

WEBSTER'S THIRD AND THE 20TH CENTURY

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To what extent can year dates be found in Webster's Third? Year dates are scattered throughout Webster's Third, in definitions and in etymologies, ranging from many thousands of years BC to the very recent. Here's a slimmed-down version of the entry for BULL MOOSE:

Main entry: bull moose

Etymology: bull moose, the emblem of the Progressive party formed in 1912 by Theodore Roosevelt died 1919 American president

: a follower of Theodore Roosevelt in the United States presidential campaign of 1912

The definition refers to 1912, while the etymology refers to both 1912 and 1919.

We wondered whether it would be possible to compile a list of words and terms relating to each year of the 20th century. In the lists here, we show the word (or term) earliest alphabetically in the dictionary that includes a given year date in its definition, and also the word earliest alphabetically in the dictionary that includes a given year date in its etymology. Not surprisingly, most words come from the earlier parts of the dictionary.

Although Webster's Third was first published in 1961, there were regular addenda sections from 1966 onwards. Supplemental publications such as *6000 Words* and *12000 Words* appeared from 1976 on. All this supplementary material has been brought together in the CD-ROM version of the dictionary (Version 2.5, 2000). It is this CD-ROM version that has been used in compiling the following lists. This should explain why there are many dates post-1961 appearing in the definitions and etymologies.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Earliest entry in W3 with this year in definition</u>	<u>Earliest entry in W3 with this year in etymology</u>
1900	Boxer	Bertrand curve
1901	acceleration of gravity	Aida trumpet
1902	Aglipayan	abelite
1903	dollar	baud
1904	Kinkaid	Bayer process
1905	Arisaka	Abbe condenser
1906	att	Boltzmann's constant
1907	American Baptist	Bezold-Brücke phenomenon
1908	boy scout	Ayrton shunt
1909	besa	Argyll-Robertson pupil
1910	boy scout	Abegg's rule
1911	Double Ten	Binet-Simon test
1912	Bull Moose	brushite
1913	carat	Aschersonia
1914	argentino	Bertillon system

1915	Anzac Day	Alzheimer's disease
1916	Dada	Ammon's law
1917	Bolshevik	Baeyer strain theory
1918	Armistice Day	Ayerza's disease
1919	amani	amani
1920	Black and Tan	Abney level
1921	abbasi	Allen's hummingbird
1922	chervonets	Babbitt
1923	abbasi	andorite
1924	caliph	Albada finder
1925	anthroposophy	Alexandra palm
1926	Austrian school	Annie Oakley
1927	Independent Baptist	Bechterew's nucleus
1928	angular	artinite
1929	catty	bazzite
1930	Hitlerism	demanian system
1931	Bourbon	Babcock test
1932	cardinal bishop	Babinski reflex
1933	double eagle	Abt system
1934	duck stamp	bundle of His
1935	dollar	Dreyfusard
1936	Loyalist	bandar-log
1937	Anglic	Adlerian
1938	FD&C color	Eckert projection
1939	international pitch	aquacade
1940	kroon	Aglipayan
1941	—	Bergsonian
1942	milreis	Aschoff body
1943	Norroy King of Arms	bayleyite
1944	Wasp	Bedaux system
1945	Arisaka	Arthus phenomenon
1946	air mile	bikini
1947	Benelux	Blackman reaction
1948	condor	Brillouin zone
1949	—	Bergius process
1950	American Baptist	Abderhalden reaction
1951	Conservative Baptist	Babbitt
1952	kyat	Carrel-Dakin treatment
1953	hwan	Curtis stage
1954	air mile	Chastek paralysis
1955	at	Arneth index
1956	piaster	Barkhausen effect
1957	naya paisa	austinite
1958	Empire Day	aldrin
1959	air mile	Klieg light
1960	new franc	amani
1961	rand	Binet-Simon test
1962	hwan	Bohr atom
1963	—	Dick test
1964	—	Franck-Condon principle
1965	—	Churchillian
1966	—	Raney nickel
1967	—	Dick test
1968	—	Barthian

1969	---	Tobacco Road
1970	---	Goldbergian
1971	---	Bragg angle
1972	---	billi-bi
1973	---	krausite
1974	---	Peronism
1975	Bourbon	Coolidge tube
1976	---	Legionnaires' disease
1977	---	Nabokovian
1978	---	Eames chair
1979	Bourbon	Parsonian
1980	Anno Lucis	Hitchcockian
1981	---	Krebs cycle
1982	---	syli
1983	---	---
1984	Orwellian	Big Brother
1985	austral	angry young man
1986	---	Brigadoon
1987	---	---
1988	---	Brigadoon
1989	---	Beckettian
1990	---	Skinnerian
1991	austral	---

There are no dates after 1991.

Some of the definitions are remarkably precise. Consider this definition for KINKAIDER:

: a settler on free land in Nebraska under terms of the Kinkaid act in 1904 which allowed each bona fide settler 640 acres upon payment of a filing fee of 14 dollars

Or this definition for BLACK AND TAN:

: a recruit enlisted in England in 1920-21 for service in the Royal Irish Constabulary against the armed movement for Irish independence

Or this for DUCK STAMP:

: the federal migratory-bird hunting stamp first issued in 1934 that is required on the hunting licenses of wild-fowl hunters over 16 years of age and that is sold to raise funds for the protection of migratory birds (as by the purchase of sanctuary areas)

Similarly with etymologies. Here are three extensive ones, starting with BANDAR-LOG:

Etymology: Hindi badar monkey + log people; from the portrayal of the monkey race as chatterers and poseurs in the jungle stories of Rudyard Kipling died 1936 English writer—more at LOG

Or try this etymology for ANNIE OAKLEY, which contains three times as many words as the definition:

Etymology: after Annie Oakley died 1926 American markswoman; from the resemblance of a punched pass to a playing card with bullet holes through the spots : a free ticket as to a theater)

The third, for TOBACCO ROAD, is also longer than the definition:

Etymology: from Tobacco Road, novel (1932) by Erskine Caldwell b1903 American writer, and play (1933) adapted by Jack Kirkland died 1969 American playwright, about poor whites in a depressed rural area of Georgia traversed by a run-down thoroughfare ("tobacco road") made in earlier days by rolling hogsheads of tobacco to market

Only two years before Webster's Third's original publication date of 1961 are unrepresented in the definitions, 1941 and 1948. But there are many gaps in the years after 1961 occurring in definitions. The earliest date unrepresented in the etymologies is 1983.

Notice how some words (or terms) occur more than once. For example, the definition of ABBASI is the earliest in the dictionary for 1921 and also for 1923. The definition of BOURBON is the earliest for three different years, 1931, 1975 and 1979. As for etymologies, AMANI is the earliest for both 1919 and 1960.

The most recent years represented are 1991 for the definition of AUSTRAL, and 1990 for the etymology of SKINNERIAN.

Comparing the words on a year-by-year basis, we see that definition words appear earlier in the dictionary than etymology words for 18 dates, that etymology words occur before definition words for 70 dates, and that there are two dates where the definition and etymology words are the same. 1983 is the only date before 1992 for which neither definition nor etymology words exist.

It is interesting also to note the distribution of initial letters of the words. There are 24 definitions and 30 etymologies for words beginning with A, 35 definitions and 64 etymologies for words beginning with A or B, and 60 definitions and 82 etymologies for words beginning with the letters A through M. (However, there are only 7 words and 7 etymologies for words beginning with the letters N through Z.) This tells us that we're far more likely to find a given year earlier in the alphabet by searching the dictionary's etymologies rather than the definitions.

Where to next? Rather than wait another hundred years to repeat the exercise for the 21st century, using an appropriate future edition of Webster's, we could tackle it for the 19th century using Webster's Third, or the 18th century, or even earlier ones. Watch this space!