Metaphors Dictionary

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Rates a recommendation to lovers of language. – William Safire, New York Times. A masterful metaphor, like a picture, may be worth a thousand words. By comparing two unlike objects or ideas, it illuminates the similarities between them, accomplishing in a word or phrase what could otherwise be expressed only in many words, if at all. Metaphors Dictionary is an expansive collection of 6,500 colorful classic and contemporary comparative phrases (with full annotations and a complete bibliography of sources). The Metaphors Dictionary revisits most of the great and respected names in the annals of cultural literacy while dipping into current literature and media sources. And now available for the first time in hard cover, it's bound for heavy duty at a price that's hard to beat.

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Metaphors Dictionary From Brand: Visible Ink Press Bibliography

- Rank: #184804 in Books
- Brand: Brand: Visible Ink Press
- Published on: 2001-08-01
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.64" h x 1.92" w x 7.42" l, 3.46 pounds
- Binding: Hardcover
- 672 pages

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Editorial Review

From **Booklist**
In the words of Christopher Fry, "There's not a devil / In the length of the land could pick such a posy of words / And not swoon smelling it." These words appear under the subject heading *Language* and serve as an apt description of *Metaphors Dictionary*. The editors bring unique qualifications to the volume: Sommer compiled the *Similes Dictionary* (Gale, 1988), and Weiss is a retired English teacher. Intended for browsing, as "inspiration for writers and speakers," for the enhancement of the understanding and appreciation of metaphor, and as a quotation finder, the work meets the compilers stated goals. More than 6,500 metaphors under 600 subject headings make this the most comprehensive work of its kind.

An informative introduction discusses types of metaphor: mixed, extended, personification, allusion, metonymy, and antonomasia. A brief bibliography for further reading on these topics follows. A table of subject headings serves as an outline of contents. Subjects range from such abstract ideas as *Abandonment*, *Enthusiasm*, and *Guilt* to the concrete: *Rainbows*, *Pets*, and *Diaries*. Entries are arranged alphabetically by subject and then by author. Brief annotations that include background information, variants, or related metaphors accompany many entries. The source is given for most metaphors. The metaphors are from all periods of history, Homer to Bill Clinton, and represent the words of poets, speech writers, journalists, scientists, philosophers, business people, actors, and "just plain folks." There are author-speaker and subject indexes, a list of one-or two-word "common" metaphors, and a section of 600 metaphors from Shakespeare. A lengthy bibliography lists the works from which the authors chose the metaphors. Literary and classical metaphors predominate; many others are from newspapers and speeches.

Future editions would benefit from a word index such as those found in quotation dictionaries, which would make the location of specific quotations much easier. *Metaphors Dictionary* is a valuable addition to reference works on words. A complementary dictionary of familiar metaphors with unknown origins is *Loose Cannons & Red Herrings: A Book of Lost Metaphors* (Norton, 1988), with no attributions but useful explanations of derivation. Libraries will also want to collect specialized metaphor dictionaries such as Robert Palmatier's *Sports Talk: A Dictionary of Sports Metaphors* (Greenwood, 1989) and his *Speaking of Animals: A Dictionary of Animal Metaphors* (Greenwood, 1995).

It took awhile, but Random House has finally produced an electronic version of its unabridged dictionary of which it can be justifiably proud. When first reviewed by the Board [*RBB* F 1 94], it was criticized as having several indexing errors, a buggy Anagram search, and slow retrieval time.

Version 1.7 fixes most of these problems and adds a new feature, audio pronunciations, though it has higher hardware requirements than its predecessors. Minimum requirements are at least an 80386 IBM or compatible PC, 2MB of RAM, a hard drive with at least 1.5MB free, MS-DOS version 3.1 or later, Windows version 3.1, and a Windows-compatible sound card with speakers to access the pronunciations. Whereas previous versions included DOS, Windows, and Macintosh software on one CD, the current version runs only through Windows. The program may be invoked by clicking the proper program group or via a "hot key" combination within another Windows-based word processing program. With *WordPerfect for Windows 6.0*, the dictionary is automatically installed as an option in the Tools pull-down menu. Like previous versions, there is no direct printing capability--an entry must be pasted into a word processor. Unlike previous versions, an eight-page manual is included in the jewel case rather than merely in a READ.ME file.

Although the basic ways of retrieving entries remain the same in this new version, the retrieval time,

particularly for Boolean searches, is much quicker. Furthermore, DefSearch now allows the use of wildcards, which is a noteworthy enhancement. In addition to the standard Boolean operators that were allowed before, DefSearch also has a More Options button, which allows one to limit a search to within a single definition of an entry or limit a search within a certain range of words. There are also boxes to check to specify case sensitivity, limit a search only to definitions with illustrations, and to turn Exact Match on or off; turning it off will include inflected forms of a word in a search. Finally, all words searched with DefSearch are highlighted in the entry, making the selected words easier to spot.

Other major enhancements include more than 115,000 spoken pronunciations and more than 2,200 line drawings. This makes *Random House* far and away the superior CD-ROM dictionary in number of pronunciations--surpassing the 80,000 in *The American Heritage Dictionary* in *Microsoft Bookshelf '94* [*RBB* O 1 94]. Words with pronunciation available are shown with a speaker icon. A particularly nice touch is that often first names as well as the last names of individuals are pronounced. Thus, such names as *Horthy, Miklo{¢}s von Nagyba{ }nya* are pronounced in their entirety--unlike *Bookshelf '94*, which has pronunciations for only the last names. The illustrations included precisely match the line drawings that appear in the print version of the work and are noted by a camera icon.

Problems noted in the previous review have been corrected, including the Anagram search and inconsistency in retrieving words that appear as synonyms within entries. In fact, a few surprises in retrieval capability were discovered. Although a Help screen specifies that one cannot search the etymologies with DefSearch, actual sample searches suggest otherwise. An undocumented feature is that phrases may be searched by including the phrase within quotation marks. With this capability, users may search idioms by exact wording.

Indeed, this dictionary is everything it should have been the first time it was released. The retrieval capabilities are more than adequate for most users, and the number of spoken pronunciations is unexcelled. However, we strongly urge Random House to consider replacing the heavily promoted previous versions with the newest version--or at least provide version 1.7 to libraries for a moderate upgrade fee. With this version, users should not be disappointed. Highly recommended.

Review

"Rates a recommendation to lovers of language."— William Safire, *New York Times*

"The most comprehensive work of its kind. A valuable addition to reference works on words."— *Booklist*

"A good heavy book holds you down. It's an anchor that keeps you from getting up and having another gin and tonic."— Roy Blount metaphor, Page 47

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Barbara Spangler:

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