

Homework 10: DICTIONARY/ REFERENCE WORK

These exercises will require you to use the *OED*, *The American Heritage Dictionary* (nicknamed the *AHD*) (online at www.ahdictionary.com), and other basic reference tools .

1. According to the *OED*, which meaning (*sallied/solid/sullied*) best fits the line from *Hamlet* you looked at in the thought questions? **Solid** (adj.) is what they cite, but **sullied** matches the meaning very well.
2. Look up the etymologies of *delight*, *haughty* and *spright* and explain the presence of *gh* in their spellings. **The –gh- spelling is by analogy to words that have a historical –gh-. It’s not a historical spelling.**
3. Explain the *b* in the spelling of *crumb*, *numb*, and *thumb* by comparing them with *dumb* and *plumb*. **Again, by analogy to words that have a historical (though silent) –b- spelling.**
4. Compare the usage advice you get in the *OED* and *AHD* for the following words:

Ain’t OED: [A contracted form of *are not* (see [AN’T](#)), used also for *am not*, *is not*, in the pop. dialect of London and elsewhere; hence in representations of Cockney speech in Dickens, etc.,and subsequently in general informal use. The contraction is also found as a (somewhat outmoded) upper-class colloquialism. Cf. *won’t*, *don’t*, *cân’t*, *shân’t*.] Under an’t: contraction of *are n’t*, *are not*; colloquially for *am not*; and in illiterate or dialect speech for *is not*, *has not* (*han’t*). A later and still more illiterate form is [AINT](#), q.v.

AHD: Nonstandard

1. Contraction of am not.
2. Used also as a contraction for are not, is not, has not, and have not.

Usage Note: *Ain’t* has a long history of controversy. It first appeared in 1778, evolving from an earlier *an’t*, which arose almost a century earlier as a contraction of *are not* and *am not*. In fact, *ain’t* arose at the tail end of an era that saw the introduction of a number of our most common contractions, including *don’t* and *won’t*. But while *don’t* and *won’t* eventually became accepted at all levels of speech and writing, *ain’t* was to receive a barrage of criticism in the 19th century for having no set sequence of words from which it can be contracted and for being a "vulgarism," that is, a term used by the lower classes, although *han’t* had been originally used by the upper classes as well. At the same time *ain’t*'s uses were multiplying to include *has not*, *have not*, and *is not*, by influence of forms like *ha’n’t* and *i’n’t*. It may be that these extended uses helped fuel the negative reaction. Whatever the case, criticism of *ain’t* by usage commentators and teachers has not subsided, and the use of *ain’t* is often regarded as a sign of ignorance. · But despite all the attempts to ban it, *ain’t* continues to enjoy extensive use in speech. Even educated and upper-class speakers see no substitute in folksy expressions such as *Say it ain’t so* and *You ain’t seen nothin’ yet*. · The stigmatization of *ain’t* leaves us with no happy alternative for use in first-person questions. The widely used *aren’t I?*, though irregular, was found acceptable for use in speech by a majority of the Usage Panel as long ago as 1964, but in writing there is no acceptable substitute for the stilted *am I not?*

Hopefully OED: It is hoped (that); let us hope. (Cf. G. *hoffentlich* it is to be hoped.) orig. U.S. (Avoided by many writers.)

AHD: adv.

1. In a hopeful manner: We began our journey hopefully.
2. Usage Problem It is to be hoped.

Usage Note: When used as a sentence adverb (as in *Hopefully the measures will be adopted*), *hopefully* has been roundly criticized since the 1960s, when it saw a sudden increase in use, for being potentially ambiguous and for lacking a clear point of view. It is not easy to explain why people selected this word for disparagement. Its use can be justified by the similar use of many other adverbs, such as *mercifully* and *frankly*: *Mercifully, the play was brief. Frankly, the food at that restaurant is terrible.* And though this use of *hopefully* may have been a vogue word back in the 1960s, it has long since lost any hint of jargon or pretentiousness for the general reader. In fact, its widespread use reflects popular recognition of its usefulness; there is no precise substitute. Someone who says *Hopefully, the treaty will be ratified* makes a hopeful prediction about the fate of the treaty, whereas someone who says *I hope* (or *We hope* or *It is hoped that*) *the treaty will be ratified* expresses a bald statement about what is desired. Only the latter could be continued with a clause such as *but it isn't likely*. People often warm to a usage once its novelty fades and it becomes well established. But not so with *hopefully*. Opposition continues to run high or even higher to this usage than it did in the 1960s. In our 1968 survey, 44 percent of the Usage Panel approved the usage. This dropped to 27 percent in our 1986 survey. We asked the question again in 1999, and 34 percent accepted the sentence *Hopefully, the treaty will be ratified*, while only 22 percent accepted the adverb when placed at the end of a sentence in the example *The new product will be shipped by Christmas, hopefully*. It would seem, then, that it is not the use of *hopefully* as a sentence adverb per se that bothers the Panel, since the comparable use of *mercifully* is acceptable to a large majority. Rather, *hopefully* seems to have taken on a life of its own as a sign that the writer is unaware of the canons of usage.

Coon OED: *derog* for reference to 'A Negro.' AHD: 1. Informal A raccoon.

2. Offensive Slang Used as a disparaging term for a black person.

Damn (adjective) OED: Used profanely as a strong expression of reprehension or dislike, or as a mere intensive. Now usually printed 'd——d'. In the Southern U.S., a common epithet prefixed to *Yankee*. [Thought that would make you laugh!] AHD: *Informal*. The least valuable bit; a jot: *not worth a damn*.

Bitch (noun) OED: Applied opprobriously to a woman; strictly, a lewd or sensual woman. Not now in decent use; but formerly common in literature. In mod. use, *esp.* a malicious or treacherous woman; of things: something outstandingly difficult or unpleasant. (See also [SON OF A BITCH](#).) **b.** Applied to a man (less opprobrious, and somewhat whimsical, having the modern sense of 'dog'). Not now in decent use. Verb--**3.** *intr.* To grumble, to complain. *colloq.* (orig. U.S.). Hence **bitching** *vbl. n.* AHD: 1. A female canine animal, especially a dog.

2. Offensive A woman considered to be mean, overbearing, or contemptible.
3. Vulgar Slang
 - a. A prostitute considered in relation to a pimp.

- b. A person in a subservient sexual role, especially an incarcerated male who provides sex to another male under threat of violence or in exchange for protection.
- c. A person who is submissive to another, usually by performing menial or unpleasant tasks.
- d. A man considered to be weak or contemptible.

4. Slang A complaint.

5. Slang Something very unpleasant or difficult: *Fixing the faucet turned out to be a bitch.*

What preliminary observations can you make about the two dictionaries' approaches to correctness using this evidence? **Shows the very difficult job a lexicographer has in balancing descriptive characteristics (the general approach of the OED) with prescriptive characteristics (the general approach of the AHD). There's actually more overlap between the two dictionaries now than there was when the AHD was started.**

5. Look in the preface to your dictionary. Identify the dictionary and summarize what its approach to "correctness" is. (If you don't have a dictionary, get one. Everyone should own a good one!) **This will vary by dictionary.**
6. In H. W. Fowler's *The King's English* (1908), a predecessor to his *Modern English Usage*, he spends a great deal of time giving advice about the correct use of *shall* and *will*. Read that advice at <http://www.bartleby.com/116/213.html>. Then consult a 21st century grammar book (either your textbook for ENGL 303 or ENGL 630, or a good contemporary grammar) about the *shall/will* distinction. What differences, if any, do you find? What does this tell you about the history of prescriptivism in the last century? Please identify which modern grammar book you are using for your analysis. **This will vary by grammar book.**
7. How does the contemporary grammar book you used in exercise #6 explain the inflectional endings in current English? **This will vary by grammar book, but will probably emphasize that "good English" always uses the correct inflectional endings.**
8. How does the contemporary grammar book you used in question 6 explain the differences in principal parts among regular, irregular, and modal verbs? **This will vary by grammar book, but will probably introduce the concept of correctness.**
9. In some of the following words, the [h] pronunciation comes from the spelling of the word rather than from its historical phonological development. Write **S** before the words that have a spelling pronunciation of [h].

S	Habit		Honey	S	Humble
	Health	S	Hospital	S	Humor
	Heart	S	Host		
S	Herb		Humor		

10. In some of the following words, the [θ] pronunciation is a result of spelling rather than a historical sound development. Write **S** before the words that have a spelling pronunciation of [θ].

S	Apothecary		Hearth		Thing
S	Authority	S	Panther		Throng
	Breath	S	Theater		
S	Catholic	S	Theme		