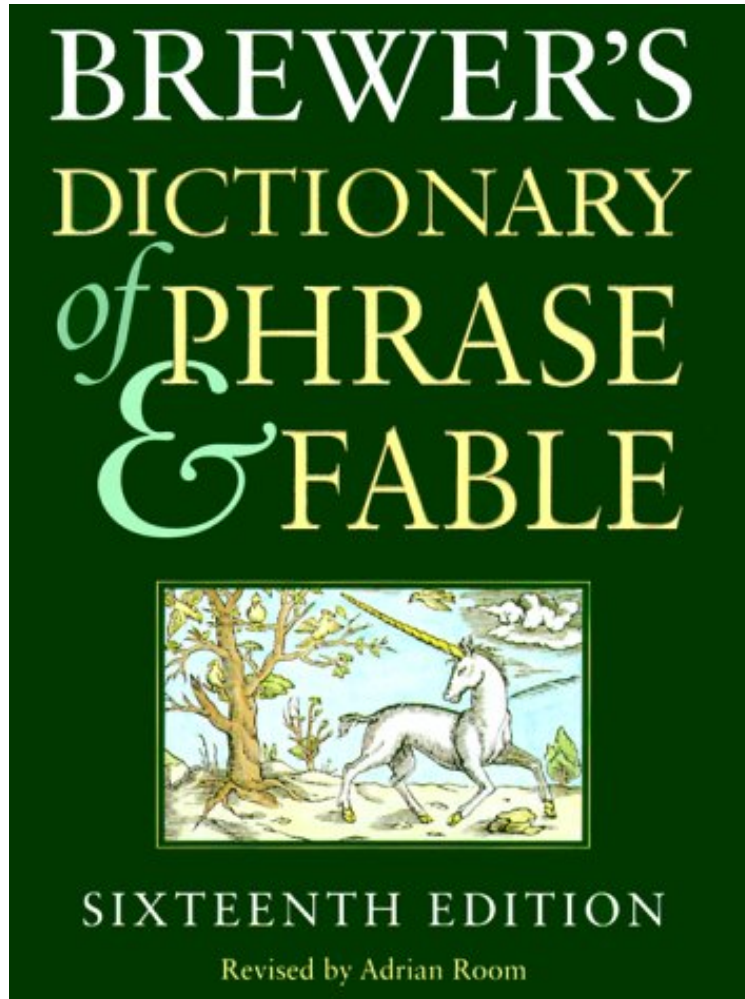


Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase and Fable

Adrian Room

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Adrian Room : Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase and Fable before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase and Fable:

43 of 43 people found the following review helpful. Just IndispensableBy A CustomerThis book is simply one of the best dictionaries of its kind ever to have been published, and, I might add, Brewer's work has already become a classic. It contains a wealth of entries from divers areas, including mythology, history, classics, language, as well as common sayings, phrases and legends. Useful as a reference though it is, this dictionary is eminently suited to a casual browse, which one will invariably find interesting, entertaining and edifying, containing many obscure tidbits of trivia that catches one's eyes. This edition, unfortunately, omits a few entries that were present in previous editions, and this is a sad loss, but, all in all, the book is worth every penny, and is a valuable reference on anyone's bookshelf, especially to those with literary pretensions.6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. This "Classic Edition" is quite good,

although abridgedBy William BultasThe full version of this edition of Brewer's is available free online (public domain), and in PDF format comes in at well over 900 pages (I believe close to 1,000). This abridged print edition has 876 pages. I cannot determine who edited this version, and no date of publication for the original full material can be found (in the online or this print edition), but it was no earlier than 1951, and no later than 1971. I established this because I quickly found a 1951 date for an event in the past tense in the book, but Memorial Day is not listed as the last Monday in May, and that was established by federal law in 1971. Every entry I checked in the print version is an exact copy of what you'll find in the public domain PDF version, but I found several entries in the PDF which are not in this print version. Still, it's a lot of fun, as well as educational. Soon I'll buy one of the more recent editions (at this time the current edition is the 17th, published in the last 2-3 years) and compare the 2; this will likely produce hours of pleasurable geekitude. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Five StarsBy CustomerGreat fit but inseam is a little long

Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase and Fable is one of the world's best-loved reference books. First published in 1870, this treasury of 'words that have a tale to tell' has established itself as one of the great reference classics—the first port of call for tens of thousands of terms, phrases and proper names, and a fund of fascinating, unusual and out-of-the-way information. At the heart of the dictionary lie entries on the meaning and origin of a vast range of words and expressions, from everyday phrases to Latin tags. Alongside these are articles on people and events in mythology and religion, and on folk customs, superstitions and beliefs. Major events and people in history are also treated, as are movements in art and literature, famous literary characters, and key aspects of popular culture, philosophy, geography, science and magic. To complete this rich mix of information, Brewer and his subsequent editors have added an extraordinary and enticing miscellany of general knowledge—lists of patron saints, terms in heraldry, regimental nicknames, public house names, and famous last words. For the sixteenth edition of Brewer's the entire existing text has been revised and updated and over 1000 new articles added. These include: recent expressions (the full monty, couchpotato, bit the ground running, Montezuma's revenge) recent events and organizations (Black Wednesday, Taliban) famous nicknames (Fab Four) historical and fictional characters (Attila the Hun, Anne Frank). Brand-new articles on hurricane names, celebrated place-names in literature, and frequently mispronounced words continue the century-old Brewer's practice of recording unexpected and fascinating information that is not available in other general reference books.

From Library JournalThe first edition of this dictionary was published in 1870; the 15th in 1995. The 16th edition contains 1000 new entries, including 'paparazzi,' 'full monty,' 'couch potato,' and 'millennium bug.' It also adds more quotations and subentries (examples of usage) while eliminating a few entries from previous editions because of obscurity. As the foreword points out, 'to be considered obscure by a Brewer's editor is a real badge of obscurity,' and the dictionary is, indeed, astonishing in its coverage. It is not, of course, perfect. The arrangement is strictly alphabetical, and, though 'See' and 'See also' references are given, intuitive searching may be difficult. For example, the phrase 'to climb on the bandwagon' is under 'climb' rather than 'bandwagon.' In addition, the book continues to be Anglocentric, though the editors appear to be making an effort to include other cultures. Nevertheless, there is no other reference quite like Brewer's; if you need to know what 'hendiadys' means or figure out which hawk to buy for a prince, you'll find it here and probably nowhere else. Libraries that do not own a copy of an earlier edition should certainly consider acquiring this reference. Katherine K. Koenig, Ellis Sch., Pittsburgh Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc. From BooklistThis entry advances the Thorndike-Barnhart line into the serious-looking dictionary that adults will recognize. Line drawings and small black-and-white photos replace the color illustrations found in the junior books. Definitions still include example sentences but are more complex and use a higher range of vocabulary. There are more personal names from history and fewer from popular culture than can be found in the Thorndike-Barnhart Junior Dictionary. There are also fewer boxed features, and those that remain ("Word Source," "Word Family") tend to be more detailed. A style manual takes into account the older, more sophisticated user. Test words are well defined; set and take include more than 15 definitions each. Another look at... Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase and FableOne of the defining characteristics of an enduring reference source is the stamp of personality. Famous First Facts and Baker's Biographical Dictionary of Musicians wouldn't be the same without Joseph Nathan Kane and Nicolas Slonimsky. Another work that owes much to an attentive and even obsessive compiler is Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase and Fable. Mid-Victorian British publisher John Cassell wanted to supply his working-class readers with material both entertaining and improving, and Dr. Ebenezer Cobham Brewer was just the person for the job. Their partnership resulted in numerous popular works, among them the famous dictionary, which was first published in 1870. The preface to the first edition described it as an "alms-basket of words," that "draws in curious or novel etymologies, pseudonyms and popular titles, local traditions and literary blunders, biographical and historical trifles too insignificant to find a place of higher pretension, but not too worthless to be worth knowing." Brewer, who was born in 1810, claimed that the dictionary evolved from his boyhood habit of note taking. Around 1841, while still a Norwich schoolmaster, he wrote a popular compendium called Guide to Science, which "brought me in a large number

of questions on all imaginary matters." These questions and their answers formed the basis for the dictionary, so successful that the first edition was reprinted 18 times. It was designed to meet the needs of a new class of readers who did not have the advantage of a classical education. It also exemplified that impulse toward collecting and classifying that seemed to distinguish so much Victorian scholarship. The Victorian flavor was retained through many editions. In fact, as reviewers have pointed out, there was not much difference between the first edition and the fourteenth, published in 1989. Beginning with the fifteenth edition, revisions have been in the hands of Adrian Room, himself a prodigious compiler of facts, being the author of *Dictionary of First Names* (Cassell, 1995), *A Dictionary of Pseudonyms and Their Origins* (McFarland, 1997), and *Placenames of the World* (McFarland, 1997), among many other titles. In the preface to the newest edition of Brewer's, Room states that there are "changes on four fronts." One of these changes is the addition of 1,000 new entries. These range from older words and phrases that appear here for the first time (hysteria, I Ching) to terms of more recent vintage (blockbuster, dress down [as in dress-down Fridays], main squeeze, millennium bug). There are more subentries, such as down time listed under down. Many of these new subentries actually refer the reader to main entry headings (Hulk, the Incredible, see under Incredible), and the much greater number of see references is the most obvious difference between this edition and the last. The third change is the addition of new quotations. The fourth is that some entries have been dropped. Although most of the missing are arcane terms, there is plenty left to delight the lover of the odd and obscure. In what other single volume will you find, for example, a list of the 50 Nereids listed in Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queen*; descriptions of famous Fakes, from Piltdown Man to the Hitler diaries; and almost five pages of Famous last words ? Not to mention patron saints and saints' symbols, the 12 oldest British public schools for girls, and British public house signs? The last two examples remind us that the book still has a very British emphasis. This emphasis helps account for some of the errors (e.g., the Chicago Bears is "a record-breaking American football team, with a home base at Wrigley Field") that continue to make their way from one edition into the next. Despite the revisions, libraries that already hold the fifteenth edition of Brewer's may not need to change. Updating information and rectifying omissions, two of the most compelling reasons for trading in an edition that is only a few year old for a newer model, are not major considerations in this case. Meanwhile, a full hypertext version is available on the Web, generally bundled with other titles as part of a basic reference collection (for example, at Bibliomania [<http://www.bibliomania.com>]). This is the 1894 revision, however--how many students browsing its contents will know (or care) that editions far newer and more useful for research may sit on the reference shelves nearby? That said, we feel sure that Dr. Brewer, with his fascination for stray facts, would feel right at home on the Internet, the ultimate miscellany. REVWRCopyright American Library Association. All rights reserved "...a best-selling barometer of popular culture since Victorian times" -- --The Sunday Times"Every page contains some gem" -- --Daily Telegraph"Every page contains some gem" -- Daily Telegraph"It is a liberal education simply to browse through it..." -- --The Augusta Chronicle"It retains the serendipitous charm which has kept the book going for a century" -- Times Literary Supplement"It retains the serendipitous charm which has kept the book going for a century." -- Times Literary Supplement