



The Cassell Dictionary of Appropriate Adjectives

By E. H. Mikhail

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This reference is designed to help users of English find an appropriate adjective. Providing a list of around 4000 nouns with the adjectives that can describe them, plus a list of common similes, this book shows how to avoid hackneyed adjectives and unspecific or ambiguous descriptions.

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The Cassell Dictionary of Appropriate Adjectives By E. H. Mikhail Bibliography

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Editorial Review

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Mikhail, a professor of English at a Canadian university, points out that there are numerous thesauri and dictionaries of synonyms but no volume to help writers find appropriate adjectives to go with nouns. In this work he lists 4,000 nouns followed by adjectives grouped thematically.

Among the types of words found are technical adjectives (e.g., *palliative* treatment), classical or mythological adjectives (e.g., *Stygian* stream), and adjectives that describe animals (e.g., *bleating* lamb). The singular and plural forms of each noun are followed by a list of adjectives arranged in a variety of ways; for example, from positive to negative, passive to active, general to technical. There are no obvious delineations between groupings. All primary entries adhere to British spelling (e.g., *aeroplane*, *odour*); there are some cross-references from American spellings. There are also references to preferred and related entries: "*offensive*, *offensives* see attack" and "*chocolate*, *chocolates* see sweets." Nouns with more than one meaning receive separate entries; there are three for *order*.

There are three appendixes: "Good Personal Qualities" arranged alphabetically from *able* to *witty* and *wonderful*; "Bad Personal Qualities" from *abrasive* to *yellow*; and "Similes with Adjectives," for example, "as rich as Croesus." The volume might have been more useful with a cross-reference list of the adjectives to nouns, but that would have made it much bigger. The entry *smile*, *smiles*, for example, features more than 275 adjectives. The selection of nouns is arbitrary, and some plurals are curious (e.g., *offspring*, *offsprings*). Writers who depend too heavily on this book may find themselves using a lot of clichés: "quaint cottage," "absolute perfection." Some adjectives will drive the reader to a dictionary: "opsonic," "sesquipedalian."

Because of the British emphasis of this volume, American libraries may wish to purchase it as a supplement to other wordbooks, such as the *Random House Word Menu* [RBB Ja 1 93]. It will be helpful to crossword puzzle fans.

Users Review

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Elinor Russell:

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David Beall:

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