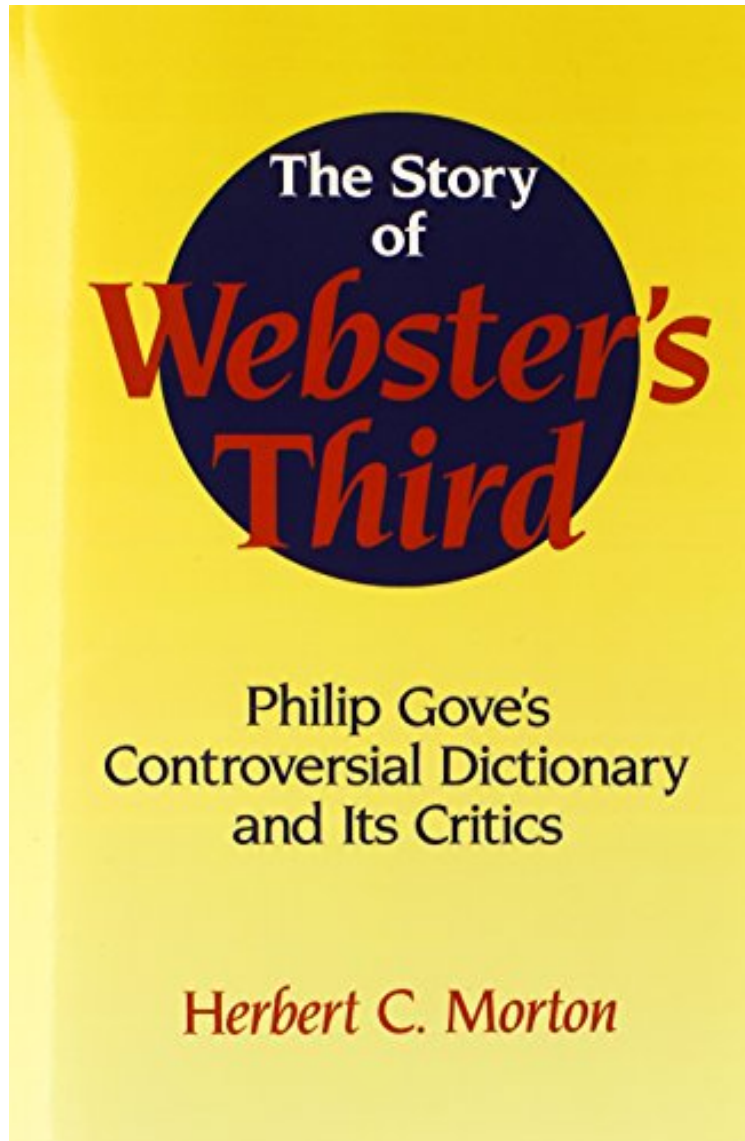


The Story of Webster's Third: Philip Gove's Controversial Dictionary and its Critics

Herbert C. Morton

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Herbert C. Morton : The Story of Webster's Third: Philip Gove's Controversial Dictionary and its Critics
before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Story of Webster's Third: Philip Gove's Controversial Dictionary and its Critics:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A wonderful story for fans of cultural history By Jerome Mc Kenna This is both a biography of Philip Gove and a story about the creation of what became his magnum opus, the

third edition of the Webster's New International Dictionary. He was a capable lexicographer, but the biography of a lexicographer doesn't make the most exciting reading. So, it is the preparation of the new edition that is the story. The third was a major change from the second. Almost all the extraneous content of the second such as the history section were removed. This was done to save space. The idea was to keep the dictionary something that would fit in one volume. The other major change was the move to a less prescriptive style. This caused a major uproar and Mr. Gove was attacked by the very people who should have understood what he was doing. The scandal of the release may be one reason why the publisher hasn't yet released a fourth edition even 63 years later. This is a good book for dictionary fans and lovers of cultural history. 29 of 30 people found the following review helpful. The most significant U.S. dictionary of the 20th century By Bruce Horner If you're one of those people who consider a well done dictionary to be good early-morning reading material (and really, who isn't?) then this book is for you. Seriously, the Merriam-Webster Third Edition created a huge controversy when it was first released in 1961, being the first major U.S. dictionary that took a mainly DESCRIPTIVE rather than PRESCRIPTIVE approach to the English language. Never mind that European dictionaries had been doing much the same for a hundred years or more, to many Americans this was heresy. The ripples from this storm are still bouncing about today. Too bad that Philip Gove, the editor and virtual godfather of the Third, was such a poor defender of it. Also too bad he didn't live long enough to see his editorial philosophy largely vindicated. Morton gives equal attention to Philip Gove, the dictionary itself, and the G. C. Merriam Company. The historical section on Noah Webster and his dictionary, how it was acquired by the Merriam brothers, and the subsequent history of the company is most informative and fascinating. So is the discussion at the end of the lasting effects of Webster's Third. As it should be with any book about dictionaries, the material is well-organized, with everything clearly and logically laid out. A good read, and a must for lexicophiles. 11 of 15 people found the following review helpful. The American Big Dictionary By COPhilip Gove spent his career producing this magnum opus. Morton traces the work and the explosion that occurred when the dictionary was published. It's the American version of "The Professor and the Madman".

The publication of Webster's Third New International Dictionary in 1961 set off a storm of intense controversy in both the popular press and in scholarly journals due to widespread disagreements about the nature of language and the role of the dictionary. This is the first full account of the controversy, set within the larger background of how the dictionary was planned and put together by its editor-in-chief, Philip Babcock Gove. Based on original research and interviews with the people who knew and worked with Gove, this is a human story as well as the story of the making of a dictionary. The author skillfully interweaves an account of Gove's character and working habits with the evolution of the dictionary. In spite of its rocky initial reception, Webster's Third is now widely regarded as one of the greatest dictionaries of our time.

"...informed, rational and utterly persuasive...Now comes Herbert C. Morton with his splendid account of the book's making and its reception, a book that along with its spirited defense of Gove should make clear to the lay reader the aims and methods of lexicography, a business until now understood by almost no one." Washington Post Book World "Herbert C. Morton's account of the affair is a chronicle of war to compare with the best....Although Morton is plainly in Gove's camp, even the most knuckle-rapping of purists should find his fine book profoundly rewarding." The Boston Sunday Globe "...a well balanced and interestingly informative. As a book about a dictionary ought to be, it is decently written." Anthony Quinton, TLS "...anyone who has an interest in the documentation of such things would be well served to obtain a copy....well-written and interestingly set forth." Laurence Urdang, Verbatim "Only rarely has the process of lexicography been given such insightful and understanding treatment by a non-lexicographer as we find in Morton's book." Sharp News From the Back Cover The publication of Webster's Third International Dictionary in 1961 set off a storm of controversy that was virtually unprecedented in its scope and intensity. Herbert Morton tells the story from the beginning, drawing on new sources. He describes how the third edition was planned and put together by Gove, where it went astray, and how it was misunderstood and misinterpreted by its detractors.