

Barron's SAT High-Frequency Word List

Word List 1

Abate v. subside or moderate. Rather than leaving immediately, they waited for the storm to *abate*. **Abatement**, N.

Aberrant adj. abnormal or deviant. Given the *aberrant* nature of the data, we came to doubt the validity of the entire experiment.

Abrasive adj. rubbing away; tending to grind down. Just as *abrasive* cleaning powders can wear away a shiny finish, *abrasive* remarks can wear away a listener's patience. **Abrade** v.

Abridge v. condense or shorten. Because the publishers felt the public wanted a shorter version of *War and Peace*, they proceeded to *abridge* the novel.

Absolute adj. sparing in eating and drinking; temperate. Concerned whether her vegetarian son's abstemious diet provided him with sufficient protein, the worried mother pressed food on him

Abstemious adj. spring in eating and drinking; temperate. Concerned whether her vegetarian son's abstemious diet provided him with sufficient protein, the worried mother pressed food on him.

Abstract adj. theoretical; not concrete; nonrepresentational. To him, hunger was an abstract concept; he had never missed a meal.

Abstruse adj. obscure; profound; difficult to understand. She carries around abstruse works of philosophy, not because she understands them but because she wants her friends to think she does.

Accessible adj. easy to approach; obtainable. We asked our guide whether the ruins were accessible on foot.

Acclaim v. applaud; announce with great approval. The NBC sportscasters acclaimed every American victory in the Olympics and lamented every American defeat acclamation, **acclaim**, n.

Word List 2

Accolade n. award of merit. In the world of public relations, a "Clio" is the highest accolade an advertising campaign can receive.

Acknowledge v. recognize; admit. Although I acknowledged that the Beatles' tunes sound

pretty dated nowadays, I still prefer them to the "gangsta" rap songs my brothers play.

Acquiesce v. assent; agree without protesting. When we asked her to participate in the play, she immediately acquiesced. **Acquiescence**, n.; **acquiescent**, adj.

Acrimonious adj. bitter in words or manner. The candidate attacked his opponent in highly acrimonious terms. **Acrimony**, n.

Acute adj. quickly perceptive; keen; brief and severe. The acute young doctor realized immediately that the gradual deterioration of her patient's once-acute hearing was due to a chronic illness, not an acute one.

Adherent n. supporter; follower. In the wake of the scandal, the senator's one-time adherents quietly deserts him

Adjacent adj. neighboring; adjoining. You will find questions based on this reading passage located on the adjacent page.

Adroit adj. skillful; nimble. The juggler's admirers particularly enjoyed his adroit handling of difficult balancing tricks.

Adulation n. flattery; admiration. The rock star relished the adulation she received from her groupies and yes-men.

Word List 3

Adversary n. opponent. The young wrestler struggled to overcome his adversary.

Adverse adj. unfavorable; hostile. The recession had a highly adverse effect on Father's investment portfolio: he lost so much money that he could no longer afford the butler and the upstairs maid. **Adversity**, n.

Advocate v. urge; plead for. Noted abolitionists such as Frederick Douglass and Sojourner Truth advocated the eradication of the Southern institution of slavery. Also n.

Aesthetic adj. artistic; dealing with or capable of appreciation of the beautiful. The beauty of Tiffany's stained glass appealed to Esther's aesthetic sense. **Aesthete**, n.

Affable adj. easily approachable; warmly friendly. **Accustomed to cold**, aloof supervisors

Nicholas was amazed at how affable his new employer was.

Affinity n. natural liking; kinship; similarity.

Octavia felt an immediate affinity for the folk dancers she met; their love of dance was hers as well.

Affirmation m. positive assertion; confirmation; solemn pledge by one who refuses to take an oath. Despite Tom's affirmations of innocence, Aunt Polly still suspected he had eaten the pie.

Aggressor n. attacker. Before you punish both boys for fighting, see whether you can determine which one was the aggressor

Alienate v. make hostile; separate. Heather's attempts to alienate Amy from Ellen failed because the two friends had complete faith in one another.

Alleviate v. relieve. The doctor's reassuring remarks alleviated June's fears for the baby; though he'd been born prematurely, he was rapidly gaining weight and could go home in a couple of weeks.

Word List 4

Aloof adj. apart; reserved; standoffish. His classmates thought James was a snob because, instead of joining in their conversations, he remained silent and aloof.

Altruistic adj. unselfishly generous; concerned for others. In providing tutorial assistance and college scholarships for hundreds of economically disadvantaged youths, Eugene Lang performed a truly altruistic deed. Altruism, n.

Ambiguous adj. unclear or doubtful in meaning. The proctor's ambiguous instructions thoroughly confused us; we didn't know which columns we should mark and which we should leave blank. Ambiguity, n.

Ambivalence n. the state of having contradictory or conflicting emotional attitudes. Torn between loving her parents on minute and hating them the next, she was confused by ambivalence of her feelings. Ambivalent, adj.

Ameliorate v. improve; make more satisfactory. Carl became a union organizer because he

wanted to join the fight to ameliorate the working conditions in the factory

Amend v. correct; change, generally for the better. Hoping to amend his circumstances, Luong left Vietnam for the United States.

Amorphous adj. formless; lacking shape or definition. As soon as we have decided on our itinerary, we shall send you a copy; right now, our plans are still amorphous.

Ample adj. abundant. Bond had ample opportunity to escape. Why did he let us catch him?

Analogy m. similarity; parallelism. A well-known analogy compares the body's immune system to an army whose defending troops are the lymphocytes or white blood cells. Analogous, adj.

Anarchist n. person who seeks to overturn the established government; advocate of abolishing authority. Denying she was an anarchist, Katya maintained she wished only to make changes in our government, not to destroy entirely.

Anarchy, n.

Word List 5

Anecdote n. short account of an amusing or interesting event. Rather than make concrete proposals for welfare reform, President Ronald Reagan told anecdotes about poor people who became wealthy despite their impoverished backgrounds. Anecdotal, adj.

Animosity n. active enmity. By advocating cuts in campaign spending and limits on congressional powers, the reform candidate seemed almost to invite the animosity of the party's leaders.

Antagonistic adj. hostile; opposed. Despite his lawyers' best efforts to stop him, the angry prisoner continued to make antagonistic remarks to the judge. Antagonism, n.

Antidote n. medicine to counteract a poison or disease. When Marge's child accidentally swallowed some cleaning fluid, the local poison control hotline told Marge how to administer the antidote.

Antiquated adj. old-fashioned; obsolete. Philip had grown so accustomed to editing his articles on word processors that he thought typewriters were antiquated for him to use. Antiquity, n.

Antithesis n. contrast; direct opposite of or to. Good is the antithesis of evil, innocence the antithesis of guilt

Apathy n. lack of caring; indifference. A firm believer in democratic government, she could not understand the apathy of people who never bothered to vote. Apathetic, adj.

Apocryphal adj. untrue; made up. To impress his friends, Ted invented apocryphal tales of his adventures in the big city.

Appease v. pacify or soothe; relieve. Tom and Jody tried to appease their crying baby by offering him one toy after another. However, they couldn't calm him down until they appeased his hunger by giving him a bottle.

Appreciate v. be thankful for; increase in worth; be thoroughly conscious of. Little Orphan Annie truly appreciated the stocks Daddy Warbucks gave her, which appreciated in value considerably over the years.

Word List 6

Apprehension n. fear; discernment; capture. The tourist refused to drive his rental car through downtown Miami because he felt some apprehension that he might be carjacked.

Apprehension, adj.

Arable adj. fit for growing crops. The first settlers wrote home glowing reports of the New World, praising its vast acres of arable land ready for the plow.

Arbitrary adj. unreasonable or capricious; randomly selected without any reason; based solely on one's unrestricted will or judgment. The coach claimed the team lost because the umpire made some arbitrary calls.

Archaic adj. antiquated. "Methinks," "thee," and "thou" are archaic words that are no longer part of our standard vocabulary.

Ardor n. heat; passion; zeal. Katya's ardor was catching; soon all her fellow demonstrators were busily making posters and handing out flyers, inspired by her enthusiasm for the cause.

Ardent, adj.

Arid adj. dry; barren. The cactus has adapted to survive in an arid environment.

Arrogance n. pride; haughtiness. Convinced that Emma thought she was better than anyone else in the class, Ed rebuked her for her arrogance. arrogant, adj.

Articulate adj. effective; distinct. Her articulate presentation of the advertising campaign impressed her employers so much that they put her in charge of the project. Also v.

Artifact n. object made by human beings, either handmade or mass-produced. Archaeologists debated the significance of the artifacts discovered in the ruins of Asia Minor but came to no conclusion about the culture they represented.

Artisan n. manually skilled worker; craftsman, as opposed to artist. Elderly artisans from Italy trained Harlem teenagers to carve the stone figures that would decorate the new wing of the cathedral

Word List 7

Ascendancy n. controlling influence. Leaders of religious cults maintain ascendancy over their followers by methods that can verge on brainwashing.

Ascetic adj. practicing self-denial; austere. The wealthy, self-indulgent young man felt oddly drawn to the ascetic life led by members of some monastic orders. Also n.

Aspire v. seek to attain; long for. Because he aspired to a career in professional sports, Philip enrolled in a graduate program in sports management. Aspiration, n.

Assuage v. ease or lessen(pain); satisfy (hunger); soothe (anger). Jilted by Jane, Dick, tried to assuage his heartache by indulging in ice cream. One gallon later, he had assuaged his appetite but not his grief.

Astute adj. wise; shrewd. Expecting Miss Marple to be woolly-headed old lady, Inspector Craddock was startled by the astute observations she made.

Atrophy v. waste away. After three months in a cast, Stan's biceps had atrophied somewhat; however, he was sure that if he pumped iron for a while he would soon build them up. Also, n.

Attentive adj. considerate; thoughtful; paying attention. Thuy is very attentive to her Vietnamese-speaking parents, acting as their interpreter and helping them deal with American society.

Attribute v. ascribe; explain. I attribute her success in science to the encouragement she received from her parents.

Audacious adj. daring; bold. Audiences cheered as Luke Skywalker and Princess Leia made their audacious, death-defying leap to freedom, escaping Darth Vader's troops. Audacity, n.

Augment v. increase; add to. Beth augmented her inadequate salary by selling Tupperware at parties at friends' homes.

Word List 8

Austerity n. sternness; severity; strict economy; lack of luxuries. The bishops charged with conducting the heresy inquiry were a solemn, somewhat forbidding group; their demeanor reflected their austerity. Austere, adj.

Authentic adj. genuine. The art expert was able to distinguish the authentic Van Gogh painting from the forged copy. Authenticate, v.

Authoritarian adj. favoring or exercising total control; nondemocratic. Forced to obey the dictates of the authoritarian regime, the people had no control over their own destiny. Also n.

Autonomous adj. self-governing. Although the University of California at Berkeley is just one part of the state university system, in many ways Cal Berkeley is autonomous, for it runs several programs that are not subject to outside control. Autonomy, n.

Aversion n. firm dislike. Their mutual aversion was so great that they refused to speak to one another.

Banal adj. hackneyed; commonplace; trite. Was it Pendleton's stale plot or his cliché-ridden dialogue that made his play seem so banal? Banality, n.

Bane n. cause of ruin. Lack of public transportation is the bane of urban life.

Belie v. contradict; give a false impression. His coarse, hard-bitten exterior belied his inner sensitivity.

Belittle v. disparage; make fun of. Parents should not belittle their children's early attempts at drawing, but should encourage their efforts

Belligerent adj. quarrelsome. Whenever he had too much to drink, he became belligerent and tried to pick fights with strangers.

Word List 9

Benevolent adj. generous; charitable. Mr. Fezziwig was a benevolent employer who wished to make Christmas merrier for young Scrooge and his other employees.

Benign adj. kindly; favorable; not malignant. Though her benign smile and gentle bearing made Miss Marple seem a sweet little old lady, in reality she was a tough-minded, shrewd observer of human nature.

Bequeath v. leave to someone by a will; hand down. Although Maud had intended to bequeath the family home to her nephew, she died before changing her will. Bequest, n.

Biased adj. slanted; prejudiced. Because the judge played golf regularly with the district attorney's father, we feared he might be biased in the persecutions' favor. Bias, n.

Bland adj. soothing; mild; dull. Unless you want your stomach lining to be eaten away, stick to a bland diet. Blandness, n.

Blasphemy n. irreverence; sacrilege; cursing. In my father's house, the Dodgers were the holiest of holies; to cheer for another team was to utter words of blasphemy. Blasphemous, adj.

Bolster v. support; reinforce. The debaters amassed file boxes full of evidence to bolster their arguments.

Braggart n. boastful person. I wouldn't mind Bob's being such a braggart if I felt he'd done anything worth bragging about.

Brawn n. muscular strength; sturdiness. It takes brawn to become a champion weight-lifter. Brawny, adj.

Brevity n. conciseness; briefness. Brevity is essential when you send a telegram or cablegram; you are charged for every word.

Word List 10

Buttress v. support; prop up. The attorney came up with several far-fetched arguments in a vain attempt to buttress his weak case. Also n.

Cacophonous adj. discordant; inharmonious. DO the students in the orchestra enjoy the cacophonous sounds they make when they're tuning up? I don't know how they can stand the racket. Cacophony, n.

Cajole v. coax; wheedle. Diane tried to cajole her father into letting her drive the family car. Cajolery, n.

Calculated adj. deliberately planned; likely. Lexy's choice of clothes to wear to the debate tournament was carefully calculated. Her conventional suit was one calculated to appeal to the conservative judges.

Candor n. frankness. The candor with which Gene spoke during the job interview impressed us all; it was clear he held nothing back, candid, adj.

Capricious adj. fickle; incalculable. The storm was capricious, changing its course constantly.

Caricature n. distortion; burlesque. The caricatures he drew always emphasized a personal weakness of the people he burlesqued also v.

Censorious adj. critical. Censorious people delight in casting blame.

Censure v. blame; criticize. The senator was censured for his inappropriate behavior. Also n.

Certitude n. certainty. Though there was on certitude of his getting the job, Lou thought he had a good chance of doing so.

Word List 11

Charlatan n. quack; pretender to knowledge. When they realized that the Wizard didn't know how to get them back to Kansas, Dorothy and her companions were indignant that they'd been duped by a charlatan.

Chronicle v. report; record (in chronological order). The gossip columnist was paid to chronicle the latest escapades of socially prominent celebrities. Also n.

Civil adj. having to do with citizens or the state; courteous and polite. Although Internal Revenue Service agents are civil servants, they are not always civil to suspected tax cheats. Civility, n.

Clamor n. noise. The clamor of the children at play outside made it impossible for her to take a nap. Also v.

Clemency n. disposition to be lenient; mildness, as of the weather. Why did the defense lawyer look pleased when his case was sent to Judge Bland's chambers? Bland was known for her clemency toward first offenders. Clement, adj.

Coercion n. use of force to get someone's compliance. They forced him to obey, but only by using great coercion, coerce, v.

Commemorate v. honor the memory of. The statue of the Minuteman commemorates the valiant soldiers who fought in the Revolutionary War.

Compelling adj. overpowering; irresistible in effect. The prosecutor presented a well-reasoned case, but the defense attorney's compelling arguments for leniency won over the jury.

Compile v. assemble; gather; accumulate. We planned to compile a list of the words most frequently used on the SAT examinations.

Compliance n. readiness to yield; conformity in fulfilling requirements. When I give an order, I expect compliance, not defiance. The design for the new school had to be in compliance with the local building code. Comply, v.

Word List 12

Composure n. mental calmness. Even the latest crisis at work failed to shake Nancy's composure.

Comprehensive adj. thorough; inclusive. This book provides a comprehensive review of critical reading skills for the SAT.

Concede v. admit; yield. Despite all the evidence Monica had assembled, Mark refused to concede that she was right. Concession, n.

Conciliatory adj. reconciling; appeasing; amiable. Hoping to end the coldness that had grown between them, he wrote a conciliatory note. Conciliate, v.

Concise adj. brief and compact. When you define a new word, be concise: the shorter the definition, the easier it is to remember.

Conclusive adj. convincing; decisive. We have conclusive evidence that proves her innocence.

Concur v. agree in opinion. Justice O'Connor wrote a minority opinion because she did not concur with the reasoning of her fellow justices.

Condone v. overlook voluntarily; forgive.

Although she had excuse Huck for his earlier escapades, Widow Douglas refused to condone his latest prank.

Confirm v. corroborate; verify; support. I have several witnesses who will confirm my account of what happened

Conflagration n. great fire. In the conflagration that followed the 1906 earthquake, much of San Francisco burned to the ground.

Word List 13

Confound v. confuse; puzzle. No mystery could confound Sherlock Holmes for long

Confront v. face; challenge. All I ask is the chance to confront my accusers face to face.

Conscientious adj. scrupulous; careful. A conscientious editor, she checked every definition for its accuracy.

Consensus n. general agreement. After hours of debate, the consensus of the group was that we should approve the executive director's proposal.

Consistency n. absence of contradictions; depend-ability; uniformity; degree of thickness. Holmes judged puddings and explanations on their consistency: he liked his puddings without lumps and his explanations without improbabilities.

Constraint n. compulsion; repression of feelings. Because he trusted his therapist completely, he discussed his feelings openly with her without feeling the least constraint. Constrain, v.

Contagion n. infection. Fearing contagion, they took great steps to prevent the spread of the disease.

Contemporary n. person belonging to the same period. Though Charlotte Bronte and George Eliot were contemporaries, the two novelists depicted their Victorian world in markedly different ways. Also adj.

Contend v. struggle; compete; assert earnestly. Sociologist Harry Edwards contends that young African-American athletes are exploited by some college recruiters. Contention, n.

Contentious adj. quarrelsome. Disagreeing violently with the referees' ruling, the coach became so contentious that they threw him out of the game.

Word List 14

Contract v. compress or shrink; make a pledge; catch a disease. Warm metal expands; cold metal contracts

Converge v. approach; tend to meet; come together. African-American men from all over the United States converged on Washington to take part in the historic Million Man march.

Conviction n. strongly held belief. Nothing could shake his conviction that she was innocent. (secondary meaning)

Cordial adj. gracious; heartfelt. Our hosts greeted us at the airport with a cordial welcome and a hearty hug.

Corroborate v. confirm; support. Though Huck was quite willing to corroborate Tom's story, Aunt Polly knew better than to believe either of them.

Corrosion n. destruction by chemical action. The corrosion of the girders supporting the bridge took place so gradually that no one suspected any danger until the bridge suddenly collapsed. Corrode, v.

Credibility n. believability. Because the candidate had made some pretty unbelievable promises, we began to question the credibility of everything he said.

Credulity n. belief on slight evidence; gullibility; naivete. Con artists take advantage of the credulity of inexperienced investors to swindle them out of their savings. Credulous, adj.

Cryptic adj. mysterious; hidden; secret. Martin loved to act mysterious, making cryptic comments no one could understand.

Word List 15

Cursory adj. casual; hastily done. Because a cursory examination of the ruins indicates the possibility of arson, we believe the insurance agency should undertake a more extensive investigation of the fire's cause.

Curtail v. shorten; reduce. When Elton asked Cher for a date, she said she was really sorry she couldn't go out with him, but her dad had ordered her to curtail her social life.

Cynic n. one who is skeptical or distrustful of human motives. A born cynic, Sidney was suspicious whenever anyone gave him a gift "with no strings attached." Cynical, adj.

Daunt v. intimidate; frighten. "Boast all you like of your prowess. Mere words cannot daunt me," the hero answered the villain.

Dawdle v. loiter; waste time. We have to meet a deadline so don't dawdle; just get down to work.

Debilitate v. weaken; enfeeble. Michael's severe bout of the flu debilitated him so much that he was too tired to go to work for a week.

Debunk v. expose something as nonsensical or false. I have gathered enough evidence to debunk the legend that Billy the Kid was a heroic, Robin Hood-like figure.

Decorum n. propriety; orderliness and good taste in manners. Even the best-mannered students have trouble behaving with decorum on the last day of school. Decorous, adj

Defame v. harm someone's reputation; malign. If you try to defame my good name, my lawyers will see you in court. Defamation, n.

Deference n. courteous regard for another's wish. In deference to the minister's request, please do not take photographs during the wedding service.

Word List 16

Defiance n. refusal to yield; resistance. When John reached the "terrible two's," he responded to every parental request with howls of defiance. Defy, v. defiant, adj.

Degenerate v. become worse; deteriorate. As the fight dragged on, the champion's stamina degenerated until he could barely keep on his feet.

Degrade v. lower in rank or dignity; debase. Some secretaries object to fetching the boss a cup of coffee because they feel it degrades them to do such lowly tasks.

Deliberate v. consider; ponder. Offered the new job, she asked for time to deliberate before she told them her decision.

Delineate v. portray; depict; sketch. Using only a few descriptive phrases, Austen delineates the character of Mr. Collins so well that we can predict his every move. Delineation, n.

Denounce v. condemn; criticize. The reform candidate denounced the corrupt city officers for having betrayed the public's trust.

Denunciation, n.

Deny v. contradict; refuse. Do you deny his story, or do you support what he says? Denial, n.

Depict v. portray; describe. Some newspaper accounts depicted the movie star as a reclusive prima donna; others portrayed her as a sensitive artist harassed by the media.

Depiction, n.

Deplore v. regret strongly; express grief over. Although I deplore the disintegration of the modern family, I understand that not every marriage can be saved.

Depravity n. corruption; wickedness. Even Romans who had grown accustomed to perversions and immorality during Tiberius' reign were shocked by the depravity of the emperor Caligula.

Word List 17

Deprecate v. express disapproval of; protest against; belittle. A firm believer in old-fashioned courtesy, Miss Post deprecated the modern tendency to address new acquaintances by their first names. Deprecatory, adj.

Deride v. ridicule; make fun of. The critics derided his pretentious dialogue and refused to consider his play seriously. Derision, n.

Derivative adj. unoriginal; derived from another source. Although her early poetry was clearly derivative in nature, the critics felt she had promise and eventually would find her own voice.

Despondent adj. depressed; gloomy. To the concern of his parents, William became seriously despondent after he broke up with Jan. Despondency, n.

Despot n. tyrant; harsh authoritarian ruler. How could a benevolent king turn overnight into a despot?

Detached adj. emotionally removed; calm and objective; indifferent. A psychoanalyst must maintain a detached point of view and stay uninvolved with her patients' personal lives. Detachment, n. (secondary meaning)

Deterrent n. something that discourages; hindrance. Does the threat of capital punishment serve as a deterrent to potential killers? Deter, v.

Detrimental adj. harmful; damaging. The candidate's acceptance of major financial contributions from a well-known racist ultimately proved detrimental to his campaign, for he lost the backing of many of his early grassroots supporters. Detriment, n.

Devious adj. roundabout; erratic; not straightforward. His plan was so devious that it was only with great difficulty we could follow its shifts and dodges.

Devise v. think up; invent; plan. How clever he must be to have devised such a devious plan! What ingenious inventions might he have devised if he had turned his mind to science and not to crime!

Word List 18

Didactic adj. teaching; instructional. Pope's lengthy poem *An Essay on Man* is too didactic for my taste: I dislike it when poets turn preachy and moralize.

Diffuse adj. wordy; rambling; spread out. If you pay authors by the word, you tempt them to produce diffuse manuscripts rather than concise ones.

Digression n. wandering away from the subject. Nobody minded when Professor Renoir's lectures wandered away from their official themes; his digressions were always more fascinating than the topic of the day. Digress, v.

Diligence n. steadiness of effort; persistent hard work. Her employers were greatly impressed by her diligence and offered her a partnership in the firm. Diligent, adj.

Diminution n. lessening; reduction in size. Old Jack was as sharp at eighty as he had been at fifty; increasing age led to no diminution of his mental acuity.

Disband v. dissolve; disperse. The chess club disbanded after its disastrous initial season.

Discerning adj. mentally quick and observant; having insight. Though no genius, the star was sufficiently discerning to tell her true friends from the countless phonies who flattered her. Discernment, n.

Disclose v. reveal. Although competitors offered him bribes, he refused to disclose any information about his company's forthcoming product. Disclosure, n.

Discordant adj. not harmonious; conflicting. Nothing is quite so discordant as the sound of a junior high school orchestra tuning up. Discord, n.

Discount v. disregard. Be prepared to discount what he has to say about his ex-wife; he is still very bitter about the divorce.

Word List 19

Discredit v. defame; destroy confidence in; disbelieve. The campaign was highly negative in tone; each candidate tried to discredit the others.

Discrepancy n. lack of consistency; difference. Noticing some discrepancies in his description of the crime, the police began to mistrust the witness's testimony.

Discriminating adj. able to see differences; prejudiced. A superb interpreter of Picasso, she was sufficiently discriminating to judge the most complex works of modern art. (secondary meaning) discrimination, n.

Discursive adj. digressing; rambling. As the lecturer wandered from topic to topic, we wondered what if any point there was to his discursive remarks.

Disdain v. view with scorn or contempt. In the film *Funny Face*, the bookish heroine disdained fashion models for their lack of intellectual interests. Also n.

Disinclination n. unwillingness. Some mornings I feel a great disinclination to get out of bed.

Disinterested adj. unprejudiced. In view of the judge's political ambitions and the lawyers' financial interest in the case, the only disinterested person in the courtroom may have been the court reporter.

Dismantle v. take apart. When the show closed, they dismantled the scenery before storing it.

Dismiss v. put away from consideration; reject. Believing in John's love for her, she dismissed the notion that he might be unfaithful.

(secondary meaning)

Disparage v. belittle. Do not disparage any donation, no matter how small it may be; every penny counts, and these little gifts mean a lot.

Word List 20

Disparity n. difference; condition of inequality. Their disparity in rank made no difference at all to the prince and Cinderella.

Dispassionate adj. calm; impartial. Known in the company for his cool judgment, Bill could impartially examine the causes of a problem, giving a dispassionate analysis of what had gone wrong, and go on to suggest how to correct the mess.

Dispel v. drive away; scatter; cause to vanish. The bright sunlight eventually dispelled the morning mist.

Disperse v. cause to break up; scatter. The police fired tear gas into the crowd to disperse the protesters.

Disputatious adj. argumentative; fond of arguing. Convinced he knew more than his lawyers, Alan was a disputatious client, ready to argue about the best way to conduct the case.

Disseminate v. distribute; spread; scatter (like seeds). BY their use of the Internet, propagandists have been able to disseminate their pet doctrines to new audiences around the globe.

Dissent v. disagree. In the recent Supreme Court decision, Justice O'Connor dissented from the majority opinion. Also n.

Dissipate v. squander; waste; scatter. He is a fine artist, but I fear he may dissipate his gifts if he keeps wasting his time on such trivial pursuits.

Dissonance n. dissonance. Composer Charles Ives often used dissonance—clashing or unresolved chords—for special effects in his musical works.

Dissuade v. advise against. Tom could not dissuade Huck from running away from home. Dissuasion, n.

Word List 21

Distant adj. reserved or aloof; cold in manner. His distant greeting made me feel unwelcome from the start. (secondary meaning)

Divergent adj. differing; deviating. Since graduating from medical school, the two doctors have taken divergent paths, one going on to become a nationally prominent surgeon, the other dedicating himself to a small family practice in his home town. Divergence, n.

Diverse adj. differing in some characteristics; various. The professor suggested diverse ways of approaching the assignment and recommended that we choose one of the them. Diversity, n.

Divulge v. reveal. No lover of gossip, Charlotte would never divulge anything that a friend told her in confidence

Doctrine n. teachings, in general; particular principle (religious, legal, and so on) taught. He was so committed to the doctrines of his faith that he was unable to evaluate them impartially.

Document v. provide written evidence. She kept all the receipts from her business trip in order to document her expenses for the firm. Also n.

Dogmatic adj. opinionated; arbitrary; doctrinal. We tried to discourage Doug from being so dogmatic, but never could convince him that his opinions might be wrong.

Dormant adj. sleeping; lethargic; latent. At fifty her long-dormant ambition to write flared up once more; within a year she had completed the first of her great historical novels.

Dubious adj. doubtful; questionable. Many critics of the SAT contend the test is of dubious worth.

Duplicity n. double-dealing; hypocrisy. When Tanya learned that Mark had been two-timing her, she was furious at his duplicity.

Duplicitous, adj.

Word List 22

Duration n. length of time something lasts.

Because she wanted the children to make a good impression on the dinner guests, Mother promised them a treat if they would behave for the duration of the meal.

Dutiful adj. respectful; obedient. The dutiful child grew up to be a conscientious adult, aware of her civic obligations.

Ebb v. recede; lessen. His fortunes began to ebb during the Recession. Also, n.

Eccentric adj. odd; whimsical; irregular. The comet passed close by Earth in its eccentric orbit.

Eclectic adj. Selective in choosing from a variety of sources. The reviewers praised the new restaurant's eclectic selection of dishes, which ranged from Oriental stir fries to French ragouts and stews.

Eclipse v. darken; extinguish; surpass. The new stock market high eclipsed the previous record set in 1995.

Effervescent adj. exuberant; bubbly and excited. Nothing depressed Amy for long; she was so naturally effervescent that she was soon as high-spirited as ever. Effervesce, v.

Egotistical adj. excessively self-centered; self-important; conceited. Typical egotistical remark: "But enough of this chit-chat about you and your little problems. Let's talk about what's really important: me!" egotism, n.

Elated adj. overjoyed; in high spirits. Grinning from ear to ear, Bonnie Blair was clearly elated by her fifth Olympic gold medal. Elation, n.

Eloquence n. expressiveness; persuasive speech. The crowds were stirred by Martin Luther King's eloquence. Eloquent, adj.

Word List 23

Elusive adj. evasive; baffling; hard to grasp.

Trying to pin down exactly when the contractors would be finished remodeling the house, Nancy was frustrated by their elusive replies. Elude, v.

Embellish v. adorn; ornament. The costume designer embellished the leading lady's ball gown with yards and yards of ribbon and lace.

Emulate v. imitate; rival. In a brief essay, describe a person you admire, someone whose virtues you would like to emulate.

Endorse v. approve; support. Everyone waited to see which one of the rival candidates for the city council the mayor would endorse.

Endorsement, n. (secondary meaning)

Enduring adj. lasting; surviving. Keats believed in the enduring power of great art, which would outlast its creators' brief lives.

Enervate v. weaken. She was slow to recover from her illness; even a short walk to the window would enervate her. Enervation n.

Engender v. cause; produce. To receive praise for real accomplishments engenders self-confidence in a child.

Enhance v. advance; improve. You can enhance your chances of being admitted to the college of your choice by learning to write well; an excellent essay can enhance any application.

Enigma n. puzzle; mystery. "What do women want?" asked Dr. Sigmund Freud. Their behavior was an enigma to him.

Enmity n. ill will; hatred. At Camp David President Carter labored to bring an end to the enmity that prevented Egypt and Israel from living in peace.

Word List 24

Enumerate v. list; mention one by one. Huck hung his head in shame as Miss Watson enumerated his many flaws.

Ephemeral adj. short-lived; fleeting. With its adult stage lasting less than two days, the mayfly is by definition an ephemeral creature.

Epic n. long heroic poem, or similar work of art. Kurosawa's film *Seven Samurai* is an epic that portrays the struggle of seven warriors to destroy a band of robbers. Also adj.

Epicure n. connoisseur of food and drink. Epicures patronize this restaurant because it features exotic wines and dishes. Epicurean, adj.

Episodic adj. loosely connected; divided into incidents; occurring at intervals. Though he tried to follow the plot of *Gravity's Rainbow*, John found the novel too episodic; he enjoyed individual passages, but had trouble following the work as a whole.

Equanimity n. calmness of temperament; composure. Even the inevitable strains of caring for an ailing mother did not disturb Bea's equanimity.

Equivocal adj. ambiguous; intentionally misleading. Rejecting the candidate's equivocal comments on tax reform, the reporters pressed him to say where he stood on the issue.

Equivocate v.

Erratic adj. odd; unpredictable; wandering. Investors become anxious when the stock market appears erratic.

Erroneous adj. mistaken; wrong. I thought my answer was correct, but it was erroneous.

Erudite adj. learned; scholarly. Though his fellow students thought him erudite, Paul knew he would have to spend many years in serious study before he could consider himself a scholar.

Word List 25

Esoteric adj. hard to understand; known only to the chosen few. *New Yorker* short stories often include esoteric allusions to obscure people and events: the implication is, if you in the in-crowd, you'll get the reference; if you come from Cleveland, you won't.

Espouse v. adopt; support. She was always ready to espouse a worthy cause.

Esteem v. respect; value; judge. Though I reject Ezra Pound's politics, I esteem him for his superb poetry and his acute literary criticism.

Ethereal adj. light; heavenly; unusually refined. In Shakespeare's *the Tempest*, the spirit Ariel is an ethereal creature, too airy and unearthly for our mortal world.

Eulogy n. expression of praise, often on the occasion of someone's death. Instead of delivering a spoken eulogy at Genny's memorial service, Jeff sang a song he had written in her honor.

Euphemism n. mild expression used in place of an unpleasant one. Until recently, many Southern Americans avoided the word *bull* in polite speech, replacing it by a euphemism, such as *he-cow* or *male beast*.

Euphonious adj. pleasing in sound. Euphonious even when spoken, the Italian language is particularly pleasing to the ear when sung.

Euphony, n.

Euphoria n. feeling of great happiness and well-being (sometimes exaggerated). Delighted with her SAT scores, sure that the university would accept her, Allison was filled with euphoria.

Euphoric, adj.

Evanescent adj. fleeting; vanishing. Brandon's satisfaction in his new job was evanescent, for he immediately began to notice its many drawbacks. **Evanescence**, n.

Exacerbate v. worsen; embitter. The latest bombing exacerbated England's already existing bitterness against the IRA, causing the prime minister to break off the peace talks abruptly.

Word List 26

Exacting adj. extremely demanding. Cleaning the ceiling of the Sistine chapel was an exacting task, one that demanded extremely meticulous care on the part of the restorers. **Exaction**, n.

Exalt v. raise in rank or dignity; praise. The actor Alec Guinness was exalted to the rank of knighthood by the queen.

Execute v. put into effect; carry out. The choreographer wanted to see how well Margaret could execute a pirouette. (secondary meaning) **execution**, n.

Exemplary adj. serving as a model; outstanding. At commencement the dean praised Ellen for her exemplary behavior as class president.

Exemplify v. serve as an example of; embody. For a generation of balletgoers, Rudolf Nureyev exemplified the ideal of masculine grace.

Exhaustive adj. thorough; comprehensive. We have made an exhaustive study of all published SAT tests and are happy to share our research with you

Exhilarating adj.. invigorating and refreshing; cheering. Though some of the hikers found tramping through the snow tiring, Jeffrey found the walk on the cold, crisp day exhilarating.

Exonerate v. acquit; exculpate. The defense team feverishly sought fresh evidence that might exonerate their client.

Expedient adj. suitable to achieve a particular end; practical; politic. A pragmatic politician, he was guided by what was expedient rather than by what was ethical. Expediency, n.

Expedite v. hasten. Because we are on a tight schedule, we hope you will be able to expedite the delivery of our order.

Word List 27

Expertise n. specialized knowledge; expert skill. Although she is knowledgeable in a number of fields, she was hired for her special expertise in computer programming.

Explicit adj. totally clear; definite' outspoken. Don't just hint around that you're dissatisfied; be explicit about what's bothering you.

Exploit n. deed or action, particularly a brave deed. Raoul Wallenberg was noted for his exploits in rescuing Jews from Hitler's forces.

Exploit v. make use of, sometimes unjustly. Cesar Chavez fought attempts to exploit migrant farmworkers in California.

Exploitation, n.

Expository adj. explanatory; intended to explain. The manual that came with my VCR was no masterpiece of expository prose: its explanations were so garbled that I couldn't even figure out how to rewind a tape.

Exposition, n.

Extant adj. still in existence. I'd hoped to buy a copy of Margaret Dean Smith's facsimile of *The Dancing Master*. Unfortunately, all the copies extant are in libraries or private collections; none is for sale.

Extol v. praise; glorified The president extolled the astronauts, calling them the pioneers of the Space Age.

Extraneous adj. not essential; superfluous. No wonder Ted can't think straight! His mind is so cluttered up with extraneous trivia that he can't concentrate on the essentials.

Extricate v. free; disentangle. The fox could not extricate itself from the trap.

Exuberance n. overflowing abundance; joyful enthusiasm; flamboyance; lavishness. I was bowled over by the exuberance of Amy's welcome. What an enthusiastic greeting!

Word List 28

Facile adj. easily accomplished; ready or fluent; superficial. Words came easily to Jonathan: he was a facile speaker and prided himself on being ready to make a speech at a moment's notice.

Facilitate v. help bring about; make less difficult. Rest and proper nourishment should facilitate the patient's recovery.

Fallacious adj. false; misleading. Paradoxically, fallacious reasoning does not always yield erroneous results: even though your logic may be faulty, the answer you get may nevertheless be correct. Fallacy, n.

Fanaticism n. excessive zeal; extreme devotion to a belief or cause. When Islamic fundamentalists demanded the death of Salman Rushdie because his novel questioned their faith, world opinion condemned them for their fanaticism.

Fastidious adj. difficult to please; squeamish. Bobby was such a fastidious eater that he would eat a sandwich only if his mother first cut off every scrap of crust.

Feasible adj. practical. Was it feasible to build a new stadium for the Yankees on New York's West Side? Without additional funding, the project was clearly unrealistic.

Fervor n. glowing ardor; intensity of feeling. At the protest rally, the students cheered the strikers and booed the dean with equal fervor.

Fickle adj. changeable; faithless. As soon as Romeo saw Juliet, he forgot all about his old girlfriend Rosalin. Was Romeo fickle?

Figurative adj. not literal, but metaphorical; using a figure of speech. "To lose one's marbles" is a figurative expression; if you're told that Jack has lost his marbles, no one expects you to rush out to buy him a replacement set.

Flagrant adj. conspicuously wicked; blatant; outrageous. The governor's appointment of his brother-in-law to the State Supreme Court was a flagrant violation of the state laws against nepotism (favoritism based on kinship).

Word List 29

Flippant adj. lacking proper seriousness. When Mark told Mona he loved her, she dismissed his earnest declaration with a flippant "Oh, you say that to all the girls!" flippancy, n.

Florid adj. ruddy; reddish; flowery. If you go to Florida and get a sunburn, your complexion will look florid.

Fluctuate v. waver; shift. The water pressure in our shower fluctuates wildly; you start rinsing yourself off with a trickle, and two minutes later, you think you're going to drown.

Foolhardy adj. rash; heedless. Don't be a foolhardy. Get some advice from experienced people before you strike out on your own.

Foresight n. ability to foresee future happenings; prudence. A wise investor, she had the foresight to buy land just before the current real estate boom.

Forestall v. prevent by taking action in advance. By setting up a prenuptial agreement, the prospective bride and groom hoped to forestall any potential arguments about money in the event of a divorce.

Forsake v. desert; abandon; renounce. No one expected Gauguin to forsake his wife and children and run off to Tahiti.

Forthright adj. outspoken; frank. Never afraid to call a spade a spade, she was perhaps too forthright to be a successful party politician.

Fortuitous adj. accidental; by chance. Though he pretended their encounter was fortuitous, he'd actually been hanging around her usual haunts for the past two weeks.

Foster v. rear; encourage; nurture. According to the legend, Romulus and Remus were fostered by a she-wolf who raised them as if they were her cubs. Also adj.

Word List 30

Founder v. fail completely; sink. After hitting the submerged iceberg, the *Titanic* started taking in water rapidly and soon foundered

Founder n. person who establishes (an organization, business). Among those drowned where the *Titanic* sank was the founder of the Abraham & Straus department store

Frail adj. weak. The sickly child seemed too frail to lift the heavy carton.

Frivolous adj. lacking in seriousness; self-indulgently carefree; relatively unimportant.

Though Nancy enjoyed Bill's frivolous, lighthearted companionship, she sometimes wondered whether he could ever be serious.

Frivolity, n.

Frugality n. thrift; economy. In economically hard times, those who do not learn to practice frugality risk bankruptcy. Frugal, adj.

Fundamental v. basic; primary; essential. The committee discussed all sorts of side issues without ever getting down to addressing the fundamental problem.

Furtive adj. stealthy; sneaky. Noticing the furtive glance the customer gave the diamond bracelet on the counter, the jeweler wondered whether he had a potential shoplifter on his hands.

Futile adj. ineffective; fruitless. Why waste your time on futile pursuits?

Galvanize v. stimulate by shock; stir up; revitalize. News that the prince was almost at their door galvanized the ugly stepsisters into a frenzy of combing and primping.

Garbled adj. mixed up; jumbled; distorted. A favorite party game involves passing a whispered message from one person to another, till, by the time it reaches the last player, the message is totally garbled.

Word List 31

Garrulous adj. loquacious; wordy; talkative. My Uncle Henry can out-talk any three people I know. He is the most garrulous person in Cayuga County.

Genre n. particular variety of art or literature. Both a short-story writer and a poet, Langston Hughes proved himself equally skilled in either genre.

Germane adj. pertinent; bearing upon the case at hand. The judge would not allow the testimony to be heard by the jury because it was not germane to the case.

Glacial adj. like a glacier; extremely cold. Never a warm person, John, when offended could seem positively glacial.

Glib adj. fluent; facile; slick. Keeping up a steady patter to entertain his customers, the kitchen gadget salesman was a glib speaker, never at a loss for a word.

Glutton n. someone who eats too much; greedy person. Who is the glutton who ate up all the chocolate chip cookies I made for dessert?

Gluttonous, adj.

Gorge n. small, steep-walled canyon. The white-water rafting guide warned us about the rapids farther downstream, where the river cut through a narrow gorge.

Grandiose adj. pretentious; high-flown; ridiculously exaggerated; impressive. The aged matinee idol still had grandiose notions of his supposed importance in the theatrical world.

Gratify v. please. Amy's success in her new job gratified her parents.

Gratuitous adj. given freely; unwarranted; unprovoked. Who asked you to comment? We don't need any gratuitous criticism from someone who has no business dissing us.

Word List 32

Gravity n. seriousness. We could tell we were in serious trouble from the gravity of the principal's expression. (secondary meaning) grave, adj.

Gregarious adj. sociable. Typically, partygoers are gregarious; hermits are not.

Grievance n. cause of complaint. When her supervisor ignored her complaint, she took her grievance to the union.

Grudging adj. unwilling; reluctant; stingy. We received only grudging support from the mayor despite his earlier promises of aid.

Guile n. deceit; duplicity; wiliness; cunning. Iago uses considerable guile to trick Othello into believing that Desdemona has been unfaithful.

Gullible adj. easily deceived. Gullible people have only themselves to blame if they fall for scams repeatedly. As the saying goes, "Fool me once, shame on you. Fool me twice, shame on me."

Hackneyed adj. commonplace; trite. When the reviewer criticized the movie for its hackneyed plot, we agreed; we had seen similar stories hundreds of times before.

Hallowed adj. blessed; consecrated. Although the dead girl's parents had never been active churchgoers, they insisted that their daughter be buried in hallowed ground.

Hamper v. obstruct. The new mother didn't realize how much the effort of caring for an infant would hamper her ability to keep an immaculate house.

Harass v. annoy by repeated attacks' torment. When he could not pay his bills as quickly as he had promised, he was harassed by his creditors.

Word List 33

Hardy adj. sturdy; robust; able to stand inclement weather. We asked the gardening expert to recommend particularly hardy plants that could withstand our harsh New England winters.

Haughtiness n. pride; arrogance. When she realized that Darcy believed himself too good to dance with his inferiors, Elizabeth took great offense at his haughtiness.

Hedonist n. one who believes that pleasure is the sole aim in life. A thoroughgoing hedonist, he considered only his own pleasure and ignored any claims others had on his money or time.

Heed v. pay attention to; consider. We hope you heed our advice and get a goodnight's sleep before the test. Also n.

Heresy n. opinion contrary to popular belief; opinion contrary to accepted religion. Galileo's assertion that Earth moves around the sun **directly** contradicted the religious teachings of his day; as a result, he was tried for heresy.

Heretic, n.

Heterodox adj. unorthodox; unconventional. To those who upheld the belief that Earth did not move, Galileo's theory that Earth circles the sun was **disturbingly** heterodox.

Heterogeneous adj. dissimilar; mixed. This year's entering class is a remarkably heterogeneous body; it includes students from 40 different states and 26 foreign countries, some the children of billionaires, others the offspring of welfare families.

Heyday n. time of greatest success; prime. In their heyday, the San Francisco Forty-Niners won the Super Bowl two years running.

Hiatus n. gap; interruption in duration or continuity; pause. During the summer hiatus, many students try to earn enough money to pay their tuition for the next school year.

Hierarchy n. arrangement by rank or standing; authoritarian body divided into ranks. To be low man on the totem pole is to have an inferior place in the hierarchy.

Word List 34

Hindrance n. block; obstacle. Stalled cars along the highway present a hindrance to traffic that two trucks should remove without delay.

Hinder, v.

Hoard v. stockpile; accumulate for future use.

Whenever there are rumors of a food shortage, many people are tempted to hoard food. Also n.

Homogenous adj. of the same kind. Because the student body at Elite Prep was so homogeneous, Sara and James decided to send their daughter to a school that offered greater cultural diversity.

Hone v. sharpen. Determined to get a good shave, Ed Honed his razor with great care.

Hostility n. unfriendliness; hatred. Children often feel hostility toward the new baby in the family.

Humane adj. marked by kindness or consideration. It is ironic that the Humane Society sometimes must show its compassion toward mistreated animals by killing them to put them out of their misery.

Husband v. use sparingly; conserve; save.

Marathon runners must husband their energy so that they can keep going for the entire distance.

Hyperbole n. exaggeration; overstatement. As far I'm concerned, Apple's claims about the new computer are hyperbole: no machine is that good.

Hypocritical adj. pretending to be virtuous; deceiving. Believing Eddie to be interested only in his own advancement, Greg resented his hypocritical posing as a friend. Hypocrisy, n.

Hypothetical adj. based on assumptions or hypotheses; supposed. Suppose you are accepted by Harvard, Stanford and Brown.

Which one would you choose to attend?

Remember: this is only a hypothetical situation.

Hypothesis, n.

Word List 35

Iconoclast n. one who attacks cherished traditions. A born iconoclast, Jean Genet deliberately set out to shock conventional theatergoers with his radical plays.

Idiosyncrasy n. individual trait, usually odd in nature; eccentricity. One of Richard Nixon's little idiosyncrasies was his liking for ketchup on cottage cheese. One of Hannibal Lecter's little idiosyncrasies was his liking for human flesh.

Ignominy n. deep disgrace; shame or dishonor. To lose the Pin-Pong match to a trained chimpanzee! How could Rollo stand the ignominy of his defeat?

Illicit adj. illegal. The defense attorney maintained that her client had never performed any illicit action.

Illuminate v. brighten; clear up or make understandable; enlighten. Just as a lamp can illuminate a dark room, a perceptive comment can illuminate a knotty problem.

Illusory adj. deceptive; not real. Unfortunately, the costs of running the lemonade stand were so high that Tom's profits proved illusory.

Imbalance n. lack of balance or symmetry; disproportion. Because of the great imbalance between the number of males and females invited, the dance was unsuccessful.

Immaculate adj. spotless; flawless; absolutely clean. Ken and Jessica were wonderful tenants and left the apartment in immaculate condition when they moved out.

Immune adj. resistant to; free or exempt from. Fortunately, Florence had contracted chicken pox as a child and was immune to it when her baby broke out in spots. Immunity, n.

Immutable adj. unchangeable. All things change over time; nothing is immutable.

Word List 36

Impair v. injure; hurt. Drinking alcohol can impair your ability to drive safely; if you're going to drink, don't drive.

Impartial adj. not biased; fair. As members of the jury, you must be impartial, showing no favoritism to either party but judging the case on its merits.

Impassive adj. without feeling; imperturbable; stoical. Refusing to let the enemy see how deeply shaken he was by his capture, the prisoner kept his face impassive.

Impeccable adj. faultless. The uncrowned queen of the fashion industry, Diana was acclaimed for her impeccable taste.

Impecunious adj. without money. Though Scrooge claimed he was too impecunious to give alms, he easily could have afforded to be charitable.

Impede v. hinder; block; delay. A series of accidents impeded the launching of the space shuttle.

Impel v. drive or force onward. A strong feeling of urgency impelled her; if she failed to finish the project right then, she knew that she would never get it done.

Imperceptible adj. unnoticeable; undetectable. Fortunately, the stain on the blouse was imperceptible after the blouse had gone through the wash.

Imperious adj. domineering; haughty. Jane rather liked a man to be masterful, but Mr. Rochester seemed so bent on getting his own way that he was actually imperious!

Word List 37

Impetuous adj. violent; hasty; rash. "Leap before you look" was the motto suggested by one particularly impetuous young man.

Implausible adj. unlikely; unbelievable. Though her alibi seemed implausible, it in fact turned out to be true.

Implement v. put into effect; supply with tools. The major was unwilling to implement the plan until she was sure it had the governor's backing implementation n.

Implication n. something hinted at or suggested. When Miss Watson said she hadn't seen her purse since the last time Jim was in the house, the implication was that she suspected Jim had taken it. **Imply**, v.

Implicit adj. understood but not stated. Jack never told Jill he adored her; he believed his love was implicit in his actions.

Impoverished adj. poor. The loss of their ancestral farm left the family impoverished and without hope.

Impromptu adj. without previous preparation; off the cuff; on the spur of the moment. The judges were amazed that she could make such a thorough, well-supported presentation in an impromptu speech.

Impudence n. impertinence; insolence. When kissed on the cheek by a perfect stranger, Lady Catherine exclaimed, "Of all the nerve! Young man, I should have you horsewhipped for your impudence."

Inadvertently adv. By oversight; carelessly or unintentionally. He inadvertently failed to answer two questions on the examination.

Inane adj. silly; senseless. There's no pint to what you're saying. Why are you bothering to make such inane remarks?

Word List 38

Inaugurate v. start; initiate; install in office. The airline decided to inaugurate its new route to the Far East with a special reduced fare offer. Inaugural, adj.

Incense v. enrage; infuriate. Cruelty to defenseless animals incensed Kit.

Incentive n. spur; motive. Mike's strong desire to outshine his big sister was all the incentive he needed to do well in school.

Incessant adj. uninterrupted; unceasing. In a famous TV commercial, the frogs' incessant croaking goes on and on until eventually it turns into a single word: "Bud-weis-er."

Incidental adj. not essential; minor. The scholarship covered his major expenses at college and some of his incidental expenses as well.

Incisive adj. cutting; sharp. Her incisive commentary cut through the tangle of arguments, exposing fallacies and logical flaws.

Incite v. arouse to action; goad; motivate; induce to exist. In a fiery speech, Mario incited his fellow students to go out on strike to protest the university's anti-affirmative-action stand.

Incline n. slope; slant. The architect recommended that the nursing home's ramp be rebuilt because its incline was too steep for wheelchairs.

Inclined adj. tending or leaning toward; bent. Though I am inclined to be skeptical, the witness's manner inclines me to believe his story. Also v.

Inclusive adj. tending to include all. The comedian turned down the invitation to join the Players' Club, saying any club that would let him in was too inclusive for him.

Word List 39

Incoherent adj. unintelligible; muddled; illogical. The bereaved father sobbed and stammered, his words becoming almost incoherent in his grief. Incoherence, n.

Incongruous adj. not fitting; absurd. Dave saw nothing incongruous about wearing sneakers with his tuxedo; he couldn't understand why his date took one look at him and started to laugh.

Incongruity, n.

Inconsequential adj. insignificant; unimportant. Brushing off Ali's apologies for having broken the wineglass, Tamara said, "Don't worry about it; its inconsequential."

Incontrovertible adj. indisputable; not open to question. Unless you find the evidence against my client absolutely incontrovertible, you must declare her not guilty of this charge.

Incorrigible adj. uncorrectable. Though Widow Douglass hoped to reform Huck, Miss Watson called him incorrigible and said he would come to no good end.

Indefatigable adj. tireless. Although the effort of taking out the garbage tired Wayne out for the entire morning, when it came to partying, he was indefatigable.

Indict v. charge. The district attorney didn't want to indict the suspect until she was sure she had a strong enough case to convince a jury. Indictment, n.

Indifferent adj. unmoved; lacking concern. Because she felt no desire to marry, she was indifferent to his constant proposals.

Indigenous adj. native. Cigarettes are made of tobacco, one of the indigenous plants the early explorers found in the New World.

Indigent adj. poor; destitute. Someone who is truly indigent can't even afford to buy a pack of cigarettes. (Don't mix up indigent and indigenous. See preceding example.)

Word List 40

Indiscriminate adj. choosing at random; confused. Disapproving of her son's indiscriminate television viewing, Shirley decided to restrict him to watching educational programs.

Indolent adj. lazy. Couch potatoes lead an indolent life lying back in their Lazyboy recliners to watch TV. Indolence, n.

Indomitable adj. unconquerable; unyielding. Focusing on her game despite all her personal problems, tennis champion Steffi Graf proved she had an indomitable will to win.

Indubitable adj. unable to be doubted; unquestionable. Auditioning for the chorus line, Molly was an indubitable hit: the director fired the leading lady and hired Molly in her place!

Induce v. persuade; bring about. After the quarrel, Tina said nothing could induce her to talk to Tony again. Inducement, n.

Indulge v. humor; treat leniently. Parents who constantly indulge their children by giving in to their every whim may thoroughly spoil them.

Industrious adj. diligent; hard-working. If you are industrious and apply yourself to your assignments, you will do well in college.

Industry, n.

Ineffectual adj. not effective; weak. Because the candidate failed to get across his message to the public, his campaign was ineffectual.

Inept adj. unsuited; absurd; incompetent. The inept glovemaker was all thumbs.

Inequity n. unfairness. In demanding equal pay for equal work, women protest the basic inequity of a system that gives greater financial rewards to men.

Word List 41

Inert adj. inactive; lacking power to move. "Get up, you lazybones," Tina cried to Tony, who lay in bed inert.

Inexorable adj. relentless; unyielding; implacable. Ignoring the defense attorney's plea for clemency, the judge was inexorable, giving the convicted felon the maximum punishment allowed by law.

Infamous adj. notoriously bad. Charles Manson and Jeffrey Dahmer are both infamous killers.

Infer v. deduce; conclude. From the students' glazed looks, it was easy for me to infer that they were bored out of their minds.

Infiltrate v. pass into or through; penetrate (an organization) sneakily. In order to be able to infiltrate enemy lines at night without being seen, the scouts darkened their faces and wore black coveralls. Infiltrator, n.

Infinitesimal adj. exceedingly small; so small as to be almost nonexistent. Making sure everyone was aware she was on an extremely strict diet, Melanie said she would have only an infinitesimal sliver of pie.

Infraction n. violation (of a rule or regulation); breach. When Dennis Rodman butted heads with a referee, he committed a clear infraction of NBA rules.

Ingenious adj. clever; resourceful. Kit admired the ingenious way that her computer keyboard opened up to reveal the built-in CD-ROM below. Ingenuity, n.

Ingrate n. ungrateful person. That ingrate Bob sneered at the tie I gave him.

Inherent adj. firmly established by nature or habit; intrinsic. Elaine's inherent love of justice caused her to champion people whom she thought society had treated unfairly.

Word List 42

Inimical adj. unfriendly; hostile; harmful; detrimental. I've always been friendly to Martha. Why is she so inimical to me?

Initiate v. begin; originate; receive into a group. The college is about to initiate a program to reduce math anxiety among students.

Injurious adj. harmful. Smoking cigarettes can be injurious to your health.

Innate adj. inborn. Mozart's parents soon recognized young Wolfgang's innate talent for music.

Innocuous adj. harmless. An occasional glass of wine with dinner is relatively innocuous and should have no ill effect.

Innovation n. change; introduction of something new. Although Richard liked to keep up with all the latest technological innovations, he didn't always abandon tried and true techniques in favor of something new.

Innovate, v.

Inopportune adj. untimely; poorly chosen. A rock concert is an inopportune setting for a quiet conversation.

Insatiable adj. not easily satisfied; greedy. Lexy's passion for new clothes is insatiable; she can shop til she literally drops.

Insightful adj. discerning; perceptive. Sol thought he was very insightful about human behavior, but he hadn't a clue why people acted the way they did.

Insinuate v. hint; imply; creep in. When you said I looked robust, were you trying to insinuate I'm getting fat?

Word List 43

Inspid adj. lacking in flavor; dull. Flat prose and flat ginger ale are equally inspid: both lack sparkle.

Insolvent adj. bankrupt; unable to repay one's debts. Although young Lord Widgeon was **insolvent**, he had no fear of being thrown into debtors' prison; he was sure that, if his creditors pressed him for payment, his wealthy parents would repay what he owed.

Instigate v. urge; start; provoke. Rumors of police corruption led the mayor to instigate an investigation into the department's activities.

Insularity n. narrow-mindedness; isolation. The insularity of the islanders manifested itself in their suspicion of anything foreign. Insular, adj.

Insuperable adj. insurmountable; unbeatable. Faced by almost insuperable obstacles, the members of the underground maintained their courage and will to resist.

Insurgent adj. rebellious. Because the insurgent forces had occupied the capital and had gained control of the railway lines, several of the war correspondents covering the uprising predicted a rebel victory.

Intangible adj. not material; not able to be perceived by touch; vague; elusive. Emotions are intangible, and yet we know that we feel love and hate though we cannot grasp these feelings in our hands.

Integral adj. complete; necessary for completeness. Physical education is an integral part of our curriculum; a sound mind and a sound body are complementary.

Integrity n. uprightness; wholeness. Lincoln, whose personal integrity has inspired millions, fought a civil war to maintain the integrity of the republic, that these United States might remain undivided for all time.

Intermittent adj. periodic; on and off. The outdoor wedding reception had to be moved indoors to avoid the intermittent showers that fell on and off all afternoon.

Word List 44

Intervene v. come between. Rachel tried to intervene in the quarrel between her two sons.

Intimidate v. frighten. I'll learn karate and then those big bullies won't be able to intimidate me any more.

Intractable adj. unruly; stubborn; unyielding. Charlie Brown's friend Pigpen was intractable: he absolutely refused to take a bath.

Intransigence n. refusal of any compromise; stubbornness. When I predicted that the strike would be over in a week, I didn't expect to encounter such intransigence from both sides. Intransigent, adj.

Intrepid adj. fearless. For her intrepid conduct in nursing the wounded during the war, Florence Nightingale was honored by Queen Victoria.

Intricate adj. complex; knotty; tangled. Eric spent many hours designing mazes so intricate that none of his classmates could solve them. Intricacy, n.

Intrinsic adj. essential; inherent; built-in; natural. Although my grandmother's china has little intrinsic value, I shall always treasure it for the memories it evokes.

Introspective adj. looking within oneself. Though young Francis of Assisi led a wild and worldly life, even he had introspective moments during which he examined his soul.

Intuition n. immediate insight; power of knowing without reasoning. Even though Tony denied that anything was wrong, Tina trusted her intuition that something was bothering him. Intuitive, adj.

Inundate v. overwhelm; flood; submerge. This semester I am inundated with work. You should see the piles of paperwork flooding my desk.

Word List 45

Invert v. turn upside down or inside out. When he inverted his body in a handstand, he felt the blood rush to his head.

Irascible adj. irritable; easily angered. Miss Minchin's irascible temper intimidated the younger schoolgirls, who feared she'd burst into a rage at any moment.

Ironic adj. relating to a contradiction between an event's expected result and its actual outcome; sarcastic. It is ironic that his success came when he least wanted it. Irony, n.

Irrational adj. illogical; lacking reason; insane. Many people have such an irrational fear of snakes that they panic at the sight of a harmless garter snake.

Irrelevant adj. not applicable; unrelated. No matter how irrelevant the patient's mumblings may seem, they give us some indications of what he has on his mind.

Irreproachable adj. blameless; impeccable. Homer's conduct at the office party was irreproachable; even Marge didn't have anything bad to say about how he behaved.

Irresolute adj. uncertain how to act; weak. She had no respect for him because he seemed weak-willed and irresolute.

Irreverence n. lack of proper respect. Some audience members were amused by the irreverence of the comedian's jokes about the Pope, others felt offended by his lack of respect for their faith. Irreverent, adj.

Jargon n. language used by a special group; technical terminology; gibberish. The computer salesmen at the store used a jargon of their own that we simply couldn't follow; we had no idea what they were jabbering about.

Jocular adj. said or done in jest; joking. Please do not take my jocular remarks seriously.

Word List 46

Judicious adj. sound in judgment; wise. At a key moment in his life, Tom made a judicious investment that was the foundation of his later wealth.

Justification n. good or just reason; defense; excuse. The jury found him guilty of the more serious charge because they could see no possible justification for his actions.

Kindle v. start a fire; inspire. Her teacher's praise kindled a spark of hope inside Maya.

Labyrinth n. maze. Hiding from Indian Jo, Tom and Becky soon lost themselves in the labyrinth of secret underground caves.

Laconic adj. brief and to the point. Many of the characters portrayed by Clint Eastwood are laconic types: strong men of few words.

Lament v. grieve; express sorrow. Even advocates of the war lamented the loss of so many lives in combat. Also n. lamentation, n.

Lassitude n. languor; weariness. After a massage and a long soak in the hot tub, I gave in to my growing lassitude and lay down for a nap.

Laud v. praise. The HF lauded Boomer Esiason's efforts to raise money to combat cystic fibrosis. Laudable, laudatory, adj.

Lavish adj. liberal; wasteful. The prince's lavish gifts delighted the showgirl. Also v.

Legacy n. a gift made by a will. Part of my legacy from my parents is an album of family photographs.

Word List 47

Lethargic adj. drowsy; dull. The stifling classroom made Sarah lethargic: she felt as if she was about to nod off. Lethargy, n.

Levity n. lack of seriousness; lightness. Stop giggling and wriggling around in your seats: such levity is inappropriate in church.

Linger v. loiter or dawdle; continue or persist. Hoping to see Juliet pass by, Romeo lingered outside the Capulet house for hours. Though Mother made stuffed cabbage on Monday, the smell lingered around the house for days.

List v. tilt; lean over. That flagpole should be absolutely vertical; instead, it lists to one side. (secondary meaning).

Listlessness n. lack in spirit or energy. We had expected him to be full of enthusiasm and were surprised by his listlessness.

Loathe v. detest. Booing and hissing, the audience showed how much they loathed the wicked villain.

Lofty adj. very high. Barbara Jordan's fellow students used to tease her about her lofty ambitions.

Loquacious adj. talkative. Though our daughter barely says a word to us these days, put a phone in her hand you'll see how loquacious she really is: our phone bills are out of sight!

Lucid adj. easily understood; clear; intelligible. Ellen made an excellent teacher: her explanations of technical points were lucid enough for a child to grasp. Lucidity, n.

Lurid adj. wild; sensational; graphic; gruesome. Do the lurid cover stories in the *Enquirer* actually attract people to buy that trashy tabloid?

Word List 48

Magnanimous adj. generous. Philanthropists by definition are magnanimous; misers, by definition, are not. Magnanimity, n.

Magnate n. person of prominence or influence. Growing up in Pittsburgh, Annie Dillard was surrounded by the mansions of the great steel and coal magnates who set their mark on that city.

Maladroit adj. clumsy; bungling. How maladroit it was of me to mention seeing you out partying last night! From the look on his face, I take it that your boyfriend thought you were otherwise occupied.

Malevolent adj. wishing evil. Iago is a malevolent villain who takes pleasure in ruining Othello.

Malice n. hatred; spite. Jealous of Cinderella's beauty, her wicked stepsisters expressed their malice by forcing her to do menial tasks.

Malicious, adj.

Malign v. speak evil of; bad-mouth; defame. Her hatred of her ex-husband ran so deep that she maligned anyone who even casually dated him.

Marred adj. damaged; disfigured. She had to refinish the marred surface of the table. Mar, v.

Martinet n. rigid disciplinarian; strict military officer. No talking at meals! No mingling with the servants! Miss Minchin was a martinet who insisted that the schoolgirls in her charge observe each regulation to the letter.

Materialism n. preoccupation with physical comforts and things. By its nature, materialism is opposed to idealism, for where the materialist emphasizes the needs of the body, the idealist emphasizes the needs of the soul.

Meager adj. scanty; inadequate. His salary was far too meager for him to afford to buy a new car.

Word List 49

Meander v. wind or turn in a course. Needing to stay close to a source of water, he followed every twist and turn of the stream as it meandered through the countryside.

Medley n. mixture. The band played a medley of Gershwin tunes.

Meek adj. quiet and obedient; spiritless. Can Lois Lane see through Superman's disguise and spot the superhero hiding behind the guise of meek, timorous Clark Kent?

Melancholy adj. gloomy; morose; blue. To Eugene, stuck in his small town, a train whistle was a melancholy sound, for it made him think of all the places he would never get to see.

Mercenary adj. interested in money or gain. Andy's every act was prompted by mercenary motives: his first question was always "What's in it for me?" also n.

Mercurial adj. capricious; changing; fickle. Quick as quicksilver to change, he was mercurial in nature and therefore erratic.

Merger n. combination (of two business corporations). When the firm's president married the director of financial planning, the office joke was that it wasn't a marriage, it was a merger.

Methodical adj. systematic. An accountant must be methodical and maintain order among his financial records.

Meticulous adj. excessively careful; painstaking; scrupulous. Martha Stewart was a meticulous housekeeper, fussing about each and every detail that went into making up her perfect home.

Minute adj. extremely small. The twins resembled one another closely; only minute differences set them apart.

Word List 50

Misanthrope n. one who hates mankind. In *Gulliver's Travels*, Swift portrays an image of humanity as vile, degraded beasts; for this reason, some critics consider him a misanthrope.

Miserly adj. stingy; mean. The miserly old man greedily counted the gold coins he had hoarded over the years.

Misnomer n. wrong name; incorrect designation. His tyrannical conduct proved to us all that his nickname, King Eric the Just, was a misnomer.

Mitigate v. appease; moderate. Nothing Jason did could mitigate Medea's anger; she refused to forgive him for betraying her.

Mock v. ridicule; imitate, often in derision. It is unkind to mock anyone; it is stupid to mock anyone significantly bigger than you.

Mockery, n.

Mollify v. soothe. The airline customer service representative tried to mollify the angry passenger by offering her a seat in first class.

Momentous adj. very important. When Marie and Pierre Curie discovered radium, they had no idea of the momentous impact their discovery would have upon society.

Monotony n. sameness leading to boredom. He took a clerical job, but soon grew to hate the monotony of his daily routine. Monotonous, adj.

Morbid adj. given to unwholesome thought; moody; characteristic of disease. This morbid dwelling on cancer is unhealthy; quit sitting around brooding and think of more pleasant topics.

Morose adj. ill-humored; sullen; melancholy. Forced to take early retirement, Bill acted morose for months; then, all of a sudden, he shook off his sullen mood and was his usual cheerful self.

Word List 51

Mundane adj. worldly as opposed to spiritual. Uninterested in philosophical or spiritual discussions, Tom talked only of mundane matters such as the daily weather forecast or the latest basketball results.

Munificent adj. very generous. The Annenberg Trust made a munificent gift that supported art programs in the public schools. Munificence, n.

Mutability n. ability to change in form; fickleness. Going from rags to riches, and then back to rags again, the bankrupt financier was a victim of the mutability of fortune.

Muted adj. silent; muffled; toned down. In the funeral parlor, the mourners' voices had a muted quality. Mute v.

Naivete n. quality of being unsophisticated; simplicity; artlessness; gullibility. Touched by the naivete of sweet, convent-trained Cosette, Marius pledges himself to protect her innocence. Naïve, adj.

Nefarious adj. very wicked. The villain's crimes, though various, were one and all nefarious.

Negate v. cancel out; nullify; deny. A sudden surge of adrenaline can negate the effects of fatigue; there's nothing like a good shock to wake you up.

Nonchalance n. indifference; lack of concern; composure. The first time they performed at the club, all the guys tried to look cool and unconcerned, but none of them could match Dale's nonchalance; you would have thought he'd been onstage for years. Nonchalant, adj.

Nonentity n. person of no importance; nonexistence. Don't dismiss William as a nonentity; in his quiet way, he's very important to the firm.

Nostalgia n. homesickness; longing for the past. My grandfather seldom spoke of life in the old country; he had little patience with nostalgia. Nostalgic, adj.

Word List 52

Notoriety n. disrepute; ill fame. To the starlet, any publicity was good publicity; if she couldn't have a good reputation, she'd settle for notoriety. Notorious, adj.

Novelty n. something new; newness. The computer is no longer a novelty around the office. Novel, adj.

Novice n. beginner. Even a novice at word processing can start writing letters right away by following these simple directions.

Nuance n. shade of difference in meaning or color. Jody has an extraordinary eye for colors. She can look at a painting and see nuances in the paint that are indistinguishable to me.

Nullify v. to make invalid; void; abolish. Once the contract was nullified, it no longer had any legal force.

Nurture v. nourish; educate; foster. The Head Start program attempts to nurture pre-kindergarten children so that they will do well when they enter public school. also n.

Obdurate adj. stubborn. The manager was obdurate in refusing to discuss the workers' grievances.

Objective n. goal; aim. A degree in medicine was her ultimate objective.

Obliterate v. destroy completely. The explosion obliterated the façade of the Federal Building, gutting it completely.

Word List 53

Oblivion n. obscurity; forgetfulness. After a brief period of popularity, Hurston's works fell into oblivion; no one bothered to reprint them, or even to read them any more.

Oblivious adj. inattentive or unmindful; wholly absorbed. Deep in her book, Nancy was oblivious to the noisy squabbles of her brother and his friends.

Obscure adj. dark; vague; unclear. Even after I read the poem a fourth time, its meaning was still obscure. Obscurity, n.

Obscure v. darken ;make unclear. At times he seemed purposely to obscure his meaning, preferring mystery to clarity.

Obsequious adj. slavishly attentive; servile; fawning sycophantic. Why are some waiters in fancy restaurants so obsequious? What makes them think I want people fawning all over me?

Obsessive adj. related to thinking about something constantly; preoccupying. Ballet, which had been a hobby, began to dominate his life; his love of dancing became obsessive.

Obsession, n.

Obstinate adj. stubborn; hard to control or treat. We tried to persuade him to give up smoking, but he was obstinate and refused to change. Obstinacy, n.

Obtuse adj. blunt; stupid. What can you do with somebody who's so obtuse that he can't even tell that you're insulting him?

Officious adj. meddlesome; excessively pushy in offering one's services. After the long light, Jill just wanted to nap, but the officious bellboy was intent on showing her all the special features of the deluxe suite.

Ominous adj. threatening. Those clouds are ominous; they suggest a severe storm is on the way

Word List 54

Opaque adj. dark; not transparent. The opaque window shade kept the sunlight out of the room.

Opacity, n. opportunist n. individual who sacrifices principles for expediency by taking advantage of circumstances. Forget about ethics! He's such an opportunist that he'll vote in favor of any deal that will give him break.

Optimist n. person who looks on the good side. The pessimist says the glass is half-empty; the optimist says it is half-full.

Optional adj. not compulsory; left to one's choice. I was impressed by the range of optional accessories for my laptop computer that were available. Option, n.

Opulence n. extreme wealth; luxuriousness; abundance. The glitter and opulence of the ballroom took Cinderella's breath away. opulent, adj.

Orator n. public speaker. The abolitionist Frederick Douglass was a brilliant orator whose speeches brought home to his audience the evils of slavery.

Ornate adj. excessively or elaborately decorated. The furnishings of homes shown on *Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous* tend to be highly ornate.

Ostentatious adj. showy; pretentious. Trying to attract attention, Trump's latest casino in Atlantic City is the most ostentatious gambling palace in the East: it easily out glitters its competitors. ostentation, n.

Pacifist n. one opposed to force; antimilitarist. During the war, pacifists, though they refused to bear arms, nevertheless served in the front lines as ambulance drivers and medical corpsemen.

Painstaking adj. showing hard work; taking great care. the new high-frequency word list is the result of painstaking efforts on the part of our research staff.

Word List 55

Paltry adj. insignificant; petty; trifling. One hundred dollars for a genuine imitation Rolex watch! Lady, this is a paltry sum to pay for such a high-class piece of jewelry.

Paradigm n. model; example; pattern. Pavlov's experiment in which he trains a dog to salivate on hearing a bell is a paradigm of the conditioned-response experiment in behavioral psychology.

Paradox n. something apparently contradictory in nature; statement that looks false but is actually correct. Richard presents a bit of a paradox, for he is a card-carrying member of both the National Rifle Association and the relatively pacifist American Civil Liberties Union. paradoxical, adj.

Paragon n. model of perfection her fellow students disliked Lavinia because Miss Minchin always pointed her out as a paragon of virtue.

Parochial adj. narrow in outlook; provincial; related to parishes Although Jane Austen's novels are set in small rural communities, her concerns are universal, not parochial.

Parody n. humorous imitation; spoof; takeoff; travesty. The show *Forbidden Broadway* presents parodies spoofing the year's new productions playing on Broadway.

Parry v. ward off a blow; deflect. Unwilling to injure his opponent in such a pointless clash, D'Artagnan simply tried to parry his rival's thrusts.

Parsimony n. stinginess; excessive frugality. Silas Marner's parsimony did not allow him to indulge himself in any luxuries.

Partial adj. incomplete. In this issue we have published only a partial list of contributors because we lack space to acknowledge everyone.

Partial adj. biased; having a liking for something. I am extremely partial to chocolate éclairs. partiality, n.

Partisan adj. one-sided; prejudiced; committed to a party. on certain issues of conscience, she refused to take a partisan stand. also n.

Word List 56

Passive adj. not active; acted upon. Mahatma Gandhi urged his followers to pursue a program of passive resistance rather than resorting to violence and acts of terrorism.

Paucity n. scarcity; lack. They closed the restaurant because the paucity of customers meant that it was a losing proposition to operate.

Pedantic adj. showing off learning; bookish. Leavening his decisions with humorous, down-to-earth anecdotes, Judge Wapner was a pleasant contrast to the typical pedantic legal scholar pedant, pedantry, n.

Penchant n. strong inclination; liking. Dave has a penchant for taking risks: one semester he went steady with three girls, two of whom were stars on the school karate team.

Perceptive adj. insightful; aware; wise. Although Maud was a generally perceptive critic, she had her blind spots: she could never see flaws in the work of her friends.

Perfunctory adj. superficial; not thorough; lacking interest, care, or enthusiasm. The auditor's perfunctory inspection of the books failed to spot many obvious errors.

Peripheral adj. marginal; outer. We lived, not in central London, but in one of those peripheral suburbs that spring up on the outskirts of a great city. periphery, n.

Perjury n. false testimony while under oath. Rather than lie under oath and perhaps be indicted for perjury, the witness chose to take the Fifth Amendment, refusing to answer any questions on the grounds that he might incriminate himself.

Pernicious adj. very destructive. The Athenians argued that Socrates's teachings had a pernicious effect on young and susceptible minds; therefore, they condemned him death.

Word List 57

Perpetuate v. make something last; preserve from extinction. Some critics attack *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* because they believe Twain's book perpetuates a false image of African-Americans in this country.

Perturb v. disturb greatly. The thought that electricity might be leaking out of the empty light bulb sockets perturbed my aunt so much that at night she crept about the house screwing fresh bulbs in the vacant spots.

Pervasive adj. pervading; spread throughout every part. Despite airing them for several hours, Martha could not rid her clothes of the pervasive odor of mothballs that clung to them.

pervade, v.
Pessimism n. belief that life is basically bad or evil; gloominess. Considering how well you have done in the course so far, you have no real reason for such pessimism about your final grade.

Petty adj. trivial; unimportant; very small. She had no major complaints about his work, only few petty quibbles that were almost too minor to state.

Petulant adj. touchy; peevish. If you'd had hardly any sleep for three nights and people kept phoning and waking you up, you'd sound petulant, too.

Phenomena n. pl. observable facts; subjects of scientific investigation. We kept careful records of the phenomena we noted in the course of these experiments.

phenomenon, sing.

Philanthropist n. lover of mankind; doer of good. In his role as a philanthropist and public benefactor, John D. Rockefeller, Sr., donated millions to charity; as an individual, however, he was a tight-fisted old man.

Pious adj. devout; religious. The challenge for church people today is how to be pious in the best sense, that is, to be devout without becoming hypocritical or sanctimonious.

piety, n.

Pitfall n. hidden danger; concealed trap. Her parents warned young Sophie against the many pitfalls that lay in wait for her in the dangerous big city.

Word List 58

Pithy adj. concise; meaningful; substantial; meaty. Some of Whoopi Goldberg's one-liners at the Oscar Awards were pithy and to the point: they packed wallop, but were short and sweet.

Pivotal adj. crucial; key; vital. The new "smart weapons" technology played a pivotal role in the quick resolution of the war.

Placate v. pacify; conciliate. The store manager tried to placate the angry customer, offering to replace the damaged merchandise or to give back her money right away.

Plagiarize v. steal another's ideas and pass them off as one's own. The teacher could tell that the student had plagiarized parts of his essay; she recognized whole paragraphs straight from *Barron's Book Notes*.

Platitude n. trite remark; commonplace statement. In giving advice to his son, old Polonius expressed himself only in platitudes; every word out of his mouth was a commonplace.

Plausible adj. having a show of truth but open to doubt; specious. Your mother made you stay home from school because she needed you to program the VCR? I'm sorry, you'll have to come up with a more plausible excuse than that.

Pliant adj. flexible; easily influenced. Pinocchio's disposition was pliant; he was like putty in his tempters' hands.

Plight n. condition, state (especially a bad state or condition); predicament. Many people feel that the federal government should do more to alleviate the plight of the homeless.

Poignancy n. quality of being deeply moving; keenness of emotion. Watching the tearful reunion of the long-separated mother and child, the social worker was touché by the poignancy of the scene.

poignant, adj.
Polemical adj. aggressive in verbal attack; disputatious. Alexis was a master of polemical rhetoric; she should have worn a T-shirt with the slogan "Born to Debate."
polemic, n.

Word List 59

Pomposity n. self-important behavior; acting like a stuffed shirt. Although the commencement speaker had some good things to say, we had to laugh at his pomposity and general air of parading his own dignity.

pompous, adj.

Ponderous adj. weighty; unwieldy. Sol's humor lacked the light touch; his jokes were always ponderous

Porous adj. full of pores; like a sieve. Dancers like to wear porous clothing because it allows the ready passage of water and air.

Potent adj. powerful; persuasive; greatly influential. The jury was swayed by the highly potent testimony of the crime's sole eyewitness.

potency, n.

Pragmatic adj. practical (as opposed to idealistic); concerned with the practical worth or impact of something. This coming trip to France should provide me with a pragmatic test of the value of my conversational French class.

Prattle v. babble. Baby John prattled endlessly about his cats and his ball and his bottle of juice.

Precarious adj. uncertain; risky. Saving the stock would be a precarious investment, Tom advised me against purchasing it.

Precedent n. something preceding in time that may be used as an authority or guide for future action. If I buy you a car for your sixteenth birthday, your brothers will want me to buy them cars when they turn sixteen, too; I can't afford to set such an expensive precedent.

Precipitate adj. rash; premature; hasty; sudden. Though I was angry enough to resign on the spot, I had enough sense to keep myself from quitting a job in such a precipitate fashion.

Precipitous adj. steep; overhasty. This hill is difficult to climb because it is so precipitous; one slip, and our descent will be precipitous as well.

Word List 60

preclude v. make impossible; eliminate. The fact that the band was already booked to play in Hollywood on New Year's Eve precluded its accepting the New Year's Eve gig in London.

Precocious adj. advanced in development.

Listening to the grown-up way the child discussed serious topics, we couldn't help remarking how precocious she was.

precocity, n.

Predator n. creature that seizes and devours another animal; person who robs or exploits others. Not just cats, but a wide variety of predators – owls, hawks, weasels, foxes – catch mice for dinner. A carnivore is by definition predatory, for it preys on weaker creatures.

prey, v.

Predecessor n. former occupant of a post. I hope I can live up to the fine example set by my late predecessor in this office.

Predilection n. partiality; preference. Although I have written all sorts of poetry over the years, I have a definite predilection for occasional verse.

Preposterous adj. absurd; ridiculous. When he tried to downplay his youthful experiments with marijuana by saying he hadn't inhaled, we all thought, "What a preposterous excuse!"

Prestige n. impression produced by achievements or reputation. Did Rockefeller become a philanthropist because he was innately generous or because he hoped to gain social prestige by donating to popular causes?

Presumptuous adj. overconfident; impertinently bold; taking liberties. Matilda thought it was somewhat presumptuous of the young man to have addressed her without first having been introduced. Perhaps manners were freer here in the New world.

Pretentious adj. ostentatious; pompous; making unjustified claims; overambitious. None of the other prize winners is wearing her medal; isn't it a bit pretentious of you to wear yours?

Prevalent adj. widespread; generally accepted. A radical committed to social change, Reed had no patience with the conservative views prevalent in the America of his day.

Word List 61

Problematic adj. doubtful; unsettled; questionable; perplexing. Given the many areas of conflict still awaiting resolution, the outcome of the peace talks remains problematic.

Proclivity n. inclination; natural tendency. Watching the two-year-old voluntarily put away his toys, I was amazed by his proclivity for neatness.

Procrastinate v. postpone; delay or put off. Looking at four years of receipts and checks he still had to sort through, Bob was truly sorry he had procrastinated for so long and not finished filing his taxes long ago.

Prodigal adj. wasteful; reckless with money. Don't be so prodigal spending my money; when you've earned some money, you can waste it as much as you want! also n.

Prodigious adj. marvelous; enormous. Watching the champion weight lifter heave the weighty barbell to shoulder height and then boost it overhead, we marveled at his prodigious strength.

Prodigy n. marvel; highly gifted child. Menuhin was a prodigy, performing wonders on his violin when he was barely eight years old.

Profane v. violate; desecrate; treat unworthily. The members of the mysterious Far Eastern cult sought to kill the British explorer because he had profaned the sanctity of their holy goblet by using it as an ashtray. also adj.

Profligate adj. dissipate; wasteful; wildly immoral. Although surrounded by wild a profligate companions, she nevertheless managed to retain some sense of decency. also n.

Profound adj. deep; not superficial; complete. Freud's remarkable insights into human behavior caused his fellow scientists to honor him as a profound thinker. profundity, n.

Profusion n. overabundance; lavish expenditure; excess. At the wedding feast, food and drink were served in such profusion that the goodies piled on the tables almost overflowed onto the floor.

Word List 62

Proliferation n. rapid growth; spread; multiplication. Times of economic hardship inevitably encourage the proliferation of countless get-rich-quick schemes.
proliferate, v.

Prolific adj. abundantly fruitful. My editors must assume I'm a prolific writer: they expect me to revise six books this year!

Prologue n. introduction (to a poem or play). In the prologue to *Romeo and Juliet*, Shakespeare introduces the audience to the feud between the Montagues and the Capulets.

Prophetic adj. foretelling the future. I have no magical prophetic powers; when I predict what will happen, I base my predictions on common sense prophesy, v.

Propitious adj. favorable; fortunate; advantageous. Chloe consulted her horoscope to see whether Tuesday would be a propitious time to dump her boyfriend.

Propriety n. fitness; correct conduct. Miss manners counsels her readers so that they may behave with due propriety in any social situation and not embarrass themselves.

Prosaic adj. dull and unimaginative; matter-of-fact; factual. Though the ad writers had come up with a wildly imaginative campaign to publicize the new product, the head office rejected it for a more prosaic, ordinary approach.

Protract v. prolong. Seeking to delay the union members' vote, the management team tried to protract the negotiations endlessly.

Provincial adj. pertaining to a province; limited in outlook; unsophisticated. As provincial governor, Sir Henry administered the Queen's law in his remote corner of Canada. Caught up in local problems, out of touch with London news, he became sadly provincial.

Provisional adj. tentative. Edward's appointment was provisional; he needed the approval of the board of directors before it would be made permanent.

Word List 63

Provocative adj. arousing anger or interest; annoying. In a typically provocative act, the bully kicked sand into the weaker man's face.

Proximity n. nearness. Blind people sometimes develop a compensatory ability to sense the proximity of objects around them.

Prudent adj. cautious; careful. A miser hoards money not because he is prudent but because he is greedy. *prudence*, n.

Pugnacity n. combativeness; disposition to fight. "Put up your dukes!" he cried, making a fist to show his pugnacity. *pugnacious*, adj.

Pungent adj. stinging; sharp in taste or smell; caustic. The pungent odor of ripe Limburger cheese appealed to Simone but made Stanley gag.

Purse v. pucker; contract into wrinkles. Miss Watson pursed her lips to show her disapproval of Huck's bedraggled appearance.

Qualified adj. limited restricted. Unable to give the candidate full support, the major gave him only a qualified endorsement. (secondary meaning)

Quandary n. dilemma. When both Harvard and Stanford accepted Laura, she was in a quandary as to which school she should attend.

Quell v. extinguish; put down; quiet. Miss Minchin's demeanor was so stern and forbidding that she could quell any unrest among her students with one intimidating glance.

Querulous adj. fretful; whining. Even the most agreeable toddlers can begin to act querulous if they miss their nap.

Word List 64

Quiescent adj. at rest; dormant; temporarily inactive. After the great eruption, fear of Mount Etna was great; people did not return to cultivate its rich hillside lands until the volcano had been quiescent for a full two years

Ramble v. wander aimlessly (physically or mentally). Listening to the teacher ramble, Judy wondered whether he'd ever make his point.

Rancor n. bitterness; hatred. Let us forget our rancor and join together in a new spirit of friendship and cooperation.

Rant v. rave; talk excitedly; scold; make a grandiloquent speech. When he heard that I'd totaled the family car, Dad began to rant at me like a complete madman.

Ratify v. approve formally; verify. Before the treaty could go into effect, it had to be ratified by the president.

Raucous adj. harsh and shrill; disorderly and boisterous. The raucous crowd of new Year's Eve revelers got progressively noisier as midnight drew near.

Raze v. destroy completely. Spelling is important: to raise a building is to put it up; to raze a building is to tear it down.

Rebuttal n. refutation; response with contrary evidence. The defense lawyer confidently listened to the prosecutor sum up his case, sure that she could answer his arguments in her rebuttal.

Recalcitrant adj. obstinately stubborn; determined to resist authority; unruly. Which animal do you think is more recalcitrant, a pig or a mule?

Recant v. disclaim or disavow; retract a previous statement; openly confess error. Those who can, keep true to their faith; those who can't, recant.

Word List 65

Receptive adj. quick or willing to receive ideas, suggestions, etc. Adventure-loving Huck Finn proved a receptive audience for Tom's tales of buried treasure and piracy.

Recluse n. hermit; loner. Disappointed in love, Miss Emily became a recluse; she shut herself away in her empty mansion and refused to see another living soul. *reclusive*, adj.

Recount v. narrate or tell; count over again. A born storyteller, my father loved to recount anecdotes about his early years in New York.

Rectify v. set right; correct. you had better send a check to rectify your account before American Express cancels your credit card.

Redundant adj. Superfluous; repetitious; excessively wordy. In your essay, you unnecessarily repeat several points; try to be less redundant in future. *redundancy*, n.

Refute v. disprove. The defense called several respectable witnesses who were able to refute the false testimony of the prosecution's sole witness.

Relegate v. banish to an inferior position; delegate; assign. After Ralph dropped his second tray of drinks that week, the manager swiftly relegated him to a minor post cleaning up behind the bar.

Relevant adj. pertinent; referring to the case in hand. How relevant Virginia Woolf's essays are to women writers today! It's as if Woolf in the 1930s foresaw their current literary struggles. relevance, n. relevancy, n.

Relinquish v. give up something with reluctance; yield Denise never realized how hard it would be for her to relinquish her newborn son to the care of his adoptive parents.

Relish v. savor; enjoy. Watching Peter enthusiastically chow down, I thought, "Now there's a man who relishes a good dinner!" also n.

Word List 66

Remorse n. guilt; self-reproach. The murderer felt no remorse for his crime.

Renegade n. deserter; traitor. Because he had abandoned his post and joined forces with the Indians, his fellow officers considered the hero of *Dancing with Wolves* a renegade.

Renounce v. forswear; repudiate; abandon; discontinue. Joan of Arc refused to renounce her testimony even though she knew she would be burned at the stake as a witch.

Repel v. drive away; disgust. At first, the Beast's ferocious appearance repelled Beauty, but she came to love the tender heart hidden behind that beastly exterior.

Replete adj. filled to the brim or to the point of being stuffed; abundantly supplied. The movie star's memoir was replete with juicy details about the love life of half of Hollywood.

Reprehensible adj. deserving blame. Shocked by the viciousness of the bombing, politicians of every party uniformly condemned the terrorists' reprehensible deed.

Repress v. restrain; hold back; crush; suppress. Anne's parents tried to curb her impetuosity without repressing her boundless high spirits.

Reprimand v. reprove severely; rebuke. Every time Ermengarde made a mistake in class, she was afraid that Miss Minchin would reprimand

her and tell her father how badly she was doing in school. also n.

Reproach v. express disapproval. He never could do anything wrong without imagining how the look on his mother's face would reproach him afterwards. also n. reproachful, adj.

Reprove v. censure; rebuke. The principle severely reprovved the students whenever they talked in the halls.

Word List 67

Repudiate v. disown; disavow. On separating from Yong, Tina announced that she would repudiate all debts incurred by her soon-to-be ex-husband.

Rescind v. cancel. Because of the public outcry against the new taxes, the senator proposed a bill to rescind the unpopular financial measure.

Reserve n. self-control; formal but distant manner. Although some girls were attracted by Mark's air of reserve, Judy was put off by it, for she felt his aloofness indicated a lack of openness. reserved, adj.

Resigned adj. unresisting; patiently submissive. Resigned to his downtrodden existence, Bob Cratchit was too meek to protest Scrooge's bullying

Resolution n. determination; resolve. Nothing could shake his resolution that his children would get the best education that money could buy. resolute, adj.

Resolve n. determination; firmness of purpose. How dare you question my resolve to take up skydiving! Of course I haven't changed my mind!

Resolve v. decide; settle; solve. Holmes resolved to travel to Bohemia to resolve the dispute between Irene Adler and the king.

Respite n. interval of relief; time for rest; delay in punishment. After working nonstop on this project for three straight months, I need a respite!

Resplendent adj. dazzling; glorious; brilliant.

~~While all the adults were commenting how glorious the emperor looked in his resplendent new clothes, one little boy was heard to say, "But he's naked!"~~

Restraint n. controlling force; control over one's emotions. Amanda dreamed of living an independent life free of all parental restraints.

Word List 68

Reticent adj. reserved; uncommunicative; inclined to be silent. Fearing his competitors might get advance word about his plans from talkative staff members, Hughes preferred reticent employees to loquacious ones.
reticence, n.

Retiring adj. modest; shy. Given Susan's retiring personality, no one expected her to take up public speaking; surprisingly enough, she became a star of the school debate team.

Retract v. withdraw; take back. When I saw how Fred and his fraternity brothers had trashed the frat house, I decided to retract my offer to let them use our summer cottage for the weekend.
retraction, n.

Reverent adj. respectful. The young acolyte's reverent attitude was appropriate in a house of worship.

Rhetorical adj. pertaining to effective communication; insincere in language. To win his audience, the speaker used every rhetorical trick in the book.

Rigorous adj. severe; harsh; demanding; exact. Disliked by his superiors, the officer candidate in *An Officer and a Gentleman* went through an extremely rigorous training program.

Robust adj. vigorous; strong. After pumping iron and taking karate for six months, the little old lady was far more robust in health and could break a plank with her fist.

Rudimentary adj. not developed; elementary; crude. Although my grandmother's English vocabulary was limited to a few rudimentary phrases, she always could make herself understood.

Ruthless adj. pitiless; cruel. Captain Hook was a dangerous, ruthless villain who would stop at nothing to destroy Peter Pan.

Sagacious adj. perceptive; shrewd; having insight. Mr. Bond, that was not a particularly sagacious move on your part. I had not expected such a foolish trick from a smart fellow like you.
sagacity, n.

Word List 69

Sage n. person celebrated for wisdom. Hearing tales of a mysterious Master of All Knowledge who lived in the hills of Tibet Sandy was possessed with a burning desire to consult the legendary sage. also adj.

Sanction v. approve; ratify. Nothing will convince me to sanction the engagement of my daughter to such a worthless young man.

Sanctuary n. refuge; shelter; shrine; holy place. The tiny attic was Helen's sanctuary to which she fled when she had to get away from the rest of her family

Sarcasm n. scornful remarks; stinging rebuke. Though Ralph tried to ignore the mocking comments of his supposed friends, their sarcasm wounded him deeply.

Satirical adj. mocking. The humor of cartoonist Gary Grudeau often is satirical; through the comments of the Doonesbury characters, Trudeau ridicules political corruption and folly.

Saturate v. soak thoroughly. Saturate your sponge with water until it can't hold any more.

Savory adj. tasty; pleasing, attractive, or agreeable. Julia Child's recipes enable amateur chefs to create savory delicacies for their guests.

Scanty adj. conscientious; extremely thorough. I'm very happy to recommend Adam as an employee because he's always been highly scrupulous about doing a good job whenever he's worked for me.

Scrutinize v. examine closely and critically. Searching for flaws, the sergeant scrutinized every detail of the private's uniform.

Word List 70

Seclusion n. isolation; solitude. One moment she loved crowds; the next, she sought seclusion. secluded, adj.

Sectarian adj. relating to a religious faction or subgroup; narrow-minded; limited. Far from being broad-minded, the religious leader was intolerant of new ideas, paying attention only to purely sectarian interests. sect, n

Sedentary adj. requiring sitting. Disliking the effect of her sedentary occupation on her figure, Stacy decided to work out at the gym every other day.

Sequester v. isolate; retire from public life; segregate; seclude. Banished from his kingdom, the wizard Prospero sequestered himself on a desert island.

Serenity n. calmness; placidity. The sound of air raid sirens pierced the serenity of the quiet village of Pearl Harbor.

Servile adj. slavishly submissive; fawning; cringing. Constantly fawning on his employer, Uriah Heep was a servile creature.

Sever v. cut; separate. The released prisoner wanted to begin a new life and sever all connections with his criminal past. severance, n.

Severity n. harshness; intensity; austerity; rigidity. The newspaper editorials disapproved of the severity of the sentence.

Shrewd adj. clever; astute. A shrewd investor, he took clever advantage of the fluctuations of the stock market.

Singular adj. unique; extraordinary; odd. Though the young man tried to understand Father William's singular behavior, he still found it odd that the old man incessantly stood on his head. singularity, n.

Word List 71

Skeptical adj. doubting; suspending judgment until one has examined the evidence supporting a point of view. I am skeptical about the new health plan; I want some proof that it can work. skepticism, n.

Slacken v. slow up; loosen. As they passed the finish line, the runners slackened their pace.

Slander n. defamation; utterance of false and malicious statements considering the negative comments politicians make about each other, it's a wonder that more of them aren't sued for slander. also v.

Slothful adj. lazy. The British word "layabout" is a splendid descriptive term for someone slothful: What did the lazy bum do? He laid about the house all day. Sloth, n.

Sluggish adj. slow; lazy; lethargic. After two nights without sleep, she felt sluggish and incapable of exertion.

Solemnity n. seriousness; gravity. The minister was concerned that nothing should disturb the solemnity of the marriage service.

Solicit v. request earnestly; seek. Knowing she needed to have a solid majority for the budget to pass, the mayor telephoned all the members of the city council to solicit their votes.

Solitude n. state of being alone; seclusion. Much depends on how much you like your own company. What to one person seems fearful isolation, to another is blessed solitude.

Soluble adj. able to be dissolved; able to be explained. Sherlock Holmes took the soluble powder and dissolved it into a seven percent solution.

Somber adj. gloomy; depressing; dark; drab. From the doctor's grim expression, I could tell he had somber news.

Word List 72

Sparse adj. not thick; thinly scattered; scanty. He had moved from the densely populated city to the remote countryside where the population was sparse.

Spendthrift n. someone who wastes money. Easy access to credit encourages people to turn into spendthrifts who shop till they drop.

Spontaneity n. lack of premeditation; naturalness; freedom from constraint. When Betty and Amy met, Amy impulsively hugged her roommate-to-be, but Betty drew back, unprepared for such spontaneity.

Spontaneous, adj.

Sporadic adj. occurring irregularly. Although you can still hear sporadic outbursts of laughter and singing outside, the big Halloween parade has passed; the party's over till next year.

Spurious adj. false; counterfeit. Unaccustomed to the design of the new hundred-dollar bills, many storekeepers rejected them as spurious.

Spurn v. reject; scorn. The heroine spurned the villain's advances.

Squalor n. filth; degradation; dirty, neglected state. Rusted, broken-down cars in the yard, trash piled up on the porch, tar paper peeling from the roof, the shack was the picture of squalor.

Squander v. waste. If you squander your allowance on candy and comic books, you won't have any money left to buy the new box of crayons you want.

Stagnant adj. motionless; stale; dull.

Mosquitoes commonly breed in ponds of stagnant water. Stagnate, v.

Stanza n. division of a poem. DO you know the last stanza of "The Star-Spangled Banner"?

Word List 73

Static adj. unchanging; lacking development.

Nothing had changed at home; life was static.

Stasis, n.

Steadfast adj. loyal; unswerving. Penelope was steadfast in her affections, faithfully waiting for Ulysses to return from his wanderings.

Stoic adj. impassive; unmoved by joy or grief. I wasn't particularly stoic when I had my flu shot. I squealed like a stuck pig. Also n.

Strident adj. loud and harsh; insistent. We could barely hear the speaker over the strident cries of the hecklers.

Strut n. pompous walk; swagger. Colonel Blimp's strut as he marched about the parade ground revealed him for what he was: a pompous buffoon. Also v.

Stupefy v. make numb; stun; amaze.

Disapproving of drugs in general, Laura refused to take sleeping pills or any other medicine that might stupefy her.

Subdued adj. less intense; quieter. In the hospital visitors spoke in a subdued tone of voice for fear of disturbing the patients.

Submissive adj. yielding; timid. Crushed by his authoritarian father, Will had no defiance left in him; he was totally submissive in the face of authority.

Subordinate adj. occupying a lower rank; inferior; submissive. Bishop Proudie's wife expected all the subordinate clergy to behave with great deference to the wife of their superior. Also n., v.

Subside v. settle down; descend; grow quiet. The doctor assured us that the fever would eventually subside.

Word List 74

Substantial adj. ample; solid. The scholarship represented a substantial sum of money.

Substantiate v. establish by evidence; verify; support. These endorsements from satisfied customers substantiate our claim that Barron's *How to Prepare for the SAT* is the best SAT-prep book on the market.

Subtlety n. perceptiveness; ingenuity; delicacy. Never obvious, she expressed herself with such subtlety that her remarks went right over the heads of most of her audience. Subtle, adj.

Succinct adj. brief; terse; compact. Don't bore your audience with excess verbiage: be succinct.

Supercilious adj. arrogant; condescending; patronizing. The supercilious headwaiter sneered at customers who he thought did not fit in at a restaurant catering to an ultrafashionable crowd.

Superficial adj. trivial; shallow. Since your report gave only a superficial analysis of the problem, I cannot give you more than a passing grade.

Superfluous adj. excessive; overabundant; unnecessary. Please try not to include so many superfluous details in your report; just give me the facts. Superfluity, n.

Supplant v. replace; usurp. Did the other woman actually supplant Princess Diana in Prince Charles's affections, or did Charles never love Diana at all?

Suppress v. crush; subdue; inhibit. After the armed troops had suppressed the rebellion, the city was placed under martial law.

Surmount v. overcome. I know you can surmount any difficulties that may stand in the way of your getting an education.

Word List 75

Surpass v. exceed. Her SAT score has surpassed our expectations.

Surreptitious adj. secret; furtive; sneaky; hidden. Hoping to discover where his mom had hidden the Christmas presents, Timmy took a surreptitious peek into the master bedroom closet.

Susceptible adj. impressionable; easily influenced; having little resistance, as to a disease; receptive to. Said the patent medicine man to the extremely susceptible customer: "Buy this new miracle drug, and you will no longer be susceptible to the common cold."

Sustain v. experience; support; nourish. Stuart sustained such a severe injury that the doctors feared he would be unable to work to sustain his growing family.

Swindler n. cheat. She was gullible and trusting, an easy victim for the first swindler who came along.

Sycophant n. servile flatterer; bootlicker; yes man. Fed up with the toadies and brownnosers who made up his entourage, the star cried, "Get out, all of you! I'm sick to death of sycophants!"

Symmetry n. arrangement of parts so that balance is obtained; congruity. Something lopsided by definition lacks symmetry.

Taciturn adj. habitually silent; talking little. The stereotypical cowboy is a taciturn soul, answering lengthy questions with "Yep" or "Nope."

Taint v. contaminate; cause to lose purity; modify with a trace of something bad. Fighting to preserve her good name, Desdemona wondered what had occurred to taint her reputation. Also n.

Tangential adj. peripheral; only slightly connected; digressing. Despite Clark's attempts to distract her with tangential remarks, Lois kept on coming back to her main question: why couldn't he come out to dinner with Superman and her?

Word List 76

Tangible adj. able to be touched; real; palpable. Although Tom did not own a house, he had several tangible assets – a car, a television, a PC – that he could sell if he needed cash.

Tantamount adj. equivalent in effect or value. Though Rudy claimed his wife was off visiting friends, his shriek of horror when she walked into the room was tantamount to a confession that he believed she was dead.

Tedious adj. boring; tiring. The repetitious nature of work on the assembly line made Martin's job very tedious. Tedium, n.

Temper v. moderate; tone down or restrain; toughen (steel). Not even her supervisor's grumpiness could temper Nancy's enthusiasm for her new job.

Tenacity n. firmness; persistence. Jean Valjean could not believe the tenacity of Inspector Javert. All Valjean had done was to steal a loaf of bread, and the inspector had pursued him doggedly for twenty years! Tenacious, adj.

Tentative adj. provisional; experimental; doubtful. Your tentative proposal sounds feasible; let me know when the final details are worked out.

Termination n. end. Because of the unexpected termination of his contract, he urgently needed a new job.

Terse adj. concise; abrupt; pithy. There is a fine line between speech that is terse and to the point and speech that is too abrupt.

Threadbare adj. worn through till the threads show; shabby and poor. The poor adjunct professor hid the threadbare spots on his jacket by sewing leather patches on his sleeves.

Thrive v. prosper; flourish. Despite the impact of the recession on the restaurant trade, Philip's café thrived.

Word List 77

Tirade n. extended scolding; denunciation; harangue. The cigar smoker went into a bitter tirade denouncing the antismoking forces that had succeeded in banning smoking from most planes and restaurants.

Torpor n. lethargy; sluggishness; dormancy. Throughout the winter, nothing aroused the bear from his torpor: he would not emerge from hibernation until spring.

Tractable adj. docile; easily managed. Although Susan seemed a tractable young woman, she had a stubborn streak of independence that occasionally led her to defy the powers that be when she felt they were in the wrong.



Tranquility n. calmness; peace. After the commotion and excitement of the city, I appreciate the tranquility of these fields and forests.

Transcendent adj. surpassing; exceeding ordinary limits; superior. For the amateur chef, dining at the four-star restaurant was a transcendent experience: the meal surpassed his wildest dreams.

Transient adj. momentary; temporary; staying for a short time. Lexy's joy at finding the perfect Christmas gift for Phil was transient; she still had to find presents for Roger, Laura, Allison and Uncle Bob.

Transparent adj. easily detected; permitting light to pass through freely. Bobby managed to put an innocent look on his face; to his mother, however, his guilt was transparent.

Trepidation n. fear; nervous apprehension. If you've never seen an SAT test, it's natural for you to feel some trepidation when you take the exam; if you're familiar with the test, however, you've got a much better chance of staying calm.

Trifling adj. trivial; unimportant. Why bother going to see a doctor for such a trifling, everyday cold?

Trite adj. hackneyed; commonplace. The trite and predictable situations in many television programs turn off many viewers, who respond by turning off their sets.

Word List 78

Trivial adj. unimportant; trifling. Too many magazines ignore newsworthy subjects and feature trivial affairs. Trivia, n.

Turbulence n. state of violent agitation. Warned of approaching turbulence in the atmosphere, the pilot told the passengers to fasten their seat belts.

Turmoil n. great commotion and confusion. Lydia running off with a soldier! Mother fainting at the news! The Bennet household was in turmoil.

Tyranny n. oppression; cruel government.

Frederick Douglass fought against the tyranny of slavery throughout his entire life.

Undermine v. weaken; sap. The recent corruption scandals have undermined many people's faith in the city government.

Uniformity n. sameness; monotony. After a while, the uniformity of TV situation comedies becomes boring. Uniform, adj.

Universal adj. characterizing or affecting all; present everywhere. At first, no one shared Christopher's opinions; his theory that the world was round was met with universal disdain.

Unkempt adj. disheveled; uncared for in appearance. Jeremy hated his neighbor's unkempt lawn: he thought its neglected appearance had a detrimental effect on neighborhood property values.

Unprecedented adj. novel; unparalleled. For a first novel, Margaret Mitchell's novel *Gone with the Wind* was an unprecedented success.

Unwarranted adj. unjustified; groundless; undeserved. We could not understand Martin's unwarranted rudeness to his mother's guests.

Word List 79

Usurp v. seize another's power or rank The revolution ended when the victorious rebel general succeeded in his attempt to usurp the throne.

Vacillate v. waver; fluctuate. Uncertain which suitor she ought to marry, the princess vacillated, saying now one, now the other. Vacillation, n.

Venerate v. revere. In Tibet today, the common people still venerate their traditional spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama.

Veracity n. truthfulness. Trying to prove Anita Hill a liar, Senator Specter repeatedly questioned her veracity.

Verbose adj. wordy We had to make some major cuts in Senator Foghorn's speech because it was far too verbose. Verbosity, n.

Viable adj. practical or workable; capable of maintaining life. The plan to build a new baseball stadium, though missing a few details, is viable and stands a good chance of winning popular support.

Vigor n. active strength. Although he was over seventy years old, Jack had the vigor of a man in his prime. Vigorous, adj.



Vilify v. slander. Waging a highly negative campaign, the candidate attempted to vilify his opponent's reputation.

Vindicate v. clear from blame; exonerate; justify or support. The lawyer's goal was to vindicate her client and prove him innocent on all charges. The critics' extremely favorable reviews vindicate my opinion that *The madness of King George* is a brilliant movie.

Vindictive adj. out for revenge; malicious.

Divorce sometimes brings out a vindictive streak in people; when Tony told Tina he was getting a divorce, she poured green Jello into his aquarium and turned his tropical fish into dessert.

Word List 80

Virtuoso n. highly skilled artist. The child prodigy Yehudi Menuhin grew into a virtuoso whose violin performances thrilled millions.

Virtuosity, n.

Virulent adj. extremely poisonous; hostile; bitter.

Laid up with an extremely virulent case of measles, he blamed his doctors because his recovery took so long. In fact, he became quite virulent on the subject of the quality of modern medical care. **Virulence**, n.

Volatile adj. changeable; explosive; evaporating rapidly. The political climate today is extremely volatile: no one can predict what the electorate will do next. Maria Callas's temper was extremely volatile: the only thing you could predict was that she would blow up. Acetone is an extremely volatile liquid: it evaporates instantly.

Voluble adj. fluent; glib; talkative. An excessively voluble speaker suffers from **logorrhea** he runs off at the mouth a lot!

Voluminous adj. bulky; large. Despite her family burdens, she kept up a voluminous correspondence with her friends.

Vulnerable adj. susceptible to wounds. His opponents could not harm Achilles, who was vulnerable only in his heel.

Whimsical adj. capricious; fanciful. He dismissed his generous gift to his college as a sentimental fancy, an old man's whimsical gesture.

Whimsy, n.

Willful adj. intentional; headstrong; stubbornly set on getting one's way. Donald had planned to kill his wife for months' clearly, her death was a case of deliberate, willful murder, not a crime of passion committed by a hasty, willful youth unable to foresee the consequences of his deeds.

Withhold v. refuse to give; hold back. The NCAA may withhold permission for academically underprepared athletes to participate in intercollegiate sports as freshmen.

Zealot n. fanatic; person who shows excessive zeal. Though Glenn was devout, he was no zealot; he never tried to force his beliefs on his friends.

