of them contains that meaning of the word. On March 15, 1982, I wrote a letter to Merriam-Webster notifying them of the deficiency in their dictionary. I didn't receive a reply. On May 4, 1983, I again brought the matter to their attention in a letter to Henry Bosley Woolf, noted as the Editor-in-Chief in my copy of *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary* (1973). I received the following response from Stephen J. Perrault, dated May 27, 1983.²

Your letter addressed to the now-retired Dr. Woolf has come to me, and I'm happy to reply.

Our decision as to whether or not a particular word or sense of a word deserves entry in the dictionary depends primarily upon our observation of the frequency and geographical extent of its use. What we require is a substantial body of printed evidence showing the word used by various people in various contexts. We don't have enough such evidence yet to justify entering the sense of muff that you've noted, but your expectation of finding it has been duly recorded and the matter will, of course, be reconsidered in the future.

Thank you for writing.

Muff, in the sense presently under discussion, has to my personal knowledge been printed at least once in the letters to the editor section of *Playboy Magazine*. Regrettably, I no longer have that issue nor do I remember its date. *Muff* has been used in the sense that I have in mind since at least the 1960's. For several years, I displayed on the rear of my truck the message "I'd rather be muff diving". So far as I know, it was never misunderstood. The chortling and pointing that I surreptitiously observed in my rear view mirror indicated quite the contrary. It wasn't until December 16, 1988, that I finally found a dictionary³ that contains that particular meaning of *muff*. It's important that a word can have generally accepted meanings that are not documented. If it's true of *muff*, then it might be true of other words.

Furthermore, there are statements in the English language that cannot be expressed in writing. I'd show you an example but, of course, that's impossible. However, I'll allude to one. In the English language, there are three particular words that are pronounced the same. They are *to*, *too*, and *two*. You may say orally⁴ the sentence, "There are three (___'s) in the English language" but, as you can see, it's impossible to write it. No matter which of them you put in the blank, the other two are missing and, in any case, there aren't three *two's* in the language, or three *too's* in the language, but only three (___'s). You get the idea. The example proves that **some things cannot be expressed in writing**.

2 See the Appendix.

3 It was *The Random House Dictionary of the English Language*, 1987. The definition was "**muff** ... 5. *slang (vulgar)*. a woman's pubic area." I looked at it in a book store. I didn't buy it so I can't provide a complete definition or even prove the quoted portion in this footnote.

4 The only distinction between oral and written contracts is in their mode of proof. And it is inaccurate to distinguish *verbal* from *written*; for contracts are equally *verbal* whether the words are *written* or spoken, - the meaning of verbal being - *expressed in words*.

—*Bouvier's Law Dictionary*, 1889, article *Contract*

I had occasion, some time ago, to look up the meaning of *fascism* in one of my old dictionaries. Here's the definition.

fascism 1. Fascism. 2. any system of government in which property is privately owned, but all industry and business is regulated by a strong national government.

—*Thorndike Century Senior Dictionary*, 1941

How about that? In 1941, that's what *fascism* meant. That's the very year that the U.S.A. entered a war to fight that very sort of thing. Had the country lost the war, then the people would probably have continued the struggle in other ways. I challenge you to find anywhere in America today any (legal) privately owned business or industry that **isn't** regulated by strong central government. Having won the war, the people gave up the struggle and lost the peace.

The only sense in which a dictionary may be considered to be authoritative is as it documents the meanings intended by custom and usage in the written version of the language at some time in the past. A dictionary can tell us some of the ways in which people were using a word at a time contemporary with the publication of the dictionary. A new dictionary might tell us some of the ways in which people are presently using a word. However, a dictionary cannot define a word. It can only attempt to document its meaning at the time of publication. Now, if you'll go look up *fascism* in a modern dictionary or, better yet, read my article *War of Words*,⁵ then you'll get some more food for thought.

Let's take a break.

Once upon a time, long, long ago, there was a village. With the passage of time, the good people of the village, wainwrights, wheelwrights, and shipwrights all, came to celebrate their trades in a rite, which they called the Wright Rite. They were a reverent folk and celebrated the Wright Rite nightly.

Eventually, there came to be a difference of opinion concerning the proper location for the celebration of the Wright Rite. Some thought that it could be celebrated most piously upon a bluff at the left of the village. Others favored the stream that flowed past the right of the village. So, it came to pass that two Wright Rites were celebrated, the Left Wright Rite and the Right Wright Rite.

Those who had chosen the Left Wright Rite were among the more conservative faction of the village and they were content to celebrate the Left Wright Rite without further change. However, those of the Right Wright Rite were less settled and soon there was another disagreement concerning a minor detail of the celebration. A large faction decided that the way in which the Right Wright Rite was being performed was wrong and determined to correct the deficiency. Thereafter, the Right Wright Rite was celebrated in two different ways. The dissident faction exalted their corrected Right Wright Rite by calling it the Right Right Wright Rite and branded the original method of celebration as the Wrong Right Wright Rite. In defiance, the practitioners of the original Right Wright Rite accepted the label and continued to refer to the original Right Wright Rite as the Wrong Right Wright Rite, claiming that to call a tail a leg doesn't make it one.

With the passage of years, everyone mellowed a little and eventually there came to be a doctrine that everyone had a right to choose any Wright Rite and celebrate it according to his own wishes. Thus, those who celebrated the Left Wright Rite were exercising their Left Wright Rite Right. Those who celebrated the Wrong Right Wright Rite were exercising their Wrong Right Wright Rite Right. And those

5 It was printed on page 2 of the December 1994 issue of the *Frontiersman*.

THE RAVINGS OF A MAD MAN

who celebrated the Right Right Wright Rite were exercising their Right Right Wright Rite Right.

Eventually, the village became a victim of progress, was converted into a right-of-way, and became a freeway. Since nothing right is free, all that's left is a hysterical marker labeled Right Right Wright Rite Right Site. I visited there recently and was bitten by a local dog. I call it the Right Right Wright Rite Right Site Bite and I've sued the owner. The media immediately named the case the Right Right Wright Rite Right Site Bite Fight. The judge has issued a gag order but I do have the right to write. Maybe I'll call myself a Writewright and begin to write a Write Rite. Right?

Like the three (___'s), the words right (write, right, right, rite, and wright) are homonyms. A homonym is "one of two or more words spelled and pronounced alike but different in meaning" if you use *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary* (1987) or "a word having the same sound as another, but a different meaning" if you use *The American Dictionary of the English Language* (1899). So, homonyms might or might not be spelled alike, depending. Thus, *man* (a human being: mankind) and *man* (a grown-up male) are not the same word. They're homonyms. They're different words that just happen to be spelled and pronounced alike. The next time that a rabid, wild-eyed, arm-waving, foaming-at-the-mouth feminist objects to being called *man*, just walk away with a smirk on your face.

The Half-Witted Half-Brother's Half-Hearted Half-Life

Suppose that you tried to explain radioactive decay to someone and discovered that he didn't understand differential equations. Before you could explain radioactive decay, you'd have to explain differential equations. What if you tried to do that and discovered that he didn't understand algebra? Then suppose that you couldn't explain algebra because he didn't know how to do arithmetic. Suppose that you tried to teach him arithmetic and discovered that he couldn't count. Suppose that on top of all of that, he'd already been taught that there's no difference between neutrons and sunshine and that anyone who says otherwise is a long-haired hippie commie biker Arab fag bigot freak weirdo who eats library paste for breakfast. You'd probably decide to give up. It would probably be a good idea. The guy doesn't need to know about radiation anyway.

Let's get back to words. I want to really emphasize the treachery that's perpetrated with language. Today, convalescence is the process of recovering health and gradually getting stronger. To whom, then, are we lying when we send them to a convalescent home? On a related subject, why do we call it health care when only sick people need it? Is it becoming clear that our language is wonderfully suited to misrepresentation and deceit? Just wait. It gets worse.

Here's a definition of *sylllogism*.

1: a deductive scheme of a formal argument consisting of a major and a minor premise and a conclusion (as in 'every virtue is laudable; kindness is a virtue; therefore kindness is laudable')

—*Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary, 1987*

If you accept the major premise (every virtue is laudable) and the minor premise (kindness is a virtue) then you don't have any choice but to accept the conclusion (therefore kindness is laudable). However, *sylllogism* has another meaning.

2: a subtle, specious, or crafty argument

—*Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary, 1987*

I can propose a premise that's inarguable.

Bread is better than nothing.

Who can doubt that a diet of bread is superior to an alternative of starvation?

I can propose another inarguable premise.

Nothing is better than heaven.

After all, we're talking about the ultimate reward. Yet, if you accept that bread is better than nothing and nothing is better than heaven then you cannot escape the conclusion that bread is better than heaven.

In the above syllogism, the change in the meaning of *nothing* from one premise to the next is obvious and the deceit is unsuccessful. However, the point is well made. Changes in meaning that occur over a longer period of time can be more difficult to

THE RAVINGS OF A MAD MAN

notice. They can also be of great importance. Remember *fascism*. Also, check this meaning of *citizen*.

citizen 1. person who by birth or by choice is a member of a state or nation....
—*Thorndike Century Senior Dictionary*, 1941

That meaning is innocuous. However, compare it to another meaning of *citizen*.

All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside....
—from *The Constitution for the United States of America*
Fourteenth Amendment, Section 1

In one definition, you're only a member of a state or nation. In the other, you're also subject to its jurisdiction.

jurisdiction 2. authority; power; control....
—*Thorndike Century Senior Dictionary*, 1941

To which definition do you consent when you answer “yes” to the citizenship question on a job application? Why isn't the meaning clearly specified when they “ask” you to answer the question? If you consent to the second definition, then what obligations are imposed by the voluntary acceptance of jurisdiction?

From its beginning, this nation has been made up of foreigners. Each group of imports has had to learn a strange new language which has gotten more strange as each group added its own peculiar twists. Along the way, meanings have often been changed and it isn't always obvious that it's happened.

Here's a nice piece of writing. Everybody knows what it means. We all learned it in school.

We hold these Truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights,⁶ that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness - That to secure these Rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just Powers from the Consent of the Governed, that whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these Ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it....
—from the *Declaration of Independence*

If you've been paying attention, then I'll bet that you noticed a trick word in that one. Right! Rights! Remember the Wright Rite? In the above statement, the four examples of alleged rights don't constitute a definition of rights. So, to what rights in general does the statement refer? I've checked lots of dictionaries and some encyclopedias. I've even talked to real people about it. I've learned that people don't know the meaning of the word. So, what's a right?

Since there wasn't a good definition available, I created one of my own. It's general and it's unambiguous. You might not like it but it's the best one available and I expect that you won't be able to think of a better one. To distinguish the kind of rights addressed by my definition from all of those other things that people call rights, I like

6 See my essay, *In Search of the Supreme Flaw of the Land: Unalienable Rights*.

to use the term “common rights”.⁷ Here’s the definition. A right (or a common right) is something that’s within your ability, for which you don’t need permission, and that will be generally or customarily approved or at least tolerated. If you have to ask someone first, or pay a fee, or get a license, or qualify in any way, then it isn’t a right. It’s a privilege.

A privilege is something that you can do when and as you’re permitted to do it. A privilege is what you get when a court “gives you the right” to do something. Rights, by their very nature, cannot be given. Only privileges can be given. Herein is the difference between a right and a privilege. If you can’t do it unless somebody says that you can, then it’s a privilege. If nobody has to say that you can do it, then it’s a right.

At this point, some idiot always says, “Wull, yeah, but ya don’t hafta ask ta kill somebody, and that ain’t a right!” I agree. That’s an ability. An ability is something that you can do without asking that might **not** be generally acknowledged as proper. Herein is the difference between a right and an ability. We have abilities simply because we’re able to do certain things. That doesn’t necessarily make them proper. Rights can originate only through a long period of custom and usage. Otherwise, ruthless individuals would have the right to do anything that was within their abilities.

So, what about all of those things about which people rant and rave? A woman’s “right” to Medicare payments for abortions, an employee’s “right” to a benefits program, a senior citizen’s “right” to social security payments, a handicapped person’s “right” to all of the best parking places? They’re not rights. They’re privileges. Nevertheless, they’re generally called rights.⁸ Clearly the words *right* (a thing that you can do without asking) and *right* (a thing that you cannot do unless you get permission) describe opposites. Since they describe opposites, they’re antonyms. Since they’re spelled the same, pronounced the same, but don’t mean the same thing, they’re also homonyms. That isn’t even the only example. It’s been recently fashionable to say, “That’s BADD!” when you particularly approve of something. I’m sure that you can think of other examples. If you send me other examples, then I’ll start a list.

I’m not aware of any previous formal discussion of this peculiar characteristic of our language. For now, I’ll assume that I’m the first one to have documented it. Therefore, by right of discovery, I’m establishing a new category of words in the English

7 See my article *Here I Go Again* on page 1 of the June 2004 issue of the *Frontiersman*.

8 My favorite example is the right to life. If a man loses his ability to live then, according to my definition, he doesn’t have a right to life any more. That’s why I commented earlier that you might not like my definition. However, it’s a valid belief. If a man loses his ability to live, then the only way that he can continue to live is if someone else keeps him alive, provides the means, pays the expenses. To define a right in that way converts one man’s right into another man’s burden. That’s an unacceptable way to define rights. If you define rights that way then, before long, you’ll have people being forced, against their wills, to pay for things that other people have declared to be rights. The most productive people in the country will then be the most abject slaves to the sickest, the laziest, or the most selfish people in the country, who will then be the most demanding masters. As my brother likes to say, “Do a slow 360 with your eyes open.” My definition would end most of the stupid nonsense that’s perpetrated today in the name of so-called rights.

THE RAVINGS OF A MAD MAN

language. Henceforth, words that are simultaneously homonyms and antonyms shall be called nononyms, pronounced “no-no nems.”

If I Had a Hammer, I'd Half Two Hammer Out Just Ice

Remember the guy who didn't understand radioactive decay because he couldn't count? Here we go again. When I try to discuss issues with people, I find that they can't understand me. An example is pre-employment drug testing. I can't explain the consequences because people don't understand the related policies such as drug enforcement or search and seizure. I can't explain the policies because people don't understand basic doctrines such as the presumption of innocence, self incrimination, or burden of proof. If I "get off the subject" and try to explain such doctrines, then I find that people don't even understand the meanings of the words. To make matters worse, they've already been taught that the INS has given them the right to work, that they have a responsibility to pay taxes, that they can't trust each other, that only the government can protect them, and that anyone who believes otherwise is advocating chaos, which they ignorantly call anarchy.

Now that we understand about words that are nononyms, let's check a doctrine. How about the Presumption of Innocence. That's where you're presumed innocent until proven guilty and the burden of proof is on the accuser. The existence of a doctrine is demonstrated by the existing policies, so let's check some policies to see what we find. If you want to cash a check, what happens? You must provide objective evidence that you're not lying about your identity and documentation proving that you've been examined and approved by the credit establishment. You're proving your innocence after a presumption of guilt. Suppose that you're about to pay your income tax. Do you simply write a check and send it in? No. Why not? Because you might cheat. Before your payment will be accepted, you must provide information and documentation to prove (you hope) that you're not cheating. You're attempting to convince the government of your innocence. Clearly, the government has presumed otherwise. When you go to the witness stand, they put a Bible under your hand and make you swear to tell the truth. They're afraid that you might lie. If you look, you'll find throughout America today policies that derive unmistakably from the existence and general acceptance of a doctrine wherein you're presumed guilty unless proven innocent.⁹ Yet we refer to the doctrine by a name that looks the same, is spelled the same, and sounds the same, as the name of its opposite. We call it Presumption of Innocence. The terms "Presumption of Innocence" (where you're presumed innocent) and "Presumption of Innocence" (where you're presumed guilty) are antonymous and homonymic, both at the same time. That is, they're nononymic. It's no wonder that people don't understand the consequences of pre-employment drug testing.

9 By the way, guess who bears the burden of proof.

This page was intentionally left blank.

Arose Buy Annie Utterin' Aim

If we tell a child that he can go down an escalator, are we lying to him? Not if we believe that there's a word, *escalate*, that means to raise something and another word, *escalate*, that means to lower something. If we believe that, then can we really believe that any word has a predictable meaning?

It's my opinion that all of this confusion and misunderstanding can only contribute to ignorance. I believe that our unacknowledged use of nononyms is a measure of our past and present ignorance. The language is riddled with nononyms. However, you've now been forewarned. You can start paying attention to things that you say and hear.

As I've been writing this essay, I've been trying to think of something that we have the right to do, or to be. Remember the definition? It has to be within our abilities, we don't have to ask, and folks will acknowledge it as proper or at least tolerate it. There weren't very many inarguable candidates but now I have it. I thought of something that's generally accepted and has been well established by a long period of custom and usage. It's definitely within our abilities and permission isn't required. It's the only inarguable right that I've discovered. We have the right to be ignorant.

If you'd like to read the next essay in this series, then ask for

[*More Ravings of a Mad Man!*](#)

-or-

[*Diatribes Doesn't Mean Two Groups of Indians Living Together*](#)

This page was intentionally left blank.

Postscript

A reader of this essay handed me the following verse.

Write Written Right

Author Unknown

“Write we know is written right,
When we see it written write;
But when we see it written wright,
We know it is not written right;
For write, to have it written right,
Must not be written right or wright,
Nor yet should it be written rite;
But write, for so ‘tis written right.”

After reading the essay, my mother sent me a clipping of the Ann Landers column, taken from *The Times*, Gainesville, Georgia, Wednesday, July 19, 1995. Here’s the text of the clipping.

Dear Ann Landers: While cleaning out my parents’ home after their deaths, I discovered these two pieces in a newspaper clipping from the Upper Marlboro, Md., Enquirer Gazette 60 years ago.

I doubt that the subject has ever been so thoroughly covered

— R.G. of Cheverly, Md.

Dear R.G.: I agree. I am always grateful when my readers send me bits of interesting information. Here’s the first one:

You may call a woman a kitten, but you must not call her a cat.

You may call her a mouse, but you must not call her a rat.

You may call her a chicken, but don’t call her a hen.

You may call her a vision, but don’t call her a sight.

And the second, written by Mr. P. Thomas O’Dea of New Haven, Conn.:

When the English tongue we speak,

Why is “break” not rhymed with “freak”?

And the maker of a verse

Cannot cap his “horse” with “worse”?

“Beard” sounds not the same as “heard.”

“Cord” is different from “word.”

“Cow” is cow, but “low” is low.

“Shoe” is never rhymed with “foe.”

Think of “hose” and “dose” and “lose,”

THE RAVINGS OF A MAD MAN

And of “goose” and yet of “choose.”
Think of “comb” and “tomb” and “bomb,”
“Doll” and “roll” and “home” and “some.”
And since “pay” is rhymed with “say,”
Why not “paid” and “said,” I pray?
We have “blood” and “food” and “good.”
“Mould” is not pronounced like “could.”
Wherefore “done,” but “gone” and “lone”?
Is there any reason known?
And, in short, it seems to me,
Sounds and letters disagree.

Dear Readers: Here’s my addition to Mr. O’Dea’s poem on the peculiarities of our language:

What about “cough” and “through” and “tougher”
Which don’t sound anything like each other.
“Thorough” can be made to rhyme with “dough,”
But “bough” sounds like “cow” and not like “though.”
We haven’t mentioned “laughter” or “daughter,”
Neither of which is spelled like it oughter.

On Thursday, November 24, 2005, James Majeski sent the following item to me. I asked him if he knew the original source. He had received it from Carolyn Miolli but he said that he didn’t know the original source. I don’t have the faintest notion who Carolyn Miolli is.

Can you read these right the first time?

1. The bandage was wound around the wound.
2. The farm was used to produce produce.
3. The dump was so full that it had to refuse more refuse.
4. We must polish the Polish furniture.
5. He could lead if he would get the lead out.
6. The soldier decided to desert his dessert in the desert.
7. Since there is no time like the present, he thought it was time to present the present.
8. A bass was painted on the head of the bass drum.
9. When shot at, the dove dove into the bushes.

10. I did not object to the object.
11. The insurance was invalid for the invalid.
12. There was a row among the oarsmen about how to row.
13. They were too close to the door to close it.
14. The buck does funny things when the does are present.
15. A seamstress and a sewer fell down into a sewer line.
16. To help with planting, the farmer taught his sow to sow.
17. The wind was too strong to wind the sail.
18. Upon seeing the tear in the painting I shed a tear.
19. I had to subject the subject to a series of tests.
20. How can I intimate this to my most intimate friend?

Let's face it — English is a crazy language. There is no egg in eggplant, nor ham in hamburger; neither apple nor pine in pineapple. English muffins weren't invented in England or French fries in France. Sweetmeats are candies while sweetbreads, which aren't sweet, are meat. We take English for granted. But if we explore its paradoxes, we find that quicksand can work slowly, boxing rings are square and a guinea pig is neither from Guinea nor is it a pig.

And why is it that writers write but fingers don't fing, grocers don't groce and hammers don't ham? If the plural of tooth is teeth, why isn't the plural of booth, beeth? One goose, 2 geese. So one moose, 2 meese? One index, 2 indices? Doesn't it seem crazy that you can make amends but not one amend? If you have a bunch of odds and ends and get rid of all but one of them, what do you call it?

If teachers taught, why didn't preachers praught? If a vegetarian eats vegetables, what does a humanitarian eat? Sometimes I think all the English speakers should be committed to an asylum for the verbally insane. In what language do people recite at a play and play at a recital? Ship by truck and send cargo by ship? Have noses that run and feet that smell?

How can a slim chance and a fat chance be the same, while a wise man and a wise guy are opposites? You have to marvel at the unique lunacy of a language in which your house can burn up as it burns down, in which you fill in a form by filling it out and in which, an alarm goes off by going on.

English was invented by people, not computers, and it reflects the creativity of the human race, which, of course, is not a race at all. That is why, when the stars are out, they are visible, but when the lights are out, they are invisible.

PS. — Why doesn't "Buick" rhyme with "quick"? You lovers of the English language might enjoy this.

There is a two-letter word that perhaps has more meanings than any other two-letter word, and that is "UP."

THE RAVINGS OF A MAD MAN

It's easy to understand UP, meaning toward the sky or at the top of the list, but when we awaken in the morning, why do we wake UP? At a meeting, why does a topic come UP? Why do we speak UP and why are the officers UP for election and why is it UP to the secretary to write UP a report?

We call UP our friends. And we use it to brighten UP a room, polish UP the silver, we warm UP the leftovers and clean UP the kitchen. We lock UP the house and some guys fix UP the old car. At other times the little word has real special meaning. People stir UP trouble, line UP for tickets, work UP an appetite, and think UP excuses. To be dressed is one thing but to be dressed UP is special.

And this UP is confusing: A drain must be opened UP because it is stopped UP. We open UP a store in the morning but we close it UP at night.

We seem to be pretty mixed UP about UP! To be knowledgeable about the proper uses of UP, look the word UP in the dictionary. In a desk-sized dictionary, it takes UP almost 1/4th of the page and can add UP to about thirty definitions. If you are UP to it, you might try building UP a list of the many ways UP is used. It will take UP a lot of your time, but if you don't give UP, you may wind UP with a hundred or more. When it threatens to rain, we say it is clouding UP. When the sun comes out we say it is clearing UP.

When it rains, it wets the earth and often messes things UP.

When it doesn't rain for awhile, things dry UP.

One could go on and on, but I'll wrap it UP, for now my time is UP, so..... Time to shut UP.....!

Oh...one more thing:

What is the first thing you do in the morning & the last thing you do at night? U-P

I'll bet that she made it all up.

—Sam

Appendix

First Letter to A Merriam-Webster

March 15, 1982

A Merriam-Webster
G. & C. Merriam Company
Springfield, Massachusetts

Dear Sir

This is to bring to your attention what appears to be an oversight in the Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary. I am using the 1979 Edition and have observed that a common meaning of the word "muff" has not been included. In the context to which I refer, the word means, roughly, the external portion of the human female genitalia, thus making it very approximately the synonym of the much less popular term, pudendum.

Please review the occurrence of this usage within the English language, and if a consistent vernacular is deemed to exist, make the appropriate addition to future editions of the Dictionary.

Sam A. Milam III

Sam A. Milam III
Box 21633
San Jose, California 95151

THE RAVINGS OF A MAD MAN

Second Letter to A Merriam-Webster

May 4, 1983

Henry Bosley Woolf
Editor in Chief
Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary
A Merriam-Webster Company
Springfield, Massachusetts

Dear Mr. Woolf

This is to bring to your attention an omission from the Webster's New collegiate Dictionary. I am using the 1979 Edition and have observed that a common meaning of the word "muff" has not been included. In the context to which I refer, the word means, approximately, the external portion of the human female genitalia, thus making it closely synonymous with the much less popular term pudendum. I request that this meaning of the word be added to the dictionary.

Sincerely

Sam A. Milam III

Sam A. Milam III
Box 21633
San Jose, California 95151

(408) 272-2817

word
Saw

Reply



G.&C. Merriam Company
PUBLISHERS OF MERRIAM-WEBSTER REFERENCE BOOKS

May 27, 1983

Mr. Sam A. Milam III
Box 21633
San Jose, CA 95151

Dear Mr. Milam:

Your letter addressed to the now-retired Dr. Woolf has come to me, and I'm happy to reply.

Our decision as to whether or not a particular word or sense of a word deserves entry in the dictionary depends primarily upon our observation of the frequency and geographical extent of its use. What we require is a substantial body of printed evidence showing the word used by various people in various contexts. We don't have enough such evidence yet to justify entering the sense of muff that you've noted, but your expectation of finding it has been duly recorded and the matter will, of course, be re-considered in the future.

Thank you for writing.

Sincerely yours,

Stephen J. Perrault

SJP/klc

This page was intentionally left blank.

Glossary

ambiguous ... *adj.* **1.** Open to more than one interpretation: *an ambiguous reply.* **2.** Doubtful or uncertain: “*The theatrical status of her frequently derided but constantly revived plays remained ambiguous*” (Frank Rich)...

SYNONYMS: *ambiguous, equivocal, obscure, recondite, abstruse, vague, cryptic, enigmatic.* These adjectives mean lacking clarity of meaning. *Ambiguous* indicates the presence of two or more possible meanings: *Frustrated by ambiguous instructions, the parents were never able to assemble the new toy.* Something *equivocal* is unclear or misleading, sometimes as a result of a deliberate effort to avoid exposure of one’s position: “*The polling had a complex and equivocal message for potential female candidates at all levels*” (David S. Broder). *Obscure* implies that meaning is hidden, either from lack of clarity of expression or from inherent difficulty of comprehension: *Those who do not appreciate Kafka’s work say his style is obscure and too complex.* *Recondite* and *abstruse* connote the erudite obscurity of the scholar: “*some recondite problem in historiography*” (Walter Laqueur). *The Professor’s lectures were so abstruse that students tended to avoid them.* What is *vague* is unclear because it is expressed in indefinite form or because it reflects imprecision of thought: “*Vague ... forms of speech ... have so long passed for mysteries of science*” (John Locke). *Cryptic* suggests a puzzling terseness that is often intended to discourage understanding: *The new insurance policy is written without cryptic or mysterious terms.* Something *enigmatic* is mysterious, puzzling, and often challenging: *I didn’t grasp the meaning of the enigmatic comment until much later.*

—*The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, 1992*

CITIZEN. In English Law. An inhabitant of a city. 1 Rolle, 138. The representative of a city, in parliament. 1 Bla. Com. 174.

In American Law. One who, under the constitution and laws of the United States, has a right to vote for representatives in congress, and other public officers, and who is qualified to fill offices in the gift of the people.

All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the state wherein they reside; XIV. Amendment, U. S. Const.

One of the sovereign people. A constituent member of the sovereignty, synonymous with the people. 19 How. 404.

A member of the civil state entitled to all its privileges; Cooley, Constit. Law, 77. See 92 U. S. 542; 21 Wall. 162.

Citizens are either native-born or naturalized. Native citizens may fill any office; naturalized citizens may be elected or appointed to any office under the constitution of the United States, except the offices of president and vice-president. The constitu-

THE RAVINGS OF A MAD MAN

tion of the United States (art. 4, s. 2) provides that “the citizens of each state shall be entitled to all the privileges and immunities of citizens in the several states.” These are privileges which in their nature are *fundamental*; which belong of right to the citizens of all free states, and which have, at all times, been enjoyed by the citizens of the several states; 4 Wash. C. C. 380. The supreme court will not define these, but will decide each case as it arises; 12 Wall. 418; 94 U. S. 39; 18 How. 591; see 37 N. J. 106; 55 Ill. 185; 16 Wall. 36, 130; 8 *id.* 168; 18 *id.* 129; 92 U. S. 542. The term citizen in the constitution applies only to natural persons; 8 Wall. 168; 1 Woods, 85.

Free persons of color, born in the United States, were always entitled to be regarded as citizens; 1 Abb. U. S. 28; but see 19 How. 393. Negroes born within the United States are citizens; 2 Bond, 389; Chase’s Dec. 157 (but not before the 14th Amendment; 19 How. 393; 10 Bush, 681); but the child of a member of one of the Indian tribes within the United States is not a citizen, though born in the United States; 2 Sawy. 118; 1 Dill. 444; but *quære* if the parents had given up their tribal relations; Abb. L. Diet. *sub voce*. The fact that an unnaturalized person of foreign birth is enabled by a state statute to vote and hold office does not make him a citizen; 4 Dill. 425. A Chinaman is not entitled to become naturalized; 5 Sawy. 155.

The *age* of the person does not affect his citizenship, though it may his political rights; 1 Abb. L. Dict. 224; nor the *sex*; *ibid.*; 21 Wall. 162; 92 U. S. 214; 1 McArthur, 169; the right to vote and the right to hold office are not necessary constituents of citizenship; 21 Wall. 162; 43 Cal. 43.

All natives are not citizens of the United States: the descendants of the aborigines are not entitled to the rights of citizens; see *supra*. Anterior to the adoption of the constitution of the United States, each state had the right to make citizens of such persons as it pleased.

A citizen of the United States residing in any of the states of the Union is a citizen of that state; 6 Pet. 761; Paine, 594; 6 Rob. 33; 12 Blatch. 320; 1 Brock. 391; 1 Paige, Ch. 183.

The child of American parents born in a foreign country, on board an American ship of which his father was the captain, is a citizen of the United States; 5 Blatch. 18; and so is a child born abroad whose father was at the time a citizen of the United States residing abroad; 13 Op. Att.-Gen. 91; 45 Iowa, 99.

A person may be a citizen for commercial purposes and not for political purposes; 7 Md. 209.

Consult 3 Story, Const. § 1687; 2 Kent, 258; Bouvier, Inst.; Vattel, 1. 1, c. 19, § 212.

As to citizenship as acquired by naturalization, see ALLEGIANCE.

—*Bouvier’s Law Dictionary*, 1889

CITIZEN,....*n.* an inhabitant of a *city*: a member of a state: a townsman: a free-man. —*n.* CITIZENSHIP, the rights of a citizen....

—*The American Dictionary of the English Language*, 1899

citizen.... **1.** person who by birth or by choice is a member of a state or nation. Many immigrants have become citizens of the United States. **2.** civilian; person who is not a soldier, policeman, etc. **3.** inhabitant of a city or town. *n.* **2.**

—*Thorndike Century Senior Dictionary*, 1941

Citizen. One who, under the Constitution and laws of the United States, or of a particular state, is a member of the political community, owing allegiance and being entitled to the enjoyment of full civil rights. All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the state wherein they reside. U.S. Const., 14th Amend.

The term may include or apply to children of alien parents born in United States, *Von Schwerdtner v. Piper*, D.C.Md., 23 F.2d 862, 863; *U. S. v. Minoru Yasui*, D.C.Or., 48 F.Supp., 40, 54; children of American citizens born outside United States, *Haaland v. Attorney General of United States*, D.C.Md., 42 F.Supp. 13, 22; Indians, *United States v. Hester*, C.C.A.Okl., 137 F.2d 145, 147; *State v. McAlhaney*, 220 N.C. 387, 17 S.E.2d 352, 354; national banks, *American Surety Co. v. Bank of California*, C.C.A.Or., 133 F.2d 160, 162; nonresident who has qualified as administratrix of estate of deceased resident, *Hunt v. Noll*, C.C.A.Tenn., 112 F.2d 288, 289. However, neither the United States nor a state is a citizen for purposes of diversity jurisdiction. *Skandia American Reinsurance Corp. v. Schenck*, 441 F.Supp. 715; *Jizemerjian v. Dept. of Air Force*, 457 F.Supp. 820. On the other hand, municipalities and other local governments are deemed to be citizens. *Rieser v. District of Columbia*, 563 F.2d 462. A corporation is not a citizen for purposes of privileges and immunities clause of the Fourteenth Amendment, *D. D. B. Realty Corp. v. Merrill*, 232 F.Supp. 629, 637.

“Citizens” are members of a political community who, in their associated capacity, have established or submitted themselves to the dominion of a government for the promotion of their general welfare and the protection of their individual as well as collective rights. *Herriott v. City of Seattle*, 81 Wash.2d 48, 500 P.2d 101, 109.

—*Black’s Law Dictionary*, 1979

convalesce.... *vi*.... to recover health and strength gradually after sickness or weakness —**convalescence**..... *n* —**convalescent**....*adj* or *n*

—*Webster’s Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*, 1987

convalescence.... *n.* **1.** Gradual return to health and strength after illness. **2.** The period needed for returning to health after illness. —**convalescent** *adj* & *n.*

—*The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, 1992

DICTIONARY, an alphabetical compilation of the words of a language, or part of a language, giving their meanings, spellings, derivation, pronunciation, and syllabica-

tion; in a more general sense, the term “dictionary” is also applied to any alphabetically arranged compendium in which special terms or subjects are defined. Thus in recent times there have been dictionaries devoted to science, biography, geography, mathematics, history, philosophy, slang, and other topics and terminologies. The earliest-known dictionaries were found in the library of the Assyrian king Ashurbanipal (r. 669—about 630 B.C.) at Nineveh. These consisted of clay tablets inscribed in columns of cuneiform, and remain the chief key of knowledge of Mesopotamian culture.

Sanskrit dictionaries appeared as early as the 5th century B.C. and were for the most part collections of rare words and meanings. These dictionaries, most of them written after the 5th century A.D., are invariably in verse and are divisible into two general classes, lexicons of synonyms and of homonyms. Sanskrit works also include special dictionaries on botany, medicine, and astronomy, as well as Buddhistic glossaries in Pali, and polyglot lexicons in Sanskrit, Tibetan, Mongolian, and Chinese. The first attempt to gather the entire Arabic vocabulary into one work was made probably by Khalil ibn Ahmed of Oman (died 791), who adopted an arrangement not alphabetical but based on certain phonetic and physiological principles. The compilation of Hebrew dictionaries began about the 10th century (although some scholars place the beginnings of Hebrew lexicography between the 6th and 8th centuries), originating from, and being stimulated by, the study of Arabic.

Dictionaries of language, however, as they exist in contemporary times, are relatively modern in origin. They are an outgrowth of the importance of Greek and Latin literature to the scholars of the Middle Ages, and may be traced to the medieval custom of inserting marginal glosses or explanatory words in texts of classical authors. The Greeks and Romans did not conceive of a work containing all the words of their own or a foreign language, and their early dictionaries were merely glossaries of unusual words or phrases. According to the Greek lexicographer Suidas, the first Greek lexicon, *Homeric Words*, was written by Apollonius, a Sophist of the days of Augustus. This is the most ancient dictionary extant, and was last published in Berlin in 1883. One of the earliest works in Latin lexicography, by Verrius Flaccus (fl. 1st century A.D.), is *De Verborum Significatu*, which survives as part of the compilation of Pompeius Festus entitled *De Significatione Verborum*; this work, in which the words are arranged alphabetically, has been of great service in giving information on antiquities and grammar. The earliest polyglot dictionary was the work of an Augustine monk, Calepino, dated 1502. At first it was a Latin-Greek lexicon, then came to be extended to include Italian, French, and Spanish, and finally in the 1590 Basel edition included eleven languages.

The precursors of English dictionaries appeared very early in the Old English period (see ENGLISH LANGUAGE: *History*) in the form of lists of relatively difficult Latin terms, chiefly Scriptural, with Anglo-Saxon glosses. Around 1400, many such glosses were collected into the so-called *Medulla Grammatica*.

The *Promptorium Parvulorum*, a redaction of the latter, compiled in 1440 by the Dominican monk Galfridus Grammaticus in Norfolk, England, and printed in 1449 by Wynkyn de Worde, may be regarded as the first English dictionary; it consisted of Latin definitions of English words. It was followed by Sir Thomas Elyot's *Bibliotheca* (1538), another English-Latin dictionary, and by the *Dictionary in Englyshe and Welsh* (1547) compiled by William SaIesbury (about 1520–1600). Robert Cawdrey (fl. 1604), in *The Table Alphabetical of Hard Words* (1604), produced the first dictionary giving definitions in English of English words. The word “dictionary” was first used by Henry Cockeram (fl. 1650) in *The English Dictionary* (1623). In 1656 Thomas Blount (1618–79) issued his *Glossographia*, also entirely in English with “...hard words together with Divinity Terms, Law, Physick, Mathematicks and other Arts and Sciences explicated”. These early works characteristically confined themselves to “hard words” and phrases not generally understood, because the daily vocabulary of the language was not expected to require elucidation. The first attempt at a comprehensive inventory of the English language was the *Universal Dictionary of the English Language* (1721) by Nathaniel Bailey (d. 1742), reissued in 1731 as the *Dictionarium Britannicum: A More Compleat Universal Etymological Dictionary Than Any Extant*. This work, which used quotations from established literary works to confirm and supplement definitions, served as the basis for the two-volume lexicon, *A Dictionary of the English Language* (1755), by the lexicographer Samuel Johnson, who extended the practice of using quotations. Johnson's dictionary remained the model of English lexicography for over a century. In 1769 and 1773, two dictionaries with guides to pronunciation were compiled by Buchanan and Kenrick, respectively. The actor Thomas Sheridan (1719–88) later compiled a *General Dictionary of the English Language* (1780) with the object of establishing a simple and permanent standard of pronunciation. The most influential of the dictionaries concerned with pronunciation was the *Critical Pronouncing Dictionary and Expositor of the English Language* (1791) by the actor John Walker (1732–1807).

The first historically important contribution to American lexicography was the volume *A New and Accurate Standard of Pronunciation* (1783), popularly known as *Webster's Spelling Book*. This work was issued by Noah Webster (q.v.), as the first part of his *Grammatical Institute of the English Language* (1783–85). Although not a dictionary in the strict sense of the term, the *Spelling Book*, because of its American origin and emphasis and its simplification of English, became a household reference wordbook throughout the country. Its success led Webster to compile his first American lexicon, *A Compendious Dictionary of the English Language* (1806), an unpretentious enlargement of Entick's *Spelling Dictionary* (London, 1764). Webster's work also contained supplementary encyclopedic material on American life. Webster's major contribution to lexicography, *An American Dictionary of the English Language*, begun in 1807 and published in 1828, included typically American usage as distinguished from the British idiom, as well as 12,000 more words and 40,000 more

definitions than had ever appeared in any dictionary of the English language. This work was never popular, however. It was soon followed by the *Comprehensive Pronouncing and Explanatory Dictionary of the English Language* (1830) by Joseph Emerson Worcester (q.v.). Worcester's dictionary, technically superior to and essentially a highly intelligent abridgment of Webster's, paved the way for modern collegiate dictionaries. Webster brought out a revised edition of his dictionary in 1841; since that time the *American Dictionary* has undergone various revisions and editions, including the contemporary *Webster's New International Dictionary of the English Language*, for which it provided the basis. In 1860 Worcester published *A Dictionary of the English Language* with the intention of displacing Webster's *American Dictionary*, which he considered frequently vulgar in vocabulary and pronunciation, but his work enjoyed little success, partly because of the lethargy of its publisher. In 1891 *The Century Dictionary*, an American dictionary containing encyclopedic information, and edited by William Dwight Whitney, the first great American linguist, was published in six volumes; it was a notable example in English of the French tradition of the combined dictionary-encyclopedia, a tradition established by Pierre Larousse (q.v.), compiler of the *Grand Dictionnaire Universel du XIX Siecle* (1866–76). The *Standard Dictionary of the English Language*, published in one volume in 1895, rivaled Webster's *American Dictionary* in popularity for a time. Both the *Century* and the *Standard* have been frequently revised, editions of the former appearing in a two-volume abridgment called *New Century Dictionary* and the latter as the Funk and Wagnalls *New Standard Dictionary of the English Language*.

The most comprehensive lexicographic work in the English language, popularly known as the *Oxford English Dictionary*, was begun under the auspices of the *English Philological Society* in 1857 and completed in seventy years with the collaboration of numerous specialists and their assistants after the editorship of the work had been undertaken by Sir James A. H. Murray in 1879. The dictionary, entitled *A New English Dictionary on Historical Principles; founded mainly on the materials collected by the Philological Society*, issued its first section in 1884; the tenth and closing volume was brought out in 1928, and a supplement, containing an introduction and bibliography, was added in 1933. The *Shorter Oxford Dictionary*, a two-volume abridgment of this work with some revisions in pronunciation, was published in 1933. In 1936 Sir William A. Craigie, who collaborated on the editing of the *Oxford English Dictionary*, began a companion work, *A Dictionary of American English on Historical Principles*, which was completed with the publication of its fourth volume in 1944.

A by-product of these scholarly works should be mentioned to complete this survey, namely the one-volume dictionary which is frequently an abridgment of the larger works and ranges from pocket size to 1900 pages. The most reputable one-volume dictionaries are the *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary* (1956) based on *Webster's New International Dictionary*, the *Webster's New World Dictionary* (1953), and the *American College Dictionary* (1947). Dictionaries of this sort, although reflecting

many of the disadvantages of condensation, are handier, less expensive, and often more up-to-date than the larger works. In recent years such works have enjoyed, particularly in America, extraordinary popularity.

HAROLD WHITEHALL
UNIVERSITY OF INDIANA

—*Funk and Wagnalls Standard Reference Encyclopedia*, 1963

fascism.... 1. Fascism. 2. any system of government in which property is privately owned, but all industry and business is regulated by a strong national government. *n.*

—*Thorndike Century Senior Dictionary*, 1941

fascism.... *n.* 1. Often **Fascism**. **a.** A system of government marked by centralization of authority under a dictator, stringent socioeconomic controls, suppression of the opposition through terror and censorship, and typically a policy of belligerent nationalism and racism. **b.** A political philosophy or movement based on or advocating such a system of government. 2. Oppressive, dictatorial control....

—*The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, 1992

general ... *adj.* **Abbr. gen., genl.** 1. Concerned with, applicable to, or affecting the whole or every member of a class or category: “*subduing all her impressions as a woman, to something more general*” (Virginia Woolf). 2. Affecting or characteristic of the majority of those involved; prevalent: *general discontent*. 3. Being usually the case; true or applicable in most instances but not all: *the general correctness of her decisions*. 4.a. Not limited in scope, area, or application: *as a general rule*. **b.** Not limited to or dealing with one class of things; diversified: *general studies*. 5. Involving only the main features rather than precise details: *a general grasp of the subject*. 6. Highest or superior in rank: *the general manager*. —**general** *n.* 1. **Abbr. Gen. a.** A commissioned rank in the U.S. Army, Air Force, or Marine Corps that is above lieutenant general. **b.** One who holds this rank or a similar rank in another military organization. 2. A general officer. 3. A statement, principle, or fact that embraces or is applicable to the whole. 4. *Archaic.* The public. —**idiom. in general.** Generally....

SYNONYMS: *general, common, generic, universal.* The central meaning shared by these adjectives is “belonging to, relating to, or affecting the whole”: *the general welfare; a common enemy; generic differences between birds and reptiles; universal military conscription.*

ANTONYM: *particular.*

—*The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, 1992

HOMONYM, ...*n.* a word having the same sound as another, but a different meaning....

—*The American Dictionary of the English Language*, 1899

homonym.... *n.*.... 1 **a** : HOMOPHONE **b**: HOMOGRAPH **c**: one of two or more words spelled and pronounced alike but different in meaning (the noun *quail* and the verb *quail* are ~s) 2 : NAMESAKE 3 : a taxonomic designation rejected because

THE RAVINGS OF A MAD MAN

the identical term has been used to designate another group of the same rank — compare SYNONYM.... — *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*, 1987

JURISDICTION The authority by which judicial officers take cognizance of and decide causes. Power to hear and determine a cause. 3 Ohio. 494; 6 Pet. 591. The right of a judge to pronounce a sentence of the law, on a case or issue before him, acquired through due process of law. It includes power to enforce the execution of what is decreed. 9 Johns. 239; 3 Metc. Mass. 460; Thach. 202....

— *Bouvier's Law Dictionary*, 1889

jurisdiction 1. right or power of administering law or justice. 2. authority; power; control. 3. extent of authority. It does not lie within his jurisdiction to set you free. 4. territory over which authority extends.

— *Thorndike Century Senior Dictionary*, 1941

jurisdiction **1** : the power, right, or authority to interpret and apply the law **2** : the authority of a sovereign power to govern or legislate **3** : the limits or territory within which authority may be exercised : CONTROL

— *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary*, 1973

Jurisdiction. The word is a term of large and comprehensive import, and embraces every kind of judicial action. *Federal Land Bank of Louisville, Ky., v. Crombie*, 258 Ky. 383, 80 S.W.2d 39, 40. It is the authority by which courts and judicial officers take cognizance of and decide cases. *Board of Trustees of Firemen's Relief and Pension Fund of City of Marietta v. Brooks*, 179 Okl. 600, 67 P.2d 4, 6; *State v. True, Me.*, 330 A.2d 787. The legal right by which judges exercise their authority. *Max Ams, Inc. v. Barker*, 293 Ky. 698, 170 S.W.2d 45, 48. It exists when court has cognizance of class of cases involved, proper parties are present, and point to be decided is within powers of court. *United Cemeteries Co. v. Strother*, 342 Mo. 1155, 119 S.W.2d 762, 765; *Harder v. Johnson*, 147 Kan. 440, 76 P.2d 763, 764. Power and authority of a court to hear and determine a judicial proceeding. *In re De Camillis' Estate*, 66 Misc.2d 882, 322 N.Y.S.2d 551, 556. The right and power of a court to adjudicate concerning the subject matter in a given case. *Biddinger v. Fletcher*, 224 Ga. 501, 162 S.E.2d 414, 416.

Areas of authority; the geographic area in which a court has power or types of cases it has power to hear.

Scope and extent of jurisdiction of federal courts is governed by 28 U.S.C.A. § 1251 et seq.

For Ancillary; Appellate; Concurrent; Contentious; Continuing; Coordinate; Criminal; Equity; Exclusive; Foreign; General; International; Legislative; Limited; Military; Pendent; Plenary; Primary; Probate; Special; Subject-matter; Summary; Territorial; and Voluntary jurisdiction, see those titles. See also Excess of jurisdiction; Jurisdiction in personam; Jurisdiction in rem; Jurisdiction of the subject mat-

ter; Jurisdiction quasi in rem; Lack of jurisdiction. For original jurisdiction, see **Original**. For diversity jurisdiction, see **Diversity of citizenship**. For federal question jurisdiction, see **Federal Question**. For jurisdiction over nonresidents or foreign corporations, see **Long arm statutes; Minimal contracts**.

—*Black's Law Dictionary*, 1979

Jurisdiction.... 1. *Law.* The right and power to interpret and apply the law: *courts having jurisdiction in this district.* **2.a.** Authority or control: *islands under U.S. jurisdiction; a bureau with jurisdiction over Native American affairs.* **b.** The extent of authority or control: *a family matter beyond the school's jurisdiction.* **3.** The territorial range of authority or control....

—*The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, 1992

muff....1 : a warm tubular covering for the hands **2** : a cluster of feathers on the side of the face of some domestic fowls

—*Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*, 1987

sylogism 1: a deductive scheme of a formal argument consisting of a major and a minor premise and a conclusion (as in “every virtue is laudable; kindness is a virtue; therefore kindness is laudable”) **2:** deductive reasoning **3:** a subtle, specious, or crafty argument

—*Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary*, 1973

sylogism.... n....1 : a deductive scheme of a formal argument consisting of a major and a minor premise and a conclusion (as in “every virtue is laudable; kindness is a virtue; therefore kindness is laudable”) **2** : a subtle, specious, or crafty argument **3** : deductive reasoning....

—*Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*, 1987

unambiguous adj. Having or exhibiting no ambiguity or uncertainty; clear: “As a horror, apartheid ... is absolutely unambiguous. There are ... no shades of interpretation or circumstances to weigh that might make coming to a moral judgment more difficult” (Mario Vargas Llosa)....

—*The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, 1992

This page was intentionally left blank.

References

1. 1776
A DECLARATION By the REPRESENTATIVES of the UNITED STATES of AMERICA, In GENERAL CONGRESS, Assembled, July 4, 1776
2. 1789
The Constitution for The United States of America
3. 1889
A LAW DICTIONARY, ADAPTED TO THE CONSTITUTION AND LAWS OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, AND OF THE Several States of the American Union: WITH REFERENCES TO THE CIVIL AND OTHER SYSTEMS OF FOREIGN LAW. BY JOHN BOUVIER. Fifteenth Edition, J. B. LIPPINCOTT COMPANY. PHILADELPHIA, 1889
4. 1899
The American Dictionary of the English Language, Compiled and edited under the immediate supervision of Professor Daniel Lyons, New York: Peter Fenelon Collier, Publisher, 1899.
5. 1941
Thorndike Century Senior Dictionary, BY E. L. THORNDIKE, SCOTT, FORESMAN AND COMPANY, Chicago, Atlanta, Dallas, New York, Copyright, 1941, by E. L. Thorndike
6. 1963
FUNK & WAGNALLS Standard REFERENCE ENCYCLOPEDIA, JOSEPH LAFFAN MORSE, SC.B., LL.B., L.H.D., LL.D., Editor in Chief, © 1963 By WILFRED FUNK, INC.
7. 1973
Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, A Merriam-Webster[®], G. & C. MERRIAM COMPANY, Springfield, Massachusetts, U.S.A., Copyright © 1973 by G. & C. Merriam Co., First Printing 1973
8. 1987
The Random House Dictionary of the English Language, Second Edition, Unabridged, Stuart Berg Flexner, Editor in Chief, Random House, New York, Copyright © 1987.
9. 1987
WEBSTER'S Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary, A Merriam-Webster[®], MERRIAM-WEBSTER INC., Publishers, Springfield, Massachusetts, U.S.A., Copyright © 1987 by Merriam-Webster Inc.

10. 1992

THE AMERICAN HERITAGE DICTIONARY OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE,
THIRD EDITION, HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY, Boston • New York •
London, Copyright © 1992 by Houghton Mifflin Company