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## Bryson's Dictionary of Troublesome Words

Priscilla Finley

University of Nevada, Las Vegas, [priscilla.finley@unlv.edu](mailto:priscilla.finley@unlv.edu)

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**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*