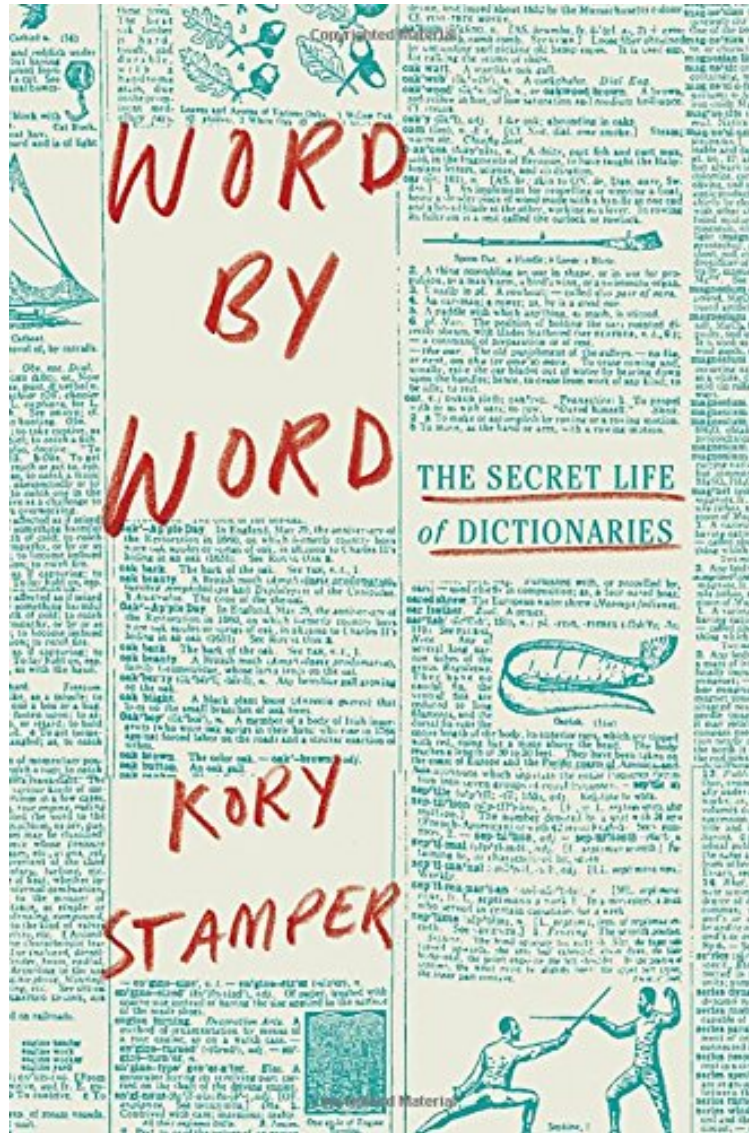


Word by Word: The Secret Life of Dictionaries

Kory Stamper

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Kory Stamper : Word by Word: The Secret Life of Dictionaries before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Word by Word: The Secret Life of Dictionaries:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Harmless drudgery and the joy of angst By P. Reilly Who knew the depths of emotion called up by a monosyllable? The agita brought on by a part of speech. This wonderful book rejoices in words and the nuts who love them. I've not read better on the subject. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Great book By Titania Fascinating book about how dictionaries are made. This logophile found the book very accessible. It was informative without being stuffy. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

Highest Accolades By Dr.G. My highest accolades. Most informative, readable, and above all, a superlative addition to the literature.

Do you have strong feelings about the word irregardless? Have you ever tried to define the word is? Brimming with intelligence and personality, this vastly entertaining account of how dictionaries are made is a must-read for word mavens. Many of us take dictionaries for granted, and few may realize that the process of writing dictionaries is, in fact, as lively and dynamic as language itself. With sharp wit and irreverence, Kory Stamper cracks open the complex, obsessive world of lexicography, from the agonizing decisions about what to define and how to do it, to the knotty questions of usage in an ever-changing language. She explains why small words are the most difficult to define, how it can take nine months to define a single word, and how our biases about language and pronunciation can have tremendous social influence. And along the way, she reveals little-known surprises—for example, the fact that OMG was first used in a letter to Winston Churchill in 1917. *Word by Word* brings to life the hallowed halls (and highly idiosyncratic cubicles) of Merriam-Webster, a startlingly rich world inhabited by quirky and erudite individuals who quietly shape the way we communicate. Certain to be a delight for all lovers of words, *Stampers* debut will make you laugh as much as it makes you appreciate the wonderful complexities and eccentricities of the English language.

.com An Best Book of March 2017: We think of English as a fortress to be defended, but a better analogy is to think of English as a child, writes Kory Stamper in her witty and surprising new book, *Word by Word*. As English grows, it lives its own life, and this is right and healthy. Sometimes English does exactly what we think it should; sometimes it goes places we don't like and thrives there in spite of all our worrying. We can tell it to clean itself up and act more like Latin; we can throw tantrums and start learning French instead. But we will never really be the boss of it. And that's why it flourishes. *Word by Word* is part memoir, part history of dictionaries in particular, those published by Stamper's employer, Merriam Webster. Language lovers (can we call them logophiles, Ms. Stamper?) will have a fine time in the author's company as she discusses the unpredictable and uncontrollable ways of her mother tongue. The surprises come when she describes the difficulties of defining seemingly simple words like *nude* and *marriage*. Stamper and her fellow lexicographers work mostly in silence, but they can't escape being drawn into our era's vociferous political discourse. Along the way, there's much pleasure to be had in Stamper's down-to-earth, frequently ribald narrative style, which keeps *Word by Word* from feeling overly intellectual or highfalutin. Readers will find a deeper understanding of how dictionaries are compiled, and a trove of amusing insights into definitions and derivations. On fleek? Invented by a 16-year-old YouTuber. Pumpernickel? Translates to fartgoblin. Posh? If you're certain that term derives from English-Empire lingo for port-out-starboard-home, think again. While you might not choose to spend an entire month of your life writing a dictionary entry for take, Stamper conveys the delight, frustration, and satisfaction her vocation entails. She has that special feeling for language she calls *sprachgefühl*: the odd buzzing in your brain that tells you that planting the lettuce and planting misinformation are different uses of *plant*. *Word by Word* offers laymen a glimpse into a crack lexicographer's mind, and it turns out to be definitively a very entertaining place indeed. --Sarah Harrison Smith, *The Book* "As a writer, Kory Stamper can do anything with words: define them, split them, lump them, agglute them, and make them work for her every bit as ferociously and precisely as she works for them in her day job as a far from mild-mannered lexicographer at Merriam-Webster. You will never take a dictionary entry for granted again." Mary Norris, bestselling author of *Between You Me* "A love letter to letters themselves... A cheerful and thoughtful rebuke of the cult of the grammar scolds. Stamper [is] a wry and charming correspondent. *Word by Word* is, like a dictionary itself, a composite affair: It's a memoir that is also an explanation of the work that writing a dictionary entails." Megan Garber, *The Atlantic* "An unlikely page-turner Stamper displays a contagious enthusiasm for words... Illuminating." *The New Yorker* "Delightful, informed, irreverent and witty. A gloriously (occasionally even uproariously) well-written book, and unsurprisingly erudite. Do read [*Word by Word*]." Stevie Godson, *New York Journal of Books* About the Author KORY STAMPER is a lexicographer at Merriam-Webster, where she also writes, edits, and appears in the Ask the Editor video series. She blogs regularly on language and lexicography at www.korystamper.com, and her writing has appeared in *The Guardian* and *The New York Times*, and on *Slate.com*.