

Preface

WEBSTER'S NINTH NEW COLLEGIATE DICTIONARY IS THE latest in the Collegiate line of Merriam-Webster · dictionaries which began in 1898. Every entry and feature of the last edition has been reexamined so that this Collegiate offers the dictionary user much that is new and useful while preserving the best features of preceding editions. This dictionary is meant to serve the general public as its chief source of information about the words of our language. The school or college student, the office worker, the home user – all will find this Collegiate a reliable guide to understanding the English of our day and communicating it.

While Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary holds no more pages than did the last edition, a change in the dimensions of the page and a different design of some elements on that page have allowed the editors to add thousands of new words and senses as well as to introduce several significant new features and other improvements. The treatment of words in the A-Z vocabulary section is as nearly exhaustive as the compass of an abridged work permits. 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. The citation files hold 3,000,000 more examples than were available to the editors of Webster's Third New International Dictionary, published in 1961, the total now being 13,000,000. Those entries known to be trademarks or service marks are so labeled and are treated in accordance with a formula approved by the United States Trademark Association. No entry in this dictionary, however, should be regarded as affecting the validity of any trademark or service mark.

Several features of the vocabulary section are worth special notice. The treatment of synonymy has been completely revised for this edition so that all the synonym articles now discriminate from one another words of closely associated meaning. Many of the articles are enriched with typical

examples of usage based on – or sometimes quoted from – citations in our files.

Pictorial illustrations have been prominent in Collegiate dictionaries from the beginning. In this edition, as before, they have been selected chiefly for their ability to inform by supplementing and clarifying definitions. In many instances this function has been enhanced for this edition by increasing the size of the illustration so that significant details are more readily apparent.

In Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary two features make their first appearance in any Merriam-Webster dictionary. Before the first entered sense of each entry for a generic word, the user of this Collegiate will find a date that indicates when the earliest example known to us of the use of that sense was written or printed. This date serves as a link, in the case of entries with several senses, between the etymology preceding it and the historically ordered senses following it. We believe that the date will often be a point of considerable interest in its own right as well.

A number of entries for words posing special problems of confused or disputed usage include for the first time brief articles that provide the dictionary user with suitable guidance on the usage in question. The guidance offered is never based merely on received opinion, though opinions are often noted, but typically on both a review of the historical background and a careful evaluation of what citations reveal about actual contemporary practice. These articles should prove a helpful complement to the usage information offered through the traditional devices of the usage label and the usage note.

The front matter of this book attempts to establish a context for understanding what this dictionary is and how it came to be, as well as how it may be used most effectively. The Explanatory Notes address themselves to the latter topic. They answer the user's questions about the conventions, devices, and techniques by which the editors have been able to compress mountains of information about English words into fewer than 1400 pages. All users of the dictionary are urged to read this section through and then consult it for special information as they need to. The brief essay on our language as it is recorded in Merriam-Webster dictionaries, and this Collegiate in particular, is meant to satisfy an interest in lexicography often expressed in the correspondence which our editors receive. The Guide to Pronunciation serves both to show how the

pronunciations recorded in this book are arrived at and to explain the mechanics of the respelling system in which they are set down.

The back matter retains all six sections from the last edition of the Collegiate. These are Foreign Words and Phrases that occur frequently in English texts but have not become part of the English vocabulary; thousands of proper names gathered under the separate headings Biographical Names and Geographical Names; a list of the degree-granting, two-year and four-year Colleges and Universities of the United States and Canada; and a Handbook of Style in which various stylistic conventions (as of punctuation and capitalization) are summarized and exemplified. All these sections are expanded with new material in this edition. One section has been added: Abbreviations and Symbols for Chemical Elements, which were in the main vocabulary of the 1973 Collegiate, are now in the back matter.

Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary is the result of much patient labor by the trained staff of Merriam-Webster Incorporated, working in collaboration with each other and, in a sense, with the editors of earlier Collegiates and Internationals, who have left numberless, often indiscernible traces of their thought, insight, and care upon the pages of this dictionary. There is unfortunately no space to acknowledge former editors individually, but all the staff members who made substantial contributions to this edition are listed on the facing page. Many demonstrated their versatility by working in several widely separated parts of the book and in very different roles.

Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary is offered to the user in the same spirit as were earlier editions: it is the product of a company with a sustained tradition of excellence in the making of dictionaries, and we are confident that whoever comes to know it and use it carefully will be well served by it.

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