



# DICTIONARY DAY

**October 16** is American **Dictionary Day**, marking the birthday of the great American lexicographer **Noah Webster**. Born in Hartford, Connecticut, in 1758, it was Webster's two-volume **American Dictionary of the English Language** that truly earned him his place in linguistic history, and a reputation as the foremost lexicographer of American English. He is considered **the Father** of the American Dictionary.

Following his studies at Yale in the late 1700s, Webster had initially hoped to become a lawyer, but a lack of funds held him back from pursuing his chosen career and he instead ended up teaching.

Webster began to write his dictionary at the age of 43. It took him 27 years to complete it! To evaluate the etymology of words, Webster **learned twenty-six languages**, including Old English, German, Latin... His book contained seventy thousand words, of which twelve thousand uniquely American words such as “skunk” and “squash” had never appeared in a published dictionary before.

As a **spelling reformer**, he believed that the English spelling rules were unnecessarily complex so in his dictionary he introduced American English spellings, replacing “colour” with “color”, substituting “wagon” for “waggon” and printing “center” instead of “centre”. Webster published his dictionary in 1828 at the age of seventy. The dictionary sold 2500 copies. In 1840, the second edition was published in two volumes.

Webster died two years later on May 28, 1843, after which booksellers **George and Charles Merriam** bought all unsold copies of Webster's 2nd edition - crucially, along with the rights to publish revised editions in future. **The Merriam-Webster Dictionary** was born.

The Dictionary Day is set to emphasize **the importance** of learning and using dictionary skills and increasing one's vocabulary.

