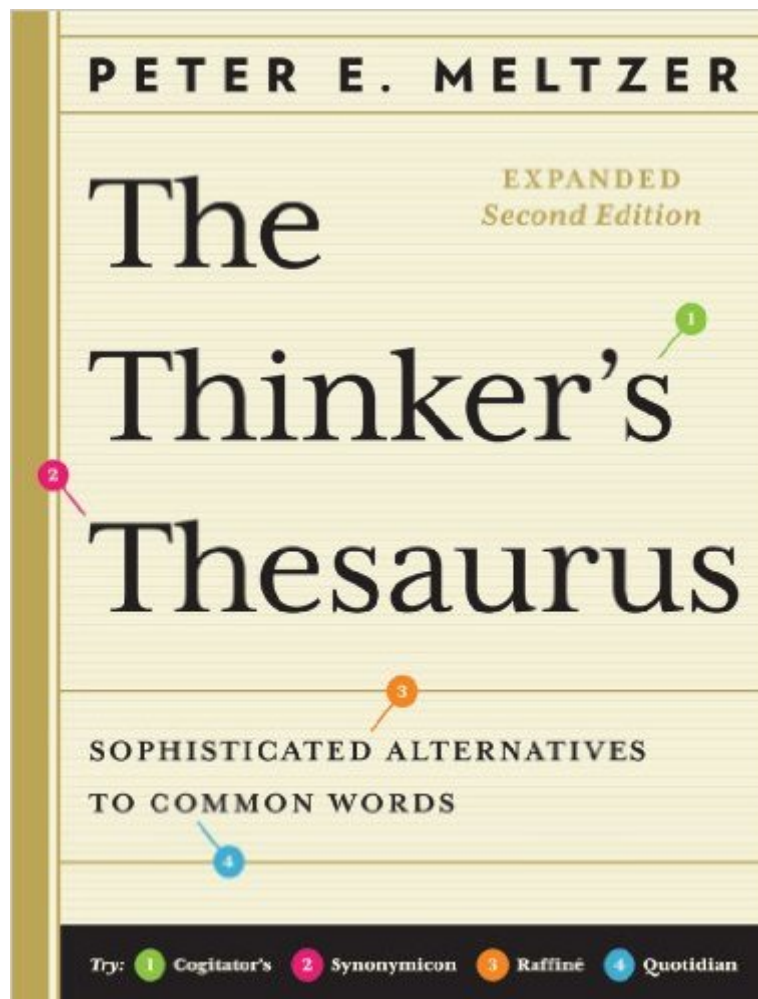


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The Thinker's Thesaurus: Sophisticated Alternatives To Common Words (Expanded Second Edition)



Synopsis

The go-to guide for finding those exceptional and unexpected words that will bring your writing to the next level. Do you find that your regular thesaurus spits out the same old words already running through your head? Are the lists boring, repetitive, and generally unhelpful? Peter E. Meltzer thought so and decided to create a unique thesaurus that would offer interesting, original synonyms along with contextual examples. He quotes from a range of recent media—including books and hundreds of magazines and newspapers—to reassure readers that though the words might be unfamiliar, they are all completely legitimate words in current use. The first edition was the top-selling thesaurus in the United States on numerous occasions. The second edition has been expanded by 50 percent and includes a new introduction that lays out the goals and methods of the thesaurus. This highly entertaining and informative book is truly a dream come true, not only for logophiles but for anyone wishing to enhance their writing through these wonderful words.

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Customer Reviews

Perhaps my expectations were too high after reading all the glowing reviews but my balloon quickly deflated this evening as I sat down with this book to find intellectual synonyms for common words. I found no results more often than not. I tried again later with the word "flippant". Nothing. Then I looked up "messy" and was given "frowzy", "blowsy", and "higgledy-piggledy". Are those the missing dwarfs from "Snow White"? Later again with the word "useless", which is what I was going to title this review. It gave me one workable synonym, as you can see. When I think of a thesaurus, I envision a

dictionary: nearly all-inclusive with not just one, but several alternative options depending on the use of a word. Something I need while working on a term paper at 3am, when my mind has long-since turned to mush, leaving even the most basic understanding of the English language just beyond my tired grasp. But I hate to part on bad terms so I won't say it is a useless book but rather just not as...I was looking up a synonym for "helpful" but that's not in this book either!

Whenever I consider a new thesaurus, I look up the entry for "delay" to see whether "cunctation" appears. Needless to say, I am often disappointed. I think it's a thesaurus's role to alert users to such forms, even if the right time for using them rarely arises. Mr. Meltzer's opus not only provides this rare synonym, but also includes a citation of its use. This book is designed to take off where other thesauri stop, so you won't want to get along without an ordinary thesaurus. This one rewards browsers. The 35-page introduction covers so many bases that it's worth the price of the book all by itself. I suppose I would quibble with the author's heavy reliance on ephemeral sources (magazines and newspapers) rather than books, but some might regard that as a plus. In any event, consider this book: it may well be just the one you're looking for.

Back in the day, say 1852, Peter Mark Roget, finding no thesaurus on the shelf, decided to write one himself, grouping words by related ideas and earning for himself a place in lexicographical history. Subsequent thesauruses, rivals to Roget, dispensed with the grouping principle and simply listed words alphabetically. Not all of the synonyms were direct substitutes for the word synonymized. The assumption was (and is) that we readers know the nuances and simply need our mind jogged a bit. If we wanted a synonym for "steal" we might come across embezzle -- but we'd have to know that embezzling is a particular kind of stealing. (You can't embezzle a candy bar from the grocery store, but you can steal one. But you really shouldn't.) Most of the synonyms in these word books were also likely as common as the original word -- ho-hum! Frankly, if we are looking for a sparkling alternative to quotidian diction, the thesaurus is a dinosaur. Of course, we might well turn to the many books that alphabetize unusual or obsolete words, but we can't have archaic and eat it, too, since how would we know that "natterjack" was just the word we wanted for a Western European toad that runs rather than hops? Enter Philadelphia attorney Peter E. Meltzer who, after a decade of sedulous work on his avocation, has published "The Thinker's Thesaurus: Sophisticated Alternatives to Common Words" (\$16.95 in paperback from Marion Street Press). Attempting to write the wrongs of thesauruses past (which he does in a marvelous 50-page introduction), Meltzer goes on to deliver the goods, thousands of ordinary words coupled with one or more less common

synonyms. But he doesn't stop there. Some 75 percent of the entries contain "clarifiers" helping us understand the particular synonym's "spin." So wrongdoing "in public office" is malversation. And an occupation "requiring little work but paying an income" is a sinecure. Meltzer writes that he has avoided the use of obsolete words (Shakespeare used a lot of them, but they weren't obsolete then, don't you know). To show their currency, the "thinker's synonyms" get illustrative quotations drawn from magazines, newspapers, and even books published in the last decade. The author quotes from a story in the Sydney Morning Herald from 2000 about the newest in adult education courses -- stripping. The quote comes in the entry for "bravado" and its synonym "fanfaronade":

"Fanfaronade," says the story, "will take you through the steps necessary to become a confident exotic dancer. Each participant is expected to have partially completed a semester each of Tassel Making, Cracking Walnuts with Your Own Buttocks on Stage and Booking the Light Entertainment Circuit." Just so you know, there's also a good word for "having a nicely proportioned rear end": callipygian. Time magazine used it of Jennifer Lopez. Some words cry out to be used in this day and age. Under "superficial (knowledge of a subject while pretending to be learned)" we find "sciolism" and a quote from a Montreal newspaper referring to talk show hosts. Oh, Canada: You, too? What has me eupeptic (cheerful but, you know, in a scholarly way) is that "The Thinker's Thesaurus" is not a book for impressing friends with a lot of fanfaronade. It's a book that helps us think a little more clearly as we search for just the right word -- especially those who yearn to be philosophers and not mere philophastrs. This book may, however, make you a philosopher faster! Dan Barnett teaches philosophy at Butte College. Copyright 2006 Chico Enterprise-Record. Used by permission.

I am a free-lance writer and I have owned this book for about 3 weeks and have found it to be much more useful than other reference sources in my library which offer word synonyms. Ordinary thesauruses can be helpful if you're just trying to find a word that you already knew but had temporarily forgotten. So-called "reverse dictionaries" are for the exact same purpose--simply to remind you of words you already knew. Thus these books are rarely helpful for me, except when I have a brain freeze on a certain word. Two instances come to mind which really brought home the difference between this book and others--I wanted a synonym for the words "large" and "grouchy". For "large", my thesaurus and reverse dictionary offered up such "unusual" possibilities as big, enormous, giant, huge and sizable. Well, duh! Did I really need a reference book to suggest those useless synonyms to me? Meltzer's book offers far more interesting alternatives, namely Bunyanesque, elephantine, brobdingnagian, leviathan, pachydermatous, pythonic, and the one which I eventually chose, "Pantagruelian". For "grouchy", my thesaurus and reverse dictionary

offered up irritable, surly, testy and touchy. Thanks but no thanks. Meltzer's book suggested instead tetchy, bilious (or atrabilious), liverish, querulous, shirty and splenetic. Also, all of the entries in this book have examples of their use. Some of them are quite funny, and many explain the historical derivation of the words (such as Pantagruelian). The one thing I would have liked to see would be an alphabetized listing of all the hard words, so I could more easily check to see if a hard word was in the book. Anyway, if you want to expand your vocabulary with real words that are not found in the "same old" reference books, I suggest this one.

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