

THE
AMERICAN
HERITAGE
COLLEGE
dic·tion·ar·y



THIRD EDITION

Words are included in this Dictionary on the basis of their usage. Words that are known to have current trademark registrations are shown with an initial capital and are also identified as trademarks. No investigation has been made of common-law trademark rights in any word, because such investigation is impracticable. The inclusion of any word in this Dictionary is not, however, an expression of the Publisher's opinion as to whether or not it is subject to proprietary rights. Indeed, no definition in this Dictionary is to be regarded as affecting the validity of any trademark.

American Heritage® and the eagle logo are registered trademarks of Forbes Inc. Their use is pursuant to a license agreement with Forbes Inc.

Copyright © 1997, 1993 by Houghton Mifflin Company.
All rights reserved.

No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying and recording, or by any information storage or retrieval system without the prior written permission of Houghton Mifflin Company unless such copying is expressly permitted by federal copyright law. Address inquiries to Reference Permissions, Houghton Mifflin Company, 222 Berkeley Street, Boston MA 02116.

0-395-67161-2 (UPC)

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

The American heritage college dictionary. —3rd ed.

p. cm.

ISBN 0-395-66917-0 (plain edge). —ISBN 0-395-44638-4 (thumb edge). —ISBN 0-395-66918-9 (deluxe binding).

1. English language—Dictionaries. 2. Americanisms.

PE1628.A6227 1993

423—dc20

92-42124
CIP

Manufactured in the United States of America

For information about this and other Houghton Mifflin trade and reference books and multimedia products, visit The Bookstore at Houghton Mifflin on the World Wide Web at <http://www.hmco.com/trade/>.

commendation

commit

3. To commit to the care of another; entrust. [ME *commendēn* < Lat. *commendāre*: *com-*, *com-* + *mandāre*, to entrust; see *man-2**.] — *com·mend'a·ble* *adj.* — *com·mend'a·ble·ness* *n.* — *com·mend'a·bly* *adv.* — *com·men'da'tō'ry* *adj.*

com·men·da'tion (kōm'ən-dā'shən) *n.* 1. The act of commending. 2. Something, as an award, that commends.

com·men·sal (kō-mən'sal) *Biol.* — *adj.* Of, relating to, or characterized by commensalism. — *n.* An organism participating in a commensal relationship. [ME, sharing a meal < Med.Lat. *commensālis*: Lat. *com-*, *com-* + Lat. *mēnsa*, table.] — *com·men'sal'ly* *adv.*

com·men·sal·ism (kō-mən'sə-liz'əm) *n. Biol.* A symbiotic relationship between two organisms of different species in which one derives some benefit while the other is unaffected.

com·men·su·ra·ble (kō-mən'sə-rə-bəl, -shər-) *adj.* 1. Measurable by a common standard. 2. Commensurate; proportionate. 3. *Math.* Exactly divisible by the same unit an integral number of times. Used of two quantities. [LLat. *commensū-rābilis*: Lat. *com-*, *com-* + *mēnsūrābilis*, measurable (< *mēnsūrāre*, to measure; see *COMMENSURATE*).] — *com·men'su·rā·bil'i·ty* *n.* — *com·men'su·rā·bly* *adv.*

com·men·su·rate (kō-mən'sū-rā-tē, -shər-) *adj.* 1. Of the same size, extent, or duration as another. 2. Corresponding in size or degree; proportionate. 3. Measurable by a common standard; commensurable. [LLat. *commensū-rātus*: Lat. *com-*, *com-* + *mēnsūrātus* < *p*.part. of *mēnsūrāre*, to measure (< Lat. *mēnsūra*, measure; see *MEASURE*).] — *com·men'su·rate·ly* *adv.* — *com·men'su·ra'tion* *n.*

com·ment (kōm'ənt) *n.* 1.a. A written note intended as an explanation, an illustration, or a criticism of a passage in a book or other writing; an annotation. b. A series of annotations or explanations. 2.a. A statement of fact or opinion, esp. one that expresses a personal reaction or attitude. b. An implied conclusion or judgment. 3. Talk; gossip. 4. *Comp. Sci.* Text in a program that does not function in the program itself but is used by the programmer to explain instructions. — *v.* **ment·ed**, **ment·ing**, **ments**. — *intr.* 1. To make a comment; remark. 2. To serve as a judgmental commentary. — *tr.* To make comments on; annotate. [ME < LLat. *commentum*, interpretation < Lat., contrivance < neut. *p*.part. of *commināre*, to devise. See *men-1**.]

Syns: comment, observation, remark. The central meaning shared by these nouns is "an expression of fact, opinion, or explanation": an unpleasant comment about me; an observation about the movie; an offensive remark.

com·men·tar'y (kōm'ən-tēr'ē) *n., pl. -ies*. 1. A series of explanations or interpretations. 2. An expository treatise or series of annotations; an exegesis. Often used in the plural. 3. An apt explanation or illustration. 4. A personal narrative; a memoir. Often used in the plural. — *com·men'tar'i·al* (-tār'ē-əl) *adj.*

com·men·tate (kōm'ən-tāt'ē) *v.* **·tat·ed**, **·tat·ing**, **·tates**. — *intr.* To serve as commentator. — *tr.* To make a running commentary on. [Back-formation < *COMMENTATOR*.]

com·men·ta'tor (kōm'ən-tā'tər) *n.* 1. A broadcaster or writer who reports and analyzes events in the news. 2. One who writes or delivers a commentary or commentaries.

com·mer·ce (kōm'ərs) *n.* 1. The buying and selling of goods, esp. on a large scale, as between cities or nations. See *Syns* at *business*. 2. Intellectual exchange or social interaction. 3. Sexual intercourse. [Fr. < OFr. < Lat. *commercium*: *com-*, *com-* + *merx*, *merc-*, merchandise.]

Com·merce City (kōm'ərs) *n.* A city of N-central CO, a suburb of Denver. Pop. 16,466.

com·mer·cial (kō-mūr'shəl) *adj.* 1.a. Of or relating to commerce. b. Engaged in commerce. c. Involved in work that is intended for the mass market. 2. Of, relating to, or being goods, often unrefined, produced and distributed in large quantities for use by industry. 3. Having profit as a chief aim. 4. Sponsored by an advertiser or supported by advertising. — *n.* An advertisement on television or radio. — *com·mer'cial·ly* *adv.*

commercial bank *n.* A bank whose principal functions are to receive demand deposits and make short-term loans.

com·mer·cial·ism (kō-mūr'shə-liz'əm) *n.* 1. The practices, methods, aims, and spirit of commerce or business. 2. An attitude that emphasizes tangible profit or success. — *com·mer'cial·ist* *n.* — *com·mer'cial·is'tic* *adj.*

com·mer·cial·ize (kō-mūr'shə-liz'ē) *tr.v.* **·ized**, **·iz·ing**, **·izes**. 1. To apply business methods to for profit. 2.a. To do, exploit, or make chiefly for financial gain. b. To sacrifice the quality of for profit. — *com·mer'cial·i·za'tion* (-shə-liz'ā-shən) *n.*

commercial paper *n.* Short-term, unsecured, discounted, and negotiable notes sold by one company to another in order to satisfy immediate cash needs.

commercial traveler *n.* A traveling sales representative.

com·mie also **Com·mie** (kōm'ē) *n. Informal.* A Communist.

[Short for *COMMUNIST*.]

com·mi·na'tion (kōm'ə-nā'shən) *n.* A formal denunciation. [ME *comminacioun* < Lat. *comminātiō*, *comminātiō* <

comminātus, *p*.part. of *commināre*, to threaten: *com-*, *com-* + *mināre*, to threaten; see *MINACE*.] — *com·min'a'tō'ry* (kō-mīn'ə-tōr'ē, -tōr'ē, kōm'ī-nə-) *adj.*

Com·mines (kō-mēn'), Philippe de. See Philippe de Comines.

com·min·gle (kō-mīng'gəl) *v.* **·gled**, **·gling**, **·gles**. — *intr.* To become blended. — *tr.* To cause to blend together; mix.

com·mi·nute (kōm'ə-nōot', -nyōot') *tr.v.* **·nut·ed**, **·nut·ing**, **·nutes**. To reduce to powder; pulverize. [Lat. *comminūere*, *comminūt-*: *com-*, *com-* + *minuere*, to lessen; see *MEL-2**.] — *com·mi·nu'tion* *n.*

com·mis·er·ate (kō-miz'ə-rōt'ē) *v.* **·at·ed**, **·at·ing**, **·ates**. — *tr.* To feel or express sorrow or pity for; sympathize with. — *intr.* To feel or express sympathy. [Lat. *commiserari*, *commiserat-*: *com-*, *com-* + *miserari*, to pity (< *miser*, wretched).] — *com·mis'er'a'tive* *adj.* — *com·mis'er'a'tiv·ly* *adv.* — *com·mis'er'a'tor* *n.*

com·mis·er·a'tion (kō-miz'ə-rā'shən) *n.* The feeling or expression of pity or sorrow.

com·mis·sar (kōm'ī-sār') *n.* 1.a. An official of the Communist Party in charge of political indoctrination and the enforcement of party loyalty. b. The head of a commissariat in the Soviet Union until 1946. 2. A person who tries to control public opinion. [Russ. *kommisar* < Ger. *Kommissar*, deputy < Med.Lat. *commissarius*, agent. See *COMMISSARY*.]

com·mis·sar'i·at (kōm'ī-sār'ē-īt) *n.* 1. A department of an army that provides supplies. 2. A food supply. 3. A major government department in the Soviet Union until 1946. [Fr. < Med.Lat. *commissarius*, agent. See *COMMISSARY*.]

com·mis·sar'y (kōm'ī-sār'ē) *n., pl. -ies*. 1.a. A supermarket for military personnel and their dependents, usu. located on a military installation. b. A store where food and equipment are sold, as in a mining camp. 2. A lunchroom or cafeteria, esp. one in a film or television studio. 3. A person to whom a special duty is given by a higher authority; a deputy. [ME *commissarie*, agent < Med.Lat. *commissarius* < Lat. *commissus*, entrusted. See *COMMISSION*.]

com·mis·sion (kōm'ī-shən) *n.* 1.a. The act of granting certain powers or the authority to carry out a particular task or duty. b. The authority so granted. c. The matter or task so authorized. d. A document conferring such authorization. 2.a. A group of people officially authorized to perform certain duties or functions. b. Often Commission. A ruling council within the Mafia. 3. The act of committing or perpetrating. 4. A fee or percentage allowed to a sales representative or an agent for services rendered. 5.a. An official document issued by a government, conferring on the recipient the rank of a commissioned officer in the armed forces. b. The rank and powers so conferred. — *tr.v.* **·sioned**, **·sion·ing**, **·sions**. 1. To grant a commission to. 2. To place an order for. 3. To put (a ship) into active service. — *idioms*. **in commission**. 1. In active service. Used of a ship. 2. In use or in usable condition. **on commission**. With a sales commission serving as full or partial recompense for the work done. **out of commission**.

1. Not in active service. Used of a ship. 2. Not in use or in working condition. [ME *commissio* < Lat. *commissio*, *commissio* < *commissus*, *p*.part. of *committēre*, to entrust. See *COMMIT*.] — *com·mis'sion'al* *adj.*

com·mis·sion·aire (kō-mīsh'ə-nār') *n.* Chiefly British. A uniformed attendant. [Fr. < Med.Lat. *commissiōnārius* < Lat. *commissio*, *commissio*, commission. See *COMMISSION*.]

com·mis·sioned officer (kō-mīsh'ə-nd) *n.* An officer who holds a commission and ranks as a second lieutenant or above in the U.S. Army, Air Force, or Marine Corps or as an ensign or above in the U.S. Navy or Coast Guard.

com·mis·sion·er (kō-mīsh'ə-nər) *n.* 1. A member of a commission. 2. A person authorized by a commission to perform certain duties. 3. A governmental official in charge of a department. 4. *Sports*. An official selected by an athletic association or league to exercise administrative or regulatory powers over it. — *com·mis'sion'er·ship* *n.*

commission merchant *n.* One that buys and sells goods for others on a commission basis.

commission plan *n.* Municipal government in which legislative and administrative functions and powers are vested in an elected commission rather than in a mayor and city council.

com·mis·sure (kōm'ə-shōōr') *n.* 1. A line or place at which two things join. 2. *Anat.* a. A tract of nerve fibers passing from one side to the other of the spinal cord or brain. b. The point or surface where two parts, such as the eyelids, join or form a connection. [ME < Lat. *commissūra* < *commissus*, *p*.part. of *committēre*, to join. See *COMMIT*.] — *com·mis'su'ral* *adj.*

com·mit (kō-mīt') *v.* **·mit·ted**, **·mit·ting**, **·mits**. — *tr.* 1. To do, perform, or perpetrate. 2. To put in trust or charge; entrust. 3. To place officially in confinement or custody. 4. To consign for future use or reference or for preservation. 5. To put into a place to be kept safe or to be disposed of. 6.a. To make known the views of (oneself) on an issue. b. To bind or obligate, as by a pledge. 7. To refer (a legislative bill, for example) to a committee. — *intr.* To pledge or obligate oneself. [ME *committen* < Lat. *committēre*: *com-*, *com-* + *mittere*, to send.] — *com·mit'ta·ble* *adj.*

com·mit·ment (kō-mīt'mənt) *n.* 1. The act or committing, esp.: a. The act of referring a legal matter to a committee. b. Official consignment, as to a prison. 2. The act of authorizing consignment to a prison. 3. A promise. d. Something pledged, esp. an engagement involving financial obligation. 3. The state of being emotionally or intellectually to someone or so.

com·mit·tal (kō-mīt'əl) *n.* 1. The act of entrusting or an instance of committing to confinement. 2. The act of pledging oneself to a particular view or position.

com·mit·tee (kō-mīt'ē) *n.* 1. A group of people delegated to perform a function. See *Usage Note* under *committee*. 2. *Archaic.* A person to whom a task is committed. [ME *committē*, trustee < AN *committere*, to commit < Lat. *committēre*. See *COMMIT*.] — *com·mit·tee·man* (kō-mīt'ē-mən, -mān') *n.* 1. A member of a committee. 2. A man who is in charge of a ward or precinct.

committee of the whole *n.* The whole membership of a legislative body sitting as a committee to consider legislation.

com·mit·tee·wom·an (kō-mīt'ē-wōom'ən) *n.* A woman who is a member of a committee. 2. A woman leader of a ward or precinct.

com·mix (kō-mīks', kō-) *v.* **·mixed**, **·mix·ing**. — *intr.* To be or become mixed. — *tr.* To cause to be mixed, mixed < Lat. *commixtus*, *p*.part. of *com·mix·ere*: *com-*, *com-* + *miscēre*, to mix; see *MEIT*.

com·mix·ture (kō-mīks'chər, kō-) *n.* 1. The act of mixing. 2. The result of mixing; a mixture.

com·mode (kō-mōd') *n.* 1. A low cabinet or chest often elaborately decorated and used, usu. standing on feet. 2.a. A movable stand or cupboard containing a bowl. b. A chair enclosing a chamber pot. c. A woman's ornate headdress, fashionable around 1800. — *adj.* **com·mode**, convenient < Lat. *commodus*. See *COM·MODIOUS*.

com·mo·di·ous (kō-mōd'ē-əs) *adj.* 1. Spacious. 2. *Archaic.* Suitable; handy. [ME, convenient < Lat. *commodus* < Lat. *commodus*: *com-*, *com-* + *modus*, measure; see *MED-**.] — *com·mo'di·ous·ly* *adv.* — *com·mo'di·ous·ness* *n.*

com·mo·di·ty (kō-mōd'ē-tē) *n., pl. -ties*. 1. Something that can be turned to commercial or other advantage. 2. An article of trade or commerce, esp. an agricultural product, that can be transported. 3. Advantage. 4. *Obsolete.* A quantity; lot. [ME *commoditate* < Lat. *commoditas* < *commodus*, convenient. See *COMMODIOUS*.]

com·mo·dore (kōm'ə-dōr', -dōr') *n.* 1.a. A commissioned rank in the U.S. Navy that is above captain and below admiral. b. One who holds this rank. 2.a. The captain of a naval squadron or merchant fleet. b. The commanding officer of a yacht club. [Obsolete *commander*.] — *com·mo'dore*, commander < Fr. *commandeur*, commander. See *COMMAND*.]

Com·mo·dus (kōm'ə-dəs), Lucius Aelius Aurelius *n.* 192. Emperor of Rome (180–192) who was in a conspiracy led by his mistress.

com·mon (kōm'on) *adj.* **·er**, **·est**. 1.a. Belonging to, shared equally by two or more; joint. b. Of or relating to a community as a whole; public. See *Syns* at *general*. Note at *mutual*. 2. Widespread; prevalent. 3. Done frequently or habitually; usual. b. Most widely known. 4. Having no special designation, status. 5.a. Not distinguished by superior or noteworthy qualities; average. b. Of no special quality; standard; mediocre or inferior quality; second-rate. 6. Unrefined in manner; vulgar. 7. *Gram.* a. Either masculine or feminine. b. Representing one or all of the members of a class, not designating a unique entity. — *n.* 1. *Common people*; commonalty. 2. *Commons*. (*pl.* *·mons*, or *pl.* *v.*) a. The political class composed of the commons. b. The parliamentary representatives of this class in the House of Commons. 4. A tract of land belonging to a community as a whole. 5. The legal right of use of the lands or waters of another, as for fishing. (*used with a sing. v.*) A building or hall typically at a university or college. 7. *Gram.* a. *Eccles.* A service used for a particular class. — *idiom*. **in common**. Equally with or by all. [ME < OFr. *commun* < Lat. *communis*. See *MEL-1**.] — *com·mon·ly* *adv.* — *com·mon·ness* *n.*

com·mon·age (kōm'ə-nij) *n.* 1. The right to pasture on common land. 2. The state of being held in common.

com·mon·al·ity (kōm'ə-nāl'ē-tē) *n., pl. -ties*. 1. The act of sharing along with another or others of a certain quality or attribute. 2. See *COMMONALITY*.

com·mon·al·ty (kōm'ə-nəl-tē) *n., pl. -ties*. 1. The state of being opposed to the upper classes. 2. A body of people or a corporation. 3. An entire group. [ME *communale* < Med.Lat. *communitas* < LLat. *communis*, community. See *COMMONALITY*.]

com·mon·bile duct *n.* The duct formed by the union of the