



Chapter 8: The Early Modern English Period

Dictionaries, Grammar
Books, and the People
You Can Blame for
Them

The Driving Forces for Regulation of the English Language

- **Age of Reason**: attempt to make the English language conform to logic
- **Religion**: right ways of expressing one's self reinforced one's morals and right behaviors
- **Science**: attempt to describe how the language worked through a system of rules and the study of etymology
- **Politics**: language as expression of national character
 - = The Orthoepists, who sought to establish standards for English spelling and pronunciation and reform the language to match THEIR standards

17th Century: The Science of Language sets up the Age of Linguistic Anxiety to come

- 17th c. scholarly writing still mostly in Latin, (e.g. Newton, Francis Bacon)
- Sprat's *History of Royal Society* (1667): as men of science, they have
“a constant Resolution, to reject all the amplifications, digressions, and swellings of style: to return back to the primitive purity, and shortness, when men deliver'd so many things, almost in an equal number of words. They have exacted from all their members, a close, naked, natural way of speaking; positive expressions; clear senses; a native easiness: bringing all things as near the Mathematical plainness, as they can: and preferring the language of Artizans, Countrymen, and Merchants, before that, of Wits, or Scholars.” (*Publications of the Royal Society* were in Latin or English.)

Logical, Godly, 'Right' Language

- 'Age of Reason' will try to impose order, logic, rules on the language system.
- Looked to languages that had survived a long time in one form (esp. Latin and Greek) as models; wanted English to have the same stability.
- Saw it as God-given duty to explain to & enforce "right" language on the masses.
- Word 'linguistics' doesn't appear till mid-19th c but the impulse toward the science is there in the 17th c.

...and of course **ANXIETY**....

- Morality: association of right-thinking with 'proper' language use (many language tools written by clergymen)
- Class: social mobility comes from imitating one's betters
- Politics: American anxiety about defining an identity separate from Britain

Anxiety & Prescriptivism

- 17th-18th c., movements favoring the creation of an organization to act as language sentinel, keep English "pure"
- Admired the model of the Académie Française (1635)
- Proponents: scientist and philosopher Robert Hooke (1660); Daniel Defoe (1697); Joseph Addison (1711); Jonathan Swift (1712)
- Queen Anne supported the idea but died in 1714 and her successor George I was not interested in English

Legislating Language

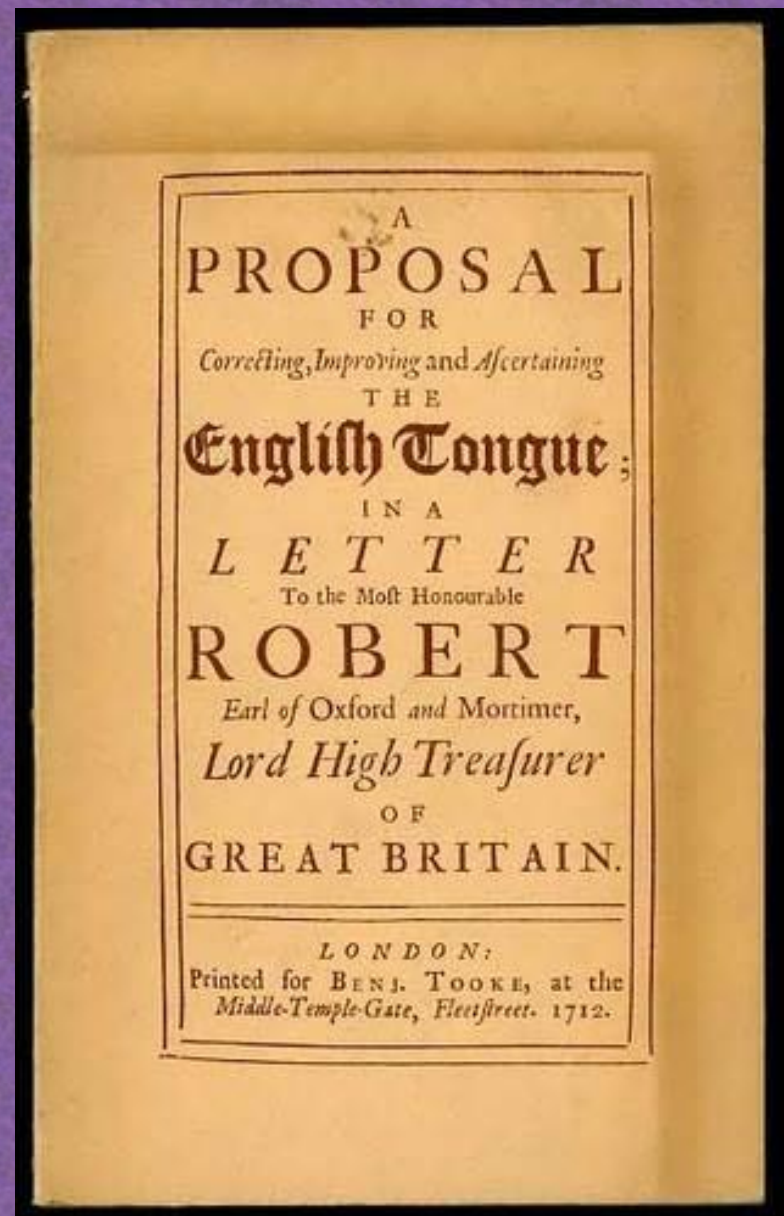
- Lexicography comes from a desire to refine, standardize, and 'fix' [freeze] the language: essentially conservative, prescriptive impulse.
- The usual practice was to record hard words or those that might be controversial and thus to give an "official" position on them.
- Publication of the first Italian dictionary in 1612 and the foundation of the *Accademia della Crusca* in Florence (1582-3), the official legislative body of the Italian language.
- *L'Académie française* established by Richelieu in 1635; first dictionary in 1694. In 1778, the Académie attempted to compile a "historical dictionary" of the French language; this idea, however, was later abandoned, the work never progressing past the letter A.

LEXICO'GRAPHER. *n. f.* [λεξικόν and γράφω; *lexicographe*, French.] A writer of dictionaries; a harmless drudge, that busies himself in tracing the original, and detailing the signification of words.

Commentators and *lexicographers* acquainted with the Syriac language, have given these hints in their writings on scripture.
Watts's Improvement of the Mind.

Jonathan Swift

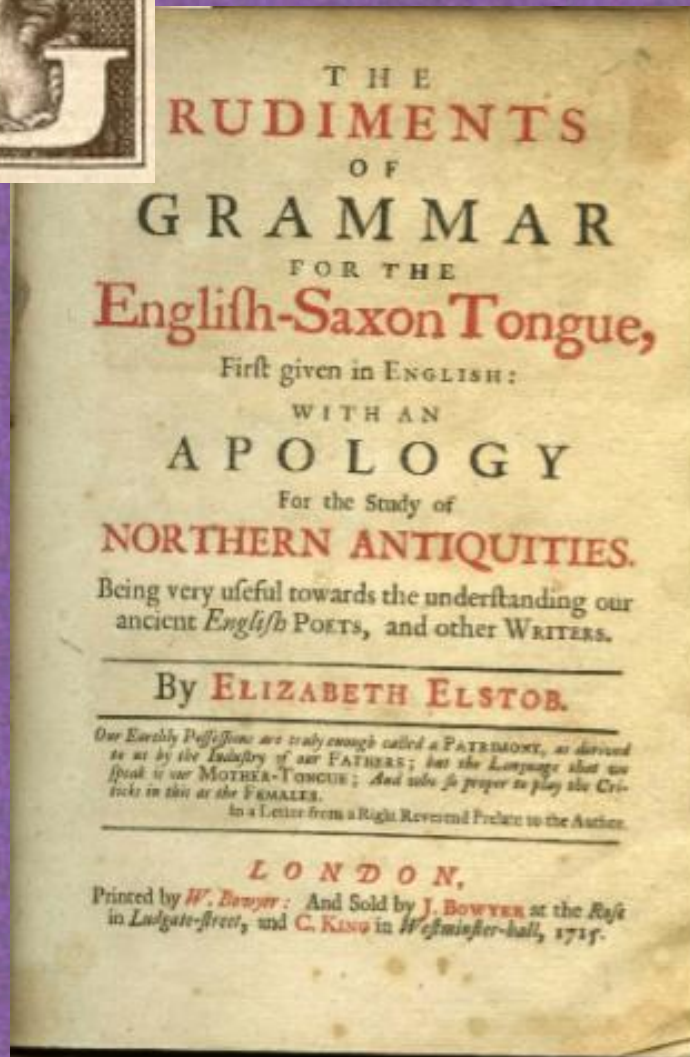
- *Proposal for Correcting, Improving, and Ascertaining the English Tongue* ([1712](#))
- Wanted an English Academy, to take out “corrupted” words like *mob*, and return to a morally authoritarian lexis
- “But what I have most at Heart is, that some Method should be thought on for *ascertaining* and *fixing* our Language for ever, after such Alterations are made in it as shall be thought requisite. For I am of [the] Opinion, that it is better a Language should not be wholly perfect, than it should be perpetually changing.”



Opponents of Prescriptivism

- Opposition from liberal Whigs who saw it as a conservative Tory scheme
- John Adams proposed an American Academy but never got anywhere with it—Americans saw it as unpatriotic
- Best articulation: Elizabeth Elstob in the preface to her Anglo-Saxon grammar

Elizabeth Elstob (1683-1756)



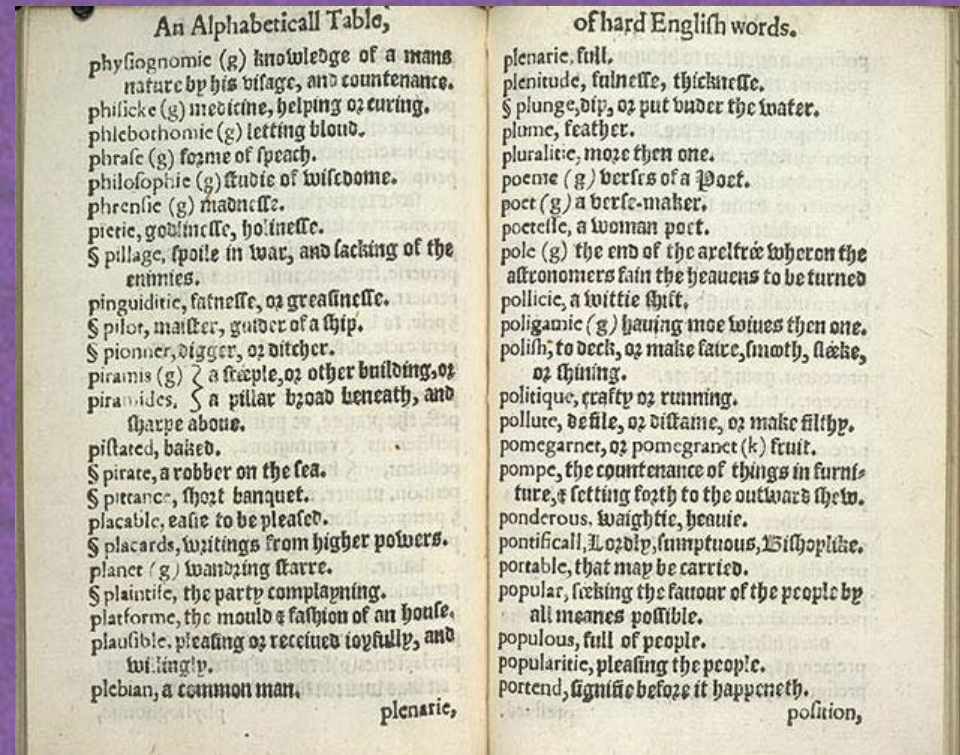
- <http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/15329>
- Response to Swift's call for "purifying" English, complete with examples
- Shows formidable knowledge of Old English
- She probably knew 9 or 10 languages

Early Lexicographers

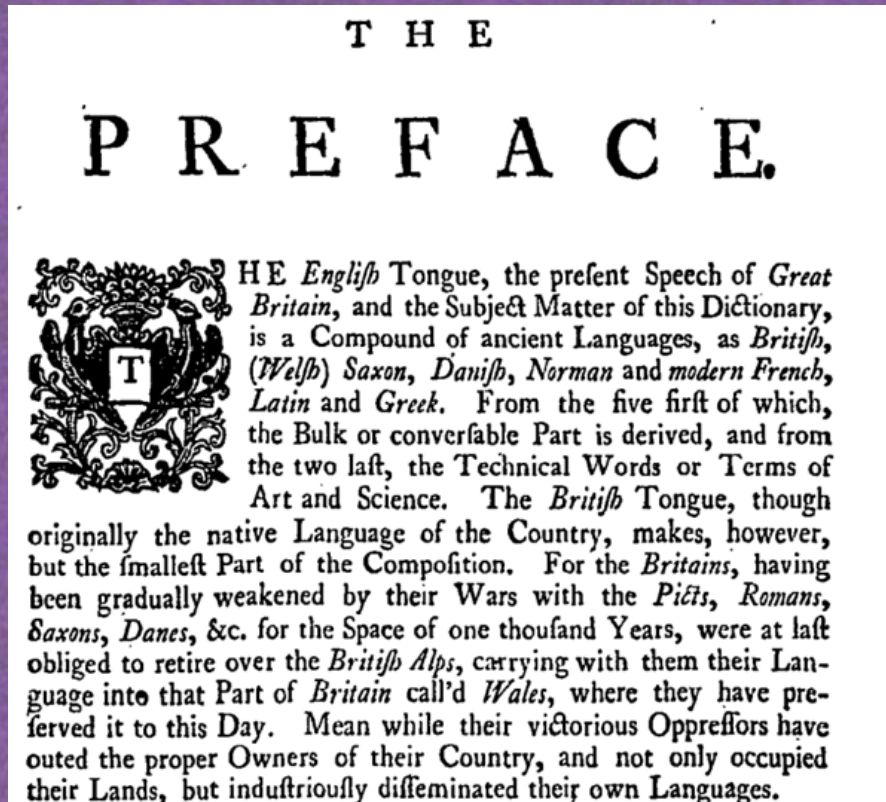
- William Caxton, printed French-English vocabulary for travelers (1480)
- John Bullokar's *An English Expositor* (1616), marked archaic words (he may have been son of the orthoepist William Bullokar)
- Henry Cockeram's *English Dictionarie* (1623) included sections on refined and 'vulgar' words and mythology
- Thomas Blount's *Glossographia* (1656): 11,000 entries, cited sources and etymologies
- John Kersey's *A New English Dictionary* (1702), first to include everyday words

1. Robert Cawdrey, *A Table Alphabeticall*, 1604

- List of 2,543 hard words
- Written “for the benefit of Ladies, Gentlewomen or any other unskilfull persons...”
- Aimed at helping people read Scripture and moral texts
- First hard words list in **alphabetical order** rather than grouped by subject
- Published eight years ahead of the first of the first Italian dictionary and 35 years ahead of the first French dictionary
- <http://www.library.utoronto.ca/utel/ret/cawdrey/cawdrey0.html>



2. Nathaniel Bailey



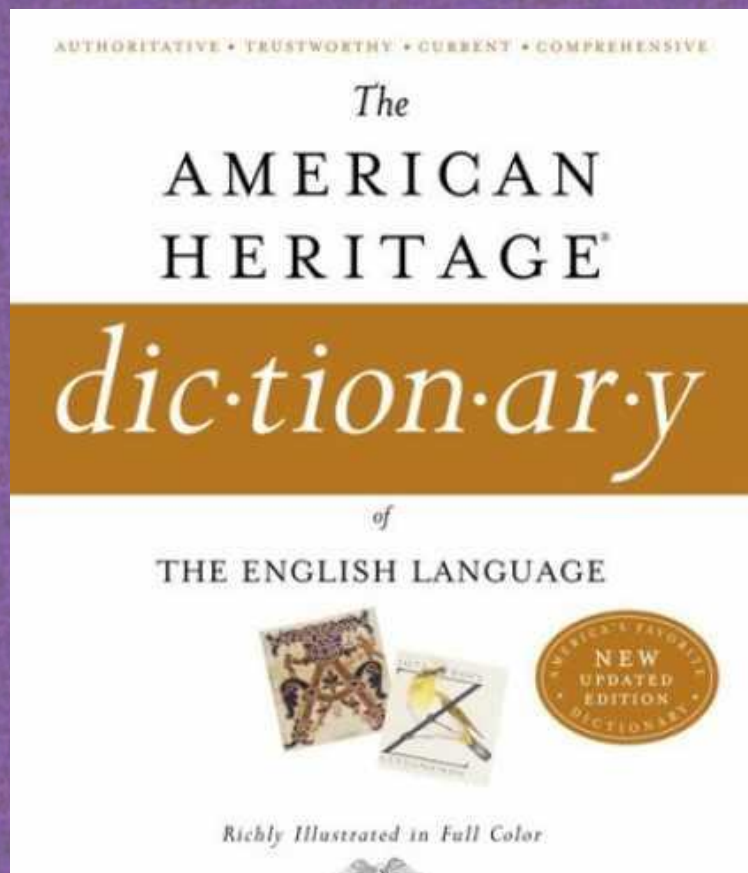
- *An Universal Etymological English Dictionary* (1721) and *Dictionary Britannicum* (1730): 48,000 entries,
- Included ordinary words, etymologies, cognate forms, stress placement
- After Swift...before Johnson

4. The *OED*: “*The*” Dictionary

- *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED), dictionary on historical principles
- followed model of Johnson's dictionary; origins in 1857 proposals to Philological Society
- 1st installment published 1884; first full version 1928;
- 2nd edition 1989, 290,500 main entries
- 3rd edition, 2020?—all electronic
- Historical and descriptive principles rather than prescriptive standards
- Crowd-sourced entries with professional editors
- Illustrative quotations
- Considered world's best dictionary

5. Webster's 3rd (1961): *"That" Dictionary*

- Based on **descriptive, not prescriptive**, linguistic principles
- **Eliminated the "nonlexical matter"** and most other proper nouns from the main text (including mythological, biblical, and fictional names, and the names of buildings, historical events, art works, etc.,)
- Also removed were words which had been virtually out of use for over two hundred years (except those found in major literature such as Shakespeare), rare variants, reformed spellings, self-explanatory combination words, and other items considered of little value to the general reader.
- Usage note for *ain't*: "though disapproved by many and more common in less educated speech, used orally in most parts of the U.S. by many cultivated speakers, esp. in the phrase *ain't I*"
- Critics charged that the dictionary was reluctant to defend standard English, for example entirely **eliminating the labels "colloquial", "correct", "incorrect", "proper", "improper", "erroneous", "humorous", "jocular", "poetic", and "contemptuous", among others.**
- Spurred creation of *American Heritage Dictionary* with its usage panel



6. American Heritage Dictionary--1969

- Created in response to Webster's 3rd Int'l.
- Usage panel to guide decisions (worth looking at)—more conservative than Webster's 3rd
- Tried to “undo the damage” that Webster's 3rd had done to language
- Praised for including Indo-European and Semitic roots
- www.dictionary.com; has iPhone application

from a steam pipe. 2. A wooden frame built especially to support the sides of an arch until the keystone is positioned. [From LAG².]

♦ **la•gniappe** (län-yăp', län'yăp') *n.* Chiefly Southern Louisiana & Mississippi 1. A small gift presented by a storeowner to a customer with the customer's purchase. 2. An extra or unexpected gift or benefit. Also called regionally *boot*. See Regional Note at **beignet**. [Louisiana French, from American Spanish *la ñapa*, the gift : *la*, the (from Latin *illa*, feminine of *ille*, that, the; see **al-** in Appendix I) + *ñapa* (variant of *yapa*, gift, from Quechua, from *yapay*, to give more).]

Regional Note *Lagniappe* derives from New World Spanish *la ñapa*, “the gift,” and ultimately from Quechua *yapay*, “to give more.” The word came into the rich Creole dialect mixture of New Orleans and there acquired a French spelling. It is still used in the Gulf states, especially southern Louisiana, to denote a little bonus that a friendly shopkeeper might add to a purchase. By extension, it may mean “an extra or unexpected gift or benefit.”

lag•o•morph (lăg'ə-môrf') *n.* Any of various plant-eating mam-

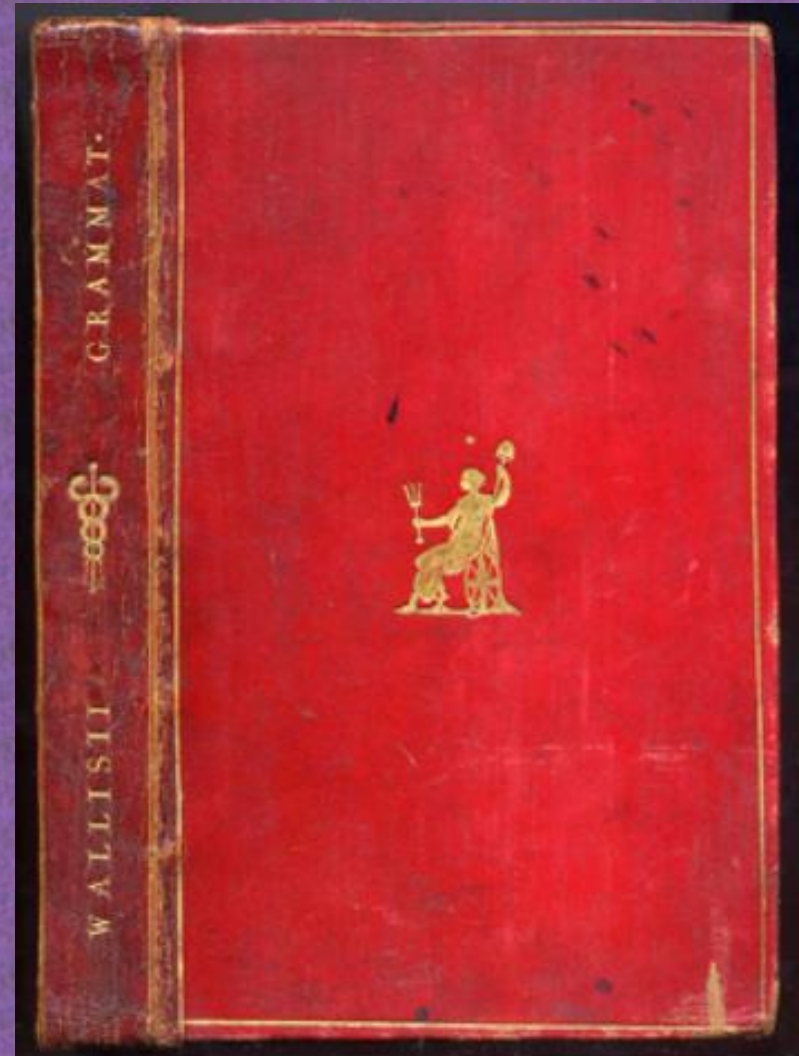
The Age of Grammars

- Ælfric: Old English *Colloquy* and *Grammar* were the first grammars that described English—in Latin, of course
- 16th & 17th century grammars are grammars of Latin and Greek; most influential is William Lilly's (d. 1522) *Rudimentia* (c. 1520), a grammar of Latin, which Henry VIII later authorized as **only grammar textbook allowed in English schools (1540)**
- 18th century attempted to define proper and improper usage; aspiring middle classes, desire to define and acquire "proper" linguistic behavior to distinguish themselves from lower classes
- 18th c. grammarians: attempts to provide rules and prevent further "decay" of language, to ascertain, to refine, to 'fix'
- Usage as moral issue

Early Attempts at Grammars

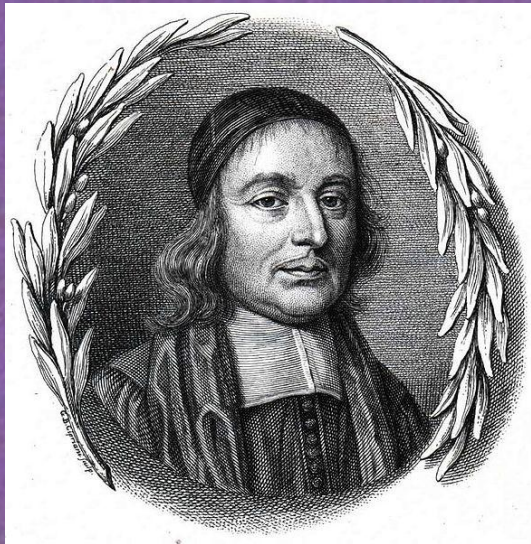
1. Wallis

Written in 1653 by John Wallis, *Grammatica Linguae Anglicanae* is generally considered the "first" book regarding English grammar. The reason why "first" is given qualification is because although it regards English grammar, it was written in Latin.



John Wallis, 1653

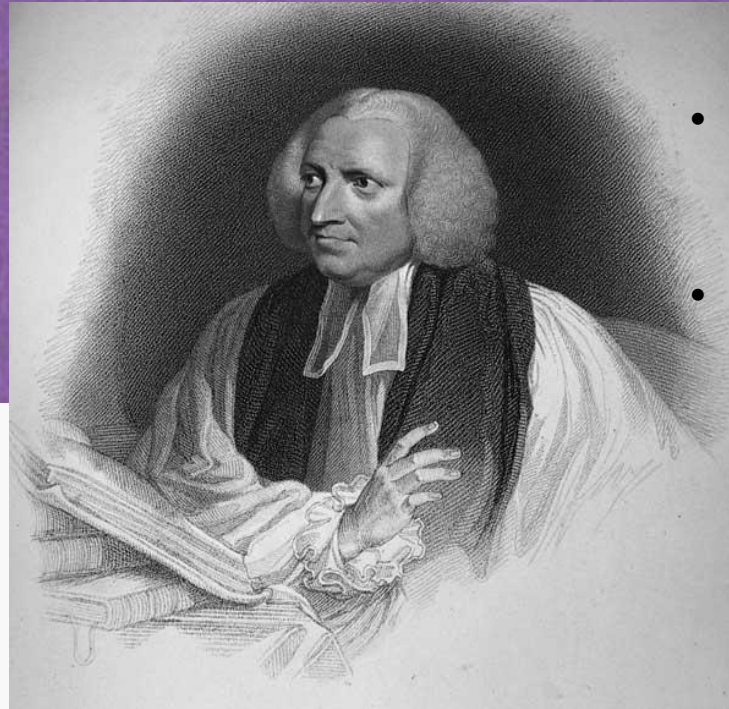
- Invented the “shall/will” distinction rule: *shall* for first person in future indicative; *will* for first person for emphasis, and the opposite modals for 2nd & 3rd persons



“Accordingly, I shall not seek, and I will not accept, the nomination of my party for another term as your President.”—Lyndon Johnson, March 31, 1968

“I thought it was a perfect example of the use of ‘shall’ and ‘will.’”—Johnson’s 3rd grade teacher, commenting on the speech to CBS News

2. Bishop Robert Lowth (1710-1787)



- *A Short Introduction to English Grammar* (1762), most prominent of 18th c. grammars;
- Authoritarian, prescriptive, moralistic tone: “The principal design of a grammar...is to teach us to express ourselves with propriety, and to enable us to judge of every phrase and form of construction, whether it be right or not.”
- Lowth's grammar is the source of many of the prescriptive commandments of grammar study.
- His most famous contribution may have been that sentences ending with a preposition—such as “what did you ask for?”—are inappropriate in formal writing

A SHORT
INTRODUCTION
TO
ENGLISH GRAMMAR:

WITH
CRITICAL NOTES.

THE SECOND EDITION, CORRECTED.

Nam ipsum *Latine* loqui est illud quidem in magna laude ponendum: sed non tam sua sponte, quam quod est a plerisque neglectum. Non enim tam præclarum est scire *Latine*, quam turpe nescire; neque tam id mihi oratoris boni, quam civis *Romani* proprium videtur. CICERO.

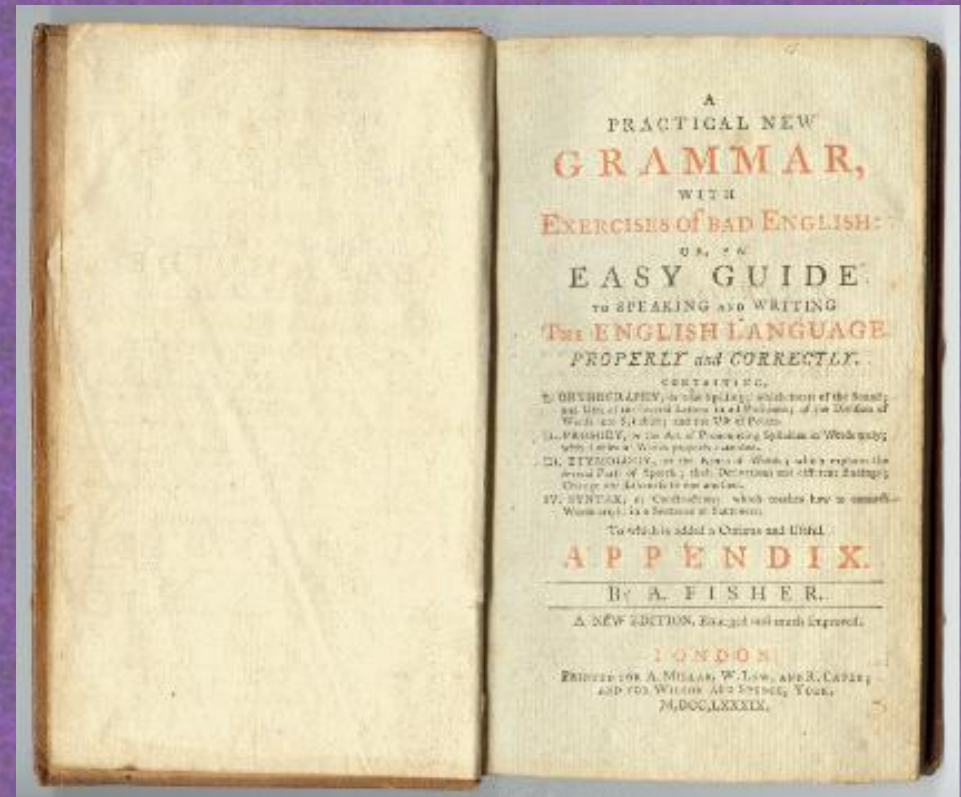
LONDON,
Printed for A. MILLAR, in the Strand; and
R. and J. DODSLEY, in Pall-mall.
MDCCCLXIII.

- At least 31 editions from 1750-1800, making it the **4th most successful grammar book written** (behind Murray, Ash, & Lowth)

YOUNG LADIES who chuse to learn the ENGLISH GRAMMAR, Yet cannot conveniently attend on SCHOOL HOURS, may ... Be instructed under the following HEADS, viz.

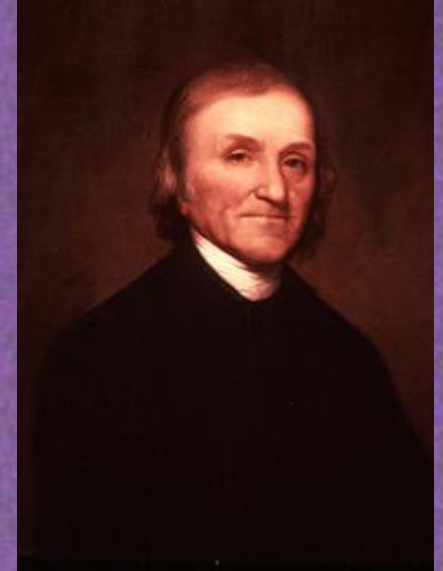
- THE peculiar SOUNDS of the several LETTERS. To spell and divide by Rule.
- An exact and proper METHOD of READING according to the Points, Cadence, and Emphasis.
- A critical Knowledge of the various Kinds of WORDS, and Parts of SPEECH to which each Word particularly belongs; with the comparing of Qualities, forming of Verbs, stating of Pronouns, &c.
- AND LIKEWISE, To concord and connect Words in a Sentence or Sentences together, consistent with the Manner of the best English Writers.

Ann Fisher's *Practical New* *Grammar (1750)*



3. Joseph Priestly

- *The Rudiments of English Grammar* (1761)
- More enlightened and liberal attitude towards language usage, awareness of change and conventionality of language features.
- **First grammar of English in English.**
- Quoted from the most famous English authors, encouraging the middle-class association between reading and pleasure and supporting morality
- Some sense of humor in explanations



4. *New England Primer*



In Adam's Fall
We finned all.

Thy Life to mend,
This Book attend.

The Cat doth play,
And after flay.

A Dog will bite
A Thief at Night.

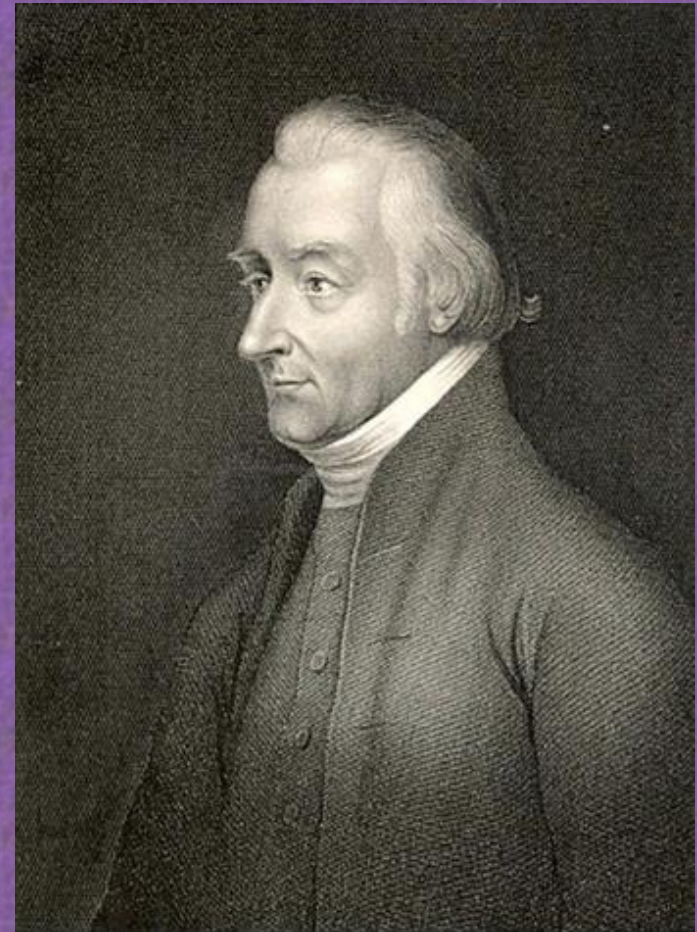
An Eagle' flight
Is out of fight.

The idle Fool
Is whipt at School.

- 1690 and many later editions
- Published as a speller along with a Puritan catechism
- Brought linguistic anxiety to the New World
- **First grammar printed in America**

5. Lindley Murray (1745-1826)

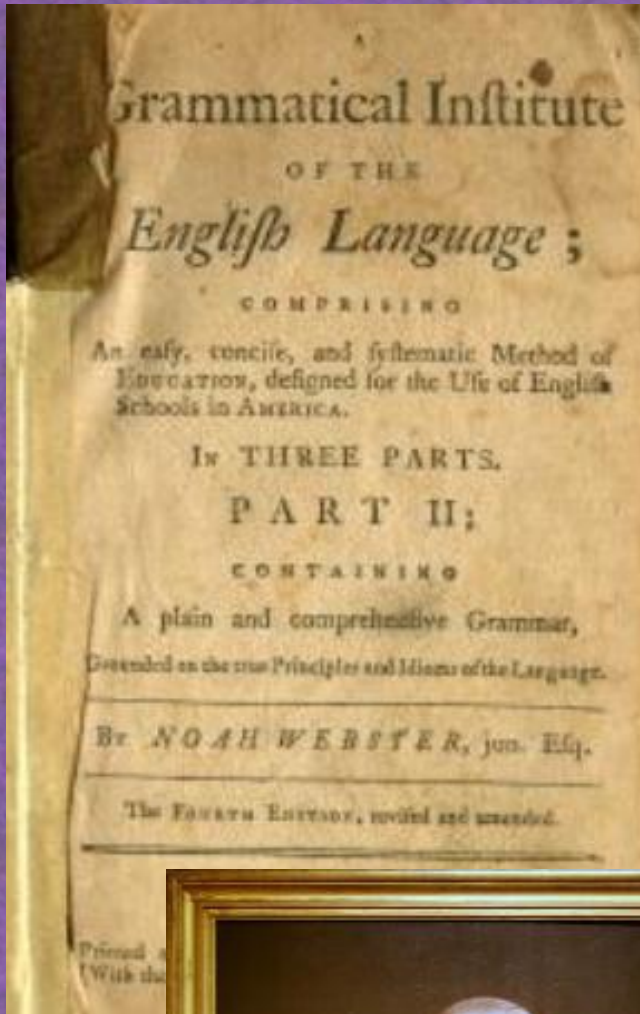
- His *English Grammar* was written for the use of a young ladies' school near York, PA. It was first published in book-form at York in 1795, and its success was immediate and extraordinary.
- Most influential early grammar of English
- 65 editions in Britain alone, and over 125 of the *Abridgement to the Grammar* in Britain, hundreds in the US
- 250 editions by 1850
- Introduced into English and American schools, and made his name a household word.
- First English grammar taught at Harvard, UNC, etc.
- Severely criticised since for its obscurity, blunders, and deficient presentation of etymology.



Shows up in “The Doubloon”
chapter of *Moby Dick*

6. Noah Webster

Politically based on common American usage but also concerned with "misuse" by Irish and Scots immigrants. *Grammatical Institutes* (1783): "the blue-backed speller" (part I), a grammar (part II), and a reader of pious examples to teach children appropriate moral behavior



- Webster's grammar was ground-breaking in that it **did not base its rules for the English language on the rules of Latin**.
- He renamed the declensions of nouns (i.e. the nominative, objective, dative, and ablative cases.)
- Nouns preceding a verb were **subjects**; nouns following a verb or preposition were **objects**.
- He called a few verbs, such as *to be*, "**auxiliary**" verbs; the rest he categorized as **transitive, intransitive, or passive**.
- He eliminated the subjunctive mode.

TO THE
 REV. EZRA STILES, S. T. D.
 PRESIDENT OF YALE COLLEGE
 AND
 PROFESSOR OF ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY;
 THIS FIRST PART
 OF A
 GRAMMATICAL INSTITUTE
 OF THE
 ENGLISH LANGUAGE,
 Is, with Permission,
 MOST HUMBLY INSCRIBED
 As a Testimony of the Author's Veneration,
 FOR HIS
 BRILLIANT TALENTS, PIETY AND PATRIOTISM,
 which enabled him to preside over this
 OF LITERATURE

RECOMMENDATIONS.

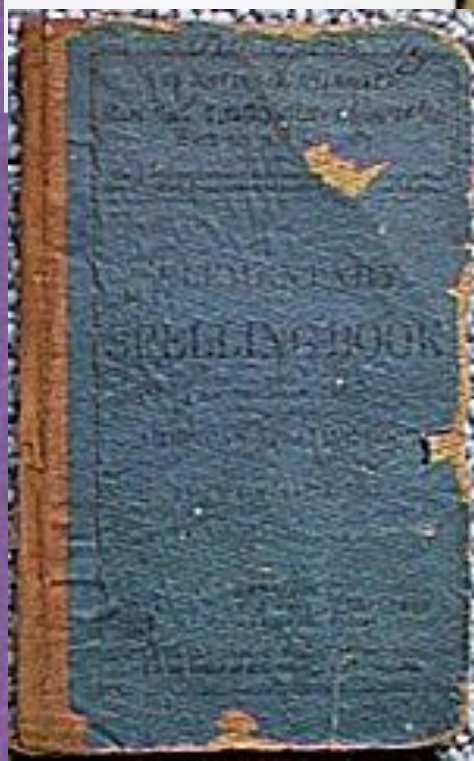
HAVING examined the first part of the new Grammatical Institute of the English Language, published by Mr. Noah Webster, we are of opinion, that it is preferable, in respect to the manner, to DuRoi's or any other Spelling Book, which has been introduced into our Schools. In this the entire omission of the tedious transcriptions is a capital defect, which very few of the present schoolmasters are qualified to execute. The usual method of tracing together, in the first instance, without any mark of definition, words in which the vowels are indistinctly pronounced, and the removal of the vowels, which are wholly arbitrary, and often ungrammatical, were calculated to puzzle the learner, and instead of affording him a solid foundation, they deface and mangle the judiciously selected and the best words, and the various additions we made will be extremely beneficial for the use of Schools. Subscribed by the following Gentlemen:

The Hon. Oliver Wolcott, Esq.	Rev. Samuel Hopkins,
Lucas, Gov. of Connecticut.	Col. Samuel Wyllys,
Rev. Ezra Stiles, S. T. D. President of Yale College,	Edw. Winstrey, Esq.
Rev. Elias Hasket, D. D.	John Franklin, Esq.
Rev. Patrick Allison, D. D.	Rev. Francis Dwight, D. D.
Hon. Joseph M. Mindel, Esq.	Rev. Elizabeth Steele,
Col. George Wyllys, Secretary of State,	Rev. Nathan Strong,
Col. Thomas Seymour, Mayor of the City of Hartford,	Rev. Nathan Perkins,
Gen. Daniel H. Poston,	Rev. Joseph B. Brewster,
Hon. John Trumbull, Esq.	Mr. Andrew Law,
	Daniel Lyman, Esq.
	Chas. G. Knapp, Esq.
	Joel Bacon, Esq.

Recd. of a letter from Dr. Joseph Willard, President of the University at Cambridge, to the author, dated Feb. 2, 1784.

I RECEIVED some time ago, three copies of your Grammatical Institute of the English Language. I have perused it myself, and put into the hands of several friends for their perusal. We all concur in the opinion, that it is a most superior to Mr. DuRoi's New Guide, and that it may be very useful in Schools. I will, you think me, in every endeavor to advance your knowledge, and hope, in a particular manner, that your exertions to promote an accurate acquaintance with the English Language among our youth, will be attended with the greatest advantage.

I am Sir, your Obedient Servant,
 JOSEPH WILLARD.



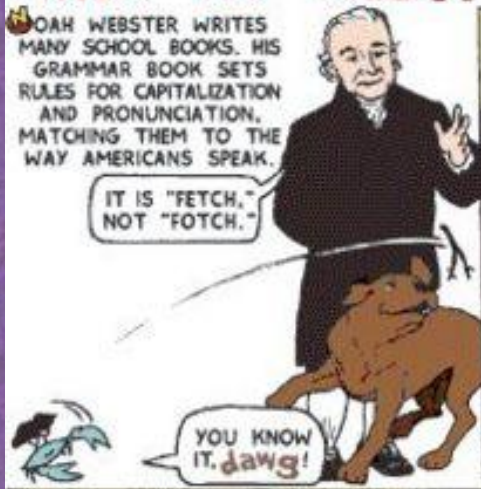
Influence of Webster

- 1828, *American Dictionary of English Language*: 70,000 entries—Americanized spellings
- Webster saw language as pious and patriotic. He **invented American (as opposed to British) spellings** for *color, theater, honor, jail & plow*.
- His etymologies, which are almost all to support piety or politics, are a mess—he made a lot of them up.
- His worries about unauthorized copying led to the first American **copyright law** in 1790; a conservative estimate is that 70 million copies of the *Speller* were sold across all its editions

WHEN DID WEBSTER'S DICTIONARY ARRIVE?

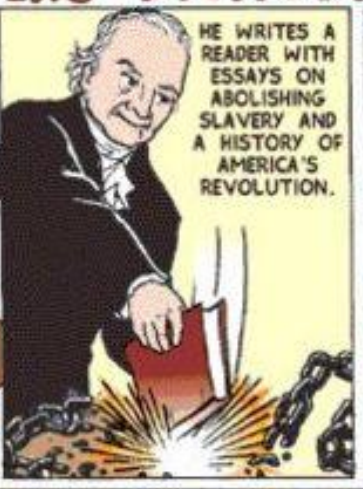
NOAH WEBSTER WRITES MANY SCHOOL BOOKS. HIS GRAMMAR BOOK SETS RULES FOR CAPITALIZATION AND PRONUNCIATION, MATCHING THEM TO THE WAY AMERICANS SPEAK.

IT IS "FETCH," NOT "FOTCH."

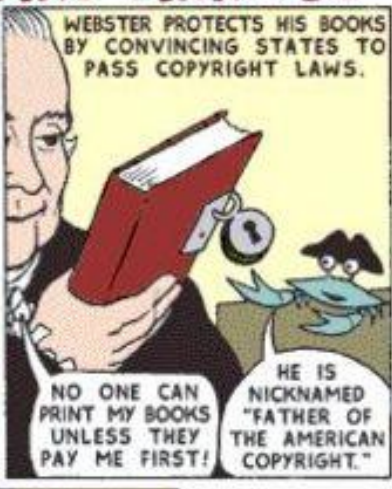


YOU KNOW IT, dawg!

HE WRITES A READER WITH ESSAYS ON ABOLISHING SLAVERY AND A HISTORY OF AMERICA'S REVOLUTION.



WEBSTER PROTECTS HIS BOOKS BY CONVINCING STATES TO PASS COPYRIGHT LAWS.



NO ONE CAN PRINT MY BOOKS UNLESS THEY PAY ME FIRST!

HE IS NICKNAMED "FATHER OF THE AMERICAN COPYRIGHT."

PRESIDENT JOHN ADAMS THINKS AMERICA SHOULD HAVE ITS OWN DICTIONARY OF WORD SPELLINGS. WEBSTER BEGINS ONE IN 1800.



TODAY I WILL WRITE DEFINITIONS FOR "SKUNK," "TOMAHAWK," AND "SNOWSHOE" — GREAT AMERICAN SLANG WORDS!

THIS DICTIONARY HAS 40,000 WORDS AND APPEARS IN 1806. HE STUDIES 20 LANGUAGES SO HE CAN PUT EVEN MORE WORDS IN HIS NEXT DICTIONARY. IN 1828 HIS "AMERICAN DICTIONARY OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE" COMES OUT WITH 70,000 WORDS.



MY BOOKS HELP CREATE ONE AMERICAN NATION FROM A TANGLED MESS OF DIFFERENT STATES AND IMMIGRANT GROUPS. A NATIONAL LANGUAGE BECOMES A NATIONAL BOND.

WEBSTER DIES IN 1843 AT AGE 84. HIS BOOKS LIVE ON: HIS TEXTBOOKS AND DICTIONARIES GO WEST WITH THE PIONEERS AND TEACH FREED SLAVES TO READ AFTER THE CIVIL WAR.

HERE IS HIS DICTIONARY ONLINE! COOL BEANS! END.



The Split Infinitive Rule

- Invented in 1834, when a writer (probably Samuel G. Howe) for *The New-England Magazine*, scolded people for doing so:

To, which comes before the verb in the infinitive mode, must not be separated from it by the intervention of an adverb.” —
“Inaccuracies of Diction,” July 1834 edition, p. 469
- See Jack Lynch, *The Lexicographer’s Dilemma: The Evolution of ‘Proper’ English from Shakespeare to South Park*

7. Otto Jespersen (1860-1943)

- Influential Danish linguist
- Founder of International Phonetic Association (IPA)
- *Modern English Grammar on Historical Principles* (1909-1949): a descriptive, historical grammar
- *Growth and Structure of the English Language* (1905)



Regarded as pioneer in structural grammar/ linguistics and sociolinguistics

Happy Halloween!

<http://sendables.jibjab.com/view/6Cae76vCIAZGRm06>

