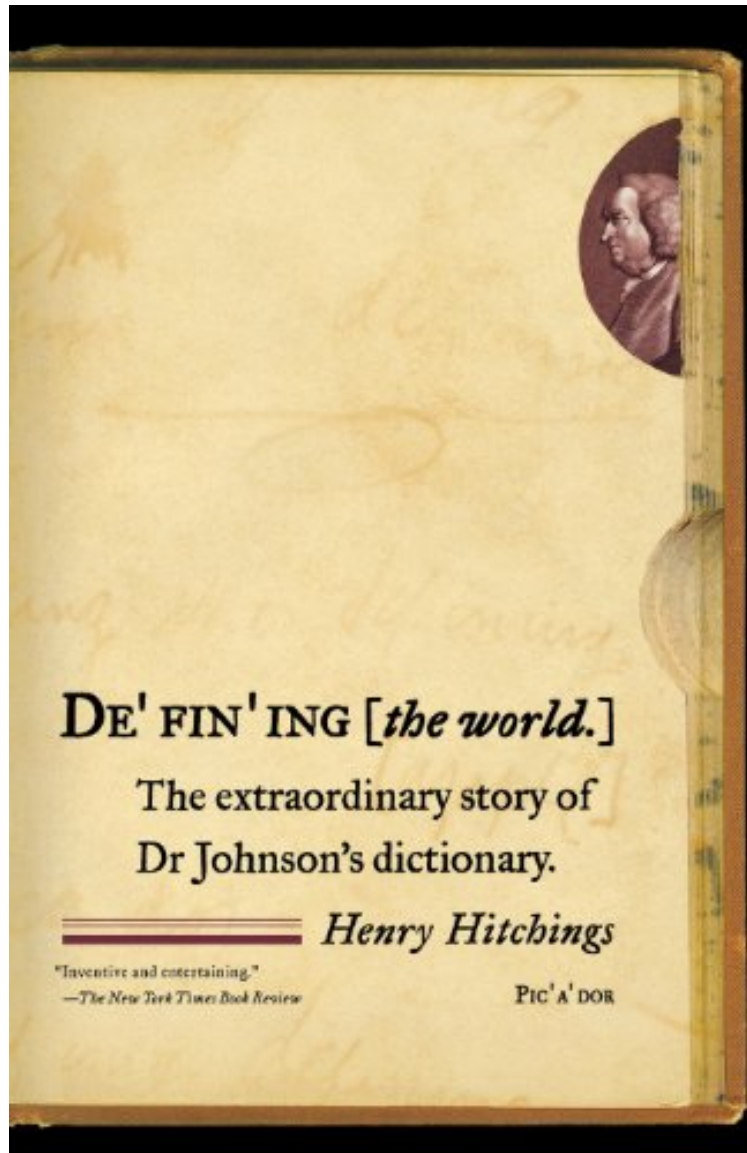


[Ebook pdf] Defining the World: The Extraordinary Story of Dr Johnson's Dictionary

# Defining the World: The Extraordinary Story of Dr Johnson's Dictionary

Henry Hitchings

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**Henry Hitchings : Defining the World: The Extraordinary Story of Dr Johnson's Dictionary** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Defining the World: The Extraordinary Story of Dr Johnson's Dictionary:

5 of 6 people found the following review helpful. A World of Words By Christian Schlect A small book about Dr. Johnson and his dictionary that defined an age. It is a wonderful effort for those who love the English language and the words that give it life. Only in his early thirties, Mr. Hitchings is a talented and intelligent writer of the type Dr. Johnson, if he were alive today, would certainly appreciate and invite into his company at the local coffeehouse. Those who enjoy this book should take an oath to obtain and read "The Life of Samuel Johnson" by James Boswell. 12 of 13 people found the following review helpful. "Doctor Johnson" By Stephen Balbach Defining the World does for Dr. Johnson's 18th century dictionary what Simon Winchester did in The Meaning of Everything for the Oxford English Dictionary. A popular, readable and enjoyable history. Hitchings doesn't have the "spark" of Winchester's prose, he's only 30 and it's his first book, but he is well versed in his subject—he has a recent PhD on it in fact—the book is very well written. Most memorable for me were the descriptions of life in London in the middle to late 18th century and its many floppy characters. As befitting a book about a dictionary, there is substantial discussion of words and definitions and the many permutations—a seemingly dry subject but in the hands of Hitchings, under the guidance of Johnson's raw material, is really very funny and interesting. Unlike the OED, the Dictionary doesn't have a dramatic creation story, other than Johnson's colorful character which is as much mythology as reality. If for no other reason than I keep running into "Doctor Johnson" and his dictionary everywhere I turn, this book provided enjoyable context on what it's all about. As my studies will in the future focus on the 18th century, Dr. Johnson has become an indispensable piece of culture to know about. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Good word book By Robert B. Miller I was a dictionary reader as a child, so it was inevitable that I would appreciate Johnson and his work. This book is an entertaining introduction to the man and the dictionary. I plan to give this book to my adult children as a holiday gift.

A Los Angeles Times Favorite Book of the Year In 1746, Samuel Johnson undertook the Herculean task of writing the first comprehensive English dictionary. Imagining he could complete the job in three years, Johnson in fact took more than eight, and the dictionary itself turned out to be as much a work of literature as it was an invaluable reference. In alphabetized chapters, from "Adventurous" to "Zootomy," Henry Hitchings tells of Johnson's toil and triumph and offers a closer look at the definitions themselves, which were alive with invention, poetry, erudition, and, at times, hilarious imprecision. The story of Johnson's adventure into the essence of words is an entertainment that "sparkles on every page" (The Philadelphia Inquirer).

From Publishers Weekly For the 250th anniversary of Dr. Samuel Johnson's most famous achievement, Hitchings's charming philology-as-biography shows Johnson to be no mere compiler of words but, as he himself put it, "a writer of dictionaries." Authoritative dictionaries for French and Italian were compiled by official academies, but English's first proper dictionary fell to a university dropout and failed provincial schoolmaster turned Grub Street hacklong before he became the Great Cham. The work began as a purely commercial venture at the suggestion of a bookseller-publisher, Johnson labored under less than ideal conditions, assisted only by a group of eclectic and eccentric amanuenses, and burdened by his wife's declining health and his own melancholia. In the end, his four-volume, 20-pound opus defined more than 42,773 common words and technical terms from all disciplines, supported with some 110,000 quotations drawn from English literature. Besides contemporary illustrations by the great Hogarth and Reynolds, Hitchings's book reproduces sample pages of Johnson's annotated reference material and the first edition of the dictionary. Though not as sensational as the bestselling account of another dictionary, The Professor and the Madam, British writer Hitchings's debut puts the scholarly labor in illuminating perspective along with its entirely human creator. (Oct.) Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. From The New Yorker James Boswell's biography has preserved for the ages the reputation of Samuel Johnson, but the dictionary for which Johnson was known in his own time receives little attention therein, because Boswell did not meet Johnson until 1763, eight years after the dictionary's publication. Hitchings' sprightly book about the dictionary gives a full picture of Johnson during a difficult decade of melancholy toil. More than twenty English dictionaries preceded Johnson's, but his surpassed them all, and was itself supplanted only in 1928, by the first Oxford English Dictionary—which used nearly two thousand of Johnson's definitions. In alphabetically ordered chapters given Johnson's own headwords, from "Adventurous" to "Zootomy," Hitchings details the magnitude of Johnson's labors and the achievements of the dictionary, from Johnson's "scrupulous care over shades of meaning"—defining "world," for example, in sixteen different senses—to the inclusion of a hundred thousand illustrative quotations, culled from his voracious reading. Copyright 2005 The New Yorker From Bookmarks Magazine What Simon Winchester did for the Oxford English Dictionary in The Meaning of Everything (\*\*\*\* Nov/Dec 2003), Hitchings does for its predecessor, Samuel Johnson's dictionary. Hitchings's delightful book is infused with details about the history of lexicography and the English language, and he places the dictionary in the context of Johnson's difficult life and the fame that followed. Cleverly written (though Hitchings misses a few definitions here and there), Defining the World is organized much like a dictionary, with each chapter dubbed with a word from Johnson's tome, including the definition. Hitchings documents Johnson's arduous labor and the impact that the book continues to have on English language and

