

Lesson 6

READ THIS STORY #2, Basic

Webster's Dictionary

When you think about a dictionary, does the name Webster come to mind? Noah Webster was an American patriot who served in the Revolutionary War. He graduated from Yale and became a schoolmaster. During his tenure as a teacher, Noah Webster became dissatisfied with the textbooks used by his students. He was critical of the tendency to emphasize British pronunciation and spelling, rather than the American interpretation of the English language.

So Noah Webster became a lexicographer. More than half of his entries had never been in any previous dictionaries. He compiled an innovative dictionary that, for the first time, separated the letters I and J, as well as U and V. Several years later, Webster's *American Dictionary of the English Language* was published. He received praise for his clear and complete definitions. This reference book set the standard for all future dictionaries.

Unfortunately, the American Dictionary was not profitable. So Webster went on to study law and was admitted to the bar.

After Noah Webster's death in 1853, the rights to his dictionary were purchased by George and Charles Merriam. That's why it is now called the Merriam-Webster dictionary. Although many revisions have been made by the new company, the name Webster has remained synonymous with dictionary.