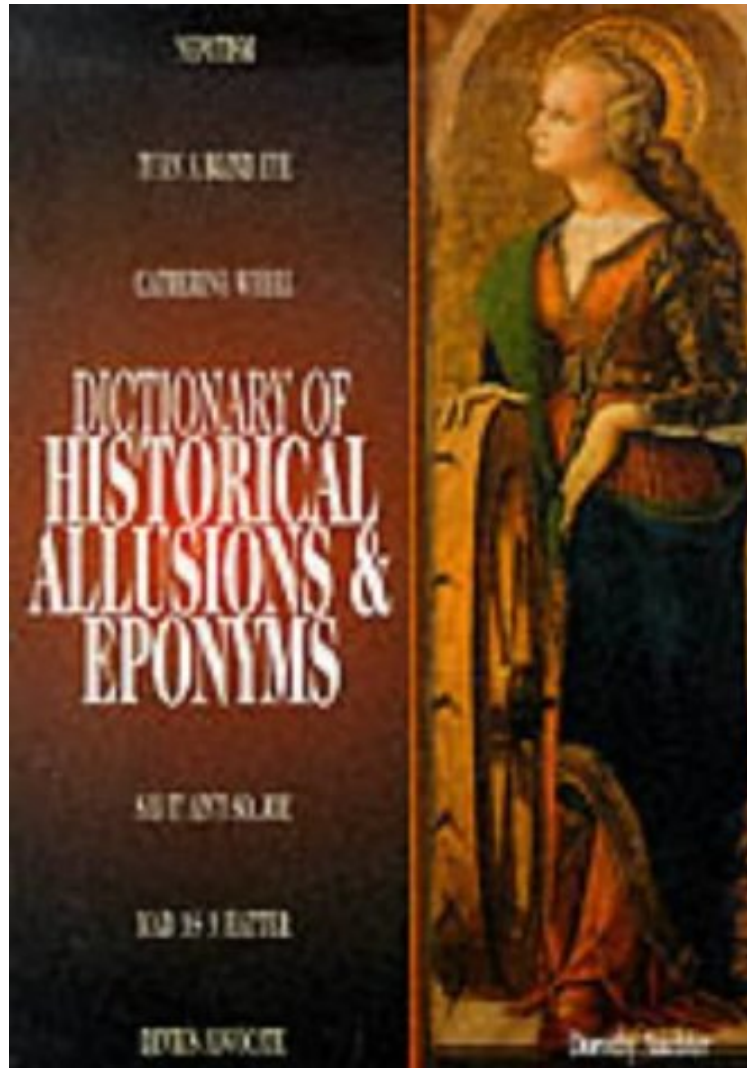


## Dictionary of Historical Allusions Eponyms

*Dorothy Auchter*

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**Dorothy Auchter : Dictionary of Historical Allusions Eponyms** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Dictionary of Historical Allusions Eponyms:

Short shrift has its origins in the public executions of Renaissance times, when the impatience of the crowd for the main event led to cutting short the last rites performed for the condemned, known as shrieving or shrift. Whipping boy originally referred to a boy chosen as companion for a young prince, who would be caned when the prince deserved punishment. The Dictionary of Historical Allusions and Eponyms records the rich and engaging stories behind the

history of over 550 words and phrases such as these. Drawing upon historical allusions from sources as varied as the courts of ancient Egypt, the battlefields of Europe, the pirate ships of the Caribbean, and the corridors of American politics, this dictionary provides the contemporary meaning as well as the history of each term or phrase.

From School Library Journal Grade 9 Up-Readable and informative etymological explications of more than 550 words and phrases used in the English language. Each entry begins with a brief definition, traces the term's history, and then closes with a short list of bibliographic sources. Auchter has displayed excellent judgment in her selection of expressions and done an admirable job in explaining their historical background and popular usage. Some of the allusions she includes are "by hook or by crook," "to eat humble pie," "slush fund," and "spick and span." A few of the eponyms cited are "Edmond Hoyle," "Charles Boycott," and "Jessica Mitford." This lively resource provides students with an enjoyable and educational tool to improve their writing skills and to enrich their understanding of our language. Peggy Mooney, Pohick Public Library, Burke, VA Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal Eponyms, those personal names that have evolved into words used in everyday speech and writing, fill our language. Some are obvious, like Diesel, Fahrenheit, Victorian, and Jezebel, while for others, such as Boycott, Chauvinist, Rastafarian, and Nicotine, connections to long-forgotten people are rarely made. Auchter, a reference librarian and author of *The History Highway: A Guide to Internet Resources* (M.E. Sharpe, 1996), sets out to "bring the stories of these people back to life," and she succeeds admirably. She gives a one-sentence definition, followed by a concise (200- to 500-word) essay for each of nearly 600 eponyms and historical allusions from all eras, including the 20th century. The essays illuminate current meaning by thoroughly explaining the historical situation that produced the words, and each entry ends with bibliographical reference to three or four sources. Only real, historically verifiable people and events appear here; allusions from fiction or mythology have been excluded. While not comprehensive, this book will be useful to students of language, literature, and history and will prove irresistible to those who are addicted to words and word lore. Other recent and noteworthy reference works on the topic include Morton S. Freeman's *A New Dictionary of Eponyms* (Oxford Univ., 1997) and Andrew Sholl's *Wellingtons, Watts Windsor Knots: How the Names Became the Words* (NTC/Contemporary, 1997), which is as entertaining as Auchter but lacking in allusional material. Recommended for academic and larger public libraries. Paul A. D'Alessandro, Portland P.L., ME Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Booklist Authored by a reference librarian at Ohio State University, this dictionary provides the contemporary meaning and history for approximately 550 words and phrases from all eras of history, including the twentieth century. Phrases to be included were selected from historically verifiable people and events from the Bible, ancient history, and folklore. Items originating in mythology or fictional works are excluded. The purpose is "to provide greater insight and historical background for these figures of speech than is currently available in reference literature." Each entry includes a terse definition and a longer (approximately three paragraphs) history of the main entry. Written in a chatty, storytelling style, the longer portions are as delightful to read as they are informative. Every entry concludes with a list of sources (usually two to five) from which information was taken. A subject index groups entries under broad headings. Obvious titles to which this volume can be compared include *Facts On File Encyclopedia of Word and Phrase Origins* [RBB D 1 97], Laurence Urdang's *Idioms and Phrases Index* (Gale, 1983), and *The American Heritage Dictionary of Idioms* [RBB D 15 97]. Although some of the content of Auchter's book is duplicated in other sources, a substantial amount is not. Hausmanization ("to restore and upgrade deteriorating urban areas") and salt, not worth one's are examples of entries that do not commonly appear in other sources. Additionally, the definitions in Auchter are often more clear than in other sources. This dictionary will provide depth to a collection of similar sources and is recommended for larger libraries. Smaller libraries should also strongly consider purchasing the book, since it is easy to understand, attractive for browsers, and less expensive than more comprehensive titles. *DISCOVERING Nations, States, and Cultures* is a program designed to help users understand all the world's nations and cultures. Its target audience is high-school students and teachers, although anyone interested in broadening cross-cultural understanding will find it useful. The CD-ROM contains information on 200 nations, The 50 U.S. states (plus Washington, D.C., and U.S. dependencies), 12 Canadian provinces and territories, and nearly 500 cultural groups. Searches are simple and can be done four ways-- Culture, Place, Full Text, and Picture Gallery. Culture and Place searches can be executed either by entering search criteria or scrolling down an alphabetical list. Place search also has a clickable map. More refined searches can be conducted from the Main Menu. Entries are similar to what one would find in the print sources from which much of the content is drawn-- *Worldmark Encyclopedia of Cultures and Daily Life* [RBB My 1 98], *Worldmark Encyclopedia of the Nations* (9th ed., 1998), and *Worldmark Encyclopedia of the States* (4th ed., 1998). Each entry includes a historical overview and current information about the economics, politics, geography, and environment of the culture or area. The more than 1,650 illustrations include official flags and seals, regional maps, and photographs that describe the everyday lives of diverse inhabitants. There are links to related documents and images. Cultural differences and similarities are the focal points, and comparisons are easy due to the standardized format of the entries and a "context bar" that allows searching each entry by subject categories, such as Climate, Judicial System, and Balance of Payments. Tables enhance understanding, and some are hard to find elsewhere. For example, in the entry for Brazil

there is a table that lists the newspapers of that country and indicates their political bias. The command buttons and the toolbar are easy to use, even for novices. Users can print or download all or parts of documents--libraries can customize the setup to limit printing and downloading. Because the default illustration (usually the official flag) and the search results box and other tools take up the left half of the screen at all times, the user sees relatively little text at once. Some of the tables cannot be read at one viewing. It is easier to "Print All" and scan the hard copy than to scroll through numerous screens. Libraries that own the Worldmark encyclopedias already have much of this information in a form that is more convenient for ready reference. The CD-ROM offers conceptual linkages that make it especially useful for a classroom setting.