Dictionary Exercise Instructions

The pages below contain the complete entries from a number of early dictionaries for a selection of words. After printing them out, read each one carefully and note down your observations on the following points:

1. Which dictionaries were the first to include the following information?

    part of speech
    pronunciation
    word stress
    etymology
    illustrative quotations

2. Which etymologies seem especially fanciful?

3. Do some entries seem to be closely derived from earlier dictionaries? Which ones? Does such dependence extend beyond the definition?

4. Are there entries that show an ideological bias?

5. Do Johnson's quotations always "illustrate" the meaning of the word?

6. Print out the entry for each word from the Oxford English Dictionary (or at least the relevant parts if it is extensive) and note whether the definitions follow the history mapped out in the earlier dictionaries.

    Does the OED ever quote an earlier dictionary?

    Does the OED cite earlier meanings that could have been but were not included in the definitions of the earlier dictionaries?

    How does the OED handle etymologies that were disputed among the early dictionaries?

    Are there any spelling variants worth commenting on?

Enthusiasm

Thomas Blount, *Glossographia,* 1656
ENTHUSIASM or ENTHYSIASM, (*enthysiasmus*) an inspiration, a ravishment of the spirit, divine motion, Poetical fury.

Edward Phillips, *New World of English Words,* 1658
ENTHYSIASTS (Greek) a certain Sect of people which pretended to the Spirit and Revelations.

Elish Coles, *An English Dictionary Explaining the Difficult Terms…,* 1676
ENTHYSIASM, ENTHUSIASM, the doctrine or principle of an Enthysian, Enthusiast, *g*. one pretending to divine revelation and inspiration, fanatick.

John Kersey, *Dictionarium Anglo-Britannicum,* 1708
ENTHUSIASM (G.) Fanaticism, a making shew of Divine Inspiration.

Nathan Bailey, *Dictionarium Britannicum, or, A more compleat universal etymological English dictionary than any extant,* 1730
ENTHUSIASM (*enthusiasmus*, L. of [illegible], of [illegible], Gr. to inspire) a prophetick or poetick rage or fury, which transports the mind, raises and enflames the imagination, and makes it think and express things extraordinary and surprising.

Samuel Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language,* 1755

ENTHU'SIASM.n.s. [illegible]

1. A vain belief of private revelation; a vain confidence of divine favour or communication.

   Enthusiasm is founded neither on reason nor divine revelation, but rises from the conceits of a warmed or overweening brain.
   Locke.

2. Heat of imagination; violence of passion; confidence of opinion.

3. Elevation of fancy; exaltation of ideas.

   Imaging is, in itself, the very height and life of poetry, which, by a kind of enthusiasm, or extraordinary emotion of soul, makes it seem to us that we behold those things which the poet paints.
   Dryden's Juv. Preface.

Noah Webster, *American Dictionary of the English Language,* 1828

ENTHU'SIASM, n. enthu'ziazm. [Gr. [illegible] from [illegible], to infuse a divine spirit, from [illegible], [illegible] inspired, divine; [illegible] God.]

1. A belief or conceit of private revelation; the vain confidence or opinion of a person, that he has special divine communications from the Supreme Being, or familiar intercourse with him.

   Enthusiasm is founded neither on reason nor divine revelation, but rises from the conceits of a warmed or overweening imagination.
   Locke.

2. Heat of imagination; violent passion or excitement of the mind, in pursuit of some object, inspiring extravagant hope and confidence of success. Hence the same heat of imagination, chastised by reason or experience, becomes a noble passion, an elevated fancy, a warm imagination, an ardent zeal, that forms sublime ideas, and prompts to the ardent pursuit of laudable objects. Such is

the *enthusiasm* of the poet, the orator, the painter and the sculptor. Such is the *enthusiasm* of the patriot, the hero, and the christian.

Faction and enthusiasm are the instruments by which popular governments are destroyed.
Ames.

Genius

Robert Cawdry, *A Table Alphabeticall of Hard Usual English Words*, 1604
GENIUS, the angell who waits on man, be it a good or evil angell

Thomas Blount, *Glossographia*, 1656
GENIUS (Lat.) a good or evil Angel, the spirit of man, nature it self, natural inclination.

Edward Phillips, *New World of English Words*, 1658
GENIUS (lat.) the good, or evil spirit attending on every man, or proper to each several place, also a mans nature, fancy, or inclination.

Elish Coles, *An English Dictionary Explaining the Difficult Terms…*, 1676
GENIUS, a good or evil spirit attending on particular men or places, also Nature, fancy or inclination.

John Kersey, *Dictionarium Anglo-Britannicum*, 1708
GENIUS, a good or evil Spirit suppos'd te attend upon every Person: Also a Man's natural Disposition or Indowment.

Nathan Bailey, *Dictionarium Britannicum, or, A more compleat universal etymological English dictionary than any extant*, 1730
GENIUS (among the *Antients*) was used to signify a spirit either good or evil; which they supposed did attend upon every Person; they also allow'd Genii to each Province, Country, Town, &c. also a Man's natural Disposition, inclination, &c.

GENIUS, the Force or Faculty of the Soul, considered as it thinks or judges; also a natural Talent or Disposition to one thing more than to another.

Samuel Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language*, 1755

GE'NIUS.n.s.[Latin; *genie*, French.]

1. The protecting or ruling power of men, places, or things.

> There is none but he
> Whose being I do fear: and, under him,
> My *genius* is rebuk'd; as it is said
> Antony's was by Cæsar.
> *Shakespeare's Macbeth.*

> The *genius* and the mortal instruments
> Are then in council; and the state of man,
> Like to a little kingdom, suffers then.
> *Shakes. Jul. Cæsar.*

> And as I awake, sweet musick breathe,
> Sent by some spirit to mortals good,
> Or th' unseen *genius* of the wood.
> *Milton.*

> And the tame demon that should guard my throne,
> Shrinks at a *genius* greater than his own.
> *Dryden.*

> To your glad *genius* sacrifice this day;
> Let common meats respectfully give way.
> *Dryden.*

2. A man endowed with superiour faculties.

> There is no little writer of Pindarick who is not mentioned as a prodigious *genius*.
> *Addison.*

3. Mental power or faculties.

> The state and order does proclaim
> The *genius* of that royal dame.
> *Waller.*

4. Disposition of nature by which any one is qualified for some peculiar employment.

A happy genius is the gift of nature.
Dryden's Dufresnoy.

Your majesty's sagacity, and happy *genius* for natural history, is a better preparation for enquiries of this kind than all the dead learning of the schools.
Burnet's Theory, Preface.

One science only will one genius fit;
So vast is art, so narrow human wit
Pope on Criticism.

The Romans, though they had no great *genius* for trade, yet were not entirely neglectful of it.
Arbuthnot on Coins.

5. Nature; disposition.

Studious to please the *genius* of the times,
With periods, points and tropes he slurs his crimes.
Dryd.

Another *genius* and disposition improper for philosophical contemplations is not so much from the narrowness of their spirit and understanding, as because they will not take time to extend them.
Burnet's Theory of the Earth, Preface.

He tames the *genius* of the stubborn plain.
Pope.

Noah Webster, *American Dictionary of the English Language*, 1828

GE'NIUS, n. [L. from the root of *gigno*, Gr. □□□□□, to beget.]

1. Among the ancients, a good or evil spirit or demon supposed to preside over a man's destiny in life, that is, to direct his birth and actions and be his guard and guide; a tutelary deity; the ruling and protecting power of men, places or things. This seems to be merely a personification or deification of the particular structure or bent of mind which a man receives from nature, which is the primary signification of the word.

2. The peculiar structure of mind which is given by nature to an individual, or that disposition or bent of mind which is peculiar to every man, and which qualifies him for a particular employment; a particular natural talent or aptitude of mind for a particular study or course of life; as a genius for history, for poetry or painting.

3. Strength of mind; uncommon powers of intellect, particularly the power of invention. In this sense we say, Homer was a man of genius. Hence,

4. A man endowed with uncommon vigor of mind; a man of superior intellectual faculties. Shakespeare was a rare genius.
Addison.

5. Mental powers or faculties. [See No. 2]

6. Nature; disposition; peculiar character; as the *genius* of the times.

Girl

Thomas Blount, *Glossographia*, 1656
GIRLE, A Row Buck of two yeers.

Edward Phillips, *New World of English Words*, 1658
GIRLE, a term in Hunting, being a Roe-buck of two years.

Elish Coles, *An English Dictionary Explaining the Difficult Terms…*, 1676
GIRLE, GERLE, a Roe-buck of two years.

John Kersey, *Dictionarium Anglo-Britannicum*, 1708
GIRLE (H.T.) a Roe-buck of two Years.

Nathan Bailey, *Dictionarium Britannicum, or, A more compleat universal etymological English dictionary than any extant*, 1730
GIRLE, (*ceorla*, Sax., Which Minshew supposes to be derived of *garrula*, L. prating, because they are usually talkative; or of *girella*, a Weather Cock, because of their fickleness) a young Maid.

Samuel Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language*, 1755
GIRL.n.s.[About the etymology of this word there is much question: Meric Casaubon, as is his custom, derives it from □□□, of the same signification; Minshew from *garrula*, Latin, a prattler, or *girella*, Italian, a weathercock; Junius thinks that it comes from *herlodes*, Welsh, from which, says he, *harlot* is very easily deduced. Skinner imagines that the Saxons, who used *ceorl* for a man, might likewise have *ceorla* for a woman, though no such word is now found. Dr. Hickes derives it most probably from the Islandick *karlinna*, a woman.]

A young woman, or female child.

In those unfledg'd days was my wife a *girl*.
Shakespeare.

And let it not displease thee, good Bianca;
For I will love thee ne'er the less, my *girl*.
Shakespeare.

A weather-beaten lover, but once known,
Is sport for every *girl* to practise on.
Donne.

Tragedy should blush as much to stoop
To the low mimick follies of a farce,
As a grave matron would to dance with *girls*.
Roscommon.

A boy, like thee, would make a kingly line;
But oh, a *girl*, like her, must be divine!
Dryden

Noah Webster, *American Dictionary of the English Language*, 1828
GIRL, n. *gerl*. [Low L. *gerula*, a young woman employed in tending children and carrying them about, from *gero*, to carry; a word probably received from the Romans while in England.]

1. A female child, or young woman. In familiar language, any young unmarried woman.
Dryden.

2. Among *sportsmen*, a roebuck of two years old.

Gossip

Edward Phillips, *New World of English Words*, 1658

GOSSIP, one that undertakes for a child in Baptism, the word signifieth in Saxon tongue, spiritually of kin

Elish Coles, *An English Dictionary Explaining the Difficult Terms…*, 1676

GOßIP, (q. *God-sib*, *sa*, of kin before God) the God-father or God-mother.

John Kersey, *Dictionarium Anglo-Britannicum*, 1708

GOSSIP (S.) one that undertakes for another in Baptism; a God-father, or God-mother

Nathan Bailey, *Dictionarium Britannicum, or, A more compleat universal etymological English dictionary than any extant*, 1730

GOSSIP, (of *god*, Sax. God, and *syb*, a Kinsman or Woman, q.d. Relation in God, a Sponsor in Baptism) hence, a prating, talkative Woman, that goes about from House to House, telling or hearing gossiping Stories.

Samuel Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language*, 1755

GO'SSIP.n.s.[from *god* and *syb*, relation, affinity, Saxon.]

1. One who answers for the child in baptism.

> Go to a *gossip's* feast and gaude with me,
> After so long grief such nativity:
> —— With all my heart, I'll *gossip* at this feast.
> *Shakespeare.*

> At the christening of George duke of Clarence, who was born in the castle of Dublin, he made both the earl of Kildare and the earl of Ormond his *gossips*.
> *Davies on Ireland.*

2. A tippling companion.

> And sometimes lurk I in a *gossip's* bowl,
> In very likeness of a roasted crab,
> And when she drinks against her lips I bob.
> *Shakespeare.*

3. One who runs about tattling like women at a lying-in.

> To do the office of a neighbour,
> And be a *gossip* at his labour.
> *Hudibras, p. ii. cant. 1.*

> 'Tis sung in ev'ry street,
> The common chat of *gossips* when they meet.
> *Dryden.*

Noah Webster, *American Dictionary of the English Language*, 1828

GOS'SIP, n. [Sax. *godsibb*; *god* and *sib*, or name of a sponsor at baptism.]

1. A sponsor; one who answers for a child in baptism; a godfather. *Obs. Shak. Davies.*

2. A tippling companion.
> And sometimes lurk I in a *gossip's* bowl.
> *Shak.*

3. One who runs from house to house, tattling and telling news; an idle tattler. [*This is the sense in which the word is now used.*] *Dryden.*

4. A friend or Neighbor. Obs.

5. Mere tattle; idle talk.

Humor

Thomas Blount, *Glossographia*, 1656

HUMOUR, (Lat.) moisture, water, juice or sap.

Edward Phillips, *New World of English Words*, 1658

HUMOUR (lat.) moisture, also a mans phancy or disposition. the four predominate humours in a mans body, are blood, choler. flegme, and melancholy.

Elish Coles, *An English Dictionary Explaining the Difficult Terms…*, 1676

HUMOUR, *l*. moisture, juice or sap; also a mans disposition or fansy.

John Kersey, *Dictionarium Anglo-Britannicum*, 1708

HUMORES, (*L*. in *Physick*) the several Humours of the Body.

HUMEUR, Moisture, Juice; Also Temper, Mood, Fancy, Whim or Whimsy

Nathan Bailey, *Dictionarium Britannicum, or, A more compleat universal etymological English dictionary than any extant*, 1730

HUMOUR, (in Comedy) is defined to be a fainter or weaker Passion, peculiar to comick Characters, as being found in Persons of a lower degree than those proper for Tragedy; or it is that which is low, ridiculous, &c.

HUMOUR, (in Medicine) the particular Temperament or Constitution of a Person, considered as arising from the Prevalence of this or that Humour or Juice of the Body; as a cholerick *Humour*, a melancholy *Humour*, a sprightly *Humour*.

Samuel Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language*, 1755

HU'MOUR.n.s.[*humeur*, French; *humor*, Latin.]

1. Moisture.

> The aqueous *humour* of the eye will not freeze, which is very admirable, seeing it hath the perspicuity and fluidity of common water.
> *Ray on the Creation.*

2. The different kind of moisture in man's body, reckoned by the old physicians to be phlegm, blood, choler, and melancholy, which, as they predominated, were supposed to determine the temper of mind.

> Believe not these suggestions, which proceed
> From anguish of the mind and *humours* black,
> That mingle with thy fancy.
> *Milton's Agonistes.*

3. General turn or temper of mind.

> As there is no *humour*, to which impudent poverty cannot make itself serviceable; so were there enow of those of desperate ambition, who would build their houses upon others ruin.
> *Sidney, b. ii.*

> There came with her a young lord, led hither with the *humour* of youth, which ever thinks that good whose goodness he sees not.
> *Sidney.*

> King James, as he was a prince of great judgment, so he was a prince of a marvellous pleasant *humour*: as he was going through Lusen by Greenwich, he asked what town it was; they said Lusen. He asked, a good while after, what town is this we are now in? They said still it was Lusen: said the king, I will be king of Lusen.
> *Bacon's Apophthegms.*

> Examine how your *humour* is inclin'd,
> And which the ruling passion of your mind.
> *Roscommon.*

They, who were acquainted with him, know his *humour* to be such, that he would never constrain himself.
Dryden.

In cases where it is necessary to make examples, it is the *humour* of the multitude to forget the crime, and to remember the punishment.
Addison's Freeholder.

Good *humour* only teaches charms to last,
Still makes new conquests, and maintains the past.
Pope.

4. Present disposition.

It is the curse of kings to be attended
By slaves, that take their *humours* for a warrant
To break into the blood-house of life.
Shakesp. K. John.

Another thought her nobler *humour* fed.
Fairfax, b. ii.

Their *humours* are not to be won,
But when they are impos'd upon.
Hudibras, p. iii.

Tempt not his heavy hand;
But one submissive word which you let fall,
Will make him in good *humour* with us all.
Dryden.

5. Grotesque imagery; jocularity; merriment.

6. Diseased or morbid disposition.

He was a man frank and generous; when well, denied himself nothing that he had a mind to eat or drink, which gave him a body full of *humours*, and made his fits of the gout frequent and violent.
Temple.

7. Petulance; peevishness.

Is my friend all perfection, all virtue and discretion? Has he not *humours* to be endured, as well as kindnesses to be enjoyed?
South's Sermons.

8. A trick; a practice.

I like not the *humour* of lying: he hath wronged me in some *humours*: I should have born the *humour'd* letter to her.
Shakespeare's Merry Wives of Windsor.

9. Caprice; whim; predominent inclination.

In private, men are more bold in their own *humours*; and in consort, men are more obnoxious to others *humours*; therefore it is good to take both.
Bacon's Essays.

Noah Webster, *American Dictionary of the English Language*, 1828

HU'MOR, n. [L from *humeo*, to be moist; Sans. *ama*, moist. The pronunciation, *yumor*, is odiously vulgar.]

1. Moisture; but the word is chiefly used to express the moisture or fluids of animal bodies, as the *humors* of the eye. But more generally the word is used to express a fluid in its morbid or vitiated state. Hence, in popular speech, we often hear it said, the blood is full of *humors*. But the expression is not technical nor correct.
Aqueous humor of the eye, a transparent fluid, occupying the space between the crystalline lens and the cornea, both before and behind the pupil
Crystaline humor or *lens*, a small transparent solid body, of a softish consistence, occupying a middle position in the eye, between the aqueous and vitreous humors, and directly behind the pupil. It is of a lenticular form, or with double convex surfaces, and is the principal instrument in refracting the rays of light, so as to form an image on the retina.
Vitreous humor of the eye, a fluid contained in the minute cells of a transparent membrane, occupying the greater part of the cavity of the eye, and all the space between the crystaline and the retina.
Wistar.

2. A disease of the skin; cutaneous eruptions.
Fielding.

3. Turn of the mind; temper; disposition, or rather a peculiarity of disposition often temporary; so called because the temper

of mind has been supposed to depend on the fluids of the body. Hence we say good *humor*; melancholy *humor*; peevish *humor*. Such humors, when temporary, we call freaks, whims, caprice. Thus a person characterized by good nature may have a fit of *ill humor*; and an ill natured person may have a fit of good *humor*. So we say, it was the *humor* of the man at the times; it was the *humor* of the multitude.

4. That quality of the imagination which gives to ideas a wild or fantastic turn, and tends to excite laughter or mirth by ludicrous images or representations. *Humor* is less poignant and brilliant than wit; hence it is always agreeable. Wit, directed against folly, often offends by its severity; *humor* makes a man ashamed of his fillies, without exciting his resentment. *Humor* may be employed solely to raise mirth and render conversation pleasant, or it may contain a delicate kind of satire.

5. Petulance; peevishness; better expressed by ill humor.

> Is my friend all perfection? has he not *humors* to be endured?
> *South*.

6. A trick; a practice or habit.

> I like not the *humor* of lying.
> *Shak*.

Mountebank

Thomas Blount, *Glossographia*, 1656

MOUNTEBANK, (Ital. *Montimbanco*. Span. *Saltaenbanco*, Fr. *Charlatan*. Teutonick *Landstreicher*. Belg. *Quacksalver*) A cousening Drug-seller, a base deceitful Merchant (especially of Apothecaries Drugs) that, with impudent lying, does, for the most part sell counterfeit stuff to the common people

Edward Phillips, *New World of English Words*, 1658

MOUNTEBANK, (from the Italian word *Montimbanco*, because he mounts upon some high bench or form) a Drugseller, or one that buys Drugs of Apothecaries, and by much boasting of their vertues, sells them again for choice Medicins. He is called in French Charlatan, from his great talking and bragging.

Elish Coles, *An English Dictionary Explaining the Difficult Terms…*, 1676

MOUNTEBANK, *Montimbanco, I. Charlatam, f. Quacksalver, D.* a wandring and jugling Physician.

John Kersey, *Dictionarium Anglo-Britannicum*, 1708

MOUNTEBANK, a juggling Pretender to Physick.

Nathan Bailey, *Dictionarium Britannicum, or, A more compleat universal etymological English dictionary than any extant*, 1730

MOUNTEBANK, (of *montimbanco*, Ital. because they generally mount or get upon a Stage or high Bench to shew themselves) a Quack Doctor or itinerant Pretender to Physick and Surgery.

Samuel Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language*, 1755

MO'UNTEBANK.n.s.[*montare in banco*, Italian.]

1. A doctor that mounts a bench in the market, and boasts his infallible remedies and cures.

I bought an unction of a *mountebank*
So mortal, that but dip a knife in it,
Where it draws blood, no cataplasm so rare,
Can save the thing from death.
Shakesp. Hamlet.

She, like a *mountebank*, did wound
And stab herself with doubts profound,
Only to shew with how small pain
The sores of faith are cur'd again.
Hudibras, p. i.

But Æschylus, says Horace in some page,
Was the first *mountebank* that trod the stage.
Dryden.

It looks so like a *mountebank* to boast of infallible cures.
Baker's Reflections on Learning.

2. Any boastful and false pretender.

As nimble jugglers, that deceive the eye,
Disguised cheaters, prating *mountebanks*,
And many such like libertines of sin.
Shakespeare.

There are *mountebanks*, and smatterers in state.
L'Estrange.

Nothing so impossible in nature but *mountebanks* will undertake.
Arbuthnot's Hist. of John Bull.

Noah Webster, *American Dictionary of the English Language*, 1828

MOUNT'EBANK, n. [It. *montare*, to mount, and *banco*, bench.]

1. One who mounts a bench or stage in the market or other public place, boasts of his skill in curing diseases, vends medicines which he pretends are infallible remedies, and thus deludes the ignorant multitude. Persons of this character may be indicted and punished.

2. An boastful and false pretender.

Nothing so impossible in nature, but *mountebanks* will undertake.
Arbuthnot.

Spinster

Thomas Blount, *Glossographia*, 1656
SPINSTER, a term or addition in our Law-Dialect, added in Obligations, Evidences, and Writings, to unmarried Women, as it were, calling them *Spinners*; And this onely addition is given to all unmarried women, from the Viscounts Daughter downward.

Edward Phillips, *New World of English Words*, 1658
SPINSTER, a Law term, being appropriated to unmarried women in all deeds, bonds, and evidences.

Elish Coles, *An English Dictionary Explaining the Difficult Terms…*, 1676
SPINSTER, the title of all unmarried women, from the viscounts Daughter downward

John Kersey, *Dictionarium Anglo-Britannicum*, 1708
SPINSTER, (L.T.) a Title usually given to all unmarried Women from the Viscount's Daughter downward in all Deeds, Bonds, &c.

Nathan Bailey, *Dictionarium Britannicum, or, A more compleat universal etymological English dictionary than any extant*, 1730
SPINSTER, (of *spinnan*, Sax.) a Title given in Law to all unmarried Women, even from the Daughter of a Viscount to the meanest Person.

Samuel Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language*, 1755
SPI'NSTER.n.s. [from *spin*.]

1. A woman that spins.

> The *spinsters* and the knitters in the sun,
> And the free maids that weave their thread with bones,
> Do use to chant it.
> *Shakespeare's Twelfth Night.*

2. [In law.] The general term for a girl or maiden woman.

> One Michael Cassio,
> That never set a squadron in the field,
> Nor the division of a battle knows
> More than a *spinster*.
> *Shakespeare's Othello.*

> I desire that a yearly annuity of twenty pounds shall be paid to Rebecca Dingley of the city of Dublin, *spinster*, during her life.
> *Swift.*

Noah Webster, *American Dictionary of the English Language*, 1828
SPIN'STER, n. [*spin* and *ster*.] A woman who spins or whose occupation is to spin. Hence,
2. In law, the common title by which a woman without rank or distinction is designated.

> If a gentlewoman is termed a *spinster*, she may abate the writ.
> *Coke.*