Happy Birthday, Noah Webster!

When you see a word you don’t know, you probably use a dictionary (DIK-shuh-nair-ee) to find out what it means. The dictionary you use may be a newer version of the one first written by Noah Webster. He started his dictionary in 1801 and finished in 1828. It gave the meanings of more than 70,000 words.

This week, The Mini Page honors Webster’s 250th birthday by learning about his life and the things he did that still affect us today.

Early life

Noah Webster was born on Oct. 16, 1758. His family lived in West Hartford, Conn. Noah had two brothers and two sisters.

Noah’s father was a farmer and weaver. (“Webster” comes from Old English and means “female weaver.”) His mother, Mercy, was a homemaker.

When Noah was a child, many kids went to school until they were 10 or 11 years old. After that, they stayed home to work on the farm. But when Noah was 14, he began studying with a minister. After two years, he went to Yale College. After he graduated, he wanted to study to be a lawyer, but he didn’t have enough money.

Noah Webster (1758-1843) was patriotic, or loyal to the United States. He believed that American subjects and styles should be included in books. He thought this would make America more independent, or free, from England.

A different career path

Instead of studying law, Noah became a teacher.

Teachers in the late 1700s had many challenges: They taught all grades together, in one room. One teacher might have children from ages 6 to 16. The books were not well-written, and they were published in England. Schools had bad lighting and not enough heat in the winter.

Noah wrote essays about improving the poor conditions for teachers and students.

Working for change

Noah thought American children should have American textbooks.

In 1783, he finished “A Grammatical Institute of the English Language.” It included “The Blue-backed Speller.” A speller is a textbook that helps kids learn to read, spell and pronounce words. A lesson from it is shown below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE XXV. Lesson I.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>People often sound ow at the end of words like er, thus, follow they call foller, pillow, piller. This corruption is called, in London, the cockney pronunciation. In the following lesson, children should be taught that w is silent and o retains its proper sound.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>barrow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bellow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>billow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>elbow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fallow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>farrow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>furrow</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Noah Webster would have taught in a one-room schoolhouse similar to this. Younger kids sat in front, with older kids in back rows. Light came from windows and candles.
A Mini Guide to the Dictionary

You can learn about a word’s history and the different ways it’s used in a dictionary. But it helps to know what all the symbols mean.

Become a word detective. Use the dictionary to find out more about words you’re interested in.

For this example, we’ll use the noun newspaper. (A noun describes a person, place or thing.)

newspaper

\n(y)üz-,pə-pər, n(y)üs\n
\n (1670) 1: a paper that is printed and distributed usu. daily or weekly and that contains news, articles of opinion, features and advertising 2: an organization that publishes a newspaper 3: the paper making up a newspaper

Definition
This entry has three definitions, or meanings, for newspaper. The abbreviation usu. means usually.

Pronunciation
You can learn how to pronounce, or say, a word by looking it up in the dictionary.

Pronunciation (proh-nun-see-AY-shun) guides are shown between two slashes, like this:

\n(y)üz-,pə-pər, n(y)üs\n
• The first symbol, a high-set stress mark (‘) means that the first syllable gets more importance when we say it.
• Low-set stress marks (‘) mean that those syllables get less stress than those marked with high-set stress marks.
• The letter in parentheses (y) means that some people pronounce the Y and others don’t. Either way is OK.
• The U with two dots over it (ü) means it is pronounced like the U in rule.
• An A with a line over it (ā) means it’s a long A, pronounced like the A in ate.
• An upside-down E (ē) is called a schwa. It is pronounced like UH, as the A is in the word about.

Most dictionaries have guides in the front that help you understand these and other symbols.

History of words
The history of words is called etymology (eh-tuh-MOL-uh-gee). Knowing the language that one of our words comes from helps us understand other words from that language as well as English.

In the dictionary, etymology:
• traces a word as far back as possible in English (for example, to Old English);
• tells from what language and in what form the word came into English;
• traces the pre-English source as far back as possible.

In our example, newspaper is an English word that was first used in 1670, about 340 years ago.

If you look up the word signal, you’ll see that it is traced back through English and French to the Latin word signum. That word was used about 700 years ago.

Noah Webster

Words that remind us of Noah Webster are hidden in the block below. Some words are hidden backward or diagonally, and some letters are used twice. See if you can find: DICTIONARY, BIRTHDAY, WORDS, NOAH, WEBSTER, CONNECTICUT, SCHOOL, YALE, LAW, TEACHER, ESSAY, AMERICAN, TEXT, SPELLER, BOOK, PRONOUNCE, HISTORY, SYMBOL, COPYRIGHT, LANGUAGE, MERRIAM.

Mini Spy . . .

Mini Spy and Basset Brown are looking up new words in the library’s dictionary. See if you can find: • man in the moon • word MINI • acorn • pumpkin • mitten • olive • sock • pencil • letter M • kite • heart • number 3

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Rookie Cookie’s Recipe

Soy Glazed Burgers

You’ll need:

• 1/4 cup low-sodium soy sauce
• 1/4 cup honey
• 1/2 teaspoon ground ginger
• 1 teaspoon garlic powder
• 1/2 teaspoon salt
• 1/2 teaspoon pepper
• 2 tablespoons ground beef

What to do:

1. In a bowl, stir together soy sauce, honey and spices.
2. Combine 1/3 cup soy sauce mixture with ground beef. Reserve remaining mixture.
3. Form into 6 or 8 hamburger patties, depending on desired size.
4. Brush patties with remaining soy sauce mixture on both sides as you grill.
5. Grill on medium-high heat until meat is no longer pink.

*You will need an adult’s help with this recipe.

Meet Cole and Dylan Sprouse


Cole and Dylan, 16, were born in Arezzo, Italy. They grew up in Southern California. They got their first role in a toilet paper commercial when they were 6 months old.

When they were 1 to 6 years old, the brothers alternated in playing one character, Patrick, in the TV series “Grace Under Fire.” They have appeared in several movies and TV shows.

Both boys love animals, video games, motocross, snowboarding, surfing and basketball. Cole also loves math. Dylan loves science.

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Mighty Funny’s Mini Jokes

All the following jokes have something in common. Can you guess the common theme or category?

Will: What word starts with an E, ends with an E, and has one letter?
Walter: Envelope!

Winton: Where can you always find happiness?
Wendy: In the dictionary!

Wesley: Why is a dictionary considered so dangerous?
Willem: Because it has “dynamite” in it!
Noah Webster’s Dictionary

New country, new words
While he was working on the Speller, Noah Webster realized that people in the United States were using different words to describe their new government and laws. He decided to write an American dictionary. In 1806, he published a shortened version of the dictionary. It had 40,600 words.

American spellings
For his American dictionary, Noah changed the spelling of many English words. He wanted to make the spelling simpler.

These are some examples of spellings he changed. Can you think of other words that are still spelled differently in England or Canada than they are in the United States?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The old British way</th>
<th>Noah’s American way</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kee</td>
<td>Key</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dawter</td>
<td>Daughter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centre</td>
<td>Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flavair</td>
<td>Flavor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programme</td>
<td>Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aluminium</td>
<td>Aluminum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gaol</td>
<td>Jail</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mould</td>
<td>Mold</td>
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<tr>
<td>Travelled</td>
<td>Traveled</td>
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<tr>
<td>Honour</td>
<td>Honor</td>
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<td>Humour</td>
<td>Humor</td>
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<tr>
<td>Masque</td>
<td>Mask</td>
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<tr>
<td>Publick</td>
<td>Public</td>
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<tr>
<td>Defence</td>
<td>Defense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colour</td>
<td>Color</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Musick</td>
<td>Music</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What took so long?
Noah Webster had to do a lot of research to write his dictionary. Most of the words we use today come from other languages, such as Latin or French. Noah learned 26 languages so that he could figure out the origins, or beginnings, of our words.

Twenty-two years later, the final version was published. “An American Dictionary of the English Language” had about 70,000 words. Webster included spelling, pronunciation, and information about the history of each word.

Copyright
While he was writing the “Speller” and his dictionary, Noah Webster began to work for copyright laws. He thought America should have laws to protect the works of its authors.

*Copyright is protection against someone copying someone else’s work.

A friend visiting from New York City, Noah Webster married Rebecca Greenleaf in 1789. They had eight children.

Look through your newspaper, including this Mini Page, for copyright symbols. Circle the ones you find.

The Mini Page thanks Jennifer DiCola Matos, director of education, Noah Webster House & West Hartford Historical Society, West Hartford, Conn., for help with this issue.

Next week, The Mini Page is all about spiders.

Site to see: www.noahwebsterhouse.org/childcentral.html

Merriam-Webster
After Noah Webster died in 1843, a publishing company called G. & C. Merriam Co. bought all the unsold copies of the 1841 edition of Webster’s dictionary. They also bought from his family the rights to update and sell new versions of the dictionary.

Today, Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary has more than 225,000 definitions — more than three times as many as Webster’s original book.
Supersport: DeMarcus Ware

Height: 6-4  
Birthdate: 7-31-82  
Weight: 257  
Hometown: Auburn, Ala.

National Football League teams facing the Dallas Cowboys know to beware of DeMarcus Ware. The aggressive linebacker has a reputation for racking up quarterbacks and wrecking offenses.

Ware led the Cowboys in sacks with 14 last year and was selected to the Pro Bowl for the second season in a row.

Before rising to NFL stardom, Ware was a standout at Troy State, where he earned a degree in business information systems. The Cowboys picked him 11th overall in the NFL draft four years ago, and he has lived up to their expectations.

Away from football, Ware spends time with his wife, Taniqua, and their young daughter. He also has been active in community and charity projects such as United Way, Make-A-Wish and the Cowboys’ youth football camps.

But on fall Sunday afternoons, Ware is a rough, tough Cowboy.

(Note to Editor: Above is camera-ready, one column-by-3 1/2-inch ad promoting Issue 41.)