

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

A

abjure \ab-JUR\, transitive verb:

1. To renounce under oath.
2. To renounce or reject solemnly; to recant; to reject; repudiate.
3. To abstain from; to shun.

A few years earlier Galileo had been forced by the Inquisition to abjure, on his knees, his heretical views that the Earth moves around the Sun.

ablution \uh-BLOO-shun\, noun:

1. The act of washing or cleansing; specifically, the washing of the body, or some part of it (as in a religious rite).
2. The water used in cleansing.

Worshippers, who have performed their ablutions in the basement before entering the prayer hall, individually prepare themselves for participation in the communal worship.

abominate \uh-BOM-uh-nayt\, transitive verb:

To hate in the highest degree; to detest intensely; to loathe;
to abhor.

I had no wish to study or learn anything, and as for Latin,

I abominated it.

abscond \ab-SKOND\, intransitive verb:

To depart secretly; to steal away and hide oneself -- used
especially of persons who withdraw to avoid arrest or
prosecution.

abstemious \ab-STEE-mee-uhs\, adjective:

1. Sparing in eating and drinking; temperate; abstinent.
2. Sparingly used or consumed; used with temperance or moderation.
3. Marked by or spent in abstinence.

They were healthy and abstemious; their chief pleasure was reading and Oliver was a life member of the London Library.

accede \ak-SEED\, intransitive verb:

1. To agree or assent, as to a proposition, or to terms proposed by another.
2. To become a party, as to an agreement, treaty, convention, etc.
3. To attain, as to an office or rank; to enter upon the duties of an office.

Well, after much blustering and standing and sitting, he acceded to my demand.

acrid \AK-rid\, adjective:

1. Sharp and harsh, or bitter to the taste or smell; pungent.
2. Caustic in language or tone; bitter.

There was burning jet fuel everywhere. Acrid, black smoke billowed across the water.

acumen \uh-KYOO-muhn; AK-yuh-muhn\, noun: Quickness of perception or discernment; shrewdness shown by keen insight.

With Leo's rare combination of editorial acumen and business know-how, he might have become a publishing giant had he not permitted his drinking and gambling to hold him back.

adamant \AD-uh-muhnt\, adjective:

Not capable of being swayed by pleas, appeals, or reason; not

susceptible to persuasion; unyielding.

adventitious \ad-ven-TISH-uhs\, adjective:

1. Added extrinsically; not essentially inherent.
2. (Biology) Out of the proper or usual place; as, "adventitious buds or roots."

The snag is that the play's inflamed and adventitious topicality may distract people from the timelessness of

its deepest concerns.

aesthete \ES-theet\, noun:

One having or affecting great sensitivity to beauty, as in art or nature.

Beijing, with its stolid, square buildings and wide, straight roads, feels like the plan of a first-year

engineering student, while Shanghai's decorative architecture and snaking, narrow roads feel like the plan of an aesthete.

affable \AF-uh-buhl\, adjective:

1. Easy to speak to; receiving others kindly and conversing with them in a free and friendly manner.
2. Gracious; benign.

Nonetheless, in view of the fact that Leon stated in the warrant that I was good-looking, cheerful and affable, they exhorted me to make myself appear to be taciturn, melancholy and ugly.

afflatus \uh-FLAY-tuhs\, noun:

A divine imparting of knowledge; inspiration.

Whatever happened to passion and vision and the divine afflatus in poetry?

affray \uh-FRAY\, noun:

A tumultuous assault or quarrel; a brawl.

aggress \uh-GRES\, intransitive verb:

To commit the first act of hostility or offense; to make an attack.

Nagaraj can never bring himself to aggress or fight back, but he is capable of a delicious malice.

agitprop \AJ-it-prop\, noun:

Propaganda, especially pro-communist political propaganda disseminated through literature, drama, music, or art.

algorithm \AL-guh-RITH-uhm\, noun:

A step-by-step procedure for solving a problem in a finite number of steps that often involves repetition

of an operation.

The notion of an algorithm is basic to all of computer programming, so we should begin with a careful analysis

of this concept.

ameliorate \uh-MEEL-yuh-rayt\, transitive verb: To make better; to improve.

intransitive verb: To grow better.

anodyne \AN-uh-dyn\,

adjective: 1. Serving to relieve pain; soothing.

2. Not likely to offend; bland; innocuous.

noun:1. A medicine that relieves pain.

2. Anything that calms, comforts, or soothes disturbed feelings.

But for the most part the British charts were clogged with anodyne ballads.

aplomb \uh-PLOMM\,

noun: Assurance of manner or of action; self-possession; confidence; coolness.

Then, unexpectedly, she picked up a microphone and began to sing. She sang several songs, handling herself with the aplomb of a professional entertainer.

apogee \AP-uh-jee\, noun:

1. The point in the orbit of the moon or of an artificial satellite that is at the greatest distance from the center of the earth.
2. The farthest or highest point; culmination.

apostasy \uh-POS-tuh-see\, noun:

Total desertion or departure from one's faith, principles, or party.

Party loyalty was fierce, political apostasy despised, and breakaway movements and third parties rarely exercised more than temporary influence.

apparition \ap-uh-RISH-uhn\, noun:

1. A ghost; a specter; a phantom.
2. The thing appearing; the sudden or unexpected appearance of something or somebody.
3. The act of becoming visible; appearance.
4. (Astronomy) The first appearance of a star or other luminary after having been invisible or obscured; -- opposed to [1]occultation.

Boris staggers into the noblemen's council chamber, shouting at an apparition that only he can see.

apposite \AP-uh-zit\, adjective:

Being of striking appropriateness and relevance; very applicable; apt.

appurtenance \uh-PUR-tn-un(t)s\, noun:

1. An adjunct; an accessory; something added to another, more important thing.
2. [Plural]. Accessory objects; gear; apparatus.
3. [Law]. An incidental right attached to a principal property right for purposes such as passage of title, conveyance, or inheritance.

The inauguration of presidents, the coronation of monarchs, the celebration of national holidays--these events require everywhere the presence of the soldier as a "ceremonial appurtenance."

arrogate \AIR-uh-gayt\, transitive verb:

1. To claim or seize without right or justification; to appropriate.
2. To claim on behalf of another; to ascribe.

aspersion \uh-SPUR-zhuhn; -shuhn\, noun:

1. A damaging or derogatory remark; slander.
2. The act of defaming or slandering.
3. A sprinkling with water, especially in religious ceremonies.

asseverate \uh-SEV-uh-rayt\, transitive verb:

To affirm or declare positively or earnestly.

"But of course it is!" asseverates Herman Woodlife.

assiduous \uh-SIJ-oo-uhs\, adjective:

1. Constant in application or attention; devoted; attentive.

2. Performed with constant diligence or attention; unremitting; persistent; as, "assiduous labor."

"I can scarcely find time to write you even a Love Letter," Samuel Adams, an assiduous committeeman, wrote his wife in early 1776.

atelier \at-l-YAY\, noun:

A workshop; a studio.

A garage in [1]Montparnasse served as Leo's atelier, and there he labored on his huge [2]trptychs, mixing

his paints in buckets and applying them with a kitchen mop.

auspicious \aw-SPISH-uhs\, adjective:

1. Giving promise of success, prosperity, or happiness;

predicting good; as, "an auspicious beginning."

2. Prosperous; fortunate; as, "auspicious years."

But as Saturday fell on a very auspicious day in the Chinese calendar, every hotel in Nanjing was booked for weddings.

autochthonous \aw-TOCK-thuh-nuhs\, adjective:

1. Aboriginal; indigenous; native.

2. Formed or originating in the place where found.

For cultures are not monoliths. They are fragmentary,

patchworks of autochthonous and foreign elements.

autocrat \AW-tuh-krat\, noun:

An absolute monarch who rules with unlimited authority; by extension, any person with undisputed authority in a relationship or situation.

Octavian -- a bloodthirsty ideologue in the civil wars --was by then well on his way to reinventing himself as Rome's benevolent autocrat, its first (and almost only)'good' Emperor, Augustus.

autodidact \aw-toh-DY-dakt\, noun: One who is self-taught.

He is our ultimate autodidact, a man who made himself from nothing into a lawyer, a legislator -- a president.

aver \uh-VUR\,transitive verb

[Inflected forms: averred; averring]:

1. To affirm with confidence; to declare in a positive manner, as in confidence of asserting the truth.

2. (Law) To assert, claim, or declare as a fact.

Between us and the bottom of the sea was less than an inch of wood. And yet, I aver it, and I aver it

again, I was unafraid.

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B

badinage \bad-n-AHZH\, noun:

Light, playful talk; banter.

Ken was determined to put the cares of the world behind him and do what he loved best -- having a few celebrity friends round and enjoying an evening of anecdote and badinage over a bottle or two of vintage bubbly and some tasty cheese straws.

bagatelle \bag-uh-TEL\, noun:

1. A trifle; a thing of little or no importance.
2. A short, light musical or literary piece.
3. A game played with a cue and balls on an oblong table having cups or arches at one end.

Don't worry about that, a mere bagatelle, old boy!

bedizen \bih-DY-zuhn\, transitive verb:

To dress or adorn in gaudy manner.

beholden \bih-HOHL-duhn\, adjective:

Obliged; bound in gratitude; indebted.

bellwether \BEL-wether\, noun:

1. A wether, or sheep, which leads the flock, with a bell on his neck.
2. Hence: A leader of a movement or activity.

"Men are for the most part like sheep, who always follow the bell-wether." --Lewes

beneficence \buh-NEFF-i-suhns\, noun:

The practice of doing good; active goodness, kindness, or charity; bounty springing from purity and goodness.

Lord Jeffrey told Dickens that it [A Christmas Carol] had "prompted more positive acts of beneficence than

can be traced to all the pulpits and confessionals in Christendom since Christmas 1842."

benignant \bih-NIG-nuhnt\, adjective:

1. Kind; gracious.
2. Beneficial; favorable.

After the captain and ladies had sat down, the autocratic steward rang a second bell, and with a majestic wave of the hand, and a calm, benignant smile, signified his pleasure that we should sit down.

berate \bih-RAYT\, transitive verb:

To scold severely or angrily

She tells of Mr. Hauptmann's great joy when they had a baby son, and of the times she ran up the stairs to berate him for playing the mandolin after the baby was asleep and found him playing the Brahms Lullaby as the baby looked on approvingly.

bete noire \bet-NWAHR\, noun: Something or someone particularly detested or avoided; a bugbear.

Even more regrettable, as far as Dame Edna is concerned, is the presence of her old bete noire, the extravagantly disgusting Sir Les Patterson.

bilious \BIL-yuhs\, adjective:

1. Of or pertaining to bile.
2. Marked by an excess secretion of bile.
3. Pertaining to, characterized by, or affected by gastric

distress caused by a disorder of the liver.

4. Appearing as if affected by such a disorder.

5. Resembling bile, especially in color.

6. Of a peevish disposition; ill-tempered.

Most arresting of all, his normally gray elephant hide has changed to a bilious shade of green.

billingsgate \BIL-ingz-gayt; -git\, noun: Coarsely abusive, foul, or profane language.

Chaney would yell at him in his own particular patois -- an unapologetic stream of billingsgate far more creative than Marine drill instructors or master rappers.

bivouac \BIV-wak, BIV-uh-wak\, noun:

An encampment for the night, usually under little or no shelter.

intransitive verb:

To encamp for the night, usually under little or no shelter.

Rob had made his emergency bivouac just below the South Summit.

blandishment \BLAN-dish-muhnt\, noun:

Speech or action that flatters and tends to coax, entice, or persuade; allurement -- often used in the plural.

bombinate \BOM-buh-nayt\, intransitive verb:

To buzz; to hum; to drone.

He is often drunk. His head hurts. Snatches of conversation, remembered precepts, prefigured cries of terror bombinate about his skull.

bonhomie \bah-nuh-MEE\, noun:

Good nature; pleasant and easy manner.

That bonhomie which won the hearts of all who knew him.

booboisie \boob-wah-ZEE\, noun:

A class of people regarded as stupid or foolish.

Until then, he'd dismissed Hollywood as a purveyor of machine-made fodder for the booboisie, but he found,

much

to his surprise, that the movies weren't nearly as bad as he'd claimed.

bootless \BOOT-lis\, adjective: Unavailing; useless; without advantage or benefit.

I have seen a swan With bootless labour swim against the tide.

boulevardier \boo-luh-var-DYAY; bul-uh-\, noun:

1. A frequenter of city boulevards, especially in Paris.
2. A sophisticated, worldly, and socially active man; a man who frequents fashionable places; a man-about-town.

Oswald, whose idea of excitement is breakfasting with a penguin, is a boulevardier: Hat cocked precariously on his head, he saunters out into the sunny city.

bouleversement \bool-vair-suh-MAWN\, noun: Complete overthrow; a reversal; a turning upside down.

For the second time in his life Amory had had a complete bouleversement and was hurrying into line with his generation.

bowdlerize \BODE-luh-rise; BOWD-\, transitive verb:

1. To remove or modify the parts (of a book, for example) considered offensive.
2. To modify, as by shortening, simplifying, or distorting in style or content.

The president did not call for bowdlerizing all entertainment, but stressed keeping unsuitable material away from the eyes of children.

bravado \bruh-VAH-doh\, noun plural bravados or bravadoes \bruh-VAH-dohz\A real or pretended show of courage or boldness.

While the popular mood in Belgrade remains defiant, unease beneath the bravado is growing.

brio \BREE-oh\, noun: Enthusiastic vigor; vivacity; liveliness; spirit.

Though my judgment was no doubt affected by all the wine we'd consumed, I remember being elated by our performance that night: our inspired spur-of-the-moment dialogue, the actors fleshing out their roles with such brio.

Brobdingnagian \brob-ding-NAG-ee-uhn\, adjective:

Of extraordinary size; gigantic; enormous.

The venture capital business has a size problem. A monstrous, staggering, stupefying one. Brobdingnagian even.

busker \BUS-kur\, noun:

A person who entertains (as by playing music) in public places.

Jakub is a student of mathematics, a likable but callow young man who seduces a blind busker, Alzbeta, who plays for the tourists in modern Prague.

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C

cadre \KAD-ree; -ray; KAH-dray; -druh\, noun:

1. A core or nucleus of trained or otherwise qualified personnel around which an organization is formed.
2. A tightly knit and trained group of dedicated members active in promoting the interests of a revolutionary party.
3. A member of such a group.
4. A framework upon which a larger entity can be built; a scheme.

Trained cadres flowed across the porous border and down the blossoming supply trail through eastern

Laos (the Ho Chi Minh Trail).

caesura \sih-ZHUR-uh; -ZUR-\, noun;

plural caesuras or caesurae \sih-ZHUR-ee; -ZUR-ee\:

1. A break or pause in a line of verse, usually occurring in the middle of a line, and indicated in scanning by a double vertical line; for example, "The proper study || of mankind is man" [Alexander Pope, An Essay on Man].
2. Any break, pause, or interruption.

After an inconclusive day spent discussing the caesura of "Sonnet"'s opening line, Luke and his colleagues went for cocktails at Strabismus.

callow \KAL-oh\, adjective:

Immature; lacking adult perception, experience, or judgment.

Those who in later years did me harm I describe as I knew them then, and I beg any reader to remember that,

although I was hardly callow, I was not yet wise in the ways of the world.

camarilla \kam-uh-RIL-uh; -REE-yuh\, noun:

A group of secret and often scheming advisers, as of a king; a cabal or clique.

Mr Kiselev likened Yeltsin's entourage to a "camarilla"..

canorous \kuh-NOR-us; KAN-or-uhs\, adjective:

Richly melodious; pleasant sounding; musical.

I felt a deep contentment listening to the meadowlark's complex melody as he sat on his bragging post calling for a mate, and the soft canorous whistle of the bobwhite as he whistled his name with intermittent lulls.

capacious \kuh-PAY-shuhs\, adjective:

Able to contain much; roomy; spacious.

Litter was picked up non stop during the week (mostly by that nice governor with the capacious pockets).

captious \KAP-shuhs\, adjective:

1. Marked by a disposition to find fault or raise objections.
2. Calculated to entrap or confuse, as in an argument.

The most common among those are captious individuals who can find nothing wrong with their own

actions but everything wrong with the actions of everybody else.

carapace \KAIR-uh-pace\, noun:

1. The thick shell that covers the back of the turtle, the crab, and other animals.
2. Something likened to a shell that serves to protect or isolate from external influence.

. . . a gauge for measuring the length of a lobster's carapace from the thorax to the eye socket.

castigate \KAS-tuh-gayt\, transitive verb:

To punish severely; also, to chastise verbally; to rebuke; to criticize severely.

It was not good enough to castigate him for his sins.

cavalcade \kav-uhl-KAYD; KAV-uhl-kayd\, noun:

1. A procession of riders or horse-drawn carriages.
2. Any procession.
3. A sequence; a series.

cavil \KAV-uhl\, intransitive verb:

To raise trivial or frivolous objections; to find fault without good reason.

transitive verb:

To raise trivial objections to.

noun:

A trivial or frivolous objection.

Insiders with their own strong views, after all, tend to cavil about competing ideas and stories they consider less than comprehensive.

celerity \suh-LAIR-uh-tee\, noun:

Rapidity of motion or action; quickness; swiftness.

ensorious \sen-SOR-ee-uhs\, adjective:

1. Tending to blame, condemn, or criticize; harshly critical.
2. Implying or expressing harsh criticism or disapproval; as, "ensorious remarks."

Another factor is the morally censorious climate in which we live -- a climate that is intolerant of eccentricity, waywardness and general lack of perfection.

chagrin \shuh-GRIN\, noun: Acute vexation, annoyance, or embarrassment, arising from disappointment or failure.

transitive verb: To unsettle or vex by disappointment or humiliation; to mortify.

He ran away to the recruiting office at Ottumwa, a river port where Union soldiers were transported east--how he got to the town, a good half-day journey by wagon, isn't clear--and to his chagrin, he found his father waiting there.

chary \CHAIR-ee\, adjective:

1. Wary; cautious.

2. Not giving or expending freely; sparing.

What do you suppose the Founding Fathers, so chary of overweening government power, would make of a prosecutor with virtually unlimited reach and a staff the size of a small town?

chicanery \shih-KAY-nuh-ree\, noun:

1. The use of trickery or sophistry to deceive (as in matters of law).

2. A trick; a subterfuge.

Wordsworth's paternal grandfather, Richard, had first come to Westmorland from South Yorkshire in 1700, to recoup his fortunes with the then baron Lonsdale, having been done out of his fortune by his own guardian's chicanery.

chimerical \ky-MER-ih-kuhl; -MIR-; kih-\, adjective:

1. Merely imaginary; produced by or as if by a wildly fanciful imagination; fantastic; improbable or unrealistic.

2. Given to or indulging in unrealistic fantasies or fantastic schemes.

But those risks are real, not chimerical.

chthonic (THONE-ik), adjective: dwelling in or under the earth; also, pertaining to the underworld

"Driven by dæmonic, chthonic Powers." --T.S. Eliot

circumambient \sur-kuhm-AM-bee-uhnt\, adjective:

Surrounding; being on all sides; encompassing.

The self owes its form and perhaps its very existence to the circumambient social order.

Facing reality, then, implies accepting one's essential powerlessness, yielding or adjusting to circumambient forces, taking solace in some local pattern or order that one has created and to which one has

become habituated.

circumlocution \sir-kum-lo-KYOO-shun\, noun:

The use of many words to express an idea that might be expressed by few; indirect or roundabout language; a [1]periphrase.

Dickens gave us the classic picture of official heartlessness: the government Circumlocution Office, burial ground of hope in "Little Dorrit."

circumspect \SUR-kuhm-spekt\, adjective:

Marked by attention to all circumstances and probable consequences; cautious; prudent.

When the evidence is plentiful and the theories well confirmed, we can be more confident of the historical scenarios we propose; when theories are weak or evidence scarce, we ought to be more circumspect.

claque \KLACK\, noun:

1. A group hired to applaud at a performance.
2. A group of fawning admirers.

clarion \KLAIR-ee-uhn\, noun:

1. A kind of trumpet having a clear and shrill note.
2. The sound of this instrument or a sound similar to it.

adjective: Sounding like the clarion; loud and clear.

His voice and laugh, which perpetually re-echoed through the Custom-House, had nothing of the tremulous

quaver and cackle of an old man's utterance; they came strutting out of his lungs, like the crow of a cock, or

the blast of a clarion.

clemency \KLEM-uhn-see/, noun:

1. Disposition to forgive and spare, as offenders; mercy.
2. An act or instance of mercy or leniency.
3. Mildness, especially of weather.

He put in a strong plea for clemency, begging the king to spare the alchemist's life.

coeval \koh-EE-vuhl/, adjective:

Of the same age; originating or existing during the same period of time -- usually followed by 'with'.

noun: One of the same age; a contemporary.

According to John Paul, this longing for transcendent truth is coeval with human existence: All men and women "shape a comprehensive vision and an answer to the question of life's meaning."

cogent \KOH-juhnt/, adjective:

Having the power to compel conviction; appealing to the mind or to reason; convincing.

One woman, Adrian Pomerantz, was so intelligent that the professors always lit up when Adrian spoke; her

eloquent, cogent analyses forced them not to be lazy, not to repeat themselves.

cogitate \KOJ-uh-tayt\, intransitive verb: To think deeply or intently; to ponder; to meditate.

transitive verb: To think about; to ponder on; to meditate upon; to plan or plot.

Still cogitating and looking for an explanation in the fire.

collude \kuh-LOOD\, intransitive verb:

To act in concert; to conspire; to plot.

comestible \kuh-MES-tuh-buhl\, adjective: Suitable to be eaten; edible.

noun: Something suitable to be eaten; food.

I came to Adria's lab expecting subtle combinations and rare ingredients, the real outer limit of the comestible.

comity \KOM-uh-tee\, noun:

A state of mutual harmony, friendship, and respect, especially between or among nations or people; civility.

comity of nations, noun:

1. The courteous recognition by one nation of the laws and institutions of another.
2. The group of nations observing international comity.

In Athens last week, E.U. leaders offered a picture of comity as they formally signed accession treaties with 10 new members.

complaisant \kuhm-PLAY-suhnt; -zuhnt\, adjective:

Exhibiting a desire to please; obliging; compliant.

They evict the irascible artist and install a complaisant tenant.

comport \kum-PORT\, transitive verb:

To conduct or behave (oneself) in a particular manner.

intransitive verb: To be fitting; to accord; to agree -- usually followed by 'with'.

compunction \kuhm-PUHNK-shuhn\, noun:

1. Anxiety or deep unease proceeding from a sense of guilt or consciousness of causing pain.
2. A sting of conscience or a twinge of uneasiness; a qualm; a scruple.

Not only were tears one means of prayer, according to Benedict, they were the only pure form: "We must know that God regards our purity of heart and tears of compunction, not our many words."

concatenation \kon-kat-uh-NAY-shuhn; kuhn-\, noun: A series of links united; a series or order of things depending on each other, as if linked together; a chain, a succession.

But at this stage the accident appears to have been just that, a dreadful concatenation of random events.

concomitant \kuhn-KOM-uh-tuhnt\, adjective:

Accompanying; attendant; occurring or existing concurrently.

noun: Something that accompanies or is collaterally connected with something else; an accompaniment.

For a filmmaker so obsessed with these issues, it is a sad irony that his fear of things going wrong--and his concomitant mania for clockwork control--should have been a major reason for the failure of... his final film.

condign \kuhn-DINE; KON-dine\, adjective:

Suitable to the fault or crime; deserved; adequate.

In a story as old as the Greeks, overweening pride brought condign disaster.

conflate \kuhn-FLAYT\, transitive verb:

1. To bring together; to fuse together; to join or meld.
2. To combine (as two readings of a text) into one whole.

Scott Reynolds's creepy debut feature [film] conflates the present and the past with ingenious use of flashbacks.

confrere \KON-frair\, noun:

A fellow member of a fraternity or profession; a colleague; a comrade; an intimate associate.

At Father Kilmartin's death the book was left unfinished (a sign of the times: not in manuscript, but on his laptop); and the arduous but also extremely delicate task of putting it into publishable condition was carried out by his Jesuit confrere, Robert J. Daly.

confute \kuhn-FYOOT\, transitive verb:

To overwhelm by argument; to refute conclusively; to prove or show to be false.

Having settled in Rome in 1486, he proposed 900 theses and challenged any scholar to confute them, agreeing to pay his expenses.

consanguineous \kon-san(g)-GWIN-ee-us\, adjective:

Of the same blood; related by birth; descended from the same parent or ancestor.

These Neolithic people practiced agriculture in a settled communal life and are widely supposed to have had consanguineous clans as their basic social grouping.

conspectus \kuhn-SPEK-tuhs\, noun:

1. A general sketch or survey of a subject.
2. A synopsis; an outline.

Eagerly the Austen family went at their productions, choosing plays that represented, as Gay says, a conspectus of late 18th-century fashionable comic theatre.

contemporaneous \kuhn-tem-puh-RAY-nee-uhs\, adjective: Originating, existing, or occurring at the same time.

The best sources for a historian are those that provide a contemporaneous account of the events under scrutiny.

contradistinction \kon-truh-dis-TINK-shuhn\,

noun: Distinction by contrast; as, "sculpture in contradistinction to painting." In the quarter-century since "[1]Gravity's Rainbow," American novelists

have increasingly fixed their boldest inventions in the past, usually their own

early years or a time long before they were born -- in contradistinction to postwar writers who

vigorously peeled away World War II and the social fabric of the 1950's.

contravene \kon-truh-VEEN\, transitive verb:

1. To act or be counter to; to violate.
2. To oppose in argument; to contradict.

conurbation \kon-uhr-BAY-shuhn\, noun:

An aggregation or continuous network of urban communities.

To live there in that great smoking conurbation rumbling with the constant thunder of locomotives, filled with the moaning of train whistles coming down the Potomac Valley, was beyond my most fevered hopes.

convivial \kuhn-VIV-ee-uhl\, adjective: Of or relating to feasting, drinking, and good company; fond of festivity and good company; sociable.

Young Sam, steeped in the family's endless storytelling, confessions, musings about their aspirations, and bickering about politics, seemed destined to become happy and convivial.

corroborate \kuh-RAHB-uh-RAYT\, transitive verb:

To strengthen or make more certain with other evidence.

Whenever I can, I interview family and friends extensively both to corroborate the history given me by the defendant and to gain insight into his behavior and personality.

coruscate \KOR-uh-skayt\, intransitive verb:

1. To give off or reflect bright beams or flashes of light; to sparkle.
2. To exhibit brilliant, sparkling technique or style.

They pulled up at the farthest end of a loop path that looked out over the great basin of the Rio Grande

under brilliant, coruscating stars.

cosset \KOSS-it\, transitive verb:

To treat as a pet; to treat with excessive indulgence; to

pamper.

countervail \kown-tur-VAYL\, transitive verb:

1. To act against with equal force, power, or effect; to counteract.
2. To compensate for; to offset; to furnish or serve as an equivalent to.

cupidity \kyoo-PID-uh-tee\, noun: Eager or excessive desire, especially for wealth; greed; avarice.

Curiosity was a form of lust, a wandering cupidity of the eye and the mind.

cursory \KUR-suh-ree\, adjective: Hastily or superficially performed.

In a time when most college coeds had strict curfews, Bennington students had none, and only a cursory morning check to make sure that we were alive and in our beds.

crepuscular \kri-PUS-kyuh-lur\, adjective:

1. Pertaining to twilight; glimmering; hence, imperfectly clear or luminous.
2. (Zoology) Flying in the twilight or evening, or before sunrise; -- said certain birds and insects.

A faint crepuscular light extending beyond the cusps of the planet.

cynosure \SY-nuh-shoor; SIN-uh-shoor\, noun:

1. Anything to which attention is strongly turned; a center of attraction.
2. That which serves to guide or direct.

3. [Capitalized]. The northern constellation Ursa Minor, which contains the North Star; also, the North Star itself.

The monarch, at the apex of court power and centre of its ritual, and the greatest patron of the arts, was the cynosure of this culture, standing (or, more usually, sitting) at the centre of a system of artistic practice intended to represent his or her sacred omnipotence and monopoly of power.

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D

daedal \DEE-duhl\, adjective:

1. Complex or ingenious in form or function; intricate.
2. Skillful; artistic; ingenious.
3. Rich; adorned with many things.

Most Web-site designers realize that large image maps and daedal layouts are to be avoided, and the leading World Wide Web designers have reacted to users' objections to highly graphical, slow sites by using uncluttered, easy-to-use layouts.

deliquesce \del-ih-KWES\, intransitive verb:

1. To melt away or to disappear as if by melting.
2. (Chemistry) To dissolve gradually and become liquid by attracting and absorbing moisture from the air, as certain salts, acids, and alkalies.
3. To become fluid or soft with age, as certain fungi.
4. To form many small divisions or branches -- used especially of the veins of a leaf.

Now it's high summer, the very high point of the high season, and I've just struggled back from Santa Eulalia with the weekly shop, most of which has already deliquesced into an evil-smelling puddle in the back of the car.

demagogue \DEM-uh-gog\, noun:

1. A leader who obtains power by means of impassioned appeals to the emotions and prejudices of the populace.
2. A leader of the common people in ancient times.

deprecate \DEP-rih-kayt\, transitive verb:

1. [Archaic] To pray against, as an evil; to seek to avert by prayer.
2. To disapprove of strongly.
3. To belittle; to depreciate.

We experience such augmentations as pleasure, which may be why aesthetic values have always been deprecated by social moralists, from Plato through our current campus Puritans.

depredation \dep-ruh-DAY-shun\, noun:

1. An act of plundering or despoiling; a raid.
2. [Plural] Destructive operations; ravages.

... the depredations of pirates and privateers on the high seas.

deride \dih-RYD\, transitive verb:

To laugh at with contempt; to subject to ridicule or make sport of; to mock; to scoff at.

She was inclined to deride Mr. Hemingway's mania for firearms and thereby often hurt his feelings.

descant \DES-kant\, noun:

1. (Music) (a) A melody or counterpoint sung above the plain song of the tenor. (b) The upper voice in part music.

2. A discourse or discussion on a theme.

\DES-kant; des-KANT; dis-, intransitive verb:

1. (a) To sing or play a descant. (b) To sing.
2. To comment freely; to discourse at length.

[T]hese to their nests,

Were slunk, all but the wakeful nightingale;

She all night long her amorous descant sung.

descry \dih-SKRY\, transitive verb:

1. To catch sight of, especially something distant or obscure;
to discern.
2. To discover by observation; to detect.

On a clear day, if there was no sun, you could descry (but barely) the ships roving out at anchor in Herne Bay and count their masts.

desideratum \dih-sid-uh-RAY-tum; -RAH-\, noun; plural desiderata:

Something desired or considered necessary.

desuetude \DES-wih-tood, -tyood\, noun:

The cessation of use; discontinuance of practice or custom; disuse.

desultory \DES-uhl-tor-ee\, adjective:

1. Jumping or passing from one thing or subject to another without order or rational connection; disconnected; aimless.
2. By the way; as a digression; not connected with the subject.

3. Coming disconnectedly or occurring haphazardly; random.

4. Disappointing in performance or progress.

The shadows on the perfect lawn were straight and angular; they were the shadows of an old man sitting in a deep wicker-chair near the low table on which the tea had been served, and of two younger men strolling to and fro, in desultory talk, in front of him.

detritus \dih-TRY-tuhs\, noun; plural detritus:

1. Loose material that is worn away from rocks.

2. Hence, any fragments separated from the body to which they

belonged; any product of disintegration; debris.

diadem \DY-uh-dem\, noun:

1. A crown.

2. An ornamental headband worn (as by Eastern monarchs) as a badge of royalty.

3. Regal power; sovereignty; empire; -- considered as symbolized by the crown.

transitive verb: To adorn with a diadem; to crown.

On the far side of the cloister in the long, chapel-like room called the Treasure, she sits on her throne -- a small stiff gold figure robed in gold and covered with jewels and crowned with a golden diadem.

diaphanous \dy-AF-uh-nuhs\, adjective:

1. Of such fine texture as to allow light to pass through; translucent or transparent.

2. Vague; insubstantial.

The curtains are thin, a diaphanous membrane that can't quite contain the light outside.

diffident \DIF-uh-dunt; -dent\, adjective:

1. Lacking self-confidence; distrustful of one's own powers; timid; bashful.
2. Characterized by modest reserve; unassertive.

He lived naturally in a condition that many greater poets never had, or if they had it, were embarrassed or diffident about it: a total commitment to his own powers of invention, a complete loss of himself in his materials.

diktat \dik-TAHT\, noun:

1. A harsh settlement unilaterally imposed on a defeated party.
2. An authoritative decree or order.

Whether with the rapid reaction force or with the Bosnian government, the United States should vigorously support efforts to lift the siege of Sarajevo and help to piece back together a contiguous territory so that the Bosnian government can come to the bargaining table free of a Serbian diktat.

dilatory \DIL-uh-tor-ee\, adjective:

1. Tending to put off what ought to be done at once; given to procrastination.
2. Marked by procrastination or delay; intended to cause delay; -- said of actions or measures.

I am inclined to be dilatory, and if I had not enjoyed extraordinary luck in life and love I might have been living with my mother at that very moment, doing nothing.

disconcert \dis-kuhn-SURT\, transitive verb:

1. To disturb the composure of.
2. To throw into disorder or confusion; as, "the emperor disconcerted the plans of his enemy."

In steering a small boat before a heavy gale, don't look back -- it may disconcert you.

discursive \dis-KUR-siv\, adjective:

1. Passing from one topic to another; ranging over a wide field; digressive; rambling.
2. Utilizing, marked by, or based on analytical reasoning -- contrasted with intuitive.

disparate \DIS-puh-rit; dis-PAIR-it\, adjective:

1. Fundamentally different or distinct in quality or kind.
2. Composed of or including markedly dissimilar elements.

Science at its best isolates a common element underlying many seemingly disparate phenomena.

dissolute \DIS-uh-loot\, adjective:

Loose in morals and conduct; marked by indulgence in sensual pleasures or vices.

doff \DOF\, transitive verb:

1. To take off, as an article of clothing.
2. To tip or remove (one's hat).
3. To put aside; to rid oneself of.

After I finished sweeping, I grabbed my check, went to the locker room, and doffed the monkey suit, slipped into my jeans, sneakers and T-shirt and broke camp.

doula \DOO-luh\, noun:

A woman who assists during childbirth labor and provides support to the mother, her child and the family after childbirth.

dubiety \doo-BY-uh-tee; dyoo-\, noun:

1. The condition or quality of being doubtful or skeptical.
2. A matter of doubt

Kennedy and O'Connor may think that Title 3 has been violated, but O'Connor and the chief justice are not convinced that the Supreme Court was meant to litigate challenges under that federal statute, and their dubiety here is shared by Justices Scalia and Souter.

dudgeon \DUH-juhn\, noun:

A state or fit of intense indignation; resentment; ill humor -- often used in the phrase "in high dudgeon."

Higgins was so frustrated by such a basic error that he stormed out of the arena for the mid-session interval in high dudgeon.

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E

ebullient \ih-BUL-yuhnt\, adjective:

1. Overflowing with enthusiasm or excitement; high-spirited.
2. Boiling up or over.

edacious \i-DAY-shus\, adjective: Given to eating; voracious; devouring.

Swallowed in the depths of edacious Time.

effulgence \i-FUL-juhn(t)s\, noun: The state of being bright and radiant; splendor; brilliance.

The purity of his private character gave effulgence to his public virtues.

eleemosynary \el-uh-MOS-uh-ner-ee\, adjective:

1. Of or for charity; charitable; as, "an eleemosynary institution."
2. Given in charity; having the nature of alms; as, "eleemosynary assistance."
3. Supported by or dependent on charity; as, "the eleemosynary poor."

We also need to revive the great eleemosynary institutions through which compassionate people serve those in need with both greater flexibility and

discipline than government agencies are capable.

encumbrance \en-KUHM-bruhn(t)s\, noun:

1. Something that burdens or impedes; a burdensome and troublesome load; an impediment.
2. A claim or lien upon property.

But just as certainly, the Don understood that Astorre wanted an excuse to be free of any encumbrance on his march to the glories of life.

enervate \EN-ur-vayt\, transitive verb:

1. To deprive of vigor, force, or strength; to render feeble; to weaken.
2. To reduce the moral or mental vigor of.

Beatriz de Ahumada soldiered on to produce nine more children, a tour of duty that left her enervated and worn.

ennui \on-WEE\, noun:

A feeling of weariness and dissatisfaction arising from lack of interest; boredom.

He glanced at his heavily laden bookshelves. Nothing there appealed to him. The ennui seemed to have settled into his very bones.

ephemeron \ih-FEM-uh-ron\, noun; plural ephemera \ih-FEM-uh-ruh\:

1. Something short-lived or of no lasting significance.
2. ephemera: Items, especially printed matter (as posters, broadsides, pamphlets, etc.), intended to be of use or importance for only a short time but preserved by collectors.

And collections of correspondence will always reveal "a remarkable mind, grappling with everything from the ephemera of day-to-day life to the mysteries of the universe."

epigone \EP-uh-gohn\, noun:

An inferior imitator, especially of some distinguished writer, artist, musician, or philosopher.

He probably was influenced by John le Carré.... But Mr. Crisp... is no mere epigone.

equable \EK-wuh-buhl; EE-kwuh-\, adjective:

1. Equal and uniform; not varying.
2. Not easily disturbed; not variable or changing -- said of the feelings, temper, etc.

An equable climate, evidently due to the large area of sea compared with the land, seems to extend over the greater part of the southern hemisphere; and, as a consequence, the vegetation partakes of a semi-tropical character.

equivocate \ih-KWIV-uh-kayt\, intransitive verb:

To be deliberately ambiguous or unclear in order to mislead or to avoid committing oneself to anything definite.

The witness shuffled, equivocated, pretended to misunderstand the questions.

ersatz \AIR-sahts; UR-sats\, adjective: Being a substitute or imitation, usually an inferior one.

Meanwhile, a poor copy was erected in the courtyard; many an unsuspecting traveler paid homage to

that ersatz masterpiece.

erudite \AIR-yuh-dyt; -uh-dyt\, adjective:

Characterized by extensive reading or knowledge; learned.

eschew \es-CHOO\, transitive verb: To shun; to avoid (as something wrong or distasteful).

In high school and college the Vassar women had enjoyed that lifestyle, but afterward they had eschewed it as shallow.

esurient \ih-SUR-ee-uhnt; -ZUR-\, adjective: Hungry; voracious; greedy

The enemy then was an esurient Soviet Union which, having swallowed up Eastern Europe, had imposed a totalitarian system on countries just liberated from Nazism.

euphonious \yoo-FOH-nee-uhs\,

adjective: Pleasing or sweet in sound; smooth-sounding.

She combines alliteration and deft word choices with the grace of an oral storyteller, creating euphonious and precise sentences that are perfect for reading aloud.

evanescent \ev-uh-NES-unt\, adjective:

Liable to vanish or pass away like vapor; fleeting.

evince \ih-VIN(T)S\, transitive verb: To show in a clear manner; to manifest; to make evident; to bring to light.

The study showed that girls were better prepared for class, had better attendance records, and evinced more positive academic behavior overall.

exacerbate \ig-ZAS-ur-bayt\, transitive verb:

To render more severe, violent, or bitter; to irritate; to aggravate; to make worse.

To reduce the stress that exacerbates my stuttering, I have meditated, done deep-breathing exercises, and floated under a condition of sensory deprivation in a dark, enclosed isolation tank.

exalt \ig-ZOLT\, verb:

1. To praise, glorify, or honor

2. To heighten or intensify

3. To raise in rank, character, or status; as, "exalted the humble shoemaker to the rank of King's adviser"

"[A] show that was merely competent needed something special if it was to run—a couple of hit tunes, something astonishing in design or [1]choreography... or a theatre-filling personality who can exalt ordinary material."

excrecence \ik-SKRESS-uhn(t)s/, noun:

1. Something (especially something abnormal) growing out from something else.
2. A disfiguring or unwanted mark, part, or addition.

exculpate \EK-skuhl-payt; ek-SKUHL-payt/, transitive verb:

To clear from alleged fault or guilt; to prove to be guiltless; to relieve of blame; to acquit.

Each member is determined to exculpate himself, to lay the blame elsewhere.

exegete \EK-suh-JEET/, noun:

A person who explains or interprets difficult parts of written works.

All the things said in this passage are clear and should be

exigent \EK-suh-juhnt/, adjective:

1. Requiring immediate aid or action; pressing; critical.
2. Requiring much effort or expense; demanding; exacting.

exiguous \ig-ZIG-yoo-us/, adjective: Extremely scanty; meager.

They are entering the market, setting up stalls on snowy streets, moonlighting to supplement exiguous incomes.

expatiate \ek-SPAY-shee-ayt\, intransitive verb:

1. To speak or write at length or in considerable detail.
2. To move about freely; to wander.

expeditious \ek-spuh-DISH-uhs\, adjective:

Characterized by or acting with speed and efficiency.

His problem was to get from Lookout Valley to Chattanooga Valley in the most expeditious way possible.

explicate \EK-spluh-kayt\, transitive verb:

To explain; to clear of difficulties or obscurity.

I can cite a case -- my own -- of a young person's being altered politically by a novel, but I cannot explicate the process, let alone explain it in terms of the author's intention or literary strategies.

extant \EK-stunt; ek-STANT\, adjective:

Still existing; not destroyed, lost, or extinct.

extempore \ik-STEM-puh-ree\, adverb:

Without premeditation or preparation; on the spur of the moment.

extirpate \EK-stur-payt\, transitive verb:

1. To pull up by the stem or root.
2. To destroy completely.
3. To remove by surgery.

A plant growing where it shouldn't is a weed. An object for which you have no need or sentimental attachment is garbage. Extirpate the one, toss the other.

extricate \EK-struh-kayt\, transitive verb:

To free or release from a difficulty or entanglement; to get free; to disengage.

Sean introduced himself and then extricated his hand from

Ronan's persistent grasp in order to show him the photo.

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F

facetious \fuh-SEE-shuhs\, adjective:

1. Given to jesting; playfully jocular.

2. Amusing; intended to be humorous; not serious.

J. K. Morley was being both serious and facetious when he claimed that "the world's greatest water power is woman's tears."

factotum \fak-TOH-tuhm\, noun:A person employed to do all kinds of work or business.

Mr. Hersey thus became Mr. Lewis's summertime factotum, copying pages of a play that Lewis was writing about Communism.

faineant \fay-nay-AWN\, adjective:

Doing nothing or given to doing nothing; idle; lazy.

fanfaronade \fan-fair-uh-NAYD; -NOD\, noun:

1. Swaggering; empty boasting; blustering manner or behavior; ostentatious display.

2. Fanfare.

George Manahan made his debut this week as music director of New York City Opera, and it is difficult to imagine someone laying claim to a major podium with less of a fanfaronade.

farrago \fuh-RAH-go; fuh-RAY-go\, noun; plural farragoes:

A confused mixture; an assortment; a medley.

fealty \FEE-uhl-tee\, noun:

1. Fidelity to one's lord; the feudal obligation by which the tenant or vassal was bound to be faithful to his lord.
2. The oath by which this obligation was assumed.
3. Fidelity; allegiance; faithfulness.

He was re-elected Governor in 1855, and his administration of the State affairs, both in that and the preceding term of office, was marked by a regard for the public interest rather than party fealty.

felicitous \fuh-LIS-uh-tuhs\, adjective:

1. Well suited or expressed; appropriate; apt.
2. Pleasant; delightful; marked by happiness or good fortune.

"We do this sort of thing most weekends anyway," said a lean rebel with gunpowder smudges on his face and the felicitous name of Troy Cool.

fetid \FET-id; FEE-tid\, adjective:

Having an offensive smell; stinking.

The air was fetid, heavy as the breath of a large animal.

fettle \FET-l\,

noun:A state or condition of fitness or order; state of mind; spirits -- often used in the phrase "in fine fettle."

Aside from the problems with her voice... Miss Garland was in fine fettle last night.

fiat \FEE-uht; -at; -aht; FY-uht; -at\, noun:

1. An arbitrary or authoritative command or order.
2. Formal or official authorization or sanction.

fiduciary \fih-DOO-shee-AIR-ee\, adjective: Relating to the holding of something in trust for another.

American capitalism relies heavily on the fiduciary duty concept to protect those who entrust their money to large and often distant corporations.

firmament \FUR-muh-muhnt\, noun:

1. The region of the air; the sky; the heavens.
2. The field or sphere of an interest or activity

But to judge by the twinkling summer stars that filled the
firmament, the dawn was still far off.

flagitious \fluh-JISH-uhs\, adjective:

1. Disgracefully or shamefully criminal; grossly wicked; scandalous; -- said of acts, crimes, etc.
2. Guilty of enormous crimes; corrupt; profligate; -- said of persons.
3. Characterized by enormous crimes or scandalous vices; as, "flagitious times."

However flagitious may be the crime of conspiring to subvert by force the government of our country, such conspiracy is not treason.

flippant \FLIP-uhnt\, adjective:

Lacking proper seriousness or respect; showing inappropriate levity; pert.

In the mid-1950s we both wrote for the same weekly, where her contributions were a good deal more serious

and less flippant than mine.

florid \FLOR-id\, adjective:

1. Flushed with red; of a lively reddish color.
2. Excessively ornate; flowery; as, "a florid style; florid eloquence."

The Reverend Mr Kidney is a short round bowlegged man with black muttonchop whiskers and a florid face, like a pomegranate, into which he has poured a great quantity of brandy and lesser amounts of whisky and claret.

foment \foh-MENT\, transitive verb:To nurse to life or activity; to encourage; to incite; to instigate; -- often in a bad sense.

Cynical politicians may even foment conflicts among groups to advance their own power.

fop \FOP\, noun:

A man who is overly concerned with or vain about his dress and appearance; a dandy.

I wear ties because I don't have to, because in an increasingly dressed-down, homogenized world, they can set you apart. I wear ties because they nurture the inner fop.Also the outer one.

forfend \for-FEND\, transitive verb:

1. a. [Archaic] To prohibit; to forbid. b. To ward off; to prevent; to avert.

2. To defend; to protect; to preserve.

The Tory leader sort of wanted to say that the government should deploy the army more rapidly, but -- heaven forbid -- he didn't want to imply that it was anybody's fault that the soldiers hadn't been deployed!

forlorn \fur-LORN; for-\, adjective:

1. Sad and lonely because deserted, abandoned, or lost.

2. Bereft; forsaken.

3. Wretched or pitiful in appearance or condition.

4. Almost hopeless; desperate.

Henry had felt guilty at abandoning his sister; he had married not once but twice, leaving Rose forlorn.

fortuitous \for-TOO-uh-tuhs; -TYOO-\, adjective:

1. Happening by chance; coming or occurring by accident, or without any known cause.

2. Happening by a fortunate or lucky chance.

3. Fortunate or lucky.

The profession, the political faith, the entire life of many men, depend on chance circumstances, on what is fortuitous, on the caprice and the unexpected turns of fate.

foundling \FOWND-ling\, noun:

A deserted or abandoned infant; a child found without a parent

or caretaker.

Some of her desires were more altruistic: she wanted to

"send Phyllis to school for a year, take Auntie May for a

winter in the Isle of Pines," and "raise foundlings."

friable \FRY-uh-buhl\, adjective:

Easily crumbled, pulverized, or reduced to powder.

frisson \free-SOHN\, noun: A moment of intense excitement; a shudder; an emotional thrill.

When we think a story hasn't been invented, there's an extra frisson in reading it.

fugacious \fyoo-GAY-shuhs\, adjective: Lasting but a short time; fleeting.

The fugacious nature of life and time.

fulminate \FUL-muh-nayt\,

intransitive verb:

1. To issue or utter verbal attacks or censures authoritatively or menacingly. 2. To explode; to detonate.

transitive verb:

1. To utter or send out with denunciations or censures.

2. To cause to explode.

funereal \fyoo-NIR-ee-uhl\, adjective:

1. Of or pertaining to a funeral.

2. Suiting a funeral; solemn; dark; gloomy; mournful.

But do I have to sound so funereal, so pontifically solemn?

furbelow \FUR-buh-low\, noun:

1. A pleated or gathered flounce on a woman's garment; a ruffle.

2. Something showy or superfluous; a bit of showy

ornamentation.

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G

galumph \guh-LUHM(P)F\, intransitive verb:

To move in a clumsy manner or with a heavy tread.

Then he climbed up the little iron ladder that led to the wharf's cap, placed me once more upon his shoulders and galumphed off again.

gambol \GAM-buhl\, intransitive verb:

To dance and skip about in play; to frolic.

garrulous \GAIR-uh-lus; GAIR-yuh-\, adjective:

1. Talking much, especially about commonplace or trivial things; talkative.

2. Wordy

gastronome \GAS-truh-nohm\, noun: A connoisseur of good food and drink.

If "poultry is for the cook what canvas is for a painter," to quote the 19th-century French gastronome Brillat-Savarin, why paint the same painting over and over again?

gaucherie \goh-shuh-REE\, noun:

1. A socially awkward or tactless act.

2. Lack of tact; boorishness; awkwardness.

If you find yourself sitting next to an obviously prosperous guest at a dinner party and your host introduces

him (it will be a him) as a "successful barrister", you will be guilty of a gaucherie of the crassest kind if you

exclaim: "How fascinating! If I promise not to call you Rumpole, will you tell me about your goriest

murder trials?"

gelid \JEL-id\, adjective:

Extremely cold; icy.

The weather is gelid on a recent Thursday night--so uninviting that it's hard to imagine anyone venturing out.

genial \JEEN-yuhl; JEE-nee-uhl\, adjective:

1. [Obsolete] Pertaining to generation or marriage.
2. Friendly, warm; kindly; sympathetically cheerful and cheering.
3. Mild, pleasant; comfortable; favorable to life or growth.

The day before the operation, despite his paralysis, he had been his usual genial self, laughing and joking.

gewgaw \G(Y)OO-gaw\, noun:

A showy trifle; a trinket; a bauble.

Bidders paid hundreds of thousands of dollars for worthless gewgaws--fake pearls, ashtrays, golf clubs--merely, one supposes, because they were touched by the hand of this celebrity of celebrities.

gimcrack \JIM-krak\, noun:A showy but useless or worthless object; a gewgaw.

adjective:Tastelessly showy; cheap; gaudy.

Yet the set is more than a collection of pretty gimcracks.

gloaming \GLOH-ming\, noun:

Twilight; dusk.

The children squealed and waved and smiled, their teeth flashing white in the gloaming.

glower \GLAU-urh\, intransitive verb:

To look or stare angrily or with a scowl.

noun: An angry or scowling look or stare.

At one point, the head of the institute started chatting with colleagues sitting at a table behind Yeltsin, prompting the Russian President to interrupt his reading and glower at them.

gourmand \goor-MAHND; GOOR-mahnd; GOOR-mund\, noun:

1. One who eats to excess.
2. A lover of good food.

A gourmand who zealously avoids all exercise as "seriously damaging to one's health," he had caviar for

breakfast and was now having oysters for lunch, whetted with wine, as he fueled

himself for a [1]postprandial reading at the Montauk Club in Brooklyn.

grandee \gran-DEE\, noun:

1. A man of elevated rank or station.
2. In Spain or Portugal, a nobleman of the first rank.

Jack Byron still harbored delusions of being a local grandee, attempting to influence district politics; as the final humiliation, in the parliamentary election of 1786 his vote was disallowed.

gravitas \GRAV-uh-tahs\, noun:

High seriousness (as in a person's bearing or in the treatment of a subject).

gregarious \grih-GAIR-ee-us\, adjective:

1. Tending to form a group with others of the same kind.
2. Seeking and enjoying the company of others.

gubernatorial \GOO-ber-nuh-TOR-ee-uhl\, adjective: Of or pertaining to a governor.

In 1780 [1]John Hancock was elected the first governor of Massachusetts under its new constitution and

thereafter was easily reelected whenever he chose to run. His gubernatorial career was marked by his

inability to prevent a fiscal and currency crisis in the mid-1780s.

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H

halcyon \HAL-see-uhn\, noun:

1. A kingfisher.
2. A mythical bird, identified with the kingfisher, that was fabled to nest at sea about the time of the winter

solstice and to calm the waves during incubation.

adjective:

1. Calm; quiet; peaceful; undisturbed; happy; as, "deep, halcyon repose."
2. Marked by peace and prosperity; as, "halcyon years."

It seems to be that my boyhood days in the Edwardian era were halcyon days.

hale \HAYL\, adjective:

Free from disease and weakening conditions; healthy.

Uncle Charles was a hale old man with a well tanned skin, rugged features and white side whiskers.

harridan \HAIR-uh-din\, noun:

A scolding, vicious woman; a shrew; a hag.

With the insight of hindsight, I'd have liked to have been able to protect my mother from the domineering old harridan, with her rough tongue and primitive sense of justice, but I did not see it like that, then.

hauteur \haw-TUR; (h)oh-\, noun:

Haughty manner, spirit, or bearing; haughtiness; arrogance

heterodox \HET-uh-ruh-doks\, adjective:

1. Contrary to or differing from some acknowledged standard, especially in church doctrine or dogma; unorthodox.
2. Holding unorthodox opinions or doctrines.

hirsute \HUR-soot; HIR-soot; hur-SOOT; hir-SOOT\, adjective:

Covered with hair; set with bristles; shaggy; hairy.

The Bear... makes the rounds of the clubs "disguised" in trench coat and broad-brimmed hat, hoping (successfully, it seems) to be mistaken for a rather hirsute human.

hobnob \HAHB-nahb\, intransitive verb: To associate familiarly.

Occasionally I heard him stop in the corridor outside my door to hobnob with someone of status.

hugger-mugger \HUH-guhr-muh-guhr\, noun:

1. A disorderly jumble; muddle; confusion.
2. Secrecy; concealment.

adjective: 1. Confused; muddled; disorderly. 2. Secret.

adverb: 1. In a muddle or confusion. 2. Secretly.

transitive verb: To keep secret.

intransitive verb: To act in a secretive manner.

While Ventura is speaking out -- his wisdom seems to be a hugger-mugger of twisted cliches from his reading of airport trash picked up as he traveled from bout to bout -- others who do possess minds too often are failing to speak theirs, and usually they do so only as a consequence of perceived electoral pragmatism.

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I

idee fixe \ee-day-FEEKS\, noun; plural idees fixes \ee-day-FEEKS\:

An idea that dominates the mind; a fixed idea; an obsession.

The reality of obsession -- its incessant return to the same few themes,

scenarios and questions; its meticulous examination and re-examination of banal minutiae for hidden meanings that simply aren't there; the cancerous way an *idée fixe* usurps other, more interesting thoughts -- is that it is confining, not rebellious, and not fascinating but maddeningly dull.

imbroglio \im-BROHL-yoh\, noun:

1. A complicated and embarrassing state of things.
2. A confused or complicated disagreement or misunderstanding.
3. An intricate, complicated plot, as of a drama or work of fiction.
4. A confused mass; a tangle.

The political imbroglio also appears to endanger the latest International Monetary Fund loan package for Russia,

which is considered critical to avoid a default this year on the country's \$17 billion in foreign debt.

immure \ih-MYUR\, transitive verb:

1. To enclose within walls, or as if within walls; hence, to shut up; to imprison; to incarcerate.
2. To build into a wall.
3. To entomb in a wall.

Not surprisingly, Sally shuddered at the thought of being immured in the black cave, to die slowly and hopelessly, far below the sunny hillside.

impassive \im-PASS-iv\, adjective:

1. Devoid of or unsusceptible to emotion.

2. Showing no sign of emotion or feeling; expressionless.

As before, he seemed neither happy nor unhappy. Just utterly impassive.

importunate \im-POR-chuh-nit\, adjective:

Troublesomely urgent; overly persistent in request or demand; unreasonably solicitous.

An emperor penguin in captivity starved to death by feeding all his rations -- about six pounds of fish daily -- to an importunate chick.

inanition \in-uh-NISH-uhn\, noun:

1. The condition or quality of being empty.
2. Exhaustion, as from lack of nourishment.
3. Lack of vitality or spirit.

The problem that faces British universities is not that they have become fat and lazy, but that they have been starved beyond lean efficiency into inanition.

inchoate \in-KOH-it\, adjective:

1. In an initial or early stage; just begun.
2. Imperfectly formed or formulated.

Mildred Spock believed that, at about the age of three, her children's inchoate wills were to be shaped like vines sprouting up a beanpole.

incipient \in-SIP-ee-uhnt\, adjective:

Beginning to exist or appear.

inclement \in-KLEM-uhnt\, adjective:

1. Rough, harsh; extreme, severe -- generally restricted to the elements or weather.
2. Severe, unrelenting; cruel.

To make his misery complete he was forced to travel back in the winter, in the most inclement weather.

incontrovertible \in-kon-truh-VUR-tuh-buhl\, adjective:

Too clear or certain to admit of dispute; indisputable; unquestionable.

indelible \in-DEL-uh-buhl\, adjective:

1. That cannot be removed, erased, or washed away.
2. Making marks that cannot easily be removed or erased.
3. Incapable of being forgotten; memorable.

It was part of his image, indelible as the ink stains under the breast pocket.

indigent \IN-di-juhnt\, adjective:

Extremely poor; not having the necessities of life, such as food, clothing and shelter.

That which goes under the general Name of Charity... consists in relieving the Indigent.

indolent \IN-duh-luhnt\, adjective:

1. Avoiding labor and exertion; habitually idle; lazy; inactive.
2. Conducive to or encouraging laziness or inactivity.
3. Causing little or no pain.
4. Slow to heal, develop, or grow.

We worked very hard--at least Iris did; I was more naturally indolent.

indomitable \in-DOM-ih-tuh-buhl\, adjective:

Incapable of being subdued or overcome; unconquerable.

ineffable \in-EF-uh-buhl\, adjective:

1. Incapable of being expressed in words; unspeakable; unutterable; indescribable.
2. Not to be uttered; taboo.

... the tension inherent in human language when it attempts to relate the ineffable, see the invisible,

understand the incomprehensible.

ineluctable \in-ih-LUCK-tuh-buhl\, adjective:

Impossible to avoid or evade; inevitable.

ingenue \AN-zhuh-noo\, noun:

1. A naive girl or young woman.
2. An actress playing such a person; also: the stage role of an ingenue.

This is not the face of an ingenue; this is an old soul in a new body -- wary, wise to her own long past, on to the wiles of the world, and having miles to go before she sleeps.

inscrutable \in-SKROO-tuh-bul\, adjective:

Difficult to fathom or understand; difficult to be explained or accounted for satisfactorily; obscure;

incomprehensible; impenetrable; as, an inscrutable design or event.

US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright recalled the inscrutable comment of a French diplomat

about the interaction of the various European organisations: "It will work in practice, yes. But will it work in theory?"

insensate \in-SEN-sayt; -sit\, adjective:

1. Lacking sensation or awareness; inanimate.
2. Lacking human feeling or sensitivity; brutal; cruel.
3. Lacking sense; stupid; foolish.

The religion of primeval humans, he suggested, held that souls inhabited not only human beings but also animals, trees, plants--even rocks, rivers, and other natural features we regard as insensate.

interpolate \in-TUR-puh-layt\, transitive verb:

1. To alter or corrupt (as a book or text) by the insertion of new or foreign matter.
2. To insert (material) into a text or conversation.
3. To insert between other elements or parts.
4. [Mathematics] to estimate a value of (a function) between two known values.

intransitive verb: To make insertions.

Twenty years earlier, Rodgers was not so pleased when, at the request of the star Belle Baker, Berlin had written a song for her to interpolate into an otherwise all-Rodgers-and-Hart score for the Broadway musical "Betsy."

interstice \in-TUR-stuhs\, noun; plural interstices \in-TUR-stuh-seez; -suhz\:

1. A space between things or parts, especially a space between things closely set; a narrow chink; a crack; a crevice; an interval.
2. An interval of time.

Out in the harbor, boats are gridlocked: who knows how they got there, or how they will get away? The filthy water is barely visible in the interstices of smokestack, hull, and sail.

intractable \in-TRAK-tuh-buhl\, adjective:

1. Not easily governed, managed, or directed; stubborn; obstinate; as, "an intractable child."
2. Not easily wrought or manipulated; as, "intractable materials."
3. Not easily remedied, relieved, or dealt with; as, "intractable problems."

Would their methods work with a child who was as violent and intractable as Helen?

intransigent \in-TRAN-suh-juhnt; -zuh-\, adjective:

Refusing to compromise; uncompromising.

He was intransigent at times, and almost playfully yielding at others.

inure \in-YOOR\, transitive verb:

To make accustomed or used to something painful, difficult, or inconvenient; to harden; to habituate; as, "inured to drudgery and distress."

intransitive verb:

To pass into use; to take or have effect; to be applied; to serve to the use or benefit of; as, "a gift of lands inures to the heirs."

They were a hard-driven, hardworking crowd inured to the hardest living, and they found their recreation in hard drinking and hard fighting.

inveigle \in-VAY-guhl; -VEE-\, transitive verb:

1. To persuade by ingenuity or flattery; to entice.
2. To obtain by ingenuity or flattery.

Deep Blue had tried to inveigle Kasparov into grabbing several pawn offers, but the champion was not fooled.

inveterate \in-VET-uhr-it\, adjective:

1. Firmly established by long persistence; deep-rooted; of long standing.
2. Fixed in habit by long persistence; confirmed; habitual.

In Montpelier, where this prison stands, the inveterate prejudice against prisoners has been swept away.

invidious \in-VID-ee-uhs\, adjective:

1. Tending to provoke envy, resentment, or ill will.
2. Containing or implying a slight.
3. Envious.

But to the human hordes of Amorites -- Semitic nomads wandering the mountains and deserts just beyond the pale of Sumer -- the tiered and clustered cities, strung out along the green banks of the meandering Euphrates like a giant's necklace of polished stone, seemed shining things, each surmounted by a wondrous temple and ziggurat dedicated to the city's god-protector, each city noted for some specialty -- all invidious reminders of what the nomads did not possess.

irascible \ih-RASS-uh-buhl\, adjective:

Prone to anger; easily provoked to anger; hot-tempered.

The lawyer described his client as an irascible eighty-two-year-old eccentric who alternated between spinning fascinating tales about her past and cussing him out.

irrefragable \ir-REF-ruh-guh-buhl\, adjective:

Impossible to refute; incontestable; undeniable; as, an irrefragable argument; irrefragable evidence.

I had the most irrefragable evidence of the absolute truth and soundness of the principle upon which my

invention was based.

itinerant \eye-TIN-uhr-uhnt\, adjective:

Passing or traveling from place to place; wandering.

noun:One who travels from place to place.

Like many itinerant vendors in rural places, he was a smooth-talking purveyor of dreams along with tawdry trinkets, and Eliza responded to this romantic wanderer.

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J

jocund \JOCK-uhnd; JOH-kuhnd\, adjective:

Full of or expressing high-spirited merriment; light-hearted; mirthful.

His careless manners and jocund repartees might well seem incompatible with anything serious.

jollification \jol-ih-fuh-KAY-shuhn\, noun:

Merrymaking; festivity; revelry.

Some inform; some prompt the conscience; some entertain, while having more than jollification in mind.

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K

kismet \KIZ-met; -mit\, noun: Destiny; fate.

It's pure kismet when these two find each other.

L

lachrymose \LAK-ruh-mohs\, adjective:

1. Given to shedding tears; suffused with tears; tearful.
2. Causing or tending to cause tears.

At the farewell party on the boat, Joyce was surrounded by a lachrymose family.

lackadaisical \lack-uh-DAY-zih-kuhl\, adjective:

Lacking spirit or liveliness; showing lack of interest;languid; listless. Drowsy from the heat and from fatigue, he dozed to the steady lackadaisical clips of the mule's shoes.

laconic \luh-KON-ik\, adjective:

Using or marked by the use of a minimum of words; brief and pithy; brusque.

Readers' reports range from the laconic to the verbose.

lacuna \luh-KYOO-nuh\, noun; plural lacunae \luh-KYOO-nee\ or lacunas:

1. A blank space; a missing part; a gap.
2. (Biology) A small opening, depression, or cavity in an anatomical structure.

Like most other writers of his generation, he was a profoundly apolitical being, not from any lacuna in his education but as a matter of principle.

lambent \LAM-buhnt\, adjective:

1. Playing lightly on or over a surface; flickering; as, "a lambent flame; lambent shadows."

2. Softly bright or radiant; luminous; as, "a lambent light."

3. Light and brilliant; as, "a lambent style; lambent wit."

I have an image in my mind of the soaring vault rising and disappearing into the gray-white silence, the niches in the salt walls where the saints dwelled, the few points of lambent gold glimmering feebly on the altar.

lascivious \luh-SIV-ee-uhs\, adjective:

1. Lewd; lustful.

2. Tending to arouse sexual desires.

Irwin, wearing Groucho Marx glasses to which a false nose is attached, appears uncharacteristically as a lascivious fellow, the maitre d'hôtel who tries to move in on the girlfriend.

lassitude \LASS-uh-tood; LASS-uh-tyood\, noun:

Lack of vitality or energy; weariness; listlessness.

The feverish excitement ... had given place to a dull, regretful lassitude.

laudable \LAW-duh-bul\, adjective:

Worthy of praise; commendable.

Her first answer was laudable -- she wrote that yes, she would remain engaged to a man who fell seriously ill subsequent to the engagement.

legerdemain \lej-ur-duh-MAIN\, noun:

1. Sleight of hand.

2. A display of skill, trickery, or artful deception.

We are inclined to regard the treatment of [paradoxes]... as a mere legerdemain of words.

lenity \LEN-uh-tee\, noun:

The state or quality of being lenient; mildness; gentleness of treatment; leniency.

The criminal suspect is pressured by remorse or hope of lenity or sheer despair to fess up.

levity \LEV-uh-tee\, noun:

1. Lightness of manner or speech, especially when inappropriate or excessive; frivolity.
2. Lack of steadiness or constancy; changeableness.

lexicon \LEK-suh-kon\, noun; plural lexicons or lexica \-kuh\:

1. A book containing an alphabetical arrangement of the words in a language with the definition of each; a dictionary.
2. The vocabulary of a person, group, subject, or language.
3. [Linguistics] The total morphemes of a language.

He thought it right in a lexicon of our language to collect many words which had fallen into disuse.

limn \LIM\, transitive verb:

1. To depict by drawing or painting.
2. To portray in words; to describe.

"Oh, yes," I write, as I limn the familiar perfections of his profile, "you look very well."

lineament \LIN-ee-uh-muhnt\, noun:

1. One of the outlines, exterior features, or distinctive marks of a body or figure, particularly of the face.
2. A distinguishing or characteristic feature; -- usually in the plural.

If she saw herself, even in her memory, she did not see the brightness that had been hers as a wife; she saw the lined and ageing woman she had become, as if these lineaments had been waiting to emerge since her features had first been formed.

lissom, also **lissome** \LISS-uhm\, adjective:

1. Limber; supple; flexible.
2. Light and quick in action; nimble; agile; active.

Raphaelle Boitel moves with the lissom, contortionist plastique of a snake-woman.

littoral \LIH-tuh-rul\, adjective: Of, relating to, or on a coastal or shore region, especially a seashore.

Professor Henslow tells me, he believes that nearly all the plants which I brought from these islands, are common littoral species in the East Indian archipelago.

logorrhea \law-guh-REE-uh\, noun: Excessive talkativeness or wordiness.

loquacious \loh-KWAY-shuhs\, adjective:

1. Very talkative.
2. Full of excessive talk; wordy.

lucre \LOO-kuhr\, noun:

Monetary gain; profit; riches; money; -- often in a bad sense.

His stories began to be published in the American Mercury before he moved to L.A., lured by the dream of Hollywood lucre.

lugubrious \lu-GOO-bree-us; -GYOO-\, adjective:

1. Mournful; indicating sorrow, often in a way that seems feigned, exaggerated, or ridiculous.
2. Gloomy; dismal.

Oh yes, he says, and his lugubrious expression suggests that the loss afflicts

him still.

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M

maelstrom \MAYL-struhm\, noun:

1. A large, powerful, or destructive whirlpool.
2. Something resembling a maelstrom; a violent, disordered, or turbulent state of affairs.

The murk became thicker as Zachareesi fishtailed his canoe through a swirling maelstrom of currents pouring

past, and over, unseen rocks.

maladroit \mal-uh-DROYT\, adjective:

Lacking adroitness; clumsy; awkward; unskillful; inept.

Do you know someone who... loves quiet conversations about feelings or ideas, and can give a dynamite presentation to a big audience, but seems awkward in groups and maladroit at small talk?

malapropos \mal-ap-ruh-POH\, adjective:

Unseasonable; unsuitable; inappropriate.

malediction \mal-uh-DIK-shun\, noun:

A curse or execration.

malfeasance \mal-FEE-zuhn(t)s\, noun:

Wrongdoing, misconduct, or misbehavior, especially by a public official.

But more often than not the same board members who were removed by the chancellor for malfeasance subsequently manage to get reelected in a political process that defies any form of accountability.

malleable \MAL-ee-uh-buhl\, adjective:

1. Capable of being extended or shaped by beating with a hammer, or by the pressure of rollers; -- applied to metals.
2. Capable of being altered or controlled by outside forces; easily influenced.
3. Capable of adjusting to changing circumstances; adaptable.

His image for his own imagination is the acid, the catalyst, that is mixed in to make the gold malleable, and is then wiped away.

manse \MAN(T)S\, noun:

1. A large and imposing residence.
2. The residence of a clergyman (especially a Presbyterian clergyman).

A two-story white Greek Revival manse, with a front porch and a terrace in the back.

matutinal \muh-TOOT-nn-uhl\, adjective:

Relating to or occurring in the morning; early.

Get up early and wash your face in the matutinal May Day dew; it will make your skin beautiful and your heart pure.

maudlin \MAWD-lin\, adjective:

Tearfully or excessively sentimental.

melange \may-LAHNZH\, noun:

A mixture; a medley.

Interspersed with diverse lectures and classroom activities were periods of financial difficulty, military service, and employment as a private tutor, all of which added to the curious melange of experiences that would ultimately blossom into his unexpected and remarkable life's work.

melee \MAY-lay; may-LAY\, noun:

1. A fight or hand-to-hand struggle in which the combatants are mingled in one confused mass.
2. A confused conflict or mingling.

In another incident, two staff members required stitches from a melee that ensued from their attempts to

confiscate a razor blade found in the sock of a boy who had just arrived from another facility.

mellifluous \muh-LIF-loo-us\, adjective:

Flowing as with honey; flowing sweetly or smoothly; as, a mellifluous voice.

The balladeer whose mellifluous voice serenaded two generations of lovers.

mendacious \men-DAY-shuhs\, adjective:

1. Given to deception or falsehood; lying; untruthful; as, a mendacious person.
2. False; untrue; as, a mendacious statement.

mercurial \mur-KYUR-ee-uhl\, adjective:

1. [Often capitalized] Of or pertaining to the god Mercury.
2. [Often capitalized] Of or pertaining to the planet Mercury.
3. Having the qualities of shrewdness, eloquence, or thievishness attributed to the god Mercury.
4. Changeable in temperament or mood; temperamental; volatile.
5. Of, pertaining to, or containing mercury.
6. Caused by the use of mercury.

Most of his New England cronies, accustomed to Brownson's frequent changes of opinion, treated him as

a mercurial spirit who had finally stepped off the edge of the world rather than as a role model.

meticulous \muh-TIK-yuh-luhs\, adjective:

Extremely or excessively careful about details.

How much work gets done in the fall perennial garden depends somewhat on whether your gardening tendencies lean toward the meticulous or toward the casual.

mien \MEEN\, noun:

1. Manner or bearing, especially as expressive of mood, attitude, or personality; demeanor.
2. Aspect; appearance.

milieu \meel-YUH; meel-YOO\, noun; plural milieus or milieux \-(z)\:

Environment; setting.

These were agricultural areas, populated with prosperous farming families and rural artisans -- a completely different milieu from the Monferrands', which was more closed, more cultured, but less affluent.

minatory \MIN-uh-tor-ee\, adjective:

Threatening; menacing.

He was often observed peeping through the bars of a gate and making minatory gestures with his small forefinger while he scolded the sheep with an inarticulate burr, intended to strike terror into their astonished minds.

misnomer \mis-NO-muhr\, noun:

1. The misnaming of a person in a legal instrument, as in a complaint or indictment.
2. Any misnaming of a person or thing; also, a wrong or inapplicable name or designation.

Morning sickness is a misnomer -- it can strike any time.

missive \MIS-iv\, noun:

A written message; a letter.

She also agreed to write to the Prince, while the Count included a suitably outraged missive of his own.

moiety \MOY-uh-tee\, noun:

1. One of two equal parts; a half.
2. An indefinite part; a small portion or share.
3. One of two basic tribal subdivisions.

Tom divided the cake and Becky ate with good appetite, while Tom nibbled at his moiety.

mollify \MOL-uh-fy\, transitive verb:

1. To pacify; to soothe or calm in temper or disposition.
2. To reduce in intensity; to temper.
3. To soften; to reduce the rigidity of.

One hundred seventeen and a half pesos! Did you think you could mollify me with that amount, Philip V?

monomania \mon-uh-MAY-nee-uh; -nyuh\, noun:

1. Pathological obsession with a single subject or idea.

2. Excessive concentration of interest upon one particular subject or idea.

One of the themes in the book was the necessity for a leader to be passionate about the work. And sometimes in a corporate setting, passion becomes monomania.

mordant \MOR-d'nt\, adjective: Biting; caustic; sarcastic.

Mr. Justice Moorcroft's forte, a part which he had played for so many years that it had become instinctive, was a courteous reasonableness occasionally enlivened with shafts of mordant wit.

mores \MOR-ayz; -eez\, plural noun:

1. The fixed customs of a particular group that are morally binding upon all members of the group.
2. Moral attitudes.
3. Customs; habits; ways.

But even before that, the increasing secularization and urbanization of society, the employment of women in

large numbers and diverse occupations, the suffragette movement (culminating in the acquisition of the vote after

the war), the widespread practice and, no less important, the candid discussion of contraception, the advent

of automobiles providing an unprecedented degree of mobility and freedom

moribund \MOR-uh-bund\, adjective:

1. In a dying state; dying; at the point of death.
2. Becoming obsolete or inactive.

He put on a beaver overcoat, a present from a wealthy Petrograd banker and speculator, Ignati Porfiryevich Manus, whose niece had been moribund with fever until Rasputin's healing intercession had revived her.

multifarious \muhl-tuh-FAIR-ee-uhs\, adjective:

Having great diversity or variety; of various kinds; diversified.

She is good at constructing a long, multifarious narrative, weaving many minor stories into one, so that you are left with a sense of the fluidity and ambiguity of historical interpretation.

munificent \myoo-NIF-i-suhnt\, adjective: Very liberal in giving or bestowing; very generous; lavish.

Another munificent friend has given me the most splendid reclining chair conceivable.

myrmidon \MUR-muh-don; -dun\, noun:

1. [Capitalized] A member of a warlike Thessalian people who followed Achilles on the expedition against Troy.
2. A loyal follower, especially one who executes orders without question, protest, or pity.

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N

nadir \NAY-dir; nay-DIR\, noun:

1. [Astronomy]. The point of the celestial sphere directly opposite the zenith and directly below the observer.
2. The lowest point; the time of greatest depression or adversity.

Exploitation reached a nadir in the 1920s, when high government officials were implicated in a flourishing international slave trade and domestic forced labor.

nescience \NESH-uhn(t)s; NESH-ee-uhn(t)s\, noun:

Lack of knowledge or awareness; ignorance.

nefarious \nuh-FAIR-ee-us\, adjective:

Wicked in the extreme; iniquitous.

nimiety \nih-MY-uh-tee\, noun: The state of being too much; excess.

What a nimiety of ... riches have we here! I am quite undone.

noisome \NOY-sum\, adjective:

1. Noxious; harmful; unwholesome.
2. Offensive to the smell or other senses; disgusting.

The body politic produces noisome and unseemly substances,
among which are politicians.

nonage \NON-ij; NOH-nij\, noun:

1. The time of life before a person becomes legally of age.
2. A period of youth or immaturity.

He was an adept in politics, even in his nonage, and an accomplished statesman before the laws regarded him as a man.

nonagenarian \non-uh-juh-NAIR-ee-uhn; no-nuh-\, noun:

A ninety year old person; someone whose age is in the nineties.

nostrum \NOS-truhm\, noun:

1. A medicine of secret composition and unproven or dubious effectiveness; a quack medicine.
2. A usually questionable remedy or scheme; a cure-all.

James is put to work at country fairs, promoting a quack nostrum for pain relief.

nugatory \NOO-guh-tor-ee; NYOO-\, adjective:

1. Trifling; insignificant; inconsequential.
2. Having no force; inoperative; ineffectual.

Tygiel's forte as a historian is his eye for what may appear nugatory or marginal but, when focused

upon, illuminates the temper of a given moment.

numinous \NOO-min-nus\, \NYOO-min-nus\, adjective: Indicating or suggesting the presence of a god-- spiritual, divine; inspiring awe and reverence-- holy.

Smoking is a ritual, and it has all the numinous force of a ritual.

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O

obdurate \OB-duh-rit; -dyuh-\, adjective:

1. a. Hardened in wrongdoing; stubbornly wicked. b. Hardened in feelings; hard-hearted.
2. Resistant to persuasion; unyielding.
3. Hard; harsh; rugged; rough.

The obdurate conscience of the old sinner.

objurgate \OB-juhr-gayt\, transitive verb:

To express strong disapproval of; to criticize severely.

I objurgate the centipede, A bug we do not really need.--Ogden Nash, "The Centipede"

The act about to be objurgated here calls on the Food and Drug Administration to oversee a broad revision of food labeling.

obloquy \OB-luh-kwee\, noun:

1. Strongly condemnatory or abusive language or utterance.

2. The condition of disgrace suffered as a result of public

blame, abuse, or condemnation; ill repute.

obsequious \ob-SEE-kwee-uhs; uhb-\, adjective:

Marked by or exhibiting servile attentiveness; compliant to excess; fawning.

His wealth nevertheless turns the townspeople into groveling, obsequious sycophants.

obviate \OB-vee-ayt\, transitive verb:

To prevent by interception; to anticipate and dispose of or make unnecessary.

After lunch he packed and stepped into the shower: Ronald Rosenthal spent a good portion of his life in planes and he knew that hot water immediately before and after a flight obviated most of its bad effects.

officious \uh-FISH-uhs\, adjective:

Marked by excessive eagerness in offering services or advice where they are neither requested nor needed; meddlesome.

Ian Holm plays a well-meaning but officious lawyer who tries to make the grieving families sue for damages.

omnipresent \om-nuh-PREZ-uhnt\, adjective: Present in all places at the same time; ubiquitous.

It was rather that myth was omnipresent; the whole people thought in this way and were long confirmed

in their belief.

oneiric \oh-NY-rik\, adjective:

Of, pertaining to, or suggestive of dreams; dreamy.

On this score, the novel might easily drift off into an oneiric never-never land, but Mr. Welch doesn't let this happen.

onus \OH-nuhs\, noun:

1. A burden; an obligation; a disagreeable necessity.
2. a: A stigma. b: Blame.
3. The burden of proof.

And who knew what financial pressures he was under or how desperate was his need to shed the onus of his past?

opportune \AHP-er-TOON\, \AHP-er-TYOON\, adjective:

Suitable for a given purpose or occasion; timely.

There is a war on. It's not the most opportune of times to distract the president with a phony political scandal.

orotund \OR-uh-tuhnd\, adjective:

1. Characterized by fullness, clarity, strength, and smoothness of sound.

2. Pompous; bombastic.

"I have been cursed to stalk the night through all eternity," he went on, his voice orotund, carrying all across the playground.

osculation \os-kyuh-LAY-shuhn\, noun:

The act of kissing; also: a kiss.

He had engaged in nervous osculation with all three of Lord Flamborough's daughters.

ostensible \ah-STEN-suh-bul\, adjective:

Represented or appearing to be true, but not necessarily so.

The credibility of the energy-trading sector has been severely damaged by disclosures of sham transactions in energy trading, designed to build up ostensible sales and profits and therefore share prices of the trading companies.

ostentation \os-ten-TAY-shuhn\, noun: Excessive or pretentious display; boastful showiness.

In a city where the wealthy are known for ostentation, many are now buying low-profile economy cars to

fool kidnappers and thieves.

outré \oo-TRAY\, adjective:

Unconventional; eccentric; bizarre.

This seven-year-old house of outré culture is the kind of place you can shop for a sculpture made out of working flamethrowers, videocassettes of underground movies, computer-generated art or a cute robot

P

paladin \PAL-uh-din\, noun:

1. A knight-errant; a distinguished champion of a medieval king or prince; as, the paladins of Charlemagne.
2. A champion of a cause.

Once in power, though, Clinton stumbled repeatedly over obstacles created by the schizoid campaign he had conducted, in which he had cast himself simultaneously as the champion of a more conservative Democratic credo and as a paladin of the party's traditional activism.

palimpsest \PAL-imp-sest\, noun:

1. A manuscript, usually of papyrus or parchment, on which more than one text has been written with the earlier writing incompletely erased and still visible.
2. An object or place whose older layers or aspects are apparent beneath its surface.

The manuscript is a palimpsest consisting of vellum leaves from which the "fluent and assured script" of the original Archimedes text and 55 diagrams had been washed or scraped off so that the surface could be used for new writings.

palindrome \PAL-in-droh\, noun:

A word, phrase, sentence, or verse that reads the same backward or forward.

A few examples:

- * Madam, I'm Adam. (Adam's first words to Eve?)
- * A man, a plan, a canal -- Panama! (The history of the Panama Canal in brief.)
- * Able was I ere I saw Elba. (Napoleon's lament.)

* Mom, Dad.

Palindrome comes from Greek palindromos, literally "running back (again)," from palin, "back, again" + dromos, "running."

palpable \PAL-puh-buhl\, adjective:

1. Capable of being touched and felt; perceptible by the touch; as, a palpable form.
2. Easily perceptible; plain; distinct; obvious; readily perceived and detected; gross; as, palpable imposture; palpable absurdity; palpable errors.

A sense of devastation from the attacks remains palpable, but so too is a sense of rejuvenation.

panacea \pan-uh-SEE-uh\, noun:

A remedy for all diseases, problems, or evils; a universal medicine; a cure-all.

[T]echnology had become a panacea for the great economic, social, and political challenges facing the nation as it embarked on the path of modernization.

panoply \PAN-uh-plee\, noun:

1. A splendid or impressive array.
2. Ceremonial attire.
3. A full suit of armor; a complete defense or covering.

Every step taken to that end which appeases the obsolete hatreds and vanished oppressions, which makes easier the traffic and reciprocal services of Europe, which encourages nations to lay aside their precautionary panoply, is good in itself.

pari passu \PAIR-ee-PASS-oo; PAIR-ih-PASS-oo\, adverb:

At an equal pace or rate.

Expand the state and [its] destructive capacity necessarily expands too, pari passu.

parley \PAR-lee\, noun:

A conference or discussion, especially with an enemy, as with regard to a truce or other matters.

intransitive verb: To speak with another; to confer on some point of mutual concern; specifically, to have a

discussion with an enemy.

The government recognized his knack for parleying with tribes, and it sent him all over the West.

parlous \PAR-luhs\, adjective:

Attended with peril; fraught with danger; hazardous.

It was a parlous time on the Continent, when Communists and fascists vied brutally for supremacy.

paroxysm \PAIR-uhk-siz-uhm\, noun:

1. (Medicine) A sudden attack, intensification, or recurrence of a disease.
2. Any sudden and violent emotion or action; an outburst; a fit.

But when he's on target -- and more often than not he is -- he can send you into paroxysms of laughter.

parsimonious \par-suh-MOH-nee-uhs\, adjective: Sparing in expenditure; frugal to excess.

His mother became increasingly parsimonious over the years, and even if there were a good doctor around she did not like to pay one.

peccadillo \peck-uh-DIL-oh\, noun:

A slight offense; a petty fault.

No peccadillo is too trivial: we learn that the mogul once blew his top because his laundry came back starched (" 'Fluff and fold!' he screamed").

pecuniary \pih-KYOO-nee-air-ee\, adjective:

1. Relating to money; monetary.
2. Consisting of money.
3. Requiring payment of money.

pelf \PELF\, noun: Money; riches; gain; -- generally conveying the idea of something ill-gotten.

. . . a master manipulator who will twist and dodge around the clock to keep the privileges of power and pelf.

pellucid \puh-LOO-sid\, adjective:

1. Transparent; clear; not opaque.
2. Easily understandable.

penchant \PEN-chunt\, noun: Inclination; decided taste; a strong liking.

"Ben was a dreamy little boy," recalls Hiddy, who always thought her brother's penchant for reveries might lead him to become an artist or a great philosopher.

perdurable \pur-DUR-uh-bul; pur-DYUR-\, adjective: Very durable; lasting; continuing long.

The idea of a classic is historically bound up with the view . . . that there are certain perdurable human truths and values, immune from geographical or historical [1]vitiation.

peregrination \pehr-uh-gruh-NAY-shun\, noun: A traveling from place to place; a

wandering.

He left Parma in the family camper-van, abandoning it in a Milan car-park to avoid its being identified at border controls before setting off on a peregrination through Switzerland, France, London, Canada, New York and eventually back to London.

perforce \pur-FORS\, adverb:

By necessity; by force of circumstance.

perfunctory \pur-FUNGK-tuh-ree\, adjective:

1. Done merely to carry out a duty; performed mechanically or routinely.
2. Lacking interest, care, or enthusiasm; indifferent.

The city's moderate hotels, however, tend to offer minimal comforts, perfunctory service and dreary decor.

persiflage \PUR-suh-flahzh\, noun:

Frivolous or bantering talk; a frivolous manner of treating any subject, whether serious or otherwise; light raillery.

He was somber and wordless and utterly unresponsive to my mother's charming persiflage.

perspicacity \pur-spuh-KAS-uh-tee\, noun:

Clearness of understanding or insight; penetration, discernment.

His predictions over the years have mixed unusual aristocratic insight with devastating perspicacity.

philomath \FIL-uh-math\, noun:

A lover of learning; a scholar.

It is precisely for the philomaths that universities ought to cater.

philter \FIL-tur\, noun:

1. A potion or charm supposed to cause the person taking it to fall in love.
2. A potion or charm believed to have magic power.

piebald \PY-bald\, adjective:

1. Having spots and patches of black and white, or other colors; mottled.
2. Mixed; composed of incongruous parts.

She remembered the piebald hair of a convicted woman, with brown roots growing through the crude bleach.

plenary \PLEE-nuh-ree; PLEN-uh-ree\, adjective:

1. Full in all respects; complete; absolute; as, plenary authority.
2. Fully attended by all qualified members.

Judges like to quote a 1936 Supreme Court opinion that spoke of "the very delicate, plenary and exclusive power of the President as the sole organ of the Federal Government in the field of international relations."

plebeian \plih-BEE-uhn\, adjective:

1. Of or pertaining to the Roman plebs, or common people.
2. Of or pertaining to the common people.

3. Vulgar; common; crude or coarse in nature or manner.

noun:

1. One of the plebs, or common people of ancient Rome; opposed to patrician.
2. One of the common people or lower classes.
3. A coarse, crude, or vulgar person.

He was unashamed of his plebeian roots but keen to provide himself with aristocratic forebears.

pleonasm \PLEE-uh-naz-uhm\, noun:

1. The use of more words than are necessary to express an idea; as, "I saw it with my own eyes."
2. An instance or example of pleonasm.
3. A superfluous word or expression.

polyglot \POL-ee-glot\, adjective:

1. Containing or made up of several languages.
2. Writing, speaking, or versed in many languages.

noun:

One who speaks several languages.

polymath \PAH-lee-math\, noun:

A person of great or varied learning; one acquainted with various subjects of study.

A century after Aristotle, in 240 B.C., a brilliant polymath, Eratosthenes, is appointed chief librarian of the Museum at Alexandria--the most cosmopolitan city and center of learning in the Mediterranean world.

portend \por-TEND\, verb: To indicate (events, misfortunes, etc.) as in future; to foreshadow; to bode.

Although no humans were there to witness the giant comet of 65 million years ago,

in this case it really did portend disaster.

posit \POZ-it\, transitive verb:

1. To assume as real or conceded.
2. To propose as an explanation; to suggest.
3. To dispose or set firmly or fixedly.

It is not necessary to posit mysterious forces to explain coincidences.

postprandial \post-PRAN-dee-uhl\, adjective:

Happening or done after a meal.

potable \POE-tuh-buhl\, adjective:

Fit to drink; suitable for drinking; drinkable.

practicable \PRAK-tik-uh-buhl\, adjective:

1. Capable of being done, accomplished, or put into practice; feasible; as, "a practicable method; a practicable aim."
2. Capable of being used; usable.

The authors give easy-to-follow instructions on coping with a whole ham leg, and so many ways to cook with it

that the project even seems practicable.

precipice \PRES-uh-pis\, noun:

1. A very steep, perpendicular, or overhanging place; a cliff.
2. The brink of a hazardous situation.

Barbara got as close to the edge as she dared and looked down over the precipice.

prelapsarian \pree-lap-SAIR-ee-uhn\, adjective:

Pertaining to or characteristic of the time or state before the Fall.

Because artifice connotes civilization to the Chinese elite, it doesn't have quite the negative meaning it has for Europeans brought up on stories of prelapsarian Eden and on Romantic conceptions of nature.

preponderate \prih-PON-duh-rayt\, intransitive verb:

1. To exceed in weight.
2. To incline or descend, as the scale of a balance; to be weighed down.
3. To exceed in influence, power, importance, number, amount, etc.

It's about the random acts of kindness which still, magically, preponderate over acts of incivility or nastiness.

prepotency \pree-POTE-n-see\, noun:

1. The quality or condition of having superior power, influence, or force; predominance.
2. (Biology) The capacity, on the part of one of the parents, as compared with the other, to transmit more than his or her own share of characteristics to their offspring.

The awesome prepotency of this smokescape is no illusion, for this is an epicenter of power, oil capital of the Western world and the most industrialized corner of the United States.

prescient \PRE-shee-uhnt\, adjective:

Knowing or anticipating the outcome of events before they happen.

Despite [1]Carroll's unfamiliarity with military matters he had an astonishingly prescient view of how the war for independence would be fought and won.

prestidigitation \pres-tuh-dij-uh-TAY-shuhn\, noun:

Skill in or performance of tricks; sleight of hand.

He was the man who had sat alone in a room for hundreds and hundreds of hours, his fingers manipulating cards and coins until he had learned and could perfectly reproduce every form of prestidigitation found in books of magic lore.

prevaricate \prih-VAIR-uh-kayt\, intransitive verb:

To depart from or evade the truth; to speak with equivocation.

Journalism has a similar obligation, particularly with men and women suddenly transferred to places of great power, who are often led to exaggerate and prevaricate, all in the name of a supposedly greater good.

prink \PRINGK\, transitive verb:

To dress up; to deck for show.

probity \PRO-buh-tee\, noun:

Complete and confirmed integrity; uprightness.

proclivity \pro-KLIV-uh-tee\, noun:

A natural inclination; predisposition.

procrastination \proh-CRAS-tuh-NAY-shun\,

noun:The act or habit of delaying doing something.

If you have newspapers dating to the last millennium, magazines from the Seventies stacked on your nightstand, and countless envelopes filled with family photos stuffed in a drawer, you may be carrying procrastination to an extreme.

prolix \pro-LIKS; PRO-lik\, adjective:

1. Extending to a great length; unnecessarily long; wordy.
2. Tending to speak or write at excessive length.

pronunciamento \pro-nun-see-uh-MEN-toe\, noun:

1. A proclamation or manifesto; a formal announcement or declaration.
2. A pronouncement.

propinquity \pruh-PING-kwih-tee\, noun:

1. Nearness in place; proximity.
2. Nearness in time.
3. Nearness of relation; kinship.

Following the race he took umbrage at Stewart's rough driving so early in the day, and the propinquity of the two drivers' haulers allowed the Kid to express his displeasure up close and personal.

propitious \pruh-PISH-uhs\, adjective:

1. Presenting favorable circumstances or conditions.
2. Favorably inclined; gracious; benevolent.

proponent \pruh-POH-nuhnt\, noun:One who argues in support of something; an advocate; a supporter.

A fervent proponent of the work ethic, Reuther at first resisted the demand for early retirement, as he had rejected shorter hours in the 1950s.

protean \PRO-tee-un; pro-TEE-un\, adjective:

1. Displaying considerable variety or diversity.
2. Readily assuming different shapes or forms.

The [Broadway] musical was ceaselessly protean in these years, usually conventional but always developing convention, twisting it, replacing it.

provenance \PROV-uh-nuhn(t)s\, noun:

Origin; source.

In a world awash in information of dubious provenance, whom can you trust to tell you the truth?

puerile \PYOO-uhr-uhl; PYOOR-uhl\, adjective:

Displaying or suggesting a lack of maturity; juvenile; childish.

pugilist \PYOO-juh-list\, noun:

One who fights with the fists; especially, a professional prize fighter; a boxer.

I had escaped my years as a pugilist with few of the badges that gave fellow-veterans of the ring the appearance of ruffians--missing eyes, mashed noses, or suchlike disfigurements--and had no more to show for my beatings than some small scars about my face and a nose that bore only the mild bumps and jagged edges that come with several breakings.

pugnacious \puhg-NAY-shuhs\, adjective: Inclined to fight; combative; quarrelsome.

Roberto's pugnacious grandmother lived across the meadow and would yell threats and curses helplessly from her balcony.

puissant \PWISS-uhnt; PYOO-uh-suhnt; pyoo-ISS-uhnt\,

adjective: Powerful; strong; mighty; as, a puissant prince or empire.

As an upcoming young corporate lawyer in San Francisco in the 1930's, Crum tended the interests of some of California's most puissant businesses, starting with William Randolph Hearst's newspaper empire.

pukka, also **pucka** \PUHK-uh\, adjective:

1. Authentic; genuine.
2. Good of its kind; first-class.

He talks like the quintessential pukka Englishman and quotes Chesterton and Kipling by the yard and yet he has **chosen to live most of his adult life abroad.**

pule \PYOOL\, intransitive verb:

To whimper; to whine.

The first lady initially flourished as a wronged wife precisely because she endured her humiliation so stoically; she did not whine or pule or treat her pain as license to behave badly.

purblind \PUR-blynd\, adjective:

1. Having greatly reduced vision.
2. Lacking in insight or discernment.

Add to this that the work seems unsure of its audience, providing no footnotes or exact references, but concluding with a bizarre parade of bibliographical essays running to 59 pages; that it gives the date only about once every 100 pages (and then not always the right date...) and leaves us feeling as if we were wandering purblind in some deep cave.

pusillanimous \pyoo-suh-LAN-uh-muhs\, adjective:

Lacking in courage and resolution; contemptibly fearful; cowardly.

putative \PYOO-tuh-tiv\, adjective:

Commonly thought or deemed; supposed; reputed.

Certainly, to have even a putative ancestor commemorated by Shakespeare is something about which to boast.

putsch \PUCH ('u' as in 'push'), noun:

(Sometimes capitalized) A secretly planned and suddenly executed attempt to overthrow a government.

Hitler operated from Munich where he enjoyed a fair degree of support, and it was here that his Putsch took place in an effort to seize power in Bavaria.

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Q

quaff \KWOFF; KWAFF\,

transitive verb: To drink with relish; to drink copiously of; to swallow in large draughts.

intransitive verb: To drink largely or luxuriously.

noun: A drink quaffed.

He gets drunk with his guides, makes eyes at the girls and gamely quaffs snake wine.

querulous \KWER-uh-luhs; -yuh\, adjective:

1. Apt to find fault; habitually complaining.
2. Expressing complaint; fretful; whining.

Querulous Oscar rattles on, never more or less than himself, but never much more than the content of his grumpy rattling.

quiddity \KWID-ih-tee\, noun:

1. The essence, nature, or distinctive peculiarity of a thing.
2. A hairsplitting distinction; a trifling point; a quibble.
3. An eccentricity; an odd feature.

He wanted to capture not just live animals, but the aliveness of animals in their natural state: their wildness, their quiddity, the fox-ness of the fox and the crow-ness of the crow

quidnunc \KWID-nuhngk\, noun:

One who is curious to know everything that passes; one who knows or pretends to know all that is going on; a gossip; a busybody.

What a treasure-trove to these venerable quidnuncs, could they have guessed the secret which Hepzibah and Clifford were carrying along with them!

quiescent \kwy-ES-uhnt; kwee-\, adjective:

Being in a state of repose; at rest; still; inactive.

The solution, Dr. Wilmut discovered, was to, in effect, put the DNA from the adult cell to sleep, making it quiescent by depriving the adult cell of nutrients.

quondam \KWAHN-duhm; KWAHN-dam\, adjective:

Having been formerly; former; sometime.

A quondam flower child, she spent seven years at the Royal

College of Art, before becoming a lecturer at Edinburgh School of Art.

quorum \KWOR-uhm\, noun:

1. Such a number of the officers or members of any body as is

legally competent to transact business.

2. A select group.

The extraordinary powers of the Senate were vested in twenty-six men, fourteen of whom would constitute a quorum, of which eight would make up a majority.

quotidian \kwoh-TID-ee-uhn\, adjective:

1. Occurring or returning daily; as, a quotidian fever.
2. Of an everyday character; ordinary; commonplace.

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R

raconteur \rack-on-TUR\, noun:

One who excels in telling stories and anecdotes.

An excellent raconteur, he had a varied stock of stories and enjoyed the joke just as much when it was on himself as he did when it was on some one else.

rapine \RAP-in\, noun: The act of plundering; the seizing and carrying away of another's property by force.

He who has once begun to live by rapine always finds reasons for taking what is not his.

rara avis \RARE-uh-AY-vis\, noun plural *rara avises* \RARE-uh-AY-vuh-suhz\ or *rarae aves* \RARE-ee-AY-veez\:

A rare or unique person or thing.

He was, after all, that *rara avis*, a Jewish Catholic priest with a wife and children.

ratiocination \rash-ee-ah-suh-NAY-shun; rash-ee-oh-\, noun:

The process of reasoning.

For all their vaunted powers of ratiocination, grand masters of chess tend to be a skittery lot.

rebarbative \ree-BAR-buh-tiv\, adjective:

Serving or tending to irritate or repel.

Over the past couple of hours a lot of rebarbative, ulcerated and embittered people had been working hard at bedding their resentments down in sensory-deprivation tanks full of alcohol.

recalcitrant \rih-KAL-sih-truhnt\, adjective:

Stubbornly resistant to and defiant of authority or restraint.

recondite \REK-un-dyt\, adjective: 1. Difficult to understand; [1]abstruse. 2. Concerned with obscure subject matter.

And his fondness for stopping his readers short in their tracks with evidence of his recondite vocabulary is wonderfully irritating.

recrimination \rih-krim-uh-NAY-shuhn\,

noun: 1. The act of returning one charge or accusation with another.

2. An accusation brought by the accused against the accuser; a counter accusation.

Others have written about the epidemic of partisanship and lack of character in our government's elected branches and the cycle of recrimination and disaffection it has created.

redivivus \red-uh-VY-vuhs; -VEE-\, adjective: Living again; brought back to life; revived; restored.

Augustine redivivus, R. contends, would find in the history of the present century confirmation of his pessimistic views of human nature.

redoubt \rih-DOWT\, noun:

1. A small and usually temporary defensive fortification.
2. A defended position or protective barrier.
3. A secure place of refuge or defense; a stronghold.

refractory \rih-FRAK-tuh-ree\, adjective:

1. Stubbornly disobedient; unmanageable.
2. Resisting ordinary treatment or cure.
3. Difficult to melt or work; capable of enduring high temperature.

refulgent \rih-FUL-juhnt\, adjective:

Shining brightly; radiant; brilliant; resplendent.

If Moore was not quite a burned-out case, his once refulgent light flickered only dimly in his sad last years.

relegate \REL-uh-gayt\, transitive verb:

1. To assign to an inferior position, place, or condition.
2. To assign to an appropriate category or class.
3. To assign or refer (a matter or task, for example) to another for appropriate action.
4. To send into exile; to banish.

Employment discrimination locked them out of better paying jobs and relegated them to menial occupations.

renascent \rih-NAS-uhnt\, adjective:

Springing or rising again into being; showing renewed vigor.

Their goal: to give voters in the June presidential elections a realistic choice between the rough-and-tumble reforms of President Boris Yeltsin and the Soviet-era nostalgia of Gennadi Zyuganov, leader of the renascent Russian Communist Party.

repast \rih-PAST\, noun:

Something taken as food; a meal.

This repast could scarcely have been digested before a "tea" of fresh bread, butter, cheese, cold meat, and cake was served at half past six.

restive \RES-tiv\, adjective:

1. Impatient under restriction, delay, coercion, or opposition; resisting control.
2. Unwilling to go on; obstinate in refusing to move forward; stubborn.

He turned restive at the least attempt at coercion.

reticent \RET-ih-suhnt\, adjective:

1. Inclined to keep silent; reserved; uncommunicative.
2. Restrained or reserved in style.
3. Reluctant; unwilling.

revenant \REV-uh-nunt\, noun:

One who returns after death (as a ghost) or after a long absence.

Lazarus, as a revenant, is often used by the religious romance-writers of the middle ages as a vehicle for their conceptions of the lower world.

ribald \RIB-uld; RY-bawld\, adjective:

Characterized by, or given to, vulgar humor; coarse.

noun: A ribald person; a lewd fellow.

Barrymore delights you with his own delight in his silly, ribald jokes (most of which are unprintable here).

rictus \RIK-tuhs\, noun:

1. The gape of the mouth, as of birds.

2. A gaping grin or grimace.

A rictus of cruel malignity lit up greyly their old bony faces.

riparian \rih-PAIR-ee-uhn; ry-PAIR-ee-uhn\, adjective:

of or pertaining to the bank of a river or stream

Riparian areas are the green, vegetated areas on each side of streams and rivers. They serve many important

functions, including purifying water by removing sediments and other contaminants; reducing the risk of flooding

and associated damage; reducing stream channel and streambank erosion; increasing available water and

stream flow duration by holding water in stream banks and [1]aquifers; supporting a diversity of plant and

wildlife species; maintaining a habitat for healthy fish populations; providing water, [2]forage, and shade

for wildlife and livestock; and creating opportunities for recreationists to fish, camp, picnic, and enjoy other

activities.

risible \RIZ-uh-buhl\, adjective:

1. Capable of laughing; disposed to laugh.
2. Exciting or provoking laughter; worthy of laughter; laughable; amusing.
3. Relating to, connected with, or used in laughter; as, "risible muscles."

Before long, I began to read aloud with my father, chanting the strange and wondrous rivers -- Shenandoah, Rappahannock, Chickahominy -- and wrapping my tongue around the risible names of rebel generals: Braxton Bragg, Jubal Early, John Sappington Marmaduke, William "Extra Billy" Smith, Pierre Gustave Toutant Beauregard.

robustious \roh-BUHS-chuhs\, adjective:

1. Boisterous; vigorous.
2. Coarse; rough; crude.

. . . the robustious romantic figure comparable to John Willoughby in Sense and Sensibility--he comes in with dash, then proves a temptation to the heroine but is an eventual disappointment.

roister \ROY-stur\, intransitive verb:

1. To engage in boisterous merrymaking; to revel; to carouse.
2. To bluster; to swagger.

roseate \ROH-zee-it; -ayt\, adjective:

1. Overly optimistic; bright or cheerful.
2. Resembling a rose especially in color.

That roseate view was shattered when the North last week detained a South Korean housewife, on a Kumkang tour with her six-year-old son, on a bizarre pretext.

rubicund \ROO-bih-kund\, adjective: Inclining to redness; ruddy; red.

The men are second cousins, around forty, resembling each other not very much, one taller and leaner, less rubicund than the other, who has just returned from California.

S

sacrosanct \SAK-roh-sankt\, adjective:

Sacred; inviolable.

The family was viewed as sacrosanct: divorce was highly unusual and children were expected to be grateful for the sacrifices that parents, who postponed their own gratifications in forming a family, made on their behalf.

salad days, noun:

A time of youthful inexperience, innocence, or indiscretion.

Those were his salad days, and he thought they might last forever.

salmagundi \sal-muh-GUHN-dee\, noun:

1. A salad plate usually consisting of chopped meat, anchovies, eggs, and onions, served with oil and vinegar.
2. Any mixture or assortment; a medley; a potpourri; a miscellany.

A glance at the schedule is enough to make one feel that one would rather go out and shoot songbirds than stay in and watch the dismal salmagundi of game shows, repeats and soap operas.

salubrious \suh-LOO-bree-us\, adjective:

Favorable to health; promoting health; healthful.

salutary \SAL-yuh-ter-ee\, adjective:

1. Producing or contributing to a beneficial effect; beneficial; advantageous.

2. Wholesome; healthful; promoting health.

Alexis de Tocqueville famously observed during his sojourn in this country that America was teeming with such associations -- charities, choral groups, church study groups, book clubs -- and that they had a remarkably salutary effect on society, turning selfish individuals into public-spirited citizens.

sang-froid, also **sangfroid** \sang-FRWAH\, noun:

Freedom from agitation or excitement of mind; coolness in

trying circumstances; calmness.

sapient \SAY-pee-uhnt\, adjective:

Wise; sage; discerning.

By actual measurement they are the brainiest of birds, and on subjective evidence they seem more sapient than most other living creatures.

sardonic \sar-DON-ik\, adjective: Scornful, mocking; disdainfully humorous.

Clive gave a sardonic account of a publicly subsidized "concert" in a nearly deserted church hall, in which the legs of a piano were repeatedly struck with the broken neck of a violin for over an hour.

sartorial \sar-TOR-ee-uhl\, adjective:

1. Of or relating to a tailor or to tailoring.
2. Of or relating to clothing, or style or manner of dress.
3. [Anatomy] Of or relating to the sartorius muscle.

His sartorial style runs toward jeans, Hawaiian shirts and cowboy boots, and he favors the grizzled, haven't-shaven-in-days look.

schadenfreude \SHOD-n-froy-duh\,

noun: A malicious satisfaction obtained from the misfortunes of others.

That the report of Sebastian Imhof's grave illness might also have been tinged with Schadenfreude appears not to have crossed Lucas's mind.

scintilla \sin-TIL-uh\, noun: A tiny or scarcely detectable amount; the slightest particle; a trace; a spark.

In victory, they must hold on to at least a scintilla of humility, lest they get too cocky -- and ripe for a takedown.

scrabble \SKRAB-uhl\, intransitive verb:

1. To scrape or scratch with the hands or feet.
2. To struggle by or as if by scraping or scratching.
3. To proceed by clawing with the hands and feet; to scramble.
4. To make irregular, crooked, or unmeaning marks; to scribble; to scrawl.

transitive verb:

1. To mark with irregular lines or letters; to scribble on or over.
2. To make or obtain by scraping together hastily.

noun:

1. The act or an instance of scrabbling.
2. A scribble.

Mice kept me awake by scrabbling in the uncovered garbage can.

scuttlebutt \SKUHT-l-buht\, noun:

1. (Nautical)
 - a. A drinking fountain on a ship.
 - b. A cask on a ship that contains the day's supply of drinking water.
2. Gossip; rumor.

What were they talking about? Sports? Neighborhood scuttlebutt? Off-color jokes? I didn't know; I knew only how exciting it was to see Dad in action.

sedulous \SEJ-uh-luhs\, adjective:

1. Diligent in application or pursuit; steadily industrious.
2. Characterized by or accomplished with care and perseverance.

He did not attain this distinction by accident but by sedulous study from the cradle forward.

segue \SEG-way; SAYG-way\, verb:

To proceed without interruption; to make a smooth transition.

Daylight segued into dusk. --Susan Dworski

Our honeymoon seemed to segue into a month of dinner parties.

sempiternal \sem-pih-TUR-nuhl\, adjective:

Of never ending duration; having beginning but no end; everlasting; endless.

In all the works on view, Mariani conjures a sempiternal realm that exists parallel to mundane reality and which is **accessible through art, reverie and the imagination**

sentient \SEN-shee-uhnt; -tee-; -shuhnt\, adjective:

1. Capable of perceiving by the senses; conscious.
2. Experiencing sensation or feeling.

I can remember very vividly the first time I became aware of my existence; how for the first time I realised that I was a sentient human being in a perceptible world.

seriatim \sir-ee-AY-tim; -AT-im\, adverb:

In a series; one after another.

sesquipedalian \ses-kwuh-puh-DAYL-yuhn\, adjective:

1. Given to or characterized by the use of long words.
2. Long and ponderous; having many syllables.

noun: A long word.

As a sesquipedalian stylist, he can throw a word like 'eponymous" into a sentence without missing a beat.

simulacrum \sim-yuh-LAY-kruhm; -LAK-ruhm\, noun;

plural simulacra \sim-yuh-LAY-kruh; -LAK-ruh\:

1. An image; a representation.
2. An insubstantial, superficial, or vague likeness or semblance.

Incorporating simulacra of historic buildings and exotic landscapes the Emperor saw on his extensive travels through his dominions, the villa is high-style multiculturalism.

sinecure \SY-nih-kyur; SIN-ih-\, noun:

An office or position that requires or involves little or no responsibility, work, or active service.

I was fortunate to receive the... offer, which in practical terms was a sinecure.

slugabed \SLUHG-uh-bed\, noun:

One who stays in bed until a late hour; a sluggard.

Nemecek's business is not for slugabeds. He opens for business every weekday at 4 a.m.

sobriquet \SO-brih-kay; -ket; so-brih-KAY; -KET\, noun:

A nickname; an assumed name; an epithet.

In addition to his notorious amours, he became distinguished for a turbulent naval career, particularly for the storms he weathered, thus bringing him the sobriquet "Foulweather Jack".

At a small reception on the occasion of my twenty-fifth anniversary in this position, my good friend Izzy Landes raised a glass and dubbed me the Curator of the Curators, a sobriquet I have worn with pride ever since.

sojourn \SO-jurn; so-JURN\, intransitive verb:

To stay as a temporary resident; to dwell for a time.

noun: A temporary stay.

Though he has sojourned in Southwold, wandered in Walberswick, dabbled in Dunwich, ambled through Aldeburgh and blundered through Blythburgh, Smallweed has never set foot in Oxford.

somniferous \som-NIF-uhr-uhs\, adjective:Causing or inducing sleep.

He has gone outside the usual channels of stodgy academic journals and somniferous lectures.

somnolent \SOM-nuh-luhnt\, adjective:

1. Sleepy; drowsy; inclined to sleep.
2. Tending to cause sleepiness or drowsiness.

soporific \sop-uh-RIF-ik; soh-puh-\, adjective:

1. Causing sleep; tending to cause sleep.
2. Of, relating to, or characterized by sleepiness or lethargy.

noun: A medicine, drug, plant, or other agent that has the quality of inducing sleep; a narcotic.

Hamilton's voice droned on, hypnotic, soporific, the gloom beyond the windows like the backdrop of a waking dream.

sough \SAU; SUHF\, intransitive verb:

To make a soft, low sighing or rustling sound, as the wind.

noun:

A soft, low rustling or sighing sound.

At a recent visit to Marsha's grave in Rathdrum, as the wind souged through the towering pines nearby, Marsha's brother Pat left a silk bluebird by her headstone to honor her love of the outdoors.

Spoonerism \SPOO-nuh-riz-uhm\, noun:

The transposition of usually initial sounds in a pair of words.

Spoony \SPOO-nee\, adjective:

1. Foolish; silly; excessively sentimental.
2. Foolishly or sentimentally in love.

Nevertheless, because we're spoony old things at heart, we like to believe that some showbiz marriages are different.

Spurious \SPYUR-ee-uhs\, adjective:

1. Not proceeding from the true or claimed source; not genuine; false.
2. Of illegitimate birth.

Some of these graves are clearly spurious and were manufactured by nineteenth-century royalists who

wanted evidence of an unbroken 2,000-year-old imperial line.

Stasis \STAY-sis; STAS-is\, noun:

plural stases \STAY-seez; STAS-eez\:

1. A state of balance, equilibrium, or stagnation.
2. Stoppage of the normal flow of a bodily fluid or semi fluid.

The reality of governance was not stasis but change; institutions did not operate according to mechanical laws, they evolved organically.

stentorian \sten-TOR-ee-uhn\, adjective:

Extremely loud.

Around his family, Sergeant Charles Mingus Sr. was easily angered and often violent and closemouthed the rest of the time, except when he gave orders in a stentorian voice that carried the assumption of command.

stertorous \STUR-tuh-ruhs\, adjective:

Characterized by a heavy snoring or gasping sound; hoarsely breathing.

In the cinder-block motel room he set the alarm, but his own stertorous breathing woke him before it rang.

stormy petrel \STOR-mee-PET-ruhl\, noun:

1. Any of various small sea birds of the family Hydrobatidae, having dark plumage with paler underparts; also called storm petrel.
2. One who brings discord or strife, or appears at the onset of trouble.

But far from a 'pet' of the Communist regime, Gorky, the "stormy petrel of the revolution," also condemned the revolution early on as a "cruel experiment" with the Russian people "doomed to failure."

sub rosa \suhb-ROH-zuh\, adverb:

Secretly; privately; confidentially.

sub-rosa, adjective:

Designed to be secret or confidential; secretive; private.

Unlike progressive educators of the past, who openly proclaimed their goals, today's multiculturalists are generally unwilling to engage the wider public in open debate about their methods, preferring to promote their agenda sub rosa.

subaltern \suhb-OL-tuhrn; SUHB-uhl-tuhrn\, adjective:

1. Ranked or ranged below; subordinate; inferior.
2. (Chiefly British) Ranking as a junior officer; being below the rank of captain.
3. (Logic) Asserting only a part of what is asserted in a related proposition.

noun:

1. A person holding a subordinate position.
2. (Chiefly British) A commissioned military officer below the rank of captain.
3. (Logic) A subaltern proposition.

Both the old and new elites, not the subaltern underclass of workers and peasants, superimposed the fever chart of the Russian Revolution on what they assumed to have been the fever chart of the French Revolution with a view to determining the degree to which the temperature curves of the two revolutions diverged from each other.

subfusc \sub-FUHSK\, adjective:

Dark or dull in color; drab, dusky.

noun: Dark or dull clothing.

The tea-cosy, property of one Edmund Gravel -- "known as the Recluse of Lower Spigot to everybody there and elsewhere," as the book's first page informs us -- is haunted by a six-legged emcee for various "subfusc but transparent" ghosts.

sublunary \suhb-LOO-nuh-ree\, adjective:

Situated beneath the moon; hence, of or pertaining to this world; terrestrial; earthly.

In Shakespearean drama, both tragic and comic, the storms and calamities that

shake the sublunary globe are reflections of turmoil in the hearts of men.

subterfuge \SUB-tur-fyooj\, noun: A deceptive device or stratagem.

In the end, however, all the stealth and subterfuge were for naught, as the young publicity agent couldn't keep the secret.

succinct \suhk-SINGKT\, adjective:

Characterized by compressed precise expression with no wasted words; brief; concise.

Susan was many things, and almost all of them wondrous, but she was not succinct. I minded this less than I might have, because I loved to listen to her talk.

sunder \SUN-dur\, transitive verb: To break apart; to separate; to divide; to sever.

intransitive verb: To become parted, disunited, or severed.

supererogatory \soo-puhr-ih-ROG-uh-tor-ee\, adjective:

1. Going beyond what is required or expected.
2. Superfluous; unnecessary.

As a result, Crane's moral reflections range from the pre-ethical (duties toward animals) to the properly ethical (conduct toward humans in ordinary situations) to the optional and supererogatory (heroic actions above and beyond ethical obligation).

supposititious \suh-poz-uh-TISH-uhs\, adjective:

1. Fraudulently substituted for something else; not being what is purports to be; not genuine; spurious; counterfeit.
2. Hypothetical; supposed.

He has threatened to write a small treatise exposing my stones as supposititious -- I should say, his stones, fashioned and fraudulently made by his hand.

surreptitious \sur-up-TISH-us; suh-rep-\, adjective:

1. Done, made, or gotten by stealth.

2. Acting with or marked by stealth.

susurration \soo-suh-RAY-shun\, noun:

A whispering sound; a soft murmur.

... the soft susurration of the wind through a stand of

whistling thorn.

susurrus \su-SUHR-uhs\, noun:

A whispering or rustling sound; a murmur.

Still, the breeze is soothing, as is the susurrus of the branches.

sybarite \SIB-uh-ryt\, noun:

A person devoted to luxury and pleasure.

sylvan \SIL-vuhn\, adjective:

1. Of or pertaining to woods or forest regions.

2. Living or located in a wood or forest.

3. Abounding in forests or trees; wooded.

noun:

1. A fabled deity or spirit of the woods.

2. One that lives in or frequents the woods or forest; a rustic.

They probably picture it as a kind of modest conservatory, set in sylvan splendour in some charmingly landscaped garden.

T

taciturn \TAS-uh-turn\, adjective:

Habitually silent; not inclined to talk.

temerarious \tem-uh-RAIR-ee-us\, adjective:

Recklessly or presumptuously daring; rash.

temerity \tuh-MER-uh-tee\, noun:

Unreasonable or foolhardy contempt of danger; rashness.

The elaborate caution with which the British commander now proceeded stands out in striking contrast with the temerity of his advance upon Bunker Hill in the preceding year.

tendentious \ten-DEN-shuhs\, adjective: Marked by a strong tendency in favor of a particular point of view.

Most writing about Wagner has been like political pamphleteering--tendentious, one-sided and full

of revisionist zeal.

tenebrous \TEN-uh-bruhs\, adjective: Dark; gloomy.

He found the Earl, who is eight feet tall and has the family trait of a Cyclops eye, standing stock still,

dressed from head to foot in deepest black, in one of the most tenebrous groves in all his haunted domains.

tetchy \TECH-ee\, adjective:

Peevish; testy; irritable.

Waugh's tetchy and combative personality made him a difficult companion at arms.

tintinnabulation \tin-tih-nab-yuh-LAY-shuhn\, noun: A tinkling sound, as of a bell or bells.

tmesis \TMEE-sis\, noun:

In grammar and rhetoric, the separation of the parts of a compound word, now generally done for humorous effect; for example, "what place soever" instead of "whatsoever place," or "abso-bloody-lutely."

Examples of tmesis:

If on the first, how heinous e'er it be,

To win thy after-love I pardon thee.

tocsin \TOCK-sin\, noun:

1. An alarm bell, or the ringing of a bell for the purpose of alarm.
2. A warning.

Some of the allegations put round are so frenzied, however, that some caution should be exercised before the tocsin is

rung too loudly.

torpid \TOR-pid\, adjective:

1. Having lost motion or the power of exertion and feeling; numb; benumbed.
2. Dormant; hibernating or estivating.
3. Dull; sluggish; apathetic.

Canary Islanders are citizens of Spain, but geography asserts itself from time to time, as a reminder that this land will always be Africa's: the trade winds get interrupted by strong gusts from the east that bring hot dust and sometimes even torpid, wind-buffed locusts.

tortuous \TOR-choo-us\, adjective:

1. Marked by repeated turns and bends; as, "a tortuous road up the mountain."
2. Not straightforward; devious; as, "his tortuous reasoning."
3. Highly involved or intricate; as, "tortuous legal procedures."

... the tortuous, narrow streets of Jerusalem's Old City.

traduce \truh-DOOS; -DYOOS\, transitive verb:

To expose to contempt or shame by means of false statements or misrepresentation; to represent as blamable; to vilify.

trammel \TRAM-uhl\, noun:

1. A kind of net for catching birds, fish, etc.
2. A kind of shackle used for making a horse amble.
3. Something that impedes activity, progress, or freedom, as a net or shackle.
4. An iron hook of various forms and sizes, used for handing kettles and other vessels over the fire.
5. An instrument for drawing ellipses.
6. An instrument for aligning or adjusting parts of a machine.

transitive verb:

1. To entangle, as in a net; to enmesh.
2. To hamper; to hinder the activity, progress, or freedom of.

I feel she dances a symbol of human happiness as it should be, free from unnatural

trammels.

trencherman \TREN-chuhr-muhn\, noun:

A hearty eater.

Quietly, almost stealthily, Livingstone has transformed himself . . . into a knowing gourmand-about-town, whose commitment to lunch is only rivalled by that other fabulous trencherman, Fatty Soames.

trepidation \trep-uh-DAY-shuhn\, noun:

1. [Archaic] An involuntary trembling; quaking; quivering.
2. A state of dread or alarm; nervous agitation; apprehension; fright.

A sense of triumph was in the air as people bravely went to the polls, but a sense of trepidation, too. "It is the happiest day of my life," a woman told me near Dili's Santa Cruz cemetery. "But it is also my day of greatest fear."

triskaidekaphobia \tris-ky-dek-uh-FOH-bee-uh\, noun: a morbid fear of the number 13 or the date Friday the 13th

--triskaidekaphobic, adjective and noun; triskaidekaphobe, noun

Thirteen people, pledged to eliminate triskaidekaphobia, fear of the number 13, today tried to reassure American sufferers by renting a 13 ft plot of land in Brooklyn for 13 cents... a month.

tyro \TY-roh\, noun:

A beginner in learning; a novice.

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U

ukase \yoo-KAYS; -KAYZ; YOO-kays; -kayz\, noun:

1. In imperial Russia, a published proclamation or order having the force of law.
2. Any order or decree issued by an authority; an edict.

I took a playwriting course from the noted Prof. A. M. Drummond, a huge man on crutches who right off

the bat delivered a ukase never to begin a play with the telephone ringing.

umbrage \UHM-brij\, noun:

1. Shade; shadow; hence, something that affords a shade, as a screen of trees or foliage.
2. a. A vague or indistinct indication or suggestion; a hint.
b. Reason for doubt; suspicion.
3. Suspicion of injury or wrong; offense; resentment.

Burr finally took umbrage, and challenged him to a duel.

unctuous \UNGK-choo-us\, adjective:

1. Of the nature or quality of an unguent or ointment; fatty; oily; greasy.
2. Having a smooth, greasy feel, as certain minerals.
3. Insincerely or excessively suave or ingratiating in manner or speech; marked by a false or smug earnestness or agreeableness.

A warmed, crusty French roll arrives split, lightly smeared with unctuous chopped liver.

upbraid \uhp-BRAYD\, transitive verb:

To scold or criticize harshly.

Afterwards, Grace roundly upbraided the boy for his boorishness.

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V

varicolored \VER-ih-kuh-lurd\, adjective:

Having a variety of colors; of various colors.

Where a bottleneck of sky showed between the hills, dark and light clouds lay in alternating layers like varicolored liquid that would not mix.

venial \VEE-nee-uhl; VEEN-yuhl\, adjective:

Capable of being forgiven; not heinous; excusable; pardonable.

Look less severely on a venial error.

verbiage \VUR-bee-ij\, noun:

1. An overabundance of words; wordiness.
2. Manner or style of expression; diction.

The sheer volume of verbiage he has expelled over eight years is enough to make John Updike look blocked.

verdant \VUR-dnt\, adjective:

1. Covered with growing plants or grass; green with vegetation.
2. Green.

3. Unripe in knowledge, judgment, or experience; unsophisticated; green.

Drab in winter, then suddenly sodden with alpine runoff, the region turns dazzlingly verdant in spring.

vim \VIM\, noun:

Power; force; energy; spirit; activity; vigor.

The 76-year-old retired Malaysian schoolteacher displayed so much vim during a recent hike through a

national park in Sarawak, astonished rangers began calling her a "recycled teenager."

virago \vuh-RAH-go; vuh-RAY-go\, noun:

1. A woman of extraordinary stature, strength, and courage.

2. A woman regarded as loud, scolding, ill-tempered, quarrelsome, or overbearing.

The intrepid heroines range from Unn the Deep Minded, the Viking virago who colonized Iceland, to Sue Hendrikson, a school dropout who became one of the great experts on amber, fossils and shipwrecks.

virtu \vuhr-TOO; vir-\, noun:

1. A love of or taste for fine objects of art.

2. Productions of art (especially fine antiques).

3. Artistic quality.

The Italian humanist Giovanni Pontano described these objects as "statues, pictures, tapestries, divans, chairs of ivory, cloth interwoven with gems, many-coloured boxes and coffers in the Arabian style, crystal vases and other things of this kind... [whose] sight... is pleasing and brings prestige to the owner of the house." They all spoke to the wealth, taste and virtu of their owner.

visage \VIZ-ij\, noun:

1. The face or appearance of a person or an animal; -- chiefly applied to the human face.
2. Appearance; aspect.

Otherwise attractive, [her] visage is marred by the unfortunate fact that her "upper lip, as if impelled by the action of involuntary muscles, habitually uplifts itself, conveying the impression of a sneer."

Older than most, and taller -- taller than Perlman, in fact -- she had a long and lean visage that might once have passed for fair but which age had turned more knowing and severe.

vitiate \VISH-ee-ayt\, transitive verb:

1. To make faulty or imperfect; to render defective; to impair; as, "exaggeration vitiates a style of writing."
2. To corrupt morally; to debase.
3. To render ineffective; as, "fraud vitiates a contract."

MacNelly is one of the few contemporary political cartoonists who can use humor to accentuate, not vitiate, his points.

vociferous \voh-SIF-uhr-uhs\, adjective:

Making a loud outcry; clamorous; noisy.

Claudio has work to do and I have a vociferous son demanding a story.

volte-face \vawlt-FAHS; vawl-tuh-\, noun:

An about-face; a reversal, as in policy or opinion.

voluble \VOL-yuh-buhl\, adjective:

1. Characterized by a ready flow of speech.
2. Easily rolling or turning; rotating.
3. (Botany) Having the power or habit of turning or twining.

voluptuary \vuh-LUHP-choo-er-ee\,

noun:

A person devoted to luxury and the gratification of sensual appetites; a sensualist.

adjective:

Voluptuous; luxurious.

Colette used to begin her day's writing by first picking fleas from her cat, and it's not hard to imagine how the methodical stroking and probing into fur might have focused such a voluptuary's mind.

votary \VOH-tuh-ree\, noun:

1. One who is devoted, given, or addicted to some particular pursuit, subject, study, or way of life.
2. A devoted admirer.
3. A devout adherent of a religion or cult.
4. A dedicated believer or advocate.

When she held out her hand to receive the glass, she had more the air of a full-grown Bacchante, celebrating the rites of Bacchus, than a votary at the shrine of Hygeia.

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W

wastrel \WAY-struhl\, noun:

1. A person who wastes, especially one who squanders money; a spendthrift.
2. An idler; a loafer; a good-for-nothing.

Horace Liveright, the book publisher of the 1920's, is usually recalled in literary memoirs as a charming wastrel, a gambler who always saw a winning bet as a chance to raise his stake in whatever game he was losing at.

waylay \WAY-lay\, transitive verb:

1. To lie in wait for and attack from ambush.
2. To approach or stop (someone) unexpectedly.

When his mother praised certain well-behaved and neatly dressed boys in the village, Jung was filled with

hate for them, and would waylay and beat them up.

wayworn \WAY-worn\, adjective:

Wearied by traveling.

The wayworn Battalions halt in the Avenue: they have, for the present, no wish so pressing as that of shelter and rest.

winsome \WIN-suhm\, adjective:

1. Cheerful; merry; gay; light-hearted.
2. Causing joy or pleasure; agreeable; pleasant.

And, oh, it was a sweet smile, they said, none sweeter, so winsome and large it transformed her

melancholy face.

woebegone \WOE-bee-gon\, adjective:

1. Beset or overwhelmed with woe; immersed in grief or sorrow;

woeful.

2. Being in a sorry condition; dismal-looking; dilapidated;

run-down.

Socrates, condemned to death by the people of Athens, prepares to drink a cup of hemlock, surrounded by woebegone friends.

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X

xenophobia \ZEN-uh-FOE-bee-uh\, noun:

Fear or hatred of strangers, people from other countries, or of anything that is strange or foreign.

After calling for peace in 61 languages and beseeching the world to end racism and xenophobia, the pope made a surprise announcement.

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Z

zeitgeist \TSYT-gyst; ZYT-gyst\, noun: (Often capitalized) The spirit of the time; the general intellectual and moral state or temper characteristic of any period of time.

Like other figures who seem, in retrospect, to have been precociously representative of their times, [1]Kerouac was not simply responding to the Zeitgeist, but to the peculiarly twisted facts of his own upbringing.

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