

# Introduction

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The *Macmillan School Dictionary* is a completely new reference resource for students learning through the medium of English. The information it provides is up to date, carefully researched, and above all completely relevant to the needs of young people who are studying a wide range of subjects and preparing for school examinations. Like any good dictionary, the *Macmillan School Dictionary* explains – clearly and accurately – the vocabulary needed for successful study in any of the key school subjects. But as we shall see, it does much more than this.

What makes the *Macmillan School Dictionary* unique is the research that underlies every aspect of its design and its content. In planning the dictionary, we have benefited from two very valuable resources:

- expert advice: at every stage, experienced teachers, textbook writers, and syllabus designers have contributed their expertise, giving us a clear idea of what the dictionary's users really need to know
- the unique Macmillan Curriculum Corpus, a 20-million-word computer database containing hundreds of school textbooks and exam syllabuses, for every subject from agriculture to zoology

Using state-of-the-art software to analyse this corpus, we have built up a detailed picture of the terms and concepts that are vital for the study of the main school subjects. We know, for example, which words are used most frequently in

textbooks about plant science, religious studies, the environment, or information technology. This gives us a reliable scientific basis for selecting the words to include in the dictionary and for deciding how much information is needed about each word.

But the corpus helps us in other ways too. It shows us how concepts are explained in the textbooks that students actually use in the classroom, and this gives us a model for our own definitions – ensuring that they are always relevant and easy to follow.

As well as explaining what words mean, the dictionary provides a wealth of useful advice and information, making it a powerful resource for self-study. These additional features include:

- 200 'usage notes' designed to help users develop their vocabulary and avoid common errors in English
- over 100 pictures and diagrams illustrating everything from flora and fauna to natural or scientific processes
- a Study Skills section in the centre of the book, with specially written articles to develop skills in essay-writing, interpreting data, reporting experiments, and writing clear, grammatical English

The *Macmillan School Dictionary* is the product of extensive research backed by modern technology. We hope you will enjoy using it, and we are confident that that it will help you to be successful in your schoolwork and your exams.