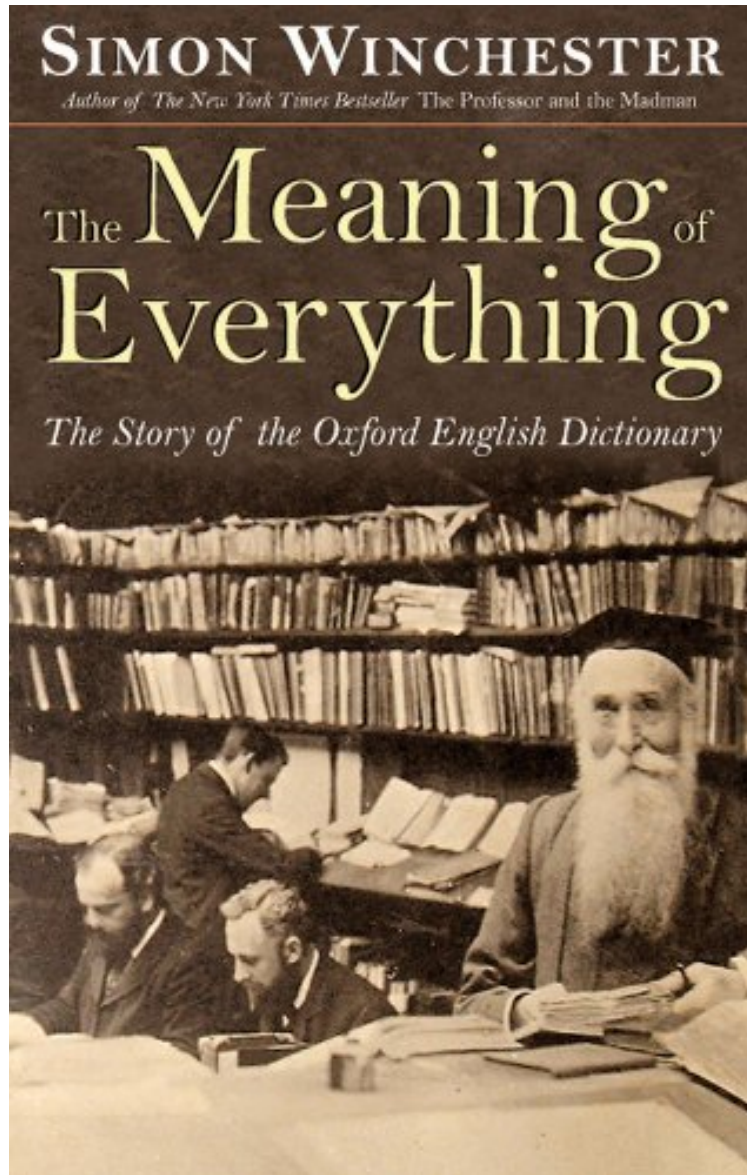


[Mobile ebook] The Meaning of Everything: The Story of the Oxford English Dictionary

The Meaning of Everything: The Story of the Oxford English Dictionary

Von Simon Winchester OBE

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Von Simon Winchester OBE : The Meaning of Everything: The Story of the Oxford English Dictionary before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Meaning of Everything: The Story of the Oxford English Dictionary:

KundenrezensionenHilfreichste Kundenrezensionen1 von 2 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. Rome wasn't built in a day... Von FrKurt MessickThe towering products of the English language include several disparate kinds of works - the plays of Shakespeare, the poetry of Chaucer, the Authorised King James Version of the Bible, the Encyclopedia Britannica, and the book that is the subject of Simon Winchester's text, the Oxford English Dictionary. Contrary to the belief of some who might never have seen the dictionary, this is no 'mere' dictionary. Some people have the two volume edition that comes in a box-slip case with a magnifying glass (I remember being offered one such when I belonged to a book club twenty years ago), whereas major libraries will have the larger-print 20 volumes of words. This is a publication still in progress. The OED now has plans for a BBC television show that hunts for words and word origins; the website edition of the OED is in constant revision and very heavily used. According to the OED, 'The Oxford English Dictionary is the accepted authority on the evolution of the English language over the last millennium. It is an unsurpassed guide to the meaning, history, and pronunciation of over half a million words, both present and past. It traces the usage of words through 2.5 million quotations from a wide range of international English language sources, from classic literature and specialist periodicals to film scripts and cookery books.' How did it come to have such authority in the English language? One thing to consider about the difference between English and a language such as French is that there is no definitive central authority that has official imprimatur over linguistic matters. Unlike the French Academe (which does itself have to bow ultimately to public convention in matters of common use), English has been for most of its time a flexible, fluid language born of competing strands within the Indo-European language family - words have Germanic, Latinate, Celtic, Greek and other influences; in the more recent times, Native American, African and Asian words have crept into common use. Winchester's book gives a look at the early days of the development of the major project, the Oxford English Dictionary, and the kind of language world in which this project would exist. How does one trace English language words from a diverse island of speakers who have expanded beyond that island to become a worldwide empire? Winchester's prologue gives a good story of the inauguration of the first edition (then twelve volumes, described as 'twelve mighty tombstone-sized volumes') of the OED in the Goldsmith Hall, with Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin presiding over a grand ceremony fit for a king on Derby Day. The then editor-in-chief William Craigie had been knighted and given an honorary degree from Oxford in recognition of his efforts; however, he had not been at the helm for the duration, for the task of coming to this point had begun over 70 years before - William Craigie had yet to be born when the OED project started. Winchester gives a short description of the history and state of the language, including earlier attempts to produce dictionaries. 'Not one of them - not Johnson, not Webster, not Richardson - ever did the English language justice.' None came close to containing all the words in the English language. The pursuit of a thorough dictionary began as a pursuit 'both learned and leisured'. Progress was slow, and sometimes looked as though the whole process might falter - indeed, in the first twenty years, a mere 40 pages were in type, although hundreds of thousands of words had been collected and organised in note card fashion, stored in pigeon-holes. There were issues early that threatened the comprehensive nature of the dictionary project - Herbert Coleridge, the first editor, had moral objection to certain words being included. These were not the typical curse words, but rather words like 'devilship'. Coleridge died young, however, 'on the quintessentially English date of 23 April - both the Feast of St. George and the birthday of Shakespeare'. Coleridge's estimate of 100,000 quotations was a grand underestimate, but he did set the project on a trajectory from which it would eventually succeed. Perhaps the most interesting characters part of this tale are Fitzedward Hall, a hermit who was obsessed with the OED project, and William Chester Minor, a murderer-lunatic whose involvement in the project was nothing short of remarkable. One can imagine that were Hall alive today, he would be obsessively glued to a computer screen tracking down words and word origins and typing up little emails to submit to the OED editorial team. Minor's way of reading, described here by Winchester, reminds me in many ways of the method by which internet reviewers sometimes size up books in preparation for writing reviews, with prodigious regularity. This is a wonderful text, fascinating in the many details and broad in scope of the project that in many ways encompassed the whole of the English language.

Kurzbeschreibung'The greatest enterprise of its kind in history,' was the verdict of British prime minister Stanley Baldwin in June 1928 when The Oxford English Dictionary was finally published. With its 15,490 pages and nearly two million quotations, it was indeed a monumental achievement, gleaned from the efforts of hundreds of ordinary and extraordinary people who made it their mission to catalogue the English language in its entirety. In The Meaning of Everything, Simon Winchester celebrates this remarkable feat, and the fascinating characters who played such a vital part in its execution, from the colourful Frederick Furnivall, cheerful promoter of an all-female sculling crew, to James Murray, self-educated son of a draper, who spent half a century guiding the project towards fruition. Along the way we learn which dictionary editor became the inspiration for Kenneth Grahame's Ratty in The Wind in the Willows, and why Tolkien found it so hard to define 'walrus'. Written by the bestselling author of The Surgeon of Crowthorne and The Map That Changed the World, The Meaning of Everything is an enthralling account of the creation of the world's

greatest dictionary..deAsk a logophile or crossword-puzzle addict what the holiest of holy reference works might be, and you're almost certain to receive a three-letter acronym in reply: the OED. The Meaning of Everything is its story. Now in 20 volumes and still growing, the Oxford English Dictionary is an astounding monument, one that, like the Great Wall and the Roman Forum, seems to have been around forever. But, writes the always interesting explorer Simon Winchester in, it took decades--and considerable sums of money--to bring it into being. The Scottish autodidact James Augustus Henry Murray, surrounded by a small army of underpaid and overworked helpers, laboured over it for more than half a century, seeing into print "a total of 227,779,589 letters and numbers, occupying fully 178 miles of type" that brought the elusive histories of words such as walrus (courtesy of JRR Tolkien) and cow ("the female of any bovine animal", courtesy of Murray himself) into sharp relief. The making of the great dictionary over the years and decades seems an unlikely topic for a sometimes romantic, sometimes suspenseful tale, but Winchester delivers just that. Those who cherish words will find it a constant pleasure. --Gregory McNamee.co.ukAsk a logophile or crossword-puzzle addict what the holiest of holy reference works might be, and you're almost certain to receive a three-letter acronym in reply: the OED. The Meaning of Everything is its story. Now in 20 volumes and still growing, the Oxford English Dictionary is an astounding monument, one that, like the Great Wall and the Roman Forum, seems to have been around forever. But, writes the always interesting explorer Simon Winchester in, it took decades--and considerable sums of money--to bring it into being. The Scottish autodidact James Augustus Henry Murray, surrounded by a small army of underpaid and overworked helpers, laboured over it for more than half a century, seeing into print "a total of 227,779,589 letters and numbers, occupying fully 178 miles of type" that brought the elusive histories of words such as walrus (courtesy of JRR Tolkien) and cow ("the female of any bovine animal", courtesy of Murray himself) into sharp relief. The making of the great dictionary over the years and decades seems an unlikely topic for a sometimes romantic, sometimes suspenseful tale, but Winchester delivers just that. Those who cherish words will find it a constant pleasure. --Gregory McNamee