

## Reviews

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Swannell, Julia (ed). *The Little Oxford Dictionary of Current English*. Oxford, London etc: Oxford University Press, 1980.

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According to Landau (1984:5) a dictionary is 'a book that lists words in alphabetical order and describes their meanings'. Dictionaries do, however, differ in how fully they cover the lexicon. Landau estimates that small dictionaries, like *The Little Oxford Dictionary*, usually have 40 000 to 60 000 entries, whereas the larger, unabridged dictionaries usually have 400 000 to 600 000 entries.

If one's primary need is a book to help one with the spelling of words, then the small dictionaries are a good buy, but their definitions are often little more than strings of synonyms. For example, in *The Little Oxford Dictionary*, **emblem** is defined as:

**emblem** n. symbol; type; distinctive badge.

In contrast, the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English* defines the same word as follows:

**emblem** n. symbol; device that represents sth; **an \_\_ of peace**, e.g. a dove; **an \_\_ of love** e.g. a heart.

Given its size, *The Little Oxford Dictionary* can hardly give full coverage to the lexicon, nor can it always include examples to support its definitions and suggest typical varieties of usage.

This dictionary does, however, give precedence to the preferred spelling or pronunciation in cases where two or more are in use. For example:

**aetiology, etiology**, (iti -) n. assignment of cause; study of causes of disease.

If a verb has irregularly-formed past tenses these are given in bold, with pronunciation when necessary:

**fly** v. (**flew**; **flown** pr flɔ:n).

The reader is told that that **flew** is the past tense and that **flown** is the past participle, with its pronunciation also being given.

Labels to indicate that a word or sense is restricted to a particular type of discourse or subject are given in italics:

**deejay** n. *colloq.* disc-jockey.

Round brackets ( ) are used to enclose words that are explanatory or optional:

**madder** n. (red dye got from root of) herbaceous climbing plant; synthetic substitute for this dye.

Words such as prepositions or adverbs that are commonly used with the headword are given in italics:

**partake** v.i. (-took; -taken) take share (*in, of, with*); eat or drink some *of*; have some (*of* quality, etc.).

The dictionary does not include obvious and regularly formed deviations such as the **-er** for agent nouns, for example **singer**, or the **-ly** for adverbs such as **bravely**.

On the whole this little dictionary is thus very useful for looking up spelling or basic meanings, but it can naturally never fulfil the function of the larger, more comprehensive dictionaries.

*Reference*

Hornby, A.S. *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English*. London: Oxford University Press, 1986.

Landau, S.I. *Dictionaries. The art and craft of lexicography*. New York: The Scribner Press, 1984.

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Maley, Alan; Duff, Alan and Grellet, Françoise. *The Mind's Eye: Using Pictures Creatively in Language Learning*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980. Paperbacks. *Teacher's Book*: 42 pp. *Student's Book*: 96 pp.

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The *Student's Edition* of this publication consists of a wide variety of photographs, illustrations, art works and ink blots which have been selected for use in the ESL classroom. The visual material is classified into fifteen sections ranging from 'portraits' to 'illusions'. To give an indication of the diversity and evocative power of these pictures a brief comment on some of the more original