

2-2003

Bryson's Dictionary of Troublesome Words

Priscilla Finley

University of Nevada, Las Vegas, priscilla.finley@unlv.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalscholarship.unlv.edu/lib_articles



Part of the [Library and Information Science Commons](#), [Other Rhetoric and Composition Commons](#), and the [Speech and Rhetorical Studies Commons](#)

Repository Citation

Finley, P. (2003). Bryson's Dictionary of Troublesome Words. *Choice*, 40(6), 1. American Library Association.

https://digitalscholarship.unlv.edu/lib_articles/290

This Book Review is protected by copyright and/or related rights. It has been brought to you by Digital Scholarship@UNLV with permission from the rights-holder(s). You are free to use this Book Review in any way that is permitted by the copyright and related rights legislation that applies to your use. For other uses you need to obtain permission from the rights-holder(s) directly, unless additional rights are indicated by a Creative Commons license in the record and/or on the work itself.

This Book Review has been accepted for inclusion in Library Faculty Publications by an authorized administrator of Digital Scholarship@UNLV. For more information, please contact digitalscholarship@unlv.edu.

Bryson's dictionary of troublesome words. Broadway Books, 2002. Reviewed in 2003Feb CHOICE.

Travel writer and humorist Bryson has revised, adapted, and updated his style guide, first published in 1984 in Britain as *Penguin Dictionary of Troublesome Words* and in the US as *Facts on File Dictionary of Troublesome Words*, to appeal to contemporary American book buyers. Presenting itself as a "compilation of suggestions, observations, and treasured prejudices," the work compiles and comments on commonly misspelled words and proper nouns and other conundrums of usage scrupulous writers or copy editors may face. Occasional humorous examples of correct and incorrect usage are culled from contemporary journalism. While browsing the guide might be a mildly entertaining procrastinating strategy, those likely to misuse these "troublesome words" are unlikely to scour an obscure reference book in search of clarification: Bryson says of "munch," "most dictionaries define munch as to eat with a pronounced crunching sound, so it is better not to apply it to soft, comparatively noiseless foods like hot dogs." Oh. The work also corrects spelling and usage for a number of landmarks of the British Empire ("Maudsley hospital in London, not Maude-") and for a scattering of frequently misused quotations and titles. Its appendix has a thoughtful discussion of punctuation, a bibliography, and a glossary of parts of speech. While more useful to contemporary writers than Fowler, this book might be more appropriate as a circulating item for word mavens than in the reference collection.

-- P. Finley, *University of Nevada, Las Vegas*