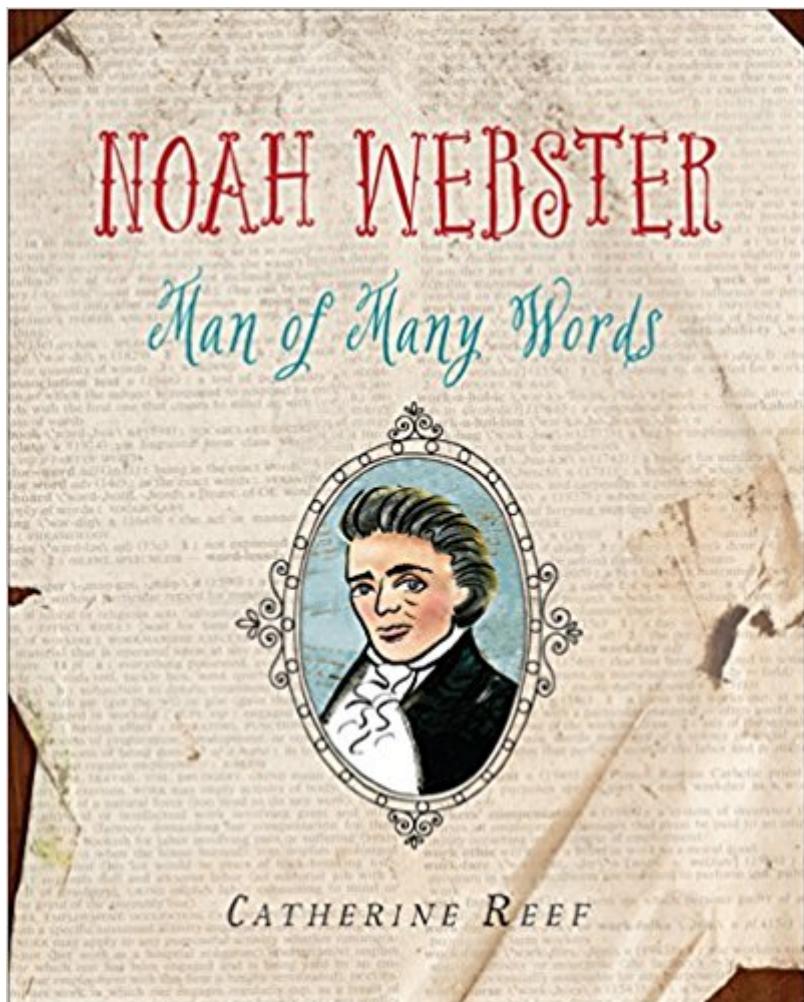


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# Noah Webster: Man Of Many Words



## Synopsis

Noah Webster may be best remembered for the enormous and ambitious task of writing his famous dictionary, but for him, this accomplishment was a means to an end. His true goal was to streamline the language spoken in our newly formed country so that it could be used as a force to bring people together and be a source of national pride. Though people laughed at his ideas, Webster never doubted himself. In the end, his so-called foolish notions achieved just what he had hoped.

Here, in the only account of Noah Webster for teens, the seasoned biographer Catherine Reef guides us through Webster's remarkable life, from boyhood on a Connecticut farm through the fight for American independence to his days as a writer and political activist who greatly influenced our Founding Fathers and the direction of the young United States.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Gr 7 Up •Many people take the dictionary for granted, rarely stopping to think of how it began. This well-written, impeccably researched book tells the story of Noah Webster (1758–1843), who was responsible for the first dictionary. Webster was fortunate to have a supportive father who mortgaged his farm so his son could afford to attend Yale. Webster saw the American Revolution unfold around him while a college student. He went on to work as a teacher, eventually opening a school and even offering classes to girls (a rarity in early America). It was his experiences as an educator that led him to pen an early version of the dictionary, a primer aimed at

young children, teaching them spelling, language, and basic history. An ardent proponent of independence from England and a strong federalist, Webster believed that the language spoken in the New World differed significantly from British English and "ought to be a source of national pride." Reef expertly emphasizes the link between her subject's fervent desire for a strong central government and his commitment to a unified language. Though Webster was ridiculed for his ideas, he persisted. Reef not only crafts a clear picture of the man but provides readers with a glimpse at historical figures such as Thomas Paine, George Washington, James Madison, and Benjamin Franklin and effectively integrates Webster's own words into the text. Featuring a large font and images throughout, this attractive offering is an excellent look at a noteworthy individual. VERDICT A first-rate addition to biography and history collections. — Jessica Lorentz Smith, Bend Senior High School, OR

\* "Featuring a large font and images throughout, this attractive offering is an excellent look at a noteworthy individual. A first-rate addition to biography and history collections." — School Library Journal, starred review "Thorough, well-documented, and smoothly written." — Kirkus "Reef capably weaves Webster's biography into the history of America's early years." — Booklist "Historical background gives context to this cradle-to-grave biography, and an epilogue discusses how our language continues to change." — Horn Book Magazine

Good information about one of the great men in our history, but slightly light on the dramatic side, since he led such an exciting life, and possibly a little too wordy for young people.

Catherine Reef has written an excellent profile of Noah Webster for the young reader audience. I was impressed with the thoroughness and substantive writing on Webster. Reef writes plainly and coherently for the age range, but she in no way "dumbs it down." She includes all of the elements one would expect in a scholarly historical biography. She develops the context of Webster's life using narrative, research, citations from Webster and others, quotes from historical documents, etc. Readers come away with a good grasp of not only Webster but his time and place, too. Through this account, readers will learn a good bit about American history and the drive for freedom and liberty that inspired American Independence. Webster's life demonstrates to readers individual motivation to develop one's abilities and skills through diligent work and study. This is a great example to young readers of a productive and useful, unselfish life, and it gives a picture into what contributes to the great values of America and to individual success. The book includes myriad illustrations to provide

some color and variety to the writing.

Catherine Reef's latest biography for kids is all about Noah Webster, sort of. The book is technically sound and more or less interesting while also being well researched. There is a more than adequate selection of source materials in the biography for further reading while also having notes so one knows when and where things are attributable. The real issue is that the focus of the book is as much on the events surrounding Webster's life as it is about his life. The American Revolution could have been a totally separate book based on how often it comes up compared to Webster's early-ish days. Yes, it's important for creating context, but at times Webster's masterpiece, the dictionary, is almost an afterthought even with the final chapters focusing more on how it finally was finished. *Man of Many Words* has an issue of focus but if you're looking to know more about Webster it's still easy to digest and works as a good starting point for middle grade readers. Note: ARC received via Vine in exchange for review.

My grandson, age 10, and I read the books and then compare analysis. The cover of the book states for Grade 7 and above, but we both think 9-10 year olds will like and understand this book. Both of us liked the book immensely. For my grandson, it was the first time he had read about the War of Independence from a first hand account, of sorts. Reading about the life of someone who lived during that period is much more informative, and the book includes famous people of the day, Washington, Jefferson and such. Webster was born near Hartford, Conn, and for the first few years of his childhood he was home schooled. He went to primary school but hated the teachers. He was tutored by a Priest to enter Yale. After Yale, Webster found it very difficult to find a job. He wanted to be a lawyer, but finally started his life as a teacher. Off and on during his life he taught school, and he recognized the dearth of spelling and reading educational material for his students. Webster wrote a book on spelling, pronunciation and reading. It was a blue backed binder, and was known as the Blue Back book. Over his lifetime he sold a million copies, and with the little money he made on each book he was able to support his careers. Webster married well, got his law degree and had four daughters. During his life he wrote many articles as part of his newspaper career. He had several newspapers, and at one time it took 600 pages to identify everything he had written. He decided to write a dictionary, and it took twenty some odd years for him to complete this missive. Today, Noah Webster is known for his Webster's Dictionary. I had no idea about this man and his accomplishments. The history of the United States during this time was more than informative. My grandson was entranced with the man. It is books like this that enliven and inform our youth. How

wonderful to have these books to enhance our history. Webster has been called the "Father of American Scholarship and Education." His blue-backed speller books taught five generations of children, what an accomplishment.Highly Recommended. prisrob 08-05-15

This book is written for young history buffs but I find the narrative engaging for us old readers as well. I didn't know much about Noah other than he wrote the first American dictionary, but now I know so much about his life story that text books gloss over.Keeping the younger audience in mind, Catherine Reef describes Noah's obsession with so many things, such as scientific fact over religious fable, letting us know that Noah most likely would have been labeled obsessive-compulsive had he been alive today. And he would most likely be an internet grammar police, correcting others' misspellings. A passionate school teacher, he wrote the blue-backed speller, then the big American dictionary, even dabbled in revising the King James's Bible. He is also portrayed as a patriotic American, having fought in the Revolutionary war. He had a hard time understanding British English, which explains his obsession with wanting an American English dictionary established. He is also portrayed as a loving husband and father to his children, which are all appropriate characteristics to embellish for young readers today. The Epilogue alone is worth reading and discussing with young readers today. There are black-white photographs, lithographs and diagrams all throughout this book. This book is recommended for all history buffs.

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