



500 Words You Should Know

Caroline Taggart

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From the author of the bestselling *I Used to Know That* comes a veracious cornucopia of 500 of the best, trickiest, and oft-misused words in the English language that will have you confabulating with the literary cognoscenti in no time

Ever wanted to ameliorate your atavistic lexicon, engage in a little intellectual badinage, or been discombobulated by tricky diction? *500 Words You Should Know* has you covered. This book will inspire readers to use uncommon words in their correct context, to utilize the English language to its full potential, and to test themselves on the words they think they already know. This is a book for the appreciator of correct usage, and contains words you thought you knew (decimate, caveat, nemesis), words you should know (euphemism, diatribe, tautology), and just a few that you might want to know (peripatetic, shibboleth, callipygian). Arranged thematically, each word is dissected, with a brief explanation of etymology, historical, and modern usage, allowing you to fully understand and effectively employ the word in its proper context.

500 Words You Should Know Details

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From Reader Review 500 Words You Should Know for online ebook

D.K. Powell says

I have quite strict rules to decide on what makes a good fiction book but how do you decide for non-fiction? Especially given how different many non-fiction books are. Caroline Taggart's book is a good example.

On paper, a kind of mini-dictionary-cum-glossary of some words which you might know and others you don't isn't exactly the kind of thing which has you swiftly reaching for your wallet to buy. It sounds about as much fun as eating sawdust and probably just about as much use too. After all, it doesn't give a complete list of anything, most words are just part of our 'intellectual' (at least) lexicon anyway, and who actually ever reads a dictionary? You 'dip' into a reference book like that. You can't even do this with Taggart's book as she's arranged words by them rather than strict alphabetical order.

So why have I rated the book so highly? Because, despite all the above, it is superb quite simply!

Taggart manages an incredibly fine line of not giving too many outlandish words which will never be of any use nor throwing up too many we already know and use all the time. Of course, this will change from person to person but my feeling is that the words she's chosen are probably about right for each reader. There was no more than a handful out of the 500 which I felt unlikely to ever want to use. About 50% I know and use, another 20-25% I understand to read but wouldn't necessarily use naturally myself. The remaining quarter to a third are either new to me or words I've often wondered exactly what they're supposed to mean.

This is an ideal ratio. I've tightened up my understanding of words I know and the book will remain on my shelf with a pencil alongside to go through again and underline words I'm going to add to my vocabulary. As a professional writer I'm painfully aware of my 'little darlings' - words and expressions I use constantly - so Taggart's book is going to be a useful tool to help me 'mix it up a bit' and gain a little more variety.

The icing on the cake is the humour which comes with all this. I get the feeling that Caroline Taggart is a nice person, someone you could have a laugh with, and not someone who you'd find irritating or 'grammar nazi'ish. I could be entirely wrong, I know, but that's how her writing feels and that's the point. She's not cocky, she doesn't try to be hilarious. It's all good-natured, informative, jolly kind of stuff; and as a result Taggart gets the balance right.

So, whether you want to improve your word power, or you're just intrigued by words which are slightly more complex than our everyday Anglo-Saxon-based lexicon, or you just want something light yet intelligent to dip into - '500 Words You Should Know' is a damned good contender for the spot.

Gill says

Great to pick up when there's a spare minute

Zoë says

Some interesting bits and pieces learned, and chirpy style, but I'd have liked more steer on entomology and origins / links of words, rather than lots of illustrations of their usage.

Jo Anne says

Educational

I learnt a lot of new words in this book and even found out interesting facts about words I did know but didn't know the meaning behind it. A good book.

Christie says

I had fun reading this book, although I took it slowly, as otherwise it resembles reading a short dictionary and my brain started to feel overwhelmed with all the explanations of different words.

I personally love words, particularly words that people don't use much. I've been known to use words such as pithy, ubiquitous and Sisyphean in everyday conversations, much to the chagrin of my friends and family.

I was surprised at how many of the words I knew quite well, but I imagine that comes from my years of extensive reading and education. I enjoyed some of the explanations of some of the more obscure words or meanings that I hadn't heard of before. However, I would have liked more detail in some of them, or pronunciation guides for more of the words. I did like how each of the chapters were broken up though.

Over all, it was a fun read and I enjoyed adding to my lexicon in such a way. I might challenge myself to use even more of these words in everyday conversations or writing where possible. It seems a shame to reduce our language to the same words constantly.

Oghma says

Definitely a great idea but there were too many terms derived from Latin for my taste.

Imogen Kathleen says

I don't think that I can give this a star rating, but I like to flick through it every so often, with the aim of improving my vocabulary.

Alex says

Clearly laid out, and revealing many interesting insights into the etymology of words, this books contains many more than 500, through the related words given with many of the explanations. However, the words themselves are likely to be already known to a reader or to be thoroughly out of place in conversation, so are not that useful. Taggart also has a horrible tendency to talk about words and their definitions in terms of what is correct or proper, which to the modern linguist is an archaic view, and although she includes many more

modern definitions, the prevailing impression is that she is resistant to language change, just like the 'purists' she repeatedly mentions (the idea of purity in relation to the English language is laughable, and would entirely detract from the beauty and fascination that can be found within it). She also tries to maintain phonology and morphology from French and Italian loan words, which is an unnecessary practice, but is all the more confusing as she does not do the same for German loans.

An interesting look into the etymology of some of our words, but that's as far as it goes.

Anny Veddes says

fatuous and flagrantly feckless. just joshing. it's worthy of magnanimous kudos. my fave chapter was 'science and the arts'.

I never knew about Tantalus or that patois was french for dialect. I also thought epicurean had more to do with horses than anything else. So I learned some good shtuff, will read more books like this in the future.

Fatima TM says

It was helpful but some definitions were described excessively.(they confused me)

Karla Winick-Ford says

You should know these words- there is a cornucopia of knowledge within the covers. Don't be discombobulated, the author presents vocabulary well. Text is sized wonderfully and the vocabulary words in bold with adequate space between.

I've reviewed many books of this type and this stands out. The author not only alphabetized the words but chunked them by chapter according to subject matter. This isn't a dictionary of favorite words but a collection of intelligent vocabulary to expand your usage of the the English language. Buy it- you'll be glad you did.

Bethany says

Interesting little book. I would have appreciated a pronunciation guide of some sort - some words had a pronunciation guide but others didn't. I did come across some interesting words I didn't know. Callipygian would have to be the one I like the sound of best, although I can't see myself ever using it!

Robert Hepple says

Published in 2014, 500 Words You Should Know does what it says on the cover. The words are catalogued under different sections, and include an often humorous description of their correct use. That said, many of you will know most of the words listed as well as their correct usage, so the book only really teaches you anything for less than half of the time. The style and presentation go some way to make up for this, and so it

makes an enjoyable read.

Mark Kriedemann says

Perfect book if you're on a trip through the country and still want to look at the scenery every now and again! Heaps of interesting notes on particularly the various french borrow-words in english, as well as the obligatory notes on the plethora of latin roots. Very pleasingly, the author also goes to the effort of drawing connections between lots of the 500 included words, noting the different degrees to which closely related words express a certain sentiment. Another great feature is that the 500 words are divvied up according to the context in which they are normally used, so you'll be able to use this almost as a thesaurus, or more likely if you're simply looking for more subtle ways of expressing things pertaining to a certain social scene. The main downside is a very general one that is recurring throughout the book. This is that there are numerous words that seem to have been given sparse analytical treatment. This mainly manifested in there not actually being a clear definition given for a word, but instead simply some example that gives an impression of how it is to be used, but doesn't really contribute to a subtle understanding of it. Overall, really fun book though. I'll be using it frequently in the future!

Miriam says

i love books about words! so this is just right for me. nicely divided into easy categories. fun to go through and see what you know and what you need to learn.
