



Oxford Fowler's Modern English Usage Dictionary

By H. W. Fowler

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This book is intended for general; students and teachers of English; anyone wanting guidance on the correct use of English.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

A guide to precise phrases, grammar, and pronunciation can be key; it can even be admired. But beloved? Yet from its first appearance in 1926, *Fowler's* was just that. Henry Watson Fowler initially aimed his *Dictionary of Modern English Usage*, as he wrote to his publishers in 1911, at "the half-educated Englishman of literary proclivities who wants to know Can I say so-&-so?" He was of course obsessed with, in Swift's phrase, "proper words in their proper places." But having been a schoolmaster, Fowler knew that liberal doses of style, wit, and caprice would keep his manual off the shelf and in writers' hands. He also felt that description must accompany prescription, and that advocating pedantic "superstitions" and "fetishes" would be to no one's advantage. Adepts will have their favorite inconsequential entries--from *burgle* to *brood*, *truffle* to *turgid*. Would that we could quote them all, but we can't resist a couple. Here Fowler lays into *dedicated*:

He is that rara avis a dedicated boxer. The sporting correspondent who wrote this evidently does not see why the literary critics should have a monopoly of this favourite word of theirs, though he does not seem to think that it will be greatly needed in his branch of the business.

Needless to say, later on *rara avis* is also smacked upside the head! And *practically* fares no better: "It is unfortunate that *practically* should have escaped from its true meaning into something like its opposite," Fowler begins. But our linguistic hero also knew full well when to put a crimp on comedy. Some phrases and proper uses, it's clear, would always be worth fighting for, and the guide thus ranges from brief definitions to involved articles. *Archaisms*, for instance, he considered safe only in the hands of the experienced, and meaningless words, especially those used by the young, "are perhaps more suitable for the psychologist than for the philologist." Well, youth might respond, "Whatever!"--though only after examining the keen differences between that phrase and *what ever*. (One can only imagine what Fowler would have made of our late-20th-century abuses of *like*.) This is where Robert Burchfield's 1996 third edition comes in. Yes, Fowler lost the fight for one *r* in *guerrilla* and didn't fare too well when it came to quashing such vogue words as *smear* and *seminal*. But he knew--and makes us ever aware--that language is a living, breathing (and occasionally suffocating) thing, and we hope that he would have welcomed any and all revisions. Fowlerphiles will want to keep their first (if they're very lucky) or second editions at hand, but should look to Burchfield for new entries on such phrases as *gay*, *iron curtain*, and *inchoate*--not to mention *girl*. --Kerry Fried

Users Review

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Georgia Lopez:

A lot of people always spent all their free time to vacation or go to the outside with them loved ones or their friend. Do you realize? Many a lot of people spent that they free time just watching TV, or perhaps playing video games all day long. If you need to try to find a new activity this is look different you can read the book. It is really fun in your case. If you enjoy the book which you read you can spent the entire day to reading a publication. The book Oxford Fowler's Modern English Usage Dictionary it is extremely good to read. There are a lot of those who recommended this book. We were holding enjoying reading this book. In case you did not have enough space bringing this book you can buy the actual e-book. You can m0ore quickly to read this book from the smart phone. The price is not to fund but this book possesses high quality.

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