

4. Noah Webster's First American Dictionary

Noah Webster published his landmark *American Dictionary of the English Language* on April 21, 1828. He was born on October 16, 1758, in West Hartford, Connecticut. After attending Yale University, Webster studied law and became a lexicographer and prolific writer. Webster did not care much for the American schools of his day. The classrooms were overcrowded with children of multiple grade levels, and sometimes there were no desks. In his opinion, the books were inferior, and the teachers were inadequately trained. While serving as a teacher in New York, he began his life-long quest to advance a distinctively American style of education. He believed Americans should learn from American books. To that end, in 1783, he wrote his own textbook, *A Grammatical Institute of the English Language*. In addition, he created the *American Spelling Book*, which most people called the "Blue-Backed Speller" because of its blue cover. Years later, Webster developed his famed dictionary which taught children how to read, spell, and pronounce words. It was perhaps the most popular American book of its time. The guiding principle of Webster's lexicography was that spelling, grammar, and usage should be based on the living, spoken language. He sought to establish the dignity and vitality of American English. In 1821, Webster co-founded Amherst College. George and Charles Merriam purchased the rights to Webster's dictionary from his estate, and their firm developed the Merriam-Webster dictionary series.

5. Earth Day

Earth Day is observed on April 22nd of each year. It was founded by United States Senator and environmental activist Gaylord Nelson of Wisconsin in 1970 for the purpose inspiring awareness and appreciation of Earth's natural environment. Dennis Hayes, a Harvard graduate, was the coordinator of the first Earth Day in 1970, and the focus was the United States. However, an organization founded by Mr. Hayes expanded the observance to an international level in 1990. That year they sponsored events in 141 nations. Today, Earth Day is coordinated globally by the non-profit Earth Day Network and is celebrated in over 175 countries. Early success of Earth Day is largely attributed to an environmental grass-roots movement. Individuals alarmed by pollution, deforestation, destruction of wildlife, and similar concerns rallied around the effort, and it grew in popularity...a popularity that has not waned but grown with each passing year since the celebration's inception. Annually, schools, communities, businesses, and organizations around the world host events promoting the idea that each of us must accept personal responsibility for our role in the preservation and protection of our natural resources and our environment.

6. Mathematics Awareness Month

Mathematics Awareness Month is observed in April each year and is sponsored by the Joint Policy Board for Mathematics. The purpose of the observance is to emphasize the vital role mathematics plays in all areas of our daily lives and to highlight new developments and applications. The Joint Policy Board for Mathematics is an organization comprised of members from the American Mathematical Society (AMS), the American Statistical Association (ASA), the Mathematical Association of America (MAA), and the Society for Industrial and Applied Mathematics (SIAM). Mathematics Awareness Month provides math departments and institutions an annual forum for promoting awareness of the fun and beauty of mathematics. Lectures, contests, and special events are planned each year.

7. National Poetry Month