Introduction

Evolution of the Thesaurus

With its intricate interweaving of strands of Celtic, earlier Roman and later ecclesiastical Latin, northern and western Germanic tongues, and, through Norman-French, the whole body of Romance languages, it is scarcely surprising that English is a language peculiarly rich in synonyms. Equally, it is scarcely strange that with so much to work with, users of this language have long been interested in synonyms as an element both in precision and in elegance of expression. Though the word *synonym* had certainly been in use at least a century earlier, its first appearance with essentially its modern meaning seems to be that in the dedicatory epistle of John Palsgrave's translation of the Latin *Comedy of Acolasius* (1540) in which he castigates self-important and incompetent masters who

. . . do oppress and overlaye the tender wyttes, the whiche they wold sofayne further, with their multitude of sondry interpretations, confusedly bythem uttered. So that fynally theyr yong scholers,... be forced to falle aglosynge. . . and as their chyldyshe judgement dothe for the time servethem, of dyvers englishe werdes in our tongue beinge synonymes... theychuse moste commonly the very worste, and therewith scryble the bokes oftheyr latyne auctours.

To pass from awareness of synonyms as a usage problem to organized consideration of them as an organic factor in rhetorical excellence is no very long stride. This is demonstrated by Henry Cockeram's *English Dictionarie* (1623). This engaging little work, though the first English dictionary in name, comes closer in some respects to being a thesaurus in fact. Its first book purports to define difficult words, but a good half of the "definitions" are simple lists of equivalents (as at *condigne* — worthy, due, deserved; at *luxurie* — lecherie, riotousnesse; at *sordid* — base, filthy). The second book contains in its author's words

The vulgar words, which whensoever any desirous of a more curious explanation by a more refined and elegant speech shall looke into, he shall there receive the exact and ample word to express the same. Entries such as "to Behead one, *Decollate,* Obtruncate", "to put Over, *Adiourne,* Prorogue, Procrastine", "Youth, *Puerilitie,* Infancie, Adolescentie, Juvenilitie, Minoritie" are typical of this section. At some stretch of credibility one might suggest that Cockeram here anticipated Roget in assembling word lists matched to ideas rather than to other words.

After this vigorous beginning, English synonymy languished until the eighteenth century. It then was given a new impetus by the appearance in 1719 of the Abbé Gabriel Girard's book of discriminative synonymies of the French language. This was translated and adapted to English use, apparently by John Trusler, who brought out a book *The Distinction between Words esteemed Synonymous in the English Language* (1766) which is patently based on Girard and which unquestionably influenced the later discriminative synonymies of Mrs. Piozzi (1794) and George Crabb (1816). Thus, the discriminative or descriptive or prescriptive synonymy became established as an accepted literary and didactic form by the early years of the nineteenth century.

Slower in blooming in spite of its head start in Cockeram's work was the essentially mnemonic approach to synonymy, the *Thesaurus* of modern usage. The first book that undertook the orderly presentation of synonyms as a primary function was William Perry's *Synonymous, Etymological, and Pronouncing English Dictionary* (1805). With respect to the assembling of synonyms in readily available lists the author notes:

It is a matter of no small astonishment that a work of this kind, one among the desiderata *of literature, should have been so long neglected. Every person accustomed to write, whether on private concerns, or for public instruction, must have felt the want of such an assistant, not only to guard him against the tiresome repetition of the same words, but to enable him to select terms to express his ideas with greater clearness and precision.*

This first "thesaurus", produced nearly half a century before Peter Mark Roget gave that word its current meaning, offers a clear and concise explication of the purpose of such a volume as distinguished from the discriminative synonymy, which seeks to impose to varying degrees an author's notions of appropriateness, propriety, and correctitude on a user.

During succeeding years several synonym-listing books appeared, some of greater and some of less worth and degree of popular appeal. Formally organized word-finding lists became a feature of the general dictionary with the publication in 1847 under the editorship of Chauncey A. Goodrich of the royal octavo abridgment of Noah Webster's American Dictionary of the English Language (1828). Finally, with the publication of Peter Mark Roget's *Thesaurus of English Words and Phrases* in 1852, a new force entered the field.

This last was and remains a unique work. The product of nearly fifty years of collecting and testing to meet the author's own needs, it is organized primarily in terms of words related to concepts. For the scholarly user it opens a very real treasury of language, but Roget's impression, expressed in his introduction, that the user *scarcely ever need engage in any critical or elaborate study of the subtle distinctions existing between synonymous terms; for if the materials set before him be sufficiently abundant, an instinctive tact will rarely fail to lead him to the proper choice* is probably far too optimistic with regard to the person who needs guidance most - the person of average or limited vocabulary. In fact, Barnas Sears, editor of the first American edition of *The Thesaurus of English Words* (1854) makes the point in his "Editor's Preface" that *apprehending that many who may consult this work would regard the plan of the author for the distribution of his topics as too obscure for ordinary reference, the editor has caused* the index to be greatly enlarged.

It has long been recognized that Roget is far more often recommended by instructors than it is used by students. Nonetheless, *The Thesaurus of English Words and Phrases is* the only word-finding book to remain viable in various editions for well over a century, and one cannot help feeling that in spite of its complexity and elaborate structural plan the sheer wealth of relevant material that it offers a sophisticated user is the explanation of its survival.

Understandably enough, most thesaurists of the post-Roget period have sought an approach that would combine the wealth of material available in Roget's work with the indubitably simpler alphabetical organization of a dictionary. While differing levels of success have been attained, the underlying problem - that a dictionary dealing in synonyms and antonyms of specific words cannot honestly cover the same ground as a thesaurus devoted to the presentation of all pertinent terms about specific concepts - can scarcely be said to have been solved in an entirely satisfactory manner. It is the hope and belief of the editors of Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Thesaurus that, by pinpointing the exact segment of meaning in which word groups are synonymous and by supplementing synonym and antonym lists in this book with lists of related and contrasted words and of pertinent idiomatic equivalents, they have gone far toward solving the problem without doing violence to the basic concepts of *synonym* and *antonym.*

The Synonym

The early lexicographers had a clear and precise awareness of the concept *synonym*. Thus, Johnson enters in his *Dictionary of the English Language* (1755) "SYNONYMA . . . Names which signify the same thing," George Mason in his *Supplement to Johnson's English Dictionary* (1803) adds "SYNONYME . . . A word of the same meaning as some other word" (an entry taken over verbatim in Todd's 1818 revision of *Johnson's English Dictionary),* and Webster (1828) includes "SYNONYM a name, noun or other word having the same signification as another is its *synonym.* Two words containing the same idea are *synonyms."* Similarly, the eighteenth century discriminative synonymists implicitly followed the lead of Abbé Girard, whose title *La Justesse de la langue frangoise ou les différentes significations des mots qui passent pour étre synonymes* makes it clear that he was discriminating "words reputed to be synonyms" rather than words that are precisely such. His imitator Trusler refers in like manner to "Words esteemed Synonymous in the English Language," while Mrs. Piozzi in her *British Synonymy* (1794) almost routinely qualifies her discriminations with such statements about her "synonym" groups as that the words "are verbs very nearly yet not strictly synonymous," or "are not I believe exactly synonymous." There can be no doubt that the early discriminators were perfectly aware that they were not dealing with synonyms in the then generally accepted meaning of that word.

In course of time, the distinction between the synonymous words of the early lexicographers and the nearly synonymous words of the discriminative synonymists, appropriately called *pseudosynonyms* by Miss Whately (1851), gradually became eroded. As early as 1864 we find in Webster's American Dictionary of the English Language the entry "SYNONYM . . . One of two or more words in the same language which are the precise equivalents of each other or which have very nearly the same signification and therefore are liable to be confounded together." The trend toward a broad and loose definition of *synonym* has continued, especially as synonymists have striven for ever longer lists of ever more remotely related "synonyms." Indeed, there are those who compile "synonym" lists while denying the existence of synonyms.

All the varied definitions, both narrow and broad, somehow pass over what seems to the editors of Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Thesaurus a fundamental point: *synonymy is a relation between meanings.* True, it can only be expressed in terms of words since meaning is an attribute of words. Nonetheless, synonymy must be thought of as a property of meanings and it must be identified through careful analysis of these meanings. With this in mind, it early became apparent that a fresh approach to the study of synonyms was essential if Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Thesaurus was to be more than another compilation of vaguely related terms.

One lead was offered by Alfred Dwight Sheffield in his introductory discussion in the third edition of Soule's *Dictionary of English Synonyms* (1938), where he makes the point that *words can be displayed together in a synonym cluster to be chosen from when they share a basic meaning such that each synonym can be felt as offering this "core-sense" expressively enriched by further distinctions of sense, feeling, or tone.* Unfortunately, in his revision of Soule, Sheffield failed to carry over his eminently sound approach and did not make such core-senses available to the users of the book. Nor is it always apparent that his synonym lists consistently share such a basic meaning. Nonetheless, his approach pointed to the need for more thorough analysis in identifying synonyms for use in Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Thesaurus.

For practical purposes of analysis it became necessary to view synonymy as a relationship not between words nor even between lexicographic senses of words. It was essential to seek out discrete objective denotations uncolored by such peripheral aspects of meaning as connotations, implications, or quirks of idiomatic usage. Only by dissecting senses is it possible to isolate

ultimate meanings and reach something which goes a little beyond Sheffield's core-sense and which for simplicity's sake will be here designated *elementary meaning.* Perhaps this approach needs to be examined more specifically to clarify the object in view. For example, there is a sense of the noun *input* in Webster's Third New International Dictionary that reads

> **:** power or energy put into a machine or system for storage (as into a storage battery) or for conversion in kind (as into a mechanically driven electric generator or a radio receiver) or conversion of characteristics (as into a transformer or electric amplifier) usu. with the intent of sizable recovery in the form of output

Obviously much of this definition is, as it should be from the lexicographic point of view, peripheral matter designed to guide and orient the consultant of the dictionary rather than a fundamental part of the denotation of the word in the sense in question. Stripped of this peripheral matter the sense can be restated denotationally as

power or energy put into a machine or system for storage
or for conversion in kind
or conversion of characteristics.

When this in turn is expressed graphically

power		machine		storage
	put into a		for	conversion in kind
energy		system		conversion of characteristics

it becomes plain that there are twelve simple statements of denotation or individual elementary meanings associated in this single sense. Of these twelve only one, "energy put into a system for storage," could reasonably be considered as a synonym of *charge* as applied to a storage battery. For the purposes of Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Thesaurus a word is construed as a synonym if and only if it or one of its senses shares with another word or sense of a word one or more elementary meanings.

When the synonymous relationship is viewed in terms of elementary meanings, the process of selecting synonyms is both simplified and facilitated. For example, it is immediately apparent that no term narrower in scope than the pertinent meaning of the headword can be its synonym, i.e., *sedan* cannot be a synonym of *automobile, biceps* cannot be a synonym of *muscle,* and *imply* cannot be a synonym of *communicate,* even though a very definite relation exists between the members of each pair. On the other hand, a term (such as *input* above)more broadly defined than another by the lexicographers is nonetheless a valid synonym of the latter if the two share one or more elementary meanings. In order to pin down the area of synonymity for the user, each main entry in Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Thesaurus prefixes to its synonym list a *meaning core* (see p. 18a) which states the elementary meaning or meanings and any peripheral notions common to all the members of the synonym group.

The Antonym
The term *antonym* was introduced by C. J. Smith in *Synonyms and Antonyms* (1867) as a term correlative to *synonym.* He identified the word somewhat ambiguously in his preface by stating that *words which agree in expressing one or more characteristic ideas in common he [the author] has regarded as Synonyms, those that negative one or more such ideas he has called Antonyms.*

However, in his discussion of the etymology of the word *antonym* he elaborates the idea that though basically expressing the notion of a word used *in substitution for another,* this can be construed practically as one used *in opposition to another.* The idea of opposition is further stressed by his suggestion of *counterterm* as an alternative to *antonym.* The evidence clearly indicates that Smith in presenting the concept of *antonym* had in mind words that constitute the *negative opposite* of a term toward which they are antonymous. Unfortunately, the vagueness of his presentation and the looseness of his own usage within the body of his book have allowed great variation in subsequent application of the term. As a result, many synonymists have come to view antonyms as in some vague way converse to or contradictory of words toward which they are antonymous rather than as sharply, exactly, and completely opposed to such words in a manner that negates the implications of the latter.

In one collection or another various classes of terms have been construed as antonyms. Among these are several that, though of questionable validity, merit some consideration.

1 *Relative terms* have such a relationship one to the other that one can scarcely be used without suggesting the other (as *husband* and *wife, father* and *son, buyer* and *seller),* yet there is neither real opposition nor real negation between such pairs. Their relation is reciprocal or correlative rather than antonymous under any reasonably strict interpretation of the antonymous relationship.

2 *Complementary terms* in a similar way are normally paired and exhibit a reciprocal relationship such that one is likely to seem incomplete without its mate (as in such pairs as *question* and *answer, seek* and *find).* This reciprocal relation which involves no negation is better viewed as sequential than antonymous.

3 *Contrastive terms* differ sharply from their "opposites" only in some parts of their meaning. They neither oppose nor negate full force, since they differ significantly in range of meaning and applicability, in emphasis, and in the peripheral suggestions they convey. For example, *destitute* (an emphatic term carrying strong suggestions of misery and distress) is contrastive rather than antonymous with respect to *rich (a* rather neutral and matter-of-fact term), and *poor* (another neutral and matter-of-fact term) is the appropriate antonym of *rich.* Essentially, contrastive words are only tangentially opposed.

There can be no question that the inclusion of words like those just discussed whittles away at the basic notion of the antonym as an antithetical negative correlative of a term and that such whittling is undesirable. Certainly the treatment in dictionaries and manuals which indulge in this practice has become increasingly haphazard, uninformative, and unhelpful to the user of these works.

The editors of Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Thesaurus feel that reappraisal of the antonym concept is long overdue. As in the case of synonyms, the relation needs to be viewed as one between isolable segments of meaning rather than between words or lexicographic senses of words. For the purposes of this book, a word which in one or more obits elementary meanings precisely opposes a corresponding area of meaning of another word and which through its implications negates each implication that individualizes its opposite is an antonym of the latter word.

This definition effectively excludes from consideration those classes of words previously

discussed which either imperfectly oppose or incompletely negate their "opposites". There remain, however, three classes of words from which antonyms may reasonably be drawn. These are:

1   *Opposites without intermediates.* Such words are so opposed as to be mutually exclusive and to admit of no middle ground between them. They deny, point by point and item by item, whatever their opposites affirm. Thus, what is *perfect* can be in no way *imperfect* and what is *imperfect,* to however slight a degree, by no shift or twist can be viewed as *perfect;* one cannot in any way at once *accept* and *reject* or *agree* and *disagree.*

2   *Opposites with intermediates.* Such words constitute the terminal elements in a range of divergence and are so genuinely and diametrically opposed that the language admits of no wider divergence. Thus, a scale of excellence might include *superiority, adequacy, mediocrity,* and *inferiority,* but only the first and last are so totally opposed that each precisely negates what its opposite affirms. Similarly, in the sequence *prodigal, extravagant, careless, careful, frugal, parsimonious* there are three antonymous pairs. *Prodigal* (stressing excessive extravagance) and *parsimonious* (stressing excessive frugality) effectively cancel one another, as do *extravagant* (stressing disregard of conservation) and *frugal* (stressing attention to conservation), or *careless* (stressing imprudence in expenditure) and *careful* (stressing prudence in expenditure). In such sequences the antonymous relation exists only between those members that are genuinely and precisely opposed. Other members (as *prodigal* and *frugal* or *careless* and *parsimonious)* may contrast sharply, but they do not clash full force; they are contrastive rather than antonymous.

3   *Reverse opposites.* These are terms that are opposed in such a way that each expresses the undoing or nullification of what the other affirms. Perhaps it is technically questionable practice to accept *nullification* as the equivalent of *negation;* yet the words overlap significantly in their range of meaning. Is it unreasonable, then, to accept two kinds of negation, one of which connotes privation (as, *bad is* the negation, or privation, of *good)* and the other of which connotes undoing or nullification (as, *reclamation is* the negation, or nullification, of *abandonment)?* Surely, these reverse opposites are entitled equally to consideration as antonyms when they precisely oppose and fully negate the special features of their opposites. Thus, *disprove* and its close synonym *refute so* perfectly oppose and so clearly negate the implications of *prove* that they fit the character of antonyms as effectively as does *unkind* with respect to *kind* or *come* with respect to *go.*

So, then, for the purposes of Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Thesaurus, words that are opposites without intermediates, opposites with intermediates, or reverse opposites, and only these will be construed as antonymous.

Related and Contrasted Words

Though the editors of Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Thesaurus are committed to a rigorous policy in the identification of synonyms and antonyms, they have no intention of evading their responsibility to those interested in a wider range of material for use in word finding or vocabulary building. In order to make relevant additional matter available without doing violence to reasonably restricted concepts of synonymy and anonymity, the book features lists of related and contrasted words wherever these seem appropriate and likely to be helpful. *Related words* (often misdescribed as synonyms) and *contrasted words* (often misdescribed as antonyms) are actually near-synonyms and near-antonyms respectively. They are words which do not quite

qualify as synonyms or antonyms under a strict definition of these terms but which are so closely related to or so clearly contrastable with the members of a synonym group that the user of the book has a right to have them brought to his attention under appropriate headings.

Phrases and Idiomatic Equivalents

In the search for ever longer synonym lists thesaurists increasingly have included phrases among their synonyms. These phrases fall into three classes:

1 *word equivalents.* These are phrases that function as if they were single words. More often than not they are combinations of noun and attributive noun (as *county agent)* or noun and adjective (as *hard sell)*or of verb and adverb (as *make up).* However, such phrases may beamed up of any kinds of verbal elements and may perform the function of any part of speech (as *with one accord,* adverb; *except for,* preposition; *Near Eastern,* adjective; *insofar as,* conjunction). These firmly fixed combinations that act as if they were single words and fulfill the grammatical functions of single words can scarcely be entirely excluded from synonym lists.

2 *glosses.* These are phrases that restate the meaning of a word. Essentially, they are brief, sometimes cryptic definitions. There is no definition of *synonym* that reasonably can be construed to justify the inclusion of restatements or definitions in synonym lists. Thus, "do heavy menial service" is a gloss rather than a synonym of *drudge,* "haven opinion" is a gloss of *opine,* and "in a state of inferiority to" is a gloss of *under.* In the opinion of the editors of Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Thesaurus, there is no place in a synonym list for such phrases since they contribute nothing useful to the vocabula ry of the user of a thesaurus.

3 *idioms.* These are phrases that have a collective meaning other than the additive meaning of the constituent words. For example, there are no literal meanings of *compare* and *note* that allow the phrase "compare notes" to mean "to exchange observations and views"; yet, this is what it does mean. There are no literal meanings of the constituent words that allow "come a long way" to mean "make progress, succeed"; nonetheless, it does mean this. When idiomatic phrases mean the something as particular words the temptation to include them in relevant synonym lists is strong. Such phrases, however, lack the qualities that excuse addition of word equivalents to synonym lists - they do not function as words but, rather, as different ways of conveying the notions that particular words convey. As in the case of glosses there is no definition of *synonym* that justifies the inclusion of idioms in a synonym list. Nonetheless, such *idiomatic equivalents* are of potential value to the user of a thesaurus since they can add force, variety, and sprightliness to his expression. The editors of Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Thesaurus have effected a compromise and included selected *idiomatic equivalents* of synonym groups or of particular words in synonym lists in separate lists that follow the pertinent synonym lists.

Explanatory Notes

How to Use Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Thesaurus

Every thesaurus user should read these Explanatory Notes because a thorough understanding of the scope, content, and structure of the book is essential to its effective employment. The Explanatory Chart (pages 14a-15a) that depicts and spotlights the book's basic components is keyed to those sections of the Explanatory Notes where detailed discussions of particular features may be found. The key lines at the bottom of the text pages also direct the user to these Explanatory Notes.

Since the English lexicon contains an incalculable number of fixed combinations, senses, subsenses, and nuances of meaning (for example, Webster's Third New International Dictionary records some 251 distinguishable meanings for the verb *set* and its fixed combinations), *it is essential that the thesaurus be used in conjunction with an adequate dictionary.*

Scope of Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Thesaurus

This book is concerned with the general vocabulary of the English language. Since the user may actually be hindered rather than helped by a vocabulary diluted with obsolete, archaic, or extremely rare terms or with specialized or technical jargon, such words have been omitted.

Structure and Content

Entry Order The body of the book consists of main and secondary entries introduced by alphabetically ordered boldface headwords, as

> **raid** *vb* **1** to make a raid on < Indians *raided* the settlers frequently >
>   *syn* foray, harass, harry, maraud
>   *rel* despoil, devastate, ravage, sack, spoliate, waste; loot, plunder, rifle, rob
> **2 syn** INVADE 1, foray, inroad, overrun, overswarm
> **raider** *n syn* MARAUDER, forager, freebooter, looter, pillager,
>   plunderer, ravager, ravisher, sacker, spoiler
> **rail** *n syn* RAILING, balustrade, banister

where *raid, raider,* and *rail* are the headwords introducing either a main entry (as **raid** *vb 1),* or a secondary entry (as **raid** *vb* 2, **raider** n, or **rail** *n*).
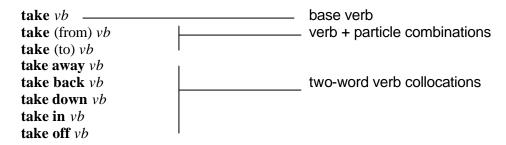
Homograph headwords are entered in historical order: the one first used in English is entered first, as

> **till** *prep*
> **till** *conj*
> **till** *vb*

Verbs used predominantly with one or two prepositions or adverbs may be headwords introducing main or secondary entries; in this case, they are entered with the verb segment in boldface type followed by the parenthetical element or elements in lightface type. Such verb + particle combinations immediately follow their base verb in alphabetical order:

put *vb* ——————————————————— base-verb homograph
put (back) *vb*
put (on) *vb*　　　　　　　├———————— verb + particle combinations
put (on *or* upon) *vb*
put *n* ——————————————————— noun homograph

Fixed verb + adverb collocations commonly entered in dictionaries as two-word verbs have boldface entry at their appropriate alphabetical positions in this book. However, they follow any verb +particle combinations occurring in the same alphabetical sequence:

take *vb* ——————————————————— base verb
take (from) *vb*　　　　├———————— verb + particle combinations
take (to) *vb*
take away *vb*
take back *vb*　　　　　├———————— two-word verb collocations
take down *vb*
take in *vb*
take off *vb*

Headwords ordinarily conform to normal dictionary practices: for instance, they are styled as singular nouns or infinitive verbs. Special situations (as plural usage or variant spellings) are signaled by the use of boldface subheads, as

crossroad n, usu **crossroads** *pl but sing or pl in constr*
　syn JUNCTURE 2, . . .
woe *n* . . . 3 usu **woes** *pl* **syn** DISASTER, . .
catercorner *(or* **catty-corner** *or* **kitty-corner)** *adv*
　syn DIAGONALLY,. . .

where **crossroads** and **woes** are subheads indicating plural usage, and
catty-corner and **kitty-corner** are subheads showing variant spellings of the headwords.

The Main Entry and Its Basic Elements Each main entry consists of a headword followed by a part-of-speech label, a sense number when needed, a meaning core with a brief verbal illustration, and a list of synonyms. Lists of related words, idiomatic equivalents, contrasted words, and antonyms follow the synonym list if they are called for. A typical main entry is

　　　calm *adj* 1 free from storm or rough activity < the
　　　　wind died and the sea became *calm* >
　　　　syn halcyon, hushed, placid, quiet, still, stilly,
　　　　untroubled
　　　　rel inactive, quiescent, reposing, resting; pacific,
　　　　smooth, tranquil, unruffled
　　　　idiom calm as a millpond, still as death
　　　　con agitated, disturbed, perturbed, restless,
　　　　turbulent, uneasy
　　　　ant stormy

where the italic part-of-speech label *adj* indicates that the headword is an adjective. Other such labels used in the book are: *adv* (adverb), *conj* (conjunction), *interj* (interjection), *n* (noun), *prep*

(preposition), *pron* (pronoun), and *vb* (verb).

Individual senses of multisense entries (as **calm** *adj)* are introduced by a boldface sense number (as **1**).

> The meaning core, as at **calm 1**
> free from storm or rough activity

indicates the area of meaning in which a group of words (in this case *calm, halcyon, hushed, placid, quiet, still, stilly,* and *untroubled)* are considered to be synonymous.

In other words, the meaning core pinpoints the exact relationship between the main-entry headword and its synonyms.

A meaning core may be supplemented by a usage note introduced by a lightface dash when additional information or comments on syntax or usage are required:

> **yet** *adv* 1 beyond this - used as an intensive to
> stress the comparative degree

Some interjections express feelings but otherwise are untranslatable into substitutable meaning; in such cases, the meaning core itself may be replaced by a usage note:

> **good-bye** *interj* - used as a conventional expression
> of good wishes at parting

Each meaning core is followed by a verbal illustration enclosed by angle brackets, as

> < the wind died and the sea became *calm* >

that exemplifies a typical use of the headword (here, **calm)** in itspertinent sense (1). The verbal illustration also offers the thesaurus usera frame for testing the suitability of the synonyms and/or related wordswith regard to his particular needs. Two verbal illustrations may appearafter a meaning core that is broad enough to subsume alternatives (as both a literal and an extended use):

> **see** *vb 1* to take cognizance of by physical
> or mental vision < *saw* that the boat was being
> driven ashore > < the only one who *saw* the truth >

Such double illustrations have been chosen with discretion and are used sparingly in this book.

The boldface italic abbreviation *syn* introduces a synonym list thatappears at each main entry on a line below the meaning core and theverbal illustration. This list may consist of only one synonym (as *here* at**hitherto** *adv 2)* or of many (as *halcyon, hushed, placid, quiet, still, stilly,*and *untroubled* at **calm** *adj 1).* Each synonym in a main-entry list has aboldface entry at its own alphabetical place.

A compare cross-reference may appear at the end of a main-entry *syn*list. This cross-reference introduced by the italic word *compare is* used(1) when two or more groups of synonyms are very closely related and itis felt that the user examining one list should be aware of the existenceof the other list or lists:

> **assassin** *n* a person hired or hirable to
> commit murder < found out who paid the *assassin* >
> *syn* bravo, cutthroat, gun, gunman, J1 gunsel, gunslinger, hatchet
> man, hit man, torpedo, triggerman; *compare* MURDERER
>
> **murderer** *n* one who kills a human being
> < *a murderer* who wouldn't hesitate to kill in cold blood >
> *syn* homicide, killer, manslayer, slayer; *compare* ASSASSIN

and (2) when the user should be warned that certain words have evolvedderivative senses that tend to blur precise sense boundaries andconsequently cause an overlapping of senses or of meaning, thus makingthose words somewhat less desirable choices for the user in terms ofpreciseness than other words in the lists. A comparison of the mainentries

> **ration** *n* an amount allotted or made available
> especially from a limited supply < saved up their gasoline *ration* for
> a vacation trip >
> *syn* allotment, allowance, apportionment, measure, meed, part,
> portion, quantum, quota, share; *compare* SHARE I
>
> **share** *n 1* something belonging to, assumed by,
> or falling to one (as in division or apportionment) < wanted his
> *share* of the prize money >
> *syn* allotment, allowance, bite, cut, lot,
> part, partage, portion, quota, slice; *compare* RATION

reveals the usage overlap of the synonyms *allotment, allowance, part, portion, quota,* and *share,* which are indeed valid synonyms at both entries.

The Secondary Entry and Its Basic Elements
A secondary entry consists of a boldface headword followed by apart-of-speech label, a boldface sense number when needed, *a syn*cross-reference in small capitals directing the user to the appropriatemain entry in whose *syn* list the secondary entry appears (followed whenneeded by a lightface sense number of the main entry), and a list of theother synonyms appearing at the main entry. Lists of related words,idiomatic equivalents, contrasted words, or antonyms that arespecifically applicable to the secondary-entry headword in therelationship indicated by the *syn* cross-reference may be included as well.A typical secondary entry is

> **placid** *adj 1 syn* CALM 1, halcyon, hushed, quiet,
> still, stilly, untroubled
> *rel* irenic, peaceful, serene, unagitated, unstirring
> *ant* roiled

where **placid** is the headword, *adj* is the part-of-speech label, 1 is thesense number of the secondary entry, and *syn* CALM 1 is the *syn*cross-reference directing the user to the main entry **calm 1** where *placid*is a synonym. The terms *halcyon, hushed, quiet, still, stilly,* and*untroubled* comprising the secondary-entry *syn* cross-reference list arethe synonyms at **calm 1.** As such, each of these terms is entered at itsown alphabetical position with at least one sense that is cross-referred to **calm 1, as**

> **still** *adj* **1** *syn* MOTIONLESS, . .
> **2** *syn* CALM 1, halycon, hushed, placid, quiet,
> stilly, untroubled
> *rel* peaceful, unperturbed
> **3** devoid of or making no stir *. . .syn . . .*

where only sense *2* of **still** is the secondary entry of **calm 1.**

If a main-entry *syn* list contains more than ten terms (as at **notable *n* 1),** the secondary entries cross-referred to that main entry include only nine synonyms selected from the entire list. This space-saving convention is illustrated at

> **high-muck-a-muck** *n syn* NOTABLE 1, big boy, ‖ big
> cheese, ‖ big chief, big shot, ‖ big wheel,
> bigwig, mugwump, nabob, VIP

where nine synonyms of the thirty-four at the main entry have been selected for inclusion at the secondary entry.

Main and Secondary Entries: Elements Common to Both
All, some, or none of the following lists may appear at both main and secondary entries in this order: related words, idiomatic equivalents, contrasted words, and antonyms.

The boldface abbreviation *rel* introduces a list of related words. Therelated words — words that are almost but not quite synonymous withthe headword — are included at an entry next after the synonym list.For example, at the main entry

> **splendid** *adj . . .*
> **2** extraordinarily or transcendently impressive . .
> *syn* glorious, gorgeous, magnificent, proud,
> resplendent, splendiferous, splendorous, sublime, superb
> *rel* eminent, illustrious; grand, impressive, lavish,
> luxurious, royal, sumptuous; divine, exquisite,
> lovely; incomparable, matchless, peerless,
> superlative, supreme, unparalleled, unsurpassed;
> surpassing, transcendent

the *rel* list is composed of twenty terms separated into five subgroups that each share a common likeness or relation with the headword and its synonyms. On the other hand, at the secondary entry

> **splendiferous** *adj syn* SPLENDID 2, . . .
> *rel* dazzling, marvelous; smashing, walloping;
> rattling, ripping, screaming, terrific

three subgroups of eight terms were selected as being distinctivelyrelated to *splendiferous* rather than to the whole synonym group in thecontext indicated by the syn cross-reference to **splendid 2**. Related wordsappearing at a main entry are not ordinarily repeated at the secondaryentries. The user should therefore check the main entry when seeking themost complete groupings of related words. Related words as such arenot entered in boldface at their own alphabetical places. They may, ofcourse, be synonyms in other lists or head their own main entries.

The boldface italic abbreviation ***idiom*** introduces a list of idiomaticequivalents that are essentially the same in meaning as the members of asynonym group. An ***idiom*** list at a main entry includes phrases that aregenerally pertinent to the entire syn list and the headword, as the ones at

> **speak** *vb 1* to articulate words in order to express
> thoughts . . .
> *syn* talk, utter, verbalize, vocalize, voice
> *rel* . . .
> *idiom* break silence, give voice *(or* tongue *or* utterance) to,
> let fall, make public (or known), open
> one's mouth *(or* lips), put in *(or* into) words, say one's say,
> speak one's piece

while a secondary-entry list, as the one at

> **retaliate** *vb syn* RECIPROCATE, recompense,
> requite, return
> *rel* . . .
> *idiom* even the score, get back at, get
> even with, give in kind, give one a
> dose of his own medicine, give one tit for
> tat, pay one in his own coin, settle (or
> square) accounts, turn the tables on

features idioms that are particularly appropriate equivalents of itsheadword in the context indicated by the *syn* cross-reference. Idiomaticequivalents, including those fixed verb + preposition combinations thatfunction as idioms rather than as literal meanings of the verb, are notentered in boldface at their own alphabetical places in this book.

The boldface italic abbreviation *con* introduces a list of contrastedwords — words that are strongly contrastable but not quite antonymouswith the headword — that may appear at an entry:

> **watchful** *adj* paying close attention usually
> with a view to anticipating approaching
> danger or opportunity . . .
> *syn* . . .
> *rel* . . .
> *idiom* . . .
> *con* careless, heedless, thoughtless;
> inadvertent; absentminded, abstracted,
> faraway
> **alert** *adj 1 syn* WATCHFUL, open-eyed,
> unsleeping, vigilant, wakeful, wide-awake
> *rel* . . .
> *idiom* . . .
> *con* inattentive, unmindful; aloof,
> detached, indifferent, unconcerned

At the main entry **watchful** *adj* the *con* list is composed of seven wordsseparated into three subgroups that each share at least one aspect ofcontrast to the headword and its *syn* list, while the

con list at thesecondary entry **alert 1** comprises six words separated into two suchsubgroups. Contrasted words appearing at a main entry are notordinarily repeated at the secondary entries. The thesaurus user shouldtherefore check the main entry when seeking the most completegroupings of contrasted words. Contrasted words as such are notentered in boldface at their own alphabetical places. They may, ofcourse, be synonyms in other lists or head their own main entries.The boldface italic abbreviation *ant* introduces the last possibleelement of a main or secondary entry: an antonym or list of antonyms,as at the entry
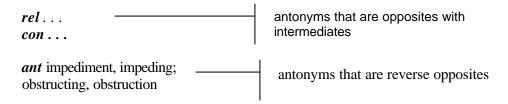
> **perfect** *adj* . . . **2** . . .
>   *ant* imperfect

or at the entry

> **quiet** *adj* . . . **4** not showy or obtrusive .
>   *ant* gaudy, loud

When antonyms are drawn from more than one of the accepted classes of opposites (see Antonym, page 10a), members of the groups are separated by semicolons, as at the entry

> **assistance** *n syn* HELP 1, aid, assist, comfort,
>   hand, lift, relief, secours, succor, support

rel . . .
con . . .   antonyms that are opposites with
                     intermediates

ant impediment, impeding;
obstructing, obstruction   antonyms that are reverse opposites

Like related and contrasted words, antonyms as such are not entered in boldface at their own alphabetical places. They may, of course, be synonyms in other lists or head their own main entries.

Main and Secondary Entries: The One Arbitrary Rule Ideally, a booksuch as this should be free of all arbitrary restraints and curtailments. Inpractice, however, its editors found that one rule was essential: *No word may appear in more than one list at a main or secondary entry.* Forexample, *nice* is a synonym at **pleasant** *adj* 1. The applicable sense of*nice* is found in Webster's Third New International Dictionary at theentry [1]**nice . . .** *adj* . . . **7** (binding substitute) + **7b**, where the definitions are

> **:** pleasant and satisfying: as . . . **b :** ENJOYABLE,
> PLEASING, DELIGHTFUL < *a nice* time at
> the party > < *nice* and warm by the fire > < we have
> four *nice* bedrooms upstairs to make them
> comfortable —Willa Cather >

However, one might reasonably construe senses **7e** (**:** MILD, CLEMENT,PLEASING < the *nice* weather of late spring > < the *nice* old days of thepast >) and **7g** (**:** FITTING, APPROPRIATE, SUITABLE < the *nice* clothesshe wears > < not a *nice* word for use in church >) as a basis forentering *nice* as a related word as well as a synonym at **pleasant 1,** while sense **8** in Webster's

Third New International Dictionary

> **:** most inappropriate **:** UNPLEASANT, UNATTRACTIVE,
> TREACHEROUS - used ironically < a chronic
> alcoholic is certainly *a nice* one to talk about
> temperance > < *a nice* friend, who would have
> me . . . cover myself with eternal infamy -J.A.
> Froude > < got himself in *a nice* fix >

could be construed as evidence for entering *nice* as both a contrasted word and an antonym at
pleasant 1.

Obviously, the thesaurus user would not be helped by an entry showing any word in such an
involved relationship with itself.

Labels, Punctuation, and Symbols

Labels Words that are labeled *cap* or *usu* [ally] *cap* in Webster's Third New International
Dictionary are capitalized in this book. Thus, the synonyms *Gehenna, Pandemonium, Sheol,* and
Tophet are so styled at the main entry **hell** *n* as are the related words *Styx* and *Tartarus.* A term
that is capitalized in a main-entry *syn* list is also capitalized when it appears as a boldface
secondary entry at its own alphabetical position:

> **Gehenna** *n syn* HELL, . . .

If only one entered sense of a word is capitalized, an italic *cap* label followed by a boldface
capitalized subhead is attached to the affected sense:

> **pandemonium** *n 1 cap* **Pandemonium** *syn* HELL, . .
> **2** *syn* SINK 1, . . .
> **3** *syn* DIN, . . .

In addition to the part-of-speech label, an italic plural label may be added when a word or a sense
of a word is sometimes, often, usually, or always used in the plural. Typical examples of these
labels are found at

> **years** *n pl syn* OLD AGE, age, caducity,
> elderliness, senectitude, senescence

where *pl* indicates that the headword **years** is always plural in form and construction in this
particular application, and at

> **road** *n 1 often* **roads** *pl syn* HARBOR 3,
> anchorage, ‖ chuck, harborage, haven,
> port, riding, roadstead
> **2** *syn* WAY 1, artery, avenue, boulevard,
> ‖ drag, highway, path, street, thoroughfare, track
> **3** *syn* WAY 2, course, line, passage, path,
> route

where sense 1 (and only that sense) of the headword **road** is often but not always used in the plural, and at

> **minutia** *n, usu* **minutiae** *pl* **1** *syn*
> INS AND OUTS, ropes
> **2** *syn* TRIVIA, small beer, small
> change, small potato(es), triviality

where the label preceding both senses indicates that the headword **minutia** is usually used in the plural in both of these applications, and at the main entry

> **trivia** *n pl but sometimes sing in constr*

where the label is qualified to show that this plural noun may sometimes be used with a singular verb, and at

> **common** *n* **1 commons** *pl but sing or pl in*
> *constr syn* COMMONALTY, commonage,
> commoners, common men, people, plebeians,
> plebs, populace, rank and file, third estate

which indicates that **common** occurs as a plural noun in sense **1** but may occur with either singular or plural verbs, and at

> **outdoors** *n pl but sing in constr* the space where
> air is unconfined < every night he let the dog
> run in the *outdoors*>

whose label indicates that while the word *outdoors is* a plural noun, itconsistently takes a singular verb. Use of these labels conforms to thetreatment of plurals in Webster's Third New International Dictionary.An italic subject guide phrase pointing to something with which theheadword is associated may precede a meaning core in a very fewinstances, as at

> **set** *vb* . . . || *of a fowl* to incubate eggs
> by crouching upon them . . .

Punctuation comma links items (as synonyms, idiomaticequivalents, members of a single group or subgroup of related orcontrasted words or of antonyms) that are alike in their relation to theheadword, as at

> **conservative** *adj* . . . **2** . . .
> *syn* controlled, discreet, moderate, reasonable,
> restrained, temperate, unexcessive, unextreme
> *rel* cautious, chary, wary; circumspect, politic, proper,
> prudent
> *con* expansive, unconstrained; excessive, freewheeling,
> uncontrolled, unrestrained

A semicolon signals a break in continuity and is used in *rel* and *con* lists (as between the two subgroups in the *rel* and *con* lists at **conservative** *2* above) to separate subgroups of words which differ in their relation to the headword. A semicolon is also used to separate antonyms that belong

to different classes of opposites, as

> **arise** *vb* **1** *syn* RISE 4, ascend, aspire, lift, mount,
> soar, up, uprear
> ***ant*** recline; slump

where the two antonyms are so separated. A semicolon may also appear at the end of a main-entry *syn* list to introduce a compare cross-reference, as shown at **honorable** *adj* **1***:*

> *syn* estimable, high-principled, noble,
> sterling, worthy; *compare* VENERABLE 1

Parentheses enclose variant spellings, as at the main entry **cake** *vb* **1** where

> encrust *(or* incrust)

is a synonym, and at the secondary entries, where that particular
synonym is styled

> **encrust** *(or* **incrust)** *vb syn* CAKE 1, . . .

Parentheses also enclose a particle or particles usually associated with a base word, as

> **adore** *vb* . . . 3 to love, admire, or enjoy excessively . . .
> *syn* dote (on *or* upon), idolize, worship
> dote (on *or* upon) *vb syn* ADORE *3,* . . .

Similarly, parentheses may indicate usage alternatives in idiomatic expressions, as at **slavery** *n* 2
where

> *idiom* the yoke *(or* chains) of slavery

alerts the user that he may choose one of two noun elements when employing this particular
idiom. Parentheses are also used in main-entry *syn* lists to enclose plural suffixes of words that
are sometimes, often, or usually but not always used in the plural:

> **scad** *n, usu* **scads** *pl a* great number or abundance
> *syn* gob(s), heap, jillion, load(s), million,
> oodles, quantities, . . .

Parentheses enclose material indicating a typical or, occasionally, a sole object of reference, as in
the meaning core of **express** *vb* 2

> to give expression to (as a thought, an opinion, or an emotion)

where they enclose an adjunct, or at entries such as **abrogate** *vb* **2**

> *ant* establish, fix (as a *right, a quality, or*
> *a custom*)

where an antonym or a group of antonyms are associated with a

particular object or objects of reference - a restriction or limitation to
which the thesaurus user should be alerted.

Symbols Two warning symbols are used in this book: the asterisk
and the double bars ‖.

The asterisk prefixes terms that are generally or often considered vulgar and that are appropriately
stigmatized in Webster's Third New International Dictionary. Examples of such terms may be
found at the main entries **fool** *n* **1** and **nonsense** *n* **2**. If an asterisk prefixes a term in a
main-entry syn list, it also prefixes that term at its secondary entry. When only one sense of an
entry is considered vulgar, the asterisk precedes only the affected sense of the entry.

The double bars prefixing some terms in this book warn the user that the employment of such a
term may involve a problem of diction too complex for presentation in a thesaurus, or a
restriction in usage. Consequently, the thesaurus user should consult a dictionary if he is in doubt
about the stylistic level or appropriateness of the word or if he is unfamiliar with its meaning. For
example, ‖ **fat cat** (a synonym of **notable** *n 1),* ‖ **chuff** (a synonym of **sullen** *adj),* and ‖ **puxy** (a
synonym of **swamp** *n)* are all double-barred in this book because they carry stigmatizing or
regional labels in Webster's Third New International Dictionary.