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**[The synonym finder ; Webster's collegiate thesaurus ; Roget's II:
the new thesaurus]**

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Indian and Pakistani, Irish, New Zealand, South African and Scottish variants are taken into account. It is certainly right that also taboo words have been included and indicated as such. They cannot be ignored by non-native speakers, for they may prove to be pitfalls into which many an unwary non-native user of English may tumble.

Most welcome are the numerous examples. In this respect, a possessor of both the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* and the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English* will be in a fortunate position, for there are cases when one of the two has an example or examples to offer, whereas the other has none.

All the information on the use of English words provided by the Dictionary will be greatly appreciated by the non-native speaker of English. In fact, the presented information may even whet his appetite for more. As he will hardly ever acquire a native speaker's feeling for English, he will always be in need of a reliable and comprehensive guide to Modern English usage. It therefore appears that there would be a place even for a larger dictionary meant specially for him, perhaps one of the size of *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*. Needless to say, this is not a criticism, but merely a suggestion. Within the limits of 1303 pages, the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* offers a wealth of information which makes it into a work of reference that will be acclaimed as an outstanding lexicographical achievement by non-native users of English all the world over.

Jan Firbas

J. I. Rodale, *The Synonym Finder*, revised edition by Laurence Urdang and Nancy La Roche, Rodale Press, Inc., Emmaus, Pa., 1979.

Webster's Collegiate Thesaurus, G. C. Merriam Co., Springfield, Mass., 1976.

Roget's II: The New Thesaurus, Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston, Mass., 1980.

The innumerable editions of *Roget's Thesaurus of English Words and Phrases*, first published in 1852, testify to the usefulness of a reference book providing a sophisticated native speaker of English with vast collections of words covering certain semantic fields. *Roget's Thesaurus* is usually less useful to non-native speakers or learners of English, partly because its range is beyond the limits of their knowledge of the English vocabulary and partly because it does not give usage labels. A disadvantage of *Roget*, felt perhaps by all its users, is its complexity, resulting in not so readily available information. Better structuration of the material is achieved with the alphabetical arrangement of a thesaurus, as is evidenced by three recent achievements of American lexicographers.

The most extensive of the new generation of thesauruses is the revised edition of *Rodale's Synonym Finder*. Its 1355 pages of small print contain over 1,000,000 words (as we learn from the blurb, or more than 1,500,000 words according to the Editor-in-Chief's introduction). The average size of an entry seems to be about 60 words, but the entries are divided into numbered subgroups according to meaning, a still finer classification within the subgroups being indicated by semicolons. For instance, *head*, as a noun, is divided into 13 numbered subgroups containing about 200 words, further divided by 33 semicolons, which gives six words between semicolons on the average. (The size of similar word-groups in Longman's 1962 revised and modernized version of *Roget's Thesaurus* seems to be slightly smaller, indicating finer classification.) If we compare the groups of synonyms of *head*, n., conveying the meaning of 'part of a body' in *Rodale* with the analogous group in *Roget*, we find that *Rodale* offers more synonyms or closely related words, although of stylistically limited applicability: archaic *mazard*, *costard*, informal *upstairs*, *noggin*, slang expressions *gourd*, *noodle*. (If the comparison were made on the basis of *Roget's* index, there would be three more words found in *Rodale* only: *poll*, *upper storey*, *double crown*.) *Roget's Thesaurus*, on the other hand, covers a wider field and offers a higher number of related words, in careful sequence, such as *scalp*, *epicranium*, *headpiece*, *brow*.

In addition to the thirteen subgroups, the entry *head* in *The Synonym Finder* contains further five subgroups with synonyms to some idioms, e.g. *head over heels*. *Head* as adjective and *head* as verb are covered by another seven subgroups.

The entry *head* also shows some of the other welcome features of *Rodale's Syn-*

onym Finder: usage labels (slang, informal, dialectal, archaic, etc.), indication of technical terms (such as nautical, chemistry) and even an occasional word from another language, like Latin, French, German. The *Synonym Finder* distinguishes not only between American and British English, but indicates words found in Scottish, Irish, Australian English, in Anglo-Indian, etc.

The second of the reviewed thesauruses is *Webster's Collegiate Thesaurus*. Based on the files of the Merriam-Webster dictionaries, it supplies the user with synonyms, antonyms, related and contrasted words. There are two types of entry: the main entry, with a short definition of the semantic range of the word in question and with an illustrative example (neither of these features is to be found in *Roget* or *Rodale*), and the secondary entry, with synonyms only. Thus under *head* the first entry is a main entry with a definition and an example (and with a full list of synonyms) and the remaining seven entries are secondary ones, where the first of the synonyms is printed in small capitals, guiding the reader to the required main entry (e.g., GIFT 2, LEADER 2). The list of synonyms for a secondary entry is slightly shorter than the list at the corresponding main entry. Usage directions are simplified, unfortunately, into a single symbol of limited use, so that another dictionary has to be consulted if more information on usage is needed.

The overall number of words in *Webster's Collegiate Thesaurus* will be lower than in *Roget* or *Rodale*. The entry *head*, n., contains 81 words, compared to about 200 in *Rodale*. The number of related words in the other two thesauruses will be higher. Taking *head* again as an example, we find only four related words in the meaning of 'part of a body': *brainpan*, *cranium*, *scalp*, *crown*, while *Rodale's Synonym Finder* has also *skull*, *cephalon*, *cap*, etc.

Even with a smaller, though not insufficient, section of the English vocabulary covered, *Webster's Thesaurus* has one advantage over *Rodale's Finder* in that all words appearing as synonyms in the entries are also included as separate entries in their own alphabetical places. A user can 'enter' the thesaurus at *noodle* or *nut* (or any other secondary entry) and will be directed to the main entry (i.e. *head*).

The authors of *Webster's Collegiate Thesaurus*, were too generous, in the view of the present reviewer, in allotting approximately one sixteenth of the book, corresponding to about sixty pages, to the explanation of abbreviations *syn*, *rel*, etc. The explanation is repeated on every page. Every other page should be more than sufficient.

The name of the third book, *Roget's II: The New Thesaurus*, by the editors of *The American Heritage Dictionary*, indicates that *Roget II* is a new type of thesaurus, different from the well-known *Roget I*. The difference can be seen at first glance and it might be said that of the three thesauruses discussed here, *Roget II* bears the least resemblance to the original *Thesaurus of English Words and Phrases*. *Roget II* has some features common with *Webster's Collegiate Thesaurus*. Both are alphabetical, both distinguish between main and secondary entries, offer definitions and examples and provide usage labels. *Roget II*, however, deals with synonyms only, i.e. it does not list antonyms, related or contrasted words.

Roget II has a very distinct lay-out of the pages, with entry words, definitions, examples in the left-hand column and with synonyms and idioms in the right-hand column. Although requiring more space than the usual dictionary lay-out, the new arrangement is very convenient and easy to survey. All expressions suggested as synonyms to the main or the secondary entries have their own alphabetic entries. The meanings of all entries, main or secondary, are always defined. If we look up *head*, n., again, we find ten definitions for the noun, three for the verb and one for the adjective.

To sum up. All three thesauruses are considered to be very useful reference books, each in a different way and, perhaps, for a different type of user. *The Synonym Finder* should be preferred by readers with an intimate knowledge of the English vocabulary, while *Webster's Collegiate Thesaurus* should be found useful by those who do not need very extensive lists of semantically cognate words but who like to get the information structured in a more systematic manner. *Roget II: The New Thesaurus* should prove very adequate as a handy reference book of high quality on English synonyms, and of the three thesauruses reviewed here is very likely to prove most useful to foreign learners of English.

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