



The Story of Webster's Third: Philip Gove's Controversial Dictionary and its Critics

Herbert C. Morton

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The publication of Webster's Third New International Dictionary in 1961 set off a storm of intense controversy in both the popular press and in scholarly journals due to widespread disagreements about the nature of language and the role of the dictionary. This is the first full account of the controversy, set within the larger background of how the dictionary was planned and put together by its editor-in-chief, Philip Babcock Gove. Based on original research and interviews with the people who knew and worked with Gove, this is a human story as well as the story of the making of a dictionary. The author skillfully interweaves an account of Gove's character and working habits with the evolution of the dictionary. In spite of its rocky initial reception, Webster's Third is now widely regarded as one of the greatest dictionaries of our time.

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