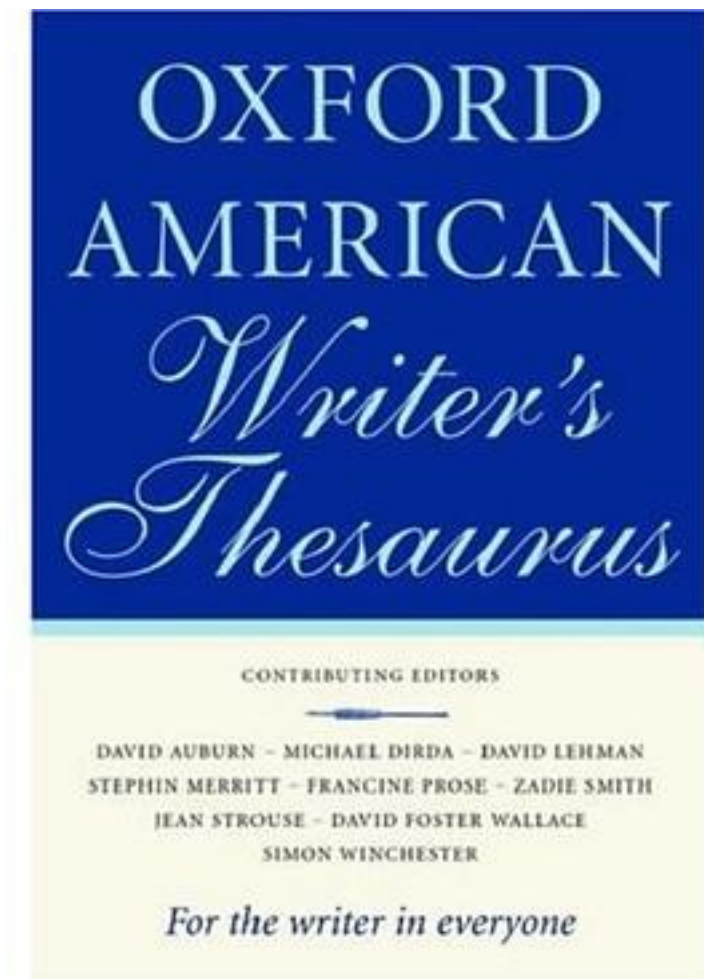


# The Oxford American Writer's Thesaurus



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From School Library Journal

Starred Review. Grade 8 Up—This very readable reference will help writers find the most precise word for their needs. Word entries include synonyms and antonyms, sample sentences, parts of speech, phrases, and cross-references—all labeled and easily distinguishable by bold, capitalized, or italicized font. A variety of editors have contributed "word notes," for meaning and usage, such as distinguishing between "ethical" and "moral" and "virtuous" and "honorable," or when to use "who" and "whom." These mini-essays are conversational in tone and provide nuances that writers will appreciate when struggling to put a word into the proper context. "Word spectrums" is a unique feature that starts with a word such as "frank," then offers a list of terms leading by progression to its polar opposite, in this case, "evasive." A number of inset boxes list specific words for types of dances, coffees, leathers, fish, and more. The back of the thesaurus contains a lengthy "Language Guide," consisting of grammar and punctuation rules, lists of commonly misspelled words, clichés to avoid, and redundant expressions. A dozen "Writing Prompts" include questions with universal appeal, such as "What's the best breakfast you've ever had?" and "Who was the first person you ever hated? loved?" Current, thoughtful, and attractively formatted, this is an indispensable tool for writers.—Vicki Reutter, Cazenovia High School, NY

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From Booklist

Any thesaurus inherently celebrates words' subtleties and shades of meaning. This new thesaurus does the same, offering more than 30,000 synonyms and 10,000 antonyms, but it also celebrates good writing. It sets that tone with Richard Goodman's spirited introductory essay, "In Search of the Exact Word," a meditation on the anguish of a writer's quest for the one word that has an effect no other can have and on the exhilaration of finding and using that word. Those themes replay in delightful variety in the "Word Notes" scattered throughout the volume and addressing 240 words including adumbrate, clothes horse, effete, lurid, and pulvinate. These brief notes, often amusing, have been written by people whose living depends upon their ability to find the right word, among them Zadie Smith, David Foster Wallace, and Simon Winchester. "Word Banks" for categories such as bears, beers, dances, fabrics, insects, and teas list specifics within each type. Another special feature, "Word Spectrums" are "chains of near-synonyms intended to show the shades of meaning available from a word to its opposite." Under fat, for example, one travels the spectrum of meanings from fat and obese through shapely and well-proportioned on to cadaverous and thin.

Each word note, bank, and spectrum is a lagniappe beyond the utilitarian thesaurus proper. The volume's expected purpose is carried out through the typical usage notes, notes differentiating easily confused words, illustrations of words through use in sample sentences, notation of parts of speech, and differentiation among senses of a word. It sets itself apart from competitors by offering more synonyms than the Cambridge Thesaurus of American English (1994) and by offering more context for meanings than the Oxford American Thesaurus of Current English (1999).

Those who seek the right word in a thesaurus will do well to start here. Even if they don't find that elusive mot juste, they will be able to enjoy the vignettes by writers who seem to find words effortlessly. James Rettig

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