

PART 5

Building Your Vocabulary

Overview

Recognizing the meaning of words is essential to comprehending what you read. The more you stumble over unfamiliar words in a text, the more you have to take time out to look up words in your dictionary, the more likely you are to wind up losing track of what the author has to say.

To succeed in college, you must develop a college-level vocabulary. You must familiarize yourself with technical words in a wide variety of fields, mastering each field's special vocabulary. You must learn to use these words, and re-use them until they become second nature to you. The time you put in now learning vocabularybuilding techniques for this exam will pay off later on, and not just on the SAT.

This section provides you with a fundamental tool that will help you build your vocabulary: Barron's SAT High-Frequency Word List.

No matter how little time you have before you take the SAT, you can familiarize yourself with the sort of vocabulary you will be facing on the test. Look over the words on our SAT High-Frequency Word List: each of these words, ranging from everyday words such as abstract and objective to less common ones such as abstruse and iconoclast, has appeared (as answer choices or as question words) from five to thirty times on SAT and SAT I tests published through 2008. Notice that the words have been divided into groups of ten so you won't be overwhelmed.

Not only will looking over the SAT High-Frequency Word List reassure you that you do know some SAT-type words, but also it will help you on the actual day of the test. These words have turned up on recent tests: some of them may turn up on the test you take. Look over these words. Review any of them that are unfamiliar to you. Try using these words on your parents and friends. Then, if the words do turn up on your test, feel confident: your knowledge of them will help you come up with the correct answers or eliminate incorrect answer choices.

Tips on Building Your Vocabulary

Read Widely to Develop Your Feeling for Words

There is only one effective long-range strategy for vocabulary building: READ.

Read—widely and well. Sample different fields—physics, art history, political science, geology—and different styles. Extensive reading is the one sure way to make your vocabulary grow and to develop your feeling for words.

The Sunday edition of The New York Times contains special sections on travel, literature, and the arts. Tuesday's edition contains a special science section. The Washington Post and The Wall Street Journal offer excellent coverage of the arts and sciences, as well as current events.

Try to develop an interest in as many fields as you can. Sample some of the quality magazines: The New Yorker, Smithsonian, Scientific American, Natural History, Harper's, Newsweek, Time. In these magazines, you'll find articles on the whole range of fields touched on by the SAT. If you take time to acquaint yourself with the contents of these magazines, you'll soon be in command of an expanding vocabulary.

Use Memory Tricks to Keep New Words in Your Active Vocabulary

Reading widely does not always help you remember the words you read. You may have the words in your passive vocabulary and be able to recognize them when you see them in a particular context and yet be unable to define them clearly or think of additional contexts for them.

Remembering words takes work. It also takes wit. You can spend hours memorizing dictionary definitions and get no place. Try capitalizing on your native intelligence by thinking up mnemonic devices—memory tricks—to help you remember new words.

Consider the word hovel. A hovel is a dirty, mean house. How can you remember that? Hovel rhymes with shovel. You need to shovel out the hovel to live in it. Rhymes can help you remember what words mean.

Now consider the word hover. To hover is to hang fluttering in the air or to wait around. Can rhyme help you here? Hover rhymes with cover. That doesn't seem to work. However, take another look at hover. Cut off the letter h and you're left with the word over. If a helicopter hovers over an accident, it hangs in the air; if a mother hovers over a sick child, she waits around to care for it. Hidden little words can help you remember bigger words.

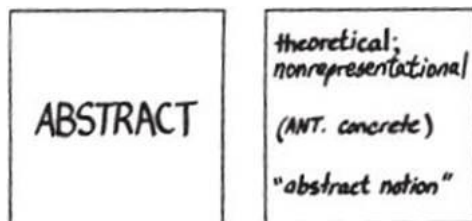
Try the hidden word trick with a less familiar word than hover. Take the word credulous, which means gullible or easily fooled. A credulous person will give money to someone who wants to sell him the Brooklyn Bridge. Now look closely at credulous. What little word is hidden within it? The hidden word is red. What

happens when a person finds out he's been taken for a fool? Often, the poor fool turns red. Credulous, red in the face. There's your memory trick.

Create Your Own Unique Flash Cards

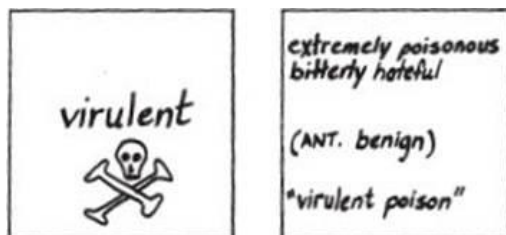
Here's how to make memorable, masterable flash cards. Be brief, but include all the information you need. On one side write the word. On the other side write concise definitions—two or three words at most—for each major meaning of the word you want to learn. Include an antonym, if you can; the synonym-antonym associations can help you remember both words. To fix the word in your mind, use it in a short phrase. Then write down that phrase.

Sample Flash Card:



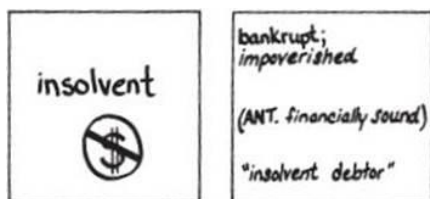
You can pack an enormous amount of information onto a flash card in only a few words. Use symbols and simple sketches; you may discover you remember pictures better than phrases.

Consider This Flash Card:



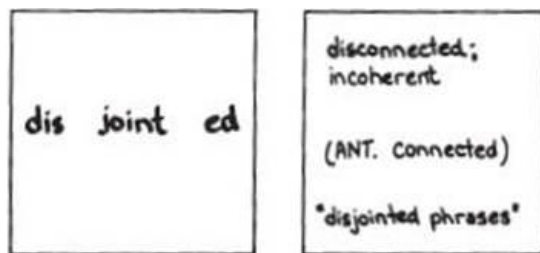
The skull-and-crossbones symbol means poison all around the world.

Consider This Card as Well:

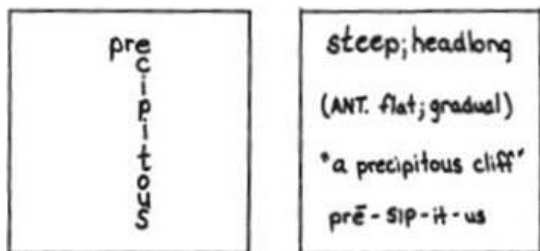


Anyone can draw a dollar sign. What makes the dollar sign useful on this card is that it's something you added personally. You didn't just copy down definitions straight off the list—you translated the word insolvent into symbols with which you're comfortable.

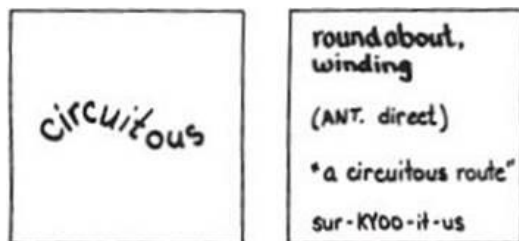
Work up your own personal set of symbols and abbreviations. You can use simple plus and minus signs to clarify a word's connotations. The word thrifty, for example, has positive connotations; it's good to be a thrifty person, a person who has sense enough to save. Thrifty, +. The word parsimonious, however, has negative connotations. Though saving money is good, it's bad to carry thrift to an extreme; when old Scrooge wouldn't let his shivering clerk light a fire on the coldest day in winter, he showed just how stingy and parsimonious he was. Parsimonious, -.



Visual cues can reinforce your sense of what a word means. Consider the word disjointed. You can take it apart.



You can also write words at odd angles.



Or you can write them in odd shapes. If you personalize your flash cards, you'll create something uniquely memorable, something that will stick in your mind because you thought it up yourself. That's the sort of flash card that will be most valuable to you.

Acquaint Yourself with Word Parts—Prefixes, Suffixes, Roots—to Expand Your Vocabulary

One good approach to expanding your vocabulary is to learn how to build up (and tear apart) words. A basic knowledge of roots, prefixes, and suffixes and their meanings can help you determine the meanings of unfamiliar words.

Consider the word magnanimity, a correct answer choice on a published SAT. It comes from two Latin words—magnus (great) and anima (spirit). Magnanimity is greatness of spirit, openhearted generosity.

Most modern English words are derived from Latin, Greek, and Anglo-Saxon (Old English). Because few students nowadays study Latin and Greek (and even fewer study Anglo-Saxon!), the majority of high school seniors and juniors lack an important tool for unlocking the meanings of unfamiliar words.

Build your vocabulary by mastering basic word parts. Learning 30 key word parts can help you determine the meanings of over 10,000 words. Learning 50 key word parts gives you access to the meanings of over 100,000!

A list of basic word parts appear towards the end of this section.

Work Through the SAT High-Frequency Word List to Expand Your College-Level Vocabulary

Take time to acquaint yourself specifically with the sorts of words you must know to do well on the SAT. Follow the procedures outlined below in order to work through the SAT High-Frequency List most profitably.

1. Select a list of 10 words.
2. Allot a definite time each day to study the list.
3. Devote at least half an hour to the list.
4. First go through the list looking at the short, simple-looking words (7 letters at most). Mark those you don't know. In studying, pay particular attention to them.
5. Go through the list again, looking at the longer words. Pay particular attention to words with more than one meaning and to familiar-looking words that turn out to have unusual definitions that surprise you. Study these secondary definitions.
6. Using the techniques shown in Tip 3, list unusual words on index cards that you can shuffle and review from time to time. (Study no more than 5 cards at a time.)
7. Use the illustrative sentences as models and make up new sentences of your own.

8. In making up new sentences, use familiar examples and be concrete: the junior high school band tuning up sounds discordant; in *Beauty and the Beast*, until Belle tames him, the Beast has a volatile temper.

For each word in the SAT High-Frequency List, the following is provided:

1. The word (printed in heavy type).
2. Its part of speech (abbreviated).
3. A brief definition.
4. A sentence illustrating the word's use.
5. Whenever appropriate, related words, together with their parts of speech.

The word list is arranged in alphabetical order.

SAT High-Frequency Word List

Word List 1

abate V. subside or moderate. Rather than leaving immediately, they waited for the storm to *abate*. abatement, N.

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

abrasive ADJ. rubbing away; tending to grind down. Just as *abrasive* cleaning powders can wear away a shiny finish, *abrasive* remarks can wear away a listener's patience. abrade, V.

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

absolute ADJ. complete; totally unlimited; certain. Although the King of Siam was an *absolute* monarch, he did not want to behead his unfaithful wife without *absolute* evidence of her infidelity.

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

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

abstruse ADJ. obscure; profound; difficult to understand. Baffled by the *abstruse* philosophical texts assigned in class, Dave asked Lexy to explain Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*.

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

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

Word List 2

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

acknowledge V. recognize; admit. Although Iris *acknowledged* that the Beatles' tunes sounded pretty dated nowadays, she still preferred them to the hip-hop songs her brothers played.

acquiesce V. assent; agree without protesting. When we asked her to participate in the play, she immediately *acquiesced*. acquiescence, N.; acquiescent, ADJ.

acrimonious ADJ. bitter in words or manner. The candidate attacked his opponent in highly *acrimonious* terms. acrimony, N.

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

address V. direct a speech to; deal with or discuss. Due to *address* the convention in July, Brown planned to *address* the issue of low-income housing in his speech.

adherent N. supporter; follower. In the wake of the scandal, the senator's one-time *adherents* quietly deserted him.

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

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

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

Word List 3

adversary N. opponent. The young wrestler struggled to overcome his *adversary*.

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

advocate V. urge; plead for. Noted abolitionists such as Frederick Douglass and Sojourner Truth *advocated* the eradication of the Southern institution of slavery. also N.

aesthetic ADJ. artistic; dealing with or capable of appreciation of the beautiful. The beauty of Tiffany's stained glass appealed to Esther's *aesthetic* sense. aesthete, N.

affable ADJ. easily approachable; warmly friendly. Accustomed to cold, aloof supervisors, Nicholas was amazed at how *affable* his new employer was.

affinity N. natural liking; kinship; similarity. Octavia felt an immediate *affinity* for the folk dancers she met; their love of dance was hers as well.

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

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

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

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

Word List 4

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

altruistic ADJ. unselfishly generous; concerned for others. In providing tutorial assistance and college scholarships for hundreds of economically disadvantaged youths, Eugene Lang performed a truly *altruistic* deed. altruism, N.

ambiguous ADJ. unclear or doubtful in meaning. The proctor's *ambiguous* instructions thoroughly confused us; we didn't know which columns we should mark and which we should leave blank. ambiguity, N.

ambivalence N. the state of having contradictory or conflicting emotional attitudes. Torn between loving her parents one minute and hating them the next, she was confused by the *ambivalence* of her feelings. ambivalent, ADJ.

ameliorate V. improve; make more satisfactory. Carl became a union organizer because he wanted to join the fight to *ameliorate* the working conditions in the factory.

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

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

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

analogy N. similarity; parallelism. A well-known *analogy* compares the body's immune system to an army whose defending troops are the lymphocytes or white blood cells. analogous, ADJ.

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

Word List 5

anecdote N. short account of an amusing or interesting event. Rather than make concrete proposals for welfare reform, President Ronald Reagan told *anecdotes* about poor people who became wealthy despite their impoverished backgrounds. anecdotal, ADJ.

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

antagonism N. hostility; active resistance. Barry showed his *antagonism* toward his new stepmother by ignoring her whenever she tried talking to him.
antagonistic, ADJ.

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

antiquated ADJ. old-fashioned; obsolete. Philip had grown so accustomed to editing his articles on word processors that he thought typewriters were too *antiquated* for him to use. antiquity, N.

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

apathy N. lack of caring; indifference. A firm believer in democratic government, she could not understand the *apathy* of people who never bothered to vote.
apathetic, ADJ.

apocryphal ADJ. untrue; made up; not genuine. To impress his friends, Ted invented *apocryphal* tales of his adventures in the big city.

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

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

Word List 6

apprehension N. fear; discernment; capture. The tourist refused to drive his rental car through downtown Miami because he felt some *apprehension* that he might be carjacked. apprehensive, ADJ.

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

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

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

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

arid ADJ. dry; barren. The cactus has adapted to survive in an *arid* environment.

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

articulate ADJ. effective; distinct. Her *articulate* presentation of the advertising campaign impressed her employers so much that they put her in charge of the project. also V.

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

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

Word List 7

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

ascetic ADJ. practicing self-denial; austere. The wealthy, self-indulgent young man felt oddly drawn to the *ascetic* life led by members of some monastic orders. also N.

aspire V. seek to attain; long for. Because he *aspired* to a career in professional sports, Philip enrolled in a graduate program in sports management. aspiration, N.

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

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

atrophy V. waste away. After three months in a cast, Stan's biceps had *atrophied* somewhat; however, he was sure that if he pumped iron for a while he would soon build them up. also, N.

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

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

audacious ADJ. daring; bold. Audiences cheered as Luke Skywalker and Princess Leia made their *audacious*, death-defying leap to freedom, escaping Darth Vader's troops. audacity, N.

augment V. increase; add to. Beth *augmented* her inadequate salary by selling Tupperware at parties at friends' homes.

Word List 8

austerity N. sternness; severity; strict economy; lack of luxuries. The bishops charged with conducting the heresy inquiry were a solemn, somewhat forbidding group; their demeanor reflected their *austerity*. austere, ADJ.

authentic ADJ. genuine. The art expert was able to distinguish the *authentic* Van Gogh painting from the forged copy. authenticate, V.

authoritarian ADJ. subordinating the individual to the state; completely dominating another's will. The leaders of the *authoritarian* regime ordered the suppression of the democratic protest movement. After years of submitting to the will of her *authoritarian* father, Elizabeth Barrett ran away from home with the poet Robert Browning.

autonomous ADJ. self-governing. Although the University of California at Berkeley is just one part of the state university system, in many ways Cal Berkeley

is *autonomous*, for it runs several programs that are not subject to outside control.
autonomy, N.

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

banal ADJ. hackneyed; commonplace; trite. Was it Pendleton's stale plot or his cliché-ridden dialogue that made his play seem so *banal*? banality, N.

bane N. cause of ruin; curse. Lucy's little brother was the *bane* of her existence; he made her life a total misery.

belie V. contradict; give a false impression. His coarse, hard-bitten exterior *belied* his inner sensitivity.

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

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

Word List 9

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

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

bequeath V. leave to someone by a will; hand down. Although Maud had intended to *bequeath* the family home to her nephew, she died before changing her will.
bequest, N.

biased ADJ. slanted; prejudiced. Because the judge played golf regularly with the district attorney's father, we feared he might be *biased* in the prosecution's favor.
bias, N.

bland ADJ. soothing; mild; dull. Unless you want your stomach lining to be eaten away, stick to a *bland* diet. blandness, N.

blasphemy N. irreverence; sacrilege; cursing. In my father's house, the Dodgers were the holiest of holies; to cheer for another team was to utter words of *blasphemy*.
blasphemous, ADJ.

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

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

brawn N. muscular strength; sturdiness. It takes *brawn* to become a champion weightlifter. brawny, ADJ.

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

Word List 10

buttress V. support; prop up. The attorney came up with several far-fetched arguments in a vain attempt to *buttress* his weak case. also N.

cacophonous ADJ. discordant; inharmonious. Do the students in the orchestra enjoy the *cacophonous* sounds they make when they're tuning up? I don't know how they can stand the racket. cacophony, N.

cajole V. coax; wheedle. Diane tried to *cajole* her father into letting her drive the family car. cajolery, N.

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

candor N. frankness. Jack can carry *candor* too far: when he told Jill his honest opinion of her, she felt like slapping his face. candid, ADJ.

capricious ADJ. unpredictable; fickle. The storm was *capricious*: it changed course constantly. Jill was *capricious*, too; she changed boyfriends almost as often as she changed clothes.

caricature N. distortion; burlesque. The cartoonist's *caricature* of President Bush grossly exaggerated the size of the president's ears. also V.

censorious ADJ. critical. *Censorious* people delight in casting blame.

censure V. blame; criticize. The senator was *censured* for behavior inappropriate to a member of Congress. also N.

certitude N. certainty. Though there was no *certitude* of his getting the job, Lou thought he had a good chance of doing so.

Word List 11

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

chronicle V. report; record (in chronological order). The gossip columnist was paid to *chronicle* the latest escapades of socially prominent celebrities. also N.

civil ADJ. having to do with citizens or the state; courteous and polite. Although Internal Revenue Service agents are *civil* servants, they are not always *civil* to suspected tax cheats. civility, N.

clamor N. noise. The *clamor* of the children at play outside made it impossible for her to take a nap. also V.

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

coercion N. use of force to get someone to obey. The inquisitors used both physical and psychological *coercion* to force Joan of Arc to deny that her visions were sent by God. coerce, V.

commemorate V. honor the memory of. The statue of the Minuteman *commemorates* the valiant soldiers who fought in the Revolutionary War.

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

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

compliance N. readiness to yield; conformity in fulfilling requirements. When I give an order, I expect *compliance*, not defiance. The design for the new school had to be in *compliance* with the local building code. comply, V.

Word List 12

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

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

concede V. admit; yield. Despite all the evidence Monica had assembled, Mark refused to *concede* that she was right. concession, N.

conciliatory ADJ. reconciling; appeasing; amiable. Hoping to end the coldness that had grown between them, he wrote a *conciliatory* note. conciliate, V.

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

conclusive ADJ. convincing; decisive. We have *conclusive* evidence that proves her innocence.

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

condone V. overlook voluntarily; forgive. Unlike the frail widow, who indulged her only son and *condoned* his minor offenses, the boy's stern uncle did nothing but scold him.

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

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

Word List 13

confound V. confuse; puzzle. No mystery could *confound* Sherlock Holmes for long.

confront V. face; challenge. All I ask is the chance to *confront* my accusers face to face.

conscientious ADJ. scrupulous; careful. A *conscientious* editor, she checked every definition for its accuracy.

consensus N. general agreement. Every time the garden club members had nearly reached a *consensus* about what to plant, Mistress Mary, quite contrary, disagreed.

consistency N. absence of contradictions; dependability; uniformity; degree of thickness. Holmes judged puddings and explanations on their *consistency*: he liked his puddings without lumps and his explanations without improbabilities.

constraint N. compulsion; repression of feelings. Because he trusted his therapist completely, he discussed his feelings openly with her without feeling the least *constraint*. constrain, V.

contagion N. infection. Fearing *contagion*, they took great steps to prevent the spread of the disease.

contemporary N. person belonging to the same period. Though Charlotte Bronte and George Eliot were *contemporaries*, the two novelists depicted their Victorian world in markedly different ways. also ADJ.

contend V. struggle; compete; assert earnestly. Sociologist Harry Edwards *contends* that young African-American athletes are exploited by some college recruiters. contention, N.

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

Word List 14

contract V. compress or shrink; make a pledge; catch a disease. Warm metal expands; cold metal *contracts*.

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

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

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

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

corrosion N. destruction by chemical action. The *corrosion* of the girders supporting the bridge took place so gradually that no one suspected any danger until the bridge suddenly collapsed. corrode, V.

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

credulity N. belief on slight evidence; gullibility; naivete. Con artists take advantage of the *credulity* of inexperienced investors to swindle them out of their savings. credulous, ADJ.

criterion N. standard used in judging. What *criterion* did you use when you selected this essay as the prize winner? criteria, PL.

cryptic ADJ. mysterious; hidden; secret. Thoroughly baffled by Holmes's *cryptic* remarks, Watson wondered whether Holmes was intentionally concealing his thoughts about the crime.

Word List 15

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

curtail V. shorten; reduce. Barbie declined Ken's invitation to go to the movies, saying her father had ordered her to *curtail* her social life.

cynic N. one who is skeptical or distrustful of human motives. A born *cynic*, Sidney was suspicious whenever anyone gave him a gift "with no strings attached." cynical, ADJ.

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

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

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

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

decorum N. propriety; orderliness and good taste in manners. Even the best-mannered students have trouble behaving with *decorum* on the last day of school. decorous, ADJ.

defame V. harm someone's reputation; malign. If you try to *defame* my good name, my lawyers will see you in court. defamation, N.

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

Word List 16

defiance N. refusal to yield; resistance. When John reached the "terrible two's," he responded to every parental request with howls of *defiance*. defy, V. defiant, ADJ.

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

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

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

delineate V. portray; depict; sketch. Using only a few descriptive phrases, Austen *delineates* the character of Mr. Collins so well that we can predict his every move. delineation, N.

denounce V. condemn; criticize. The reform candidate *denounced* the corrupt city officers for having betrayed the public's trust. denunciation, N.

deny V. contradict; refuse. Do you *deny* his story, or do you support what he says? denial, N.

depict V. portray; describe. Some newspaper accounts *depicted* the movie star as a reclusive prima donna; others portrayed her as a sensitive artist harassed by the media. depiction, N.

deplore V. regret strongly; express grief over. Although Ann Landers *deplored* the disintegration of the modern family, she recognized that not every marriage could be saved.

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

Word List 17

deprecate V. express disapproval of; protest against; belittle. A firm believer in old-fashioned courtesy, Miss Post *deprecated* the modern tendency to address new acquaintances by their first names. deprecatory, ADJ.

deride V. ridicule; make fun of. The critics *derided* his pretentious dialogue and refused to consider his play seriously. derision, N.

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

despondent ADJ. depressed; gloomy. To the concern of his parents, William became seriously *despondent* after he broke up with Jan. despondency, N.

despot N. tyrant; harsh, authoritarian ruler. How could a benevolent king turn overnight into a *despot*?

detached ADJ. emotionally removed; calm and objective; indifferent. A psychoanalyst must maintain a *detached* point of view and stay uninvolved with her patients' personal lives. detachment, N. (secondary meaning)

deterrent N. something that discourages; hindrance. Does the threat of capital punishment serve as a *deterrent* to potential killers? deter, V.

detrimental ADJ. harmful; damaging. Journalists wondered whether Senator Obama's relationship with his controversial minister would eventually prove *detrimental* to his chances of being elected president. detriment, N.

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

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

Word List 18

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

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

digression N. wandering away from the subject. Nobody minded when Professor Renoir's lectures wandered away from their official themes; his *digressions* were always more fascinating than the topic of the day. digress, V.

diligence N. steadiness of effort; persistent hard work. Her employers were greatly impressed by her *diligence* and offered her a partnership in the firm. diligent, ADJ.

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

disband V. dissolve; disperse. The chess club *disbanded* after its disastrous initial season.

discerning ADJ. mentally quick and observant; having insight. Though no genius, the star was sufficiently *discerning* to tell her true friends from the countless phonies who flattered her. discernment, N.

disclose V. reveal. Although competitors offered him bribes, he refused to *disclose* any information about his company's forthcoming product. disclosure, N.

discordant ADJ. not harmonious; conflicting. Nothing is quite so *discordant* as the sound of a junior high school orchestra tuning up. discord, N.

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

Word List 19

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

discrepancy N. lack of consistency; difference; contradiction. “Observe, Watson, the significant *discrepancies* between Sir Percy’s original description of the crime and his most recent testimony. What do these contradictions suggest?”

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

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

disdain V. view with scorn or contempt. In the film *Funny Face*, the bookish heroine *disdained* fashion models for their lack of intellectual interests. also N.

disinclination N. unwillingness. Some mornings I feel a great *disinclination* to get out of bed.

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

dismantle V. take apart. When the show closed, they *dismantled* the scenery before storing it.

dismiss V. put away from consideration; reject. Believing in John’s love for her, she *dismissed* the notion that he might be unfaithful. (secondary meaning)

disparage V. belittle. A doting mother, Emma was far more likely to praise her son’s crude attempts at art than to *disparage* them.

Word List 20

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

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

dispel V. drive away; scatter; cause to vanish. The bright sunlight eventually *dispelled* the morning mist.

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

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

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

dissent V. disagree. In a recent Supreme Court decision, Justice Ginsburg *dissented* from the majority opinion. also N.

dissipate V. squander; waste; scatter. Although Jon had the potential to become a fine actor, he seemed content to *dissipate* his talents by appearing in burlesque shows and soap operas.

dissonance N. discord; disagreement. Composer Charles Ives often used *dissonance*—clashing or unresolved chords—for special effects in his musical works.

dissuade V. persuade not to do; discourage. Since Tom could not *dissuade* Huck from running away from home, he decided to accompany his friend. dissuasion, N.

Word List 21

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

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

diverse ADJ. many and different; distinctly unlike. San Francisco offers tourists *diverse* pleasures, some as simple as a ride on a cable car, others as sophisticated as a night at the opera. diversity, N.

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

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

document V. provide written evidence. She kept all the receipts from her business trip in order to *document* her expenses for the firm. also N.

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

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

dubious ADJ. questionable; filled with doubt. Many critics of the SAT contend that the test is of *dubious* worth. Jack claimed he could get a perfect 2400 on the SAT, but Ellen was *dubious*: she knew he hadn't cracked a book in three years.

duplicity N. double-dealing; hypocrisy. When Tanya learned that Mark had been two-timing her, she was furious at his *duplicity*. duplicitous, ADJ.

Word List 22

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

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

ebb V. recede; lessen. Sitting on the beach, Mrs. Dalloway watched the waters recede as the tide slowly *ebbed*. also, N.

eccentric ADJ. odd; whimsical; irregular. The comet veered dangerously close to Earth in its *eccentric* orbit.

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

eclipse V. darken; extinguish; surpass. The new stock market high *eclipsed* the previous record set in 1995.

effervescent ADJ. exuberant; bubbly and excited. Nothing depressed Amy for long; she was so naturally *effervescent* that she was soon as high-spirited as ever. effervesce, V.

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

elated ADJ. overjoyed; in high spirits. Grinning from ear to ear, Bonnie Blair was clearly *elated* by her fifth Olympic gold medal. elation, N.

eloquence N. expressiveness; persuasive speech. The crowds were stirred by Martin Luther King's *eloquence*. eloquent, ADJ.

Word List 23

elusive ADJ. evasive; baffling; hard to grasp. No matter how hard Tom tried to lure the trout into taking the bait, the fish was too *elusive* for him to catch. elude, V.

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

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

endorse V. approve; support. Everyone waited to see which one of the rival candidates for the city council the mayor would *endorse*. endorsement, N. (secondary meaning)

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

enervate V. weaken. She was slow to recover from her illness; even a short walk to the window would *enervate* her. enervation, N.

engender V. cause; produce. To receive praise for real accomplishments *engenders* self-confidence in a child.

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

enigma N. puzzle; mystery. “What *do* women want?” asked Dr. Sigmund Freud. Their behavior was an *enigma* to him.

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

Word List 24

enumerate V. list; mention one by one. Huck hung his head in shame as Miss Watson *enumerated* his many flaws.

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

epic N. long heroic poem, or similar work of art. Kurosawa’s film *Seven Samurai* is an *epic* that portrays the struggle of seven warriors to destroy a band of robbers. also ADJ.

epicure N. connoisseur of food and drink. *Epicures* patronize this restaurant because it features exotic wines and dishes. epicurean, ADJ.

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

equanimity N. calmness of temperament; composure. Even the inevitable strains of caring for an ailing mother did not disturb Bea’s *equanimity*.

equivocal ADJ. ambiguous; intentionally misleading. Rejecting the candidate’s *equivocal* comments on tax reform, the reporters pressed him to say where he stood on the issue. equivocate, V.

erratic ADJ. odd; unpredictable; wandering. Investors become anxious when the stock market appears *erratic*.

erroneous ADJ. mistaken; wrong. I thought my answer was correct, but it was *erroneous*.

erudite ADJ. learned; scholarly. Unlike much scholarly writing, Huizinga's prose was entertaining as well as *erudite*, lively as well as learned. erudition, N.

Word List 25

esoteric ADJ. hard to understand; known only to the chosen few. Stories in *The New Yorker* often include allusions to obscure people and events, references so *esoteric* that only true New Yorkers can understand them.

espouse V. adopt; support. She was always ready to *espouse* a worthy cause.

esteem V. respect; value; judge. Jill *esteemed* Jack's taste in music, but she deplored his taste in clothes.

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

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

euphemism N. mild expression used in place of an unpleasant one. The Nazis did not describe their slaughter of the Jews as genocide; instead, they used a *euphemism*, calling it "the final solution."

euphonious ADJ. pleasing in sound. *Euphonious* even when spoken, the Italian language is particularly pleasing to the ear when sung. euphony, N.

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

evanescent ADJ. fleeting; vanishing. Brandon's satisfaction in his new job was *evanescent*, for he immediately began to notice its many drawbacks. evanescence, N.

exacerbate V. worsen; embitter; aggravate. When acacias are in bloom, the increase of pollen in the air *exacerbates* Richard's asthma.

Word List 26

exacting ADJ. extremely demanding. Cleaning the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel was an *exacting* task, one that demanded extremely meticulous care on the part of the restorers. *exaction*, N.

exalt V. raise in rank or dignity; praise. The rock star Mick Jagger was *exalted* to the rank of knighthood by the Queen; he now is known as Sir Mick Jagger.

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

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

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

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

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

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

expedient ADJ. suitable to achieve a particular end; practical; politic. A pragmatic politician, he was guided by what was *expedient* rather than by what was ethical. *expediency*, N.

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

Word List 27

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

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

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

exploit V. make use of, sometimes unjustly. Cesar Chavez fought attempts to *exploit* migrant farmworkers in California. exploitation, N.

expository ADJ. explanatory; intended to explain. The manual that came with my DVR was no masterpiece of *expository* prose: its explanations were so garbled that I couldn't even figure out how to rewind a program. exposition, N.

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

extol V. praise; glorify. The president *extolled* the astronauts, calling them the pioneers of the Space Age.

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

extricate V. free; disentangle. The fox could not *extricate* itself from the trap.

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

Word List 28

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

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

fallacious ADJ. false; misleading. Paradoxically, *fallacious* reasoning does not always yield erroneous results: even though your logic may be faulty, the answer you get may nevertheless be correct. fallacy, N.

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

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

feasible ADJ. practical. Without additional funding, it may not be *feasible* to build a new stadium for the team on the highly developed west side of the city.

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

fickle ADJ. changeable; faithless. As soon as Romeo saw Juliet, he forgot all about his old girlfriend Rosaline. Was Romeo *fickle*?

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

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

Word List 29

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

florid ADJ. excessively ornate; flowery; reddish. He was an old-fashioned orator, known for his overblown rhetoric and his *florid* prose.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

foster V. rear; encourage; nurture. According to the legend, Romulus and Remus were *fostered* by a she-wolf who raised them as if they were her cubs. also ADJ.

Word List 30

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

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

frail ADJ. weak. The delicate child seemed too *frail* to lift the heavy carton. frailty, N.

frivolous ADJ. lacking in seriousness; self-indulgently carefree; relatively unimportant. Though Nancy enjoyed Bill's *frivolous*, lighthearted companionship, she sometimes wondered whether he could ever be serious. frivolity, N.

frugality N. thrift; economy. In economically hard times, those who do not learn to practice *frugality* risk bankruptcy. frugal, ADJ.

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

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

futile ADJ. ineffective; fruitless. It is *futile* for me to try to get any work done around here while the telephone is ringing every 30 seconds.

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

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

Word List 31

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

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

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

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

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

glutton N. someone who eats too much; greedy person. Who is the *glutton* who ate up all the chocolate chip cookies I made for dessert? *gluttonous*, ADJ.

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

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

gratify V. please. Serena's parents were *gratified* by her successful performance at Wimbledon.

gratuitous ADJ. given freely; unwarranted; unprovoked; uncalled for. Quit making *gratuitous* comments about my driving; no one asked you for your opinion.

Word List 32

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

gregarious ADJ. sociable. Typically, partygoers are *gregarious*; hermits are not.

grievance N. cause of complaint. When her supervisor ignored her complaint, she took her *grievance* to the union.

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

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

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

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

hallowed ADJ. blessed; consecrated; venerated. General Douglas MacArthur wrote, "Duty, honor, country: those three *hallowed* words reverently dictate what you ought to be, what you can be, what you will be."

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

harass V. annoy by repeated attacks; torment. When he could not pay his bills as quickly as he had promised, he was *harassed* by his creditors.

Word List 33

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

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

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

heed V. pay attention to; consider. We hope you *heed* our advice and get a good night's sleep before the test. also N.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Word List 34

hindrance N. block; obstacle. Stalled cars along the highway present a *hindrance* to traffic that tow trucks should remove without delay. hinder, V.

hoard V. stockpile; accumulate for future use. Whenever there are rumors of a food shortage, many people are tempted to *hoard* food. also N.

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

hone V. sharpen. Determined to get a good shave, Ed *honed* his razor with great care.

hostility N. unfriendliness; hatred. Children often feel *hostility* toward the new baby in the family.

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

husband V. use sparingly; conserve; save. Marathon runners must *husband* their energy so that they can keep going for the entire distance.

hyperbole N. exaggeration; overstatement. As far as I'm concerned, Apple's claims about the new computer are pure *hyperbole*: no machine is that good!

hypocritical ADJ. pretending to be virtuous; deceiving. Believing Eddie to be interested only in his own advancement, Greg resented his *hypocritical* posing as a friend. hypocrisy, N.

hypothetical ADJ. based on assumptions or hypotheses; supposed. Suppose you are accepted by Harvard, Stanford, and Brown. Which one would you choose to attend? Remember: this is only a *hypothetical* situation. hypothesis, N.

Word List 35

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

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

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

illicit ADJ. illegal. The defense attorney maintained that her client had never performed any *illicit* action.

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

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

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

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

immune ADJ. resistant to; free or exempt from. Fortunately, Florence had contracted chicken pox as a child and was *immune* to it when her baby broke out in spots. immunity, N.

immutable ADJ. unchangeable. All things change over time; nothing is *immutable*.

Word List 36

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

impartial ADJ. not biased; fair. Knowing that she could not be *impartial* about her own child, Jo refused to judge any match in which Billy was competing.

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

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

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

impede V. hinder; block; delay. The special prosecutor determined that the attorney general, though inept, had not intentionally set out to *impede* the progress of the investigation.

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

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

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

impervious ADJ. impenetrable; incapable of being damaged or distressed. The carpet salesman told Simone that his most expensive brand of floor covering was warranted to be *impervious* to ordinary wear and tear.

Word List 37

impetuous ADJ. violent; hasty; rash. “Leap before you look” was the motto suggested by one particularly *impetuous* young man.

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

implement V. put into effect; supply with tools. The mayor was unwilling to *implement* the plan until she was sure it had the governor’s backing.
implementation, N.

implication N. something hinted at or suggested. When Miss Watson said she hadn’t seen her purse since the last time Jim was in the house, the *implication* was that she suspected Jim had taken it. imply, V.

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

impoverished ADJ. poor. The typical “rags to riches” story tells the tale of an *impoverished* youth who through his own efforts rises to a position of wealth and prosperity.

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

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

inadvertently ADV. by oversight; carelessly or unintentionally. Judy's great fear was that she might *inadvertently* omit a question on the exam and mismark her whole answer sheet.

inane ADJ. silly; senseless. There's no point to what you're saying. Why are you bothering to make such *inane* remarks?

Word List 38

inaugurate V. start; initiate; install in office. The airline decided to *inaugurate* its new route to the Far East with a special reduced fare offer. *inaugural*, ADJ.

incense V. enrage; infuriate. Cruelty to defenseless animals *incensed* Kit.

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

incessant ADJ. uninterrupted; unceasing. We could not fall asleep because of the crickets' *incessant* chirping, which seemed to go on all night long.

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

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

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

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

inclined ADJ. tending or leaning toward; bent. Though I am *inclined* to be skeptical, the witness's manner *inclines* me to believe his story. also V.

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

him.

Word List 39

incoherent ADJ. unintelligible; muddled; illogical. The bereaved father sobbed and stammered, his words becoming almost *incoherent* in his grief. incoherence, N.

incongruous ADJ. not fitting; absurd. Towering over the nearby houses, the McMansion looked wholly *incongruous* in the historic neighborhood of small Craftsman-style bungalows. incongruity, N.

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

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

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

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

indict V. charge. The district attorney didn't want to *indict* the suspect until she was sure she had a strong enough case to convince a jury. indictment, N.

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

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

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

Word List 40

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

indolent ADJ. lazy. Couch potatoes who lie back on their sofas watching television are by definition *indolent*. indolence, N.

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

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

induce V. persuade; bring about. After the quarrel, Tina said nothing could *induce* her to talk to Tony again. inducement, N.

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

industrious ADJ. diligent; hard-working. If you are *industrious* and apply yourself to your assignments, you will do well in college. industry, N.

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

inept ADJ. unsuited; absurd; incompetent. The *inept* glovemaker was all thumbs.

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

Word List 41

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

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

infamous ADJ. notoriously bad. Charles Manson and Jeffrey Dahmer are both *infamous* killers.

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

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

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

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

ingenious ADJ. clever; resourceful. Kit admired the *ingenious* way her iPod shuffled the songs on her playlist. ingenuity, N.

ingrate N. ungrateful person. That *ingrate* Bob sneered at the tie I gave him.

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

Word List 42

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

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

injurious ADJ. harmful. Smoking cigarettes can be *injurious* to your health.

innate ADJ. inborn. Mozart's parents soon recognized young Wolfgang's *innate* talent for music.

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

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

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

insatiable ADJ. not easily satisfied; greedy. Lexy's passion for new clothes is *insatiable*; she can shop till she literally drops.

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

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

Word List 43

insipid ADJ. lacking in flavor; dull. Flat prose and flat ginger ale are equally *insipid*: both lack sparkle.

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

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

insularity N. narrow-mindedness; isolation. The *insularity* of the islanders manifested itself in their suspicion of anything foreign. insular, ADJ.

insuperable ADJ. insurmountable; unbeatable. Though the odds against their survival seemed *insuperable*, the Apollo 13 astronauts reached Earth safely.

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

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

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

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

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

Word List 44

intervene V. come between. Rachel tried to *intervene* in the quarrel between her two sons.

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

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

intransigence N. refusal of any compromise; stubbornness. When I predicted that the strike would be over in a week, I didn't expect to encounter such *intransigence* from both sides. intransigent, ADJ.

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

intricate ADJ. complex; knotty; tangled. Eric spent many hours designing mazes so *intricate* that none of his classmates could solve them. intricacy, N.

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

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

intuition N. immediate insight; power of knowing without reasoning. Even though Tony denied that anything was wrong, Tina trusted her *intuition* that something was bothering him. intuitive, ADJ.

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

Word List 45

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

irascible ADJ. irritable; easily angered. Pop had what people call a hair-trigger temper: he was a hot-tempered, *irascible* guy.

ironic ADJ. relating to a contradiction between an event's expected result and its actual outcome; sarcastic. It is *ironic* that his success came when he least wanted it. irony, N.

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

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

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

irresolute ADJ. uncertain how to act; weak. Once you have made your decision, don't waver: a leader should never appear *irresolute*.

irreverence N. lack of proper respect. Some audience members were amused by the *irreverence* of the comedian's jokes about the Pope; others felt offended by his lack of respect for their faith. irreverent, ADJ.

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

jocular ADJ. said or done in jest; joking. Although Bill knew the boss hated jokes, he couldn't resist making one *jocular* remark.

Word List 46

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

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

kindle V. start a fire; inspire. Her teacher's praise *kindled* a spark of hope inside Maya.

labyrinth N. maze. Hiding from Indian Joe, Tom and Becky soon lost themselves in the *labyrinth* of secret underground caves.

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

lament V. grieve; express sorrow. Even advocates of the war *lamented* the loss of so many lives in combat. also N. lamentation, N.

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

laud V. praise. The NFL *lauded* Boomer Esiason's efforts to raise money to combat cystic fibrosis. laudable, laudatory, ADJ.

lavish ADJ. liberal; wasteful; extravagant. Her wealthy suitors wooed her with *lavish* gifts. also V.

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

Word List 47

lethargic ADJ. drowsy; dull. The stifling classroom made Sarah *lethargic*: she felt as if she were about to nod off. lethargy, N.

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

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

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

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

loathe V. detest. Booing and hissing, the audience showed how much they *loathed* the wicked villain.

lofty ADJ. very high. Though Barbara Jordan's fellow students used to tease her about her *lofty* ambitions, she rose to hold one of the highest positions in the land.

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

lucid ADJ. easily understood; clear; intelligible. Ellen made an excellent teacher: her explanations of technical points were *lucid* enough for a child to grasp. lucidity, N.

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

Word List 48

magnanimous ADJ. generous. Philanthropists by definition are *magnanimous*; misers, by definition, are not. magnanimity, N.

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

maladroit ADJ. clumsy; bungling. "Oh! My stupid tongue!" exclaimed Jane, embarrassed at having said anything so *maladroit*.

malevolent ADJ. wishing evil. Iago is a *malevolent* villain who takes pleasure in ruining Othello.

malice N. hatred; spite. Jealous of Cinderella's beauty, her wicked stepsisters expressed their *malice* by forcing her to do menial tasks. malicious, ADJ.

malign V. speak evil of; bad-mouth; defame. Putting her hands over her ears, Rose refused to listen to Betty *malign* her friend Susan.

marred ADJ. damaged; disfigured. She had to refinish the *marred* surface of the table. mar, V.

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

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

meager ADJ. scanty; inadequate. Still hungry after his *meager* serving of porridge, Oliver Twist asked for a second helping.

Word List 49

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

medley N. mixture. To avoid boring listeners by playing any one tune for too long, bands may combine three or four tunes into a *medley*.

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

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

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

mercurial ADJ. capricious; changing; fickle. Quick as quicksilver to change his moods, he was a *mercurial* creature, whose reactions were impossible to predict.

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

methodical ADJ. systematic. An accountant must be *methodical* and maintain order among his financial records.

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

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

Word List 50

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

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

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

mitigate V. appease; moderate. Because solar energy has the power to reduce greenhouse gases, conversion to the use of solar energy may help *mitigate* global warming.

mock V. ridicule; imitate, often in derision. It is unkind to mock anyone; it is stupid to *mock* anyone significantly bigger than you. mockery, N.

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

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

monotony N. sameness leading to boredom. What could be more deadly dull than the *monotony* of punching numbers into a computer hour after hour?
monotonous, ADJ.

morbid ADJ. given to unwholesome thought; moody; characteristic of disease. People who visit disaster sites in order to peer at the grisly wreckage are indulging their *morbid* curiosity.

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

Word List 51

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

munificent ADJ. very generous. The Annenberg Trust made a *munificent* gift that supported art programs in the public schools. munificence, N.

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

muted ADJ. silent; muffled; toned down. In the funeral parlor, the mourners' voices had a *muted* quality. mute, V.

naivete N. quality of being unsophisticated; simplicity; artlessness; gullibility. Touched by the *naivete* of sweet, convent-trained Cosette, Marius pledges himself to protect her innocence. naive, ADJ.

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

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

nonchalance N. indifference; lack of concern; composure. Cool, calm, and collected under fire, James Bond shows remarkable *nonchalance* in the face of danger. nonchalant, ADJ.

nonentity N. person of no importance; nonexistence. Because the two older princes dismissed their youngest brother as a *nonentity*, they never suspected that he was quietly plotting to seize the throne.

nostalgia N. homesickness; longing for the past. My grandfather seldom spoke of life in the old country; he had little patience with *nostalgia*. nostalgic, ADJ.

Word List 52

notoriety N. disrepute; ill fame. To the starlet, any publicity was good publicity: if she couldn't have a good reputation, she'd settle for *notoriety*. notorious, ADJ.

novelty N. something new; newness. GPS receivers are no longer a *novelty* in automobiles; every rental car we drive these days has one. novel, ADJ.

novice N. beginner. When Grandma got her first cell phone, she was such a complete *novice* that she couldn't even change her ringtone.

nuance N. shade of difference in meaning or color. Jody gazed at the Monet landscape for an hour, appreciating every subtle *nuance* of color in the painting.

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

nurture V. nourish; educate; foster. The Head Start program attempts to *nurture* prekindergarten children so that they will do well when they enter public school. also N.

obdurate ADJ. stubborn. Although defeat appeared inevitable, the general was *obdurate* in his refusal to surrender.

objective ADJ. not influenced by emotions; fair. Even though he was her son, she tried to be *objective* about his behavior. objectivity, N.

objective N. goal; aim. A degree in medicine was her ultimate *objective*.

obliterate V. destroy completely. In the film *Independence Day*, the explosion *obliterated* the White House, vaporizing it completely.

Word List 53

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

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

obscure ADJ. dark; vague; unclear. Even after I read the poem a fourth time, its meaning was still *obscure*. obscurity, N.

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

obsequious ADJ. slavishly attentive; servile; fawning; sycophantic. Helen valued people who acted as if they respected themselves; nothing irritated her more than an *obsequious* waiter or a fawning salesclerk.

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

obstinate ADJ. stubborn; hard to control or treat. We tried to persuade him to give up smoking, but he was *obstinate* and refused to change. obstinacy, N.

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

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

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

Word List 54

opaque ADJ. dark; not transparent. The *opaque* window shade kept the sunlight out of the room. opacity, N.

opportunist N. individual who sacrifices principles for expediency by taking advantage of circumstances. A born *opportunist*, the vicar of Bray changed his political convictions to suit whoever was in power, switching from fervent monarchist to puritan reformer in order to retain his ecclesiastical living.

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

optional ADJ. not compulsory; left to one's choice. I was amazed by the range of *optional* accessories available for my iPod. option, N.

opulence N. extreme wealth; luxuriousness; abundance. The glitter and *opulence* of the ballroom took Cinderella's breath away. opulent, ADJ.

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

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

ostentatious ADJ. showy; pretentious; trying to attract attention. Trump's latest casino in Atlantic City is the most *ostentatious* gambling palace in the East: it easily outglitters its competitors. ostentation, N.

pacifist N. one opposed to force; antimilitarist. Shooting his way through the jungle, Rambo was clearly no *pacifist*.

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

Word List 55

paltry ADJ. insignificant; petty; trifling. While NBA stars make an annual average salary of more than \$5 million, a player in basketball's minor league may make as little as a *paltry* \$15,000.

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

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

paragon N. model of perfection. Her fellow students disliked Lavinia because Miss Minchin always pointed her out as a *paragon* of virtue.

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

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

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

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

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

partial ADJ. biased; having a liking for something. I am extremely *partial* to chocolate eclairs. *partiality*, N.

partisan ADJ. one-sided; prejudiced; committed to a party. On certain issues of principle, she refused to take a *partisan* stand, but let her conscience, not her political affiliation, be her guide. also N.

Word List 56

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

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

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

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

pensive ADJ. dreamily thoughtful; thoughtful with a hint of sadness; contemplative. Michelangelo's statue of Lorenzo de Medici presents the duke in a *pensive* attitude, as if deep in thought.

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

perfunctory ADJ. superficial; not thorough; lacking interest, care, or enthusiasm. Giving the tabletop only a *perfunctory* swipe with her dust cloth, Betty promised herself she'd do a more thorough job tomorrow.

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

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

pernicious ADJ. very destructive. Crack cocaine has had a *pernicious* effect on urban society: It has destroyed families, turned children into drug dealers, and increased the spread of violent crime.

Word List 57

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

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

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

pessimism N. belief that life is basically bad or evil; gloominess. People inclined to *pessimism* view the wineglass as half-empty; people inclined to optimism view it as half-full.

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

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

phenomena N. PL. observable facts; subjects of scientific investigation. We kept careful records of the *phenomena* we noted in the course of these experiments.
phenomenon, SING.

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

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

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

Word List 58

pithy ADJ. concise; meaningful; substantial; meaty. While other girls might have gone on and on about how uncool Elton was, Liz summed him up in one *pithy* remark: "He's bogus!"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

poignancy N. quality of being deeply moving; keenness of emotion. Watching the tearful reunion of the long-separated mother and child, the social worker was touched by the *poignancy* of the scene. poignant, ADJ.

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

Word List 59

pomposity N. exaggerated self-esteem; excessive grandness in manner or speech. Although the commencement speaker had some good things to say, we had to laugh at his *pomposity* and general air of self-importance. pompous, ADJ.

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

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

potent ADJ. powerful; persuasive; greatly influential. Looking at the expiration date on the cough syrup bottle, we wondered whether the medicine would still be *potent*. potency, N.

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

prattle V. babble. We enjoyed listening to baby Santiago happily *prattle* in English and Spanish about the night and the stars and *la luna*.

precarious ADJ. uncertain; risky. Saying the stock would be a *precarious* investment, Tom advised me against purchasing it.

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

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

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

Word List 60

preclude V. make impossible; eliminate. Because the band had already signed a contract to play in Hollywood on New Year's Eve, that booking *precluded* their accepting the New Year's Eve gig in London they were offered.

precocious ADJ. advanced in development. Listening to the grown-up way the child discussed serious topics, we couldn't help remarking how *precocious* she was.
precocity, N.

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

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

predilection N. partiality; preference. Although Ogden Nash wrote all sorts of poetry over the years, he had a definite *predilection* for limericks.

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

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

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

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

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

Word List 61

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

profligate ADJ. dissipated; wasteful; wildly immoral. We must reverse the *profligate* spending that has characterized this administration's fiscal policy and that has left us with a projected deficit of almost 500 billion dollars. also N.

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

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

Word List 62

proliferation N. rapid growth; spread; multiplication. Times of economic hardship inevitably encourage the *proliferation* of countless get-rich-quick schemes. proliferate, V.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Word List 63

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

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

prudent ADJ. cautious; careful. A miser hoards money not because he is *prudent* but because he is greedy. prudence, N.

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

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

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

qualified ADJ. limited; restricted. Unable to give the candidate full support, the mayor gave him only a *qualified* endorsement. (secondary meaning)

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

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

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

Word List 64

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

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

rancor N. bitterness; hatred. Thirty years after the war, she could not let go of the past but was still filled with *rancor* against the foe.

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

ratify V. approve formally; verify. Party leaders doubted that they had enough votes in both houses of Congress to *ratify* the constitutional amendment.

raucous ADJ. harsh and shrill; disorderly and boisterous. The *raucous* crowd of New Year's Eve revelers got progressively noisier as midnight drew near.

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

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

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

recant V. disclaim or disavow; retract a previous statement; openly confess error. Hoping to make Joan of Arc *recant* her sworn testimony, her English captors tried to convince her that her visions had been sent to her by the Devil.

Word List 65

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

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

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

rectify V. set right; correct. You had better send a check to *rectify* your account before American Express cancels your credit card.

redundant ADJ. superfluous; repetitious; excessively wordy. In your essay, you unnecessarily repeat several points; try to be less *redundant* in the future.
redundancy, N.

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

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

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

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

relish V. savor; enjoy. Watching Peter enthusiastically chow down, I thought, "Now there's a man who *relishes* a good dinner!" also N.

Word List 66

remorse N. guilt; self-reproach. The murderer felt no *remorse* for his crime.

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

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

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

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

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

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

reprimand V. reprove severely; rebuke. Every time Ermengarde made a mistake in class, she was afraid that Miss Minchin would *reprimand* her and tell her father how badly she was doing in school. also N.

reproach V. express disapproval. He never could do anything wrong without imagining how the look on his mother's face would *reproach* him afterwards. also N. reproachful, ADJ.

reprove V. censure; rebuke. The principal severely *reproved* the students whenever they talked in the halls.

Word List 67

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

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

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

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

resolution N. determination; resolve. Nothing could shake his *resolution* that his children would get the best education that money could buy. resolute, ADJ.

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

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

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

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

restraint N. controlling force; control over one's emotions. Amanda dreamed of living an independent life, free of all parental *restraints*.

Word List 68

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Word List 69

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

scanty ADJ. meager; insufficient. Thinking his helping of food was *scanty*, Oliver Twist asked for more.

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

scrutinize V. examine closely and critically. Searching for flaws, the sergeant *scrutinized* every detail of the private's uniform.

Word List 70

seclusion N. isolation; solitude. One moment she loved crowds; the next, she sought *seclusion*. secluded, ADJ.

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

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

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

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

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

sever V. cut; separate. The released prisoner wanted to begin a new life and *sever* all connections with his criminal past. *severance*, N.

severity N. harshness; intensity; austerity; rigidity. The newspaper editorials disapproved of the *severity* of the sentence.

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

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

Word List 71

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

slacken V. slow up; loosen. As they passed the finish line, the runners *slackened* their pace.

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

slothful ADJ. lazy. The British word "layabout" is a splendid descriptive term for someone *slothful*. What did the lazy bum do? He lay about the house all day. *sloth*, N.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Word List 72

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

spendthrift N. someone who wastes money. Easy access to credit encourages people to turn into *spendthrifts* who shop till they drop.

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

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

spurious ADJ. false; counterfeit. The antique dealer hero of Jonathan Gash's mystery novels gives the reader tips on how to tell *spurious* antiques from the real thing.

spurn V. reject; scorn. The heroine *spurned* the villain's advances.

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

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

stagnant ADJ. motionless; stale; dull. Mosquitoes commonly breed in ponds of *stagnant* water. stagnate, V.

stanza N. division of a poem. Do you know the last *stanza* of “The Star-Spangled Banner”?

Word List 73

static ADJ. unchanging; lacking development. Nothing had changed at home; life was *static*. stasis, N.

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

stoic ADJ. impassive; unmoved by joy or grief. I wasn’t particularly *stoic* when I had my flu shot; I squealed like a stuck pig. also N.

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

strut N. pompous walk; swagger. Colonel Blimp’s *strut* as he marched about the parade ground revealed him for what he was: a pompous buffoon. also V.

stupefy V. make numb; stun; amaze. Disapproving of drugs in general, Laura refused to take sleeping pills or any other medicine that might *stupefy* her.

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

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

subordinate ADJ. occupying a lower rank; inferior; submissive. Bishop Proudie’s wife expected all the *subordinate* clergy to behave with great deference to the wife of their superior. also N., V.

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

Word List 74

substantial ADJ. ample; solid. The scholarship represented a *substantial* sum of money.

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

subtlety N. perceptiveness; ingenuity; delicacy. Never obvious, she expressed herself with such *subtlety* that her remarks went right over the heads of most of her audience. *subtle*, ADJ.

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

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

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

superfluous ADJ. excessive; overabundant; unnecessary. Please try not to include so many *superfluous* details in your report; just give me the facts. *superfluity*, N.

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

suppress V. crush; subdue; inhibit. After the armed troops had *suppressed* the rebellion, the city was placed under martial law.

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

Word List 75

surpass V. exceed. Her SAT scores *surpassed* our expectations.

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

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

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

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

sycophant N. servile flatterer; bootlicker; yes man. Fed up with the toadies and brownnosers who made up his entourage, the star cried, “Get out, all of you! I’m sick to death of *sycophants*!”

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

taciturn ADJ. habitually silent; talking little. The stereotypical cowboy is a *taciturn* soul, answering lengthy questions with “Yep” or “Nope.”

taint V. contaminate; cause to lose purity; modify with a trace of something bad. Fighting to preserve her good name, Desdemona wondered what had occurred to *taint* her reputation. also N.

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

Word List 76

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

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

tedious ADJ. boring; tiring. The repetitious nature of work on the assembly line made Martin’s job very *tedious*. tedium, N.

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

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

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

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

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

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

thrive V. prosper; flourish. Despite the impact of the recession on the restaurant trade, Philip's cafe *thrived*.

Word List 77

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

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

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

tranquillity N. calmness; peace. After the commotion and excitement of the city, I appreciate the *tranquillity* of these fields and forests.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Word List 78

trivial ADJ. unimportant; trifling. Too many magazines ignore newsworthy subjects and feature *trivial* affairs. trivia, N.

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

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

tyranny N. oppression; cruel government. Frederick Douglass fought against the *tyranny* of slavery throughout his entire life.

undermine V. weaken; sap. The recent corruption scandals have *undermined* many people's faith in the city government.

uniformity N. sameness; monotony. After a while, the *uniformity* of TV situation comedies becomes boring. uniform, ADJ.

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

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

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

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

Word List 79

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

vacillate V. waver; fluctuate. Uncertain which suitor she ought to marry, the princess *vacillated*, saying now one, now the other. *vacillation*, N.

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

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

verbose ADJ. wordy. We had to make some major cuts in Senator Foghorn's speech because it was far too *verbose*. *verbosity*, N.

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

vigor N. active strength. Although he was over seventy years old, Jack had the *vigor* of a man in his prime. *vigorous*, ADJ.

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

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

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

Word List 80

virtuoso N. highly skilled artist. The child prodigy Yehudi Menuhin grew into a *virtuoso* whose violin performances thrilled millions. virtuosity, N.

virulent ADJ. extremely poisonous; hostile; bitter. Laid up with an extremely *virulent* case of measles, he blamed his doctors because his recovery took so long. In fact, he became quite *virulent* on the subject of the quality of modern medical care. virulence, N.

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

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

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

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

whimsical ADJ. capricious; fanciful. He dismissed his generous gift to his college as a sentimental fancy, an old man's *whimsical* gesture. whimsy, N.

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

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

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

Basic Word Parts

In addition to reviewing the SAT High-Frequency Word List, what other quick vocabulary-building tactics can you follow when you face an SAT deadline?

One good approach is to learn how to build up (and tear apart) words. You know that words are made up of other words: the room in which you store things is the storeroom; the person whose job is to keep the books is the bookkeeper.

Just as words are made up of other words, words are also made up of word parts: prefixes, suffixes, and roots. A knowledge of these word parts and their meanings can help you determine the meanings of unfamiliar words.

Most modern English words are derived from Anglo-Saxon (Old English), Latin, and Greek. Because few students nowadays study Latin and Greek (and even fewer study Anglo-Saxon!), the majority of high school juniors and seniors lack a vital tool for unlocking the meaning of unfamiliar words.

Build your vocabulary by mastering basic word parts. Learning thirty key word parts can help you unlock the meaning of over 10,000 words. Learning fifty key word parts can help you unlock the meaning of over 100,000!

Common Prefixes

Prefixes are syllables that precede the root or stem of a word and change or refine its meaning.

Prefix	Meaning	Illustration
ab, abs	from, away from	abduct lead away, kidnap abjure renounce abject degraded, cast down
ambi	both	ambidextrous skilled with both hands ambiguous of double meaning ambivalent having two conflicting emotions
an, a	without	anarchy lack of government anemia lack of blood

		amoral without moral sense
ante	before	antecedent preceding event or word antediluvian ancient (before the flood) antenuptial before the wedding
anti	against, opposite	antipathy hatred antiseptic against infection antithetical exactly opposite
arch	chief, first	archetype original archbishop chief bishop archeology study of first or ancient times
bi	two	bicameral composed of two houses (Congress) biennial every two years bicycle two-wheeled vehicle
cata	down	catastrophe disaster cataract waterfall catapult hurl (throw down)
circum	around	circumnavigate sail around (the globe) circumspect cautious (looking around) circumscribe limit (place a circle around)
com (co, col, con, cor)	with, together	combine merge with commerce trade with communicate correspond with coeditor joint editor collateral subordinate, connected conference meeting

		corroborate confirm
contra, contro	against	contravene conflict with controversy dispute
de	down, away	debase lower in value decadence deterioration decant pour off
di	two	dichotomy division into two parts dilemma choice between two bad alternatives
dia	across	diagonal across a figure diameter distance across a circle diagram outline drawing
dis	not, apart	discord lack of harmony disparity condition of inequality; difference
dys	faulty, bad	dyslexia faulty ability to read dyspepsia indigestion
ex, e	out	expel drive out extirpate root out eject throw out
extra, extro	beyond, outside	extracurricular beyond the curriculum extraterritorial beyond a nation's bounds extrovert person interested chiefly in external objects and actions
hyper	above; excessively	hyperbole exaggeration hyperventilate breathe at an excessive rate
hypo	beneath; lower	hypoglycemia low blood sugar
in (il, im, ir)	not	inefficient not efficient

		<p>inarticulate not clear or distinct</p> <p>illegible not readable</p> <p>impeccable not capable of sinning; flawless</p> <p>irrevocable not able to be called back</p>
in (il, im, ir)	in, on, upon	<p>invite call in</p> <p>illustration something that makes clear</p> <p>impression effect upon mind or feelings</p> <p>irradiate shine upon</p>
inter	between, among	<p>intervene come between</p> <p>international between nations</p> <p>interjection a statement thrown in</p>
intra, intro	within	<p>intramural within a school</p> <p>introvert person who turns within himself</p>
macro	large, long	<p>macrobiotic tending to prolong life</p> <p>macrocosm the great world (the entire universe)</p>
mega	great, million	<p>megalomania delusions of grandeur</p> <p>megaton explosive force of a million tons of TNT</p>
meta	involving change	<p>metamorphosis change of form</p>
micro	small	<p>microcosm miniature universe</p> <p>microbe minute organism</p> <p>microscopic extremely small</p>
mis	bad, improper	<p>misdemeanor minor crime; bad conduct</p> <p>mischance unfortunate accident</p> <p>misnomer wrong name</p>

mis	hatred	misanthrope person who hates mankind misogynist woman-hater
mono	one	monarchy government by one ruler monotheism belief in one god
multi	many	multifarious having many parts multitudinous numerous
neo	new	neologism newly coined word neophyte beginner; novice
non	not	noncommittal undecided nonentity person of no importance
pan	all, every	panacea cure-all panorama unobstructed view in all directions
per	through, completely	permeable allowing passage through pervade spread throughout
peri	around, near	perimeter outer boundary periphery edge
poly	many	polygamist person with several spouses polyglot speaking several languages
post	after	postpone delay posterity generations that follow posthumous after death
pre	before	preamble introductory statement prefix word part placed before a root/stem premonition forewarning
prim	first	primordial existing at the dawn of time primogeniture state of being the first born

pro	forward, in favor of	propulsive driving forward proponent supporter
proto	first	prototype first of its kind
pseudo	false	pseudonym pen name
re	again, back	reiterate repeat reimburse pay back
retro	backward	retrospect looking back retroactive effective as of a past date
se	away, aside	secede withdraw seclude shut away seduce lead astray
semi	half, partly	semiannual every six months semiconscious partly conscious
sub (suc, suf, sug, sup, sus)	under, less	subway underground road subjugate bring under control succumb yield; cease to resist
super, sur	over, above	supernatural above natural things supervise oversee surtax additional tax
syn (sym, syl, sys)	with, together	synchronize time together synthesize combine together sympathize pity; identify with syllogism explanation of how ideas relate system network
tele	far	telemetry measurement from a distance telegraphic communicated over a distance

trans	across	transport carry across transpose reverse, move across
ultra	beyond, excessive	ultramodern excessively modern ultracritical exceedingly critical
un	not	unfeigned not pretended; real unkempt not combed; disheveled unwitting not knowing; unintentional
under	below	undergird strengthen underneath underling someone inferior
uni	one	unison oneness of pitch; complete accord unicycle one-wheeled vehicle
vice	in place of	vicarious acting as a substitute viceroy governor acting in place of a king
with	away, against	withhold hold back; keep withstand stand up against; resist

Common Roots and Stems

Roots are basic word elements that have been carried over into English. Stems are variations of roots brought about by changes in declension or conjugation.

Root or Stem	Meaning	Illustration
ac, acr	sharp	acrimonious bitter; caustic acerbity bitterness of temper acidulate to make somewhat acid or sour
aev, ev	age, era	primeval of the first age

		coeval of the same age or era medieval or mediaeval of the middle ages
ag, act	do	act deed agent doer
agog	leader	demagogue false leader of people pedagogue teacher (leader of children)
agri, agrari	field	agrarian one who works in the field agriculture cultivation of fields peregrination wandering (through fields)
ali	another	alias assumed (another) name alienate estrange (turn away from another)
alt	high	altitude height altimeter instrument for measuring height
alter	other	altruistic unselfish, considering others alter ego a second self
am	love	amorous loving, especially sexually amity friendship amicable friendly
anim	mind, soul	animadvert cast criticism upon unanimous of one mind magnanimity greatness of mind or spirit
ann, enn	year	annuity yearly remittance biennial every two years perennial present all year; persisting for several years
anthrop	man	anthropology study of man

		misanthrope hater of mankind philanthropy love of mankind; charity
apt	fit	aptitude skill adapt make suitable or fit
aqua	water	aqueduct passageway for conducting water aquatic living in water
arch	ruler, first	archaeology study of antiquities (study of first things) monarch sole ruler anarchy lack of government
aster	star	astronomy study of the stars asterisk star-like type character (*) disaster catastrophe (contrary star)
aud, audit	hear	audible able to be heard auditorium place where people may be heard audience hearers
auto	self	autocracy rule by one person (self) automobile vehicle that moves by itself autobiography story of one's own life
belli	war	bellicose inclined to fight belligerent inclined to wage war rebellious resisting authority
ben, bon	good	benefactor one who does good deeds benevolence charity (wishing good) bonus something extra above regular pay
biblio	book	bibliography list of books

		bibliophile lover of books Bible The Book
bio	life	biography writing about a person's life biology study of living things biochemist student of the chemistry of living things
breve	short	brevity briefness abbreviate shorten
cad, cas	to fall	decadent deteriorating cadence intonation, musical movement cascade waterfall
cap (capt, cept, cip)	to take	capture seize participate take part precept wise saying (originally a command)
capit, capt	head	decapitate remove (cut off) someone's head captain chief
carn	flesh	carnivorous flesh-eating carnage destruction of life carnal fleshly
ced, cess	to yield, to go	recede go back, withdraw antecedent that which goes before process go forward
celer	swift	celerity swiftness decelerate reduce swiftness accelerate increase swiftness
cent	one hundred	century one hundred years

		centennial hundredth anniversary centipede many-footed, wingless animal
chron	time	chronology timetable of events anachronism a thing out of time sequence chronicle register events in order of time
cid, cis	to cut, to kill	incision a cut (surgical) homicide killing of a man fratricide killing of a brother
cit, citat	to call, to start	incite stir up, start up excite stir up recitation a recalling (or repeating) aloud
civi	citizen	civilization society of citizens, culture civilian member of community civil courteous
clam, clamat	to cry out	clamorous loud declamation speech acclamation shouted approval
claud (claus, clos, clud)	to close	claustrophobia fear of close places enclose close in conclude finish
cognosc, cognit	to learn	agnostic lacking knowledge, skeptical incognito traveling under assumed name cognition knowledge
cord	heart	accord agreement (from the heart) cordial friendly discord lack of harmony

corpor	body	incorporate organize into a body corporeal pertaining to the body, fleshly corpse dead body
cred, credit	to believe	incredulous not believing, skeptical credulity gullibility credence belief
cur	to care	curator person who has the care of something sinecure position without responsibility secure safe
curr, curs	to run	excursion journey cursory brief precursor forerunner
deb, debit	to owe	debt something owed indebtedness debt debenture bond
dem	people	democracy rule of the people demagogue (false) leader of the people epidemic widespread (among the people)
derm	skin	epidermis skin pachyderm thick-skinned quadruped dermatology study of skin and its disorders
di, diurn	day	diary a daily record of activities, feelings, etc. diurnal pertaining to daytime
dic, dict	to say	abdicate renounce diction speech verdict statement of jury

doc, doct	to teach	docile obedient; easily taught document something that provides evidence doctor learned person (originally, teacher)
domin	to rule	dominate have power over domain land under rule dominant prevailing
duc, duct	to lead	viaduct arched roadway aqueduct artificial waterway
dynam	power, strength	dynamic powerful dynamite powerful explosive dynamo engine making electrical power
ego	I	egoist person who is self-interested egotist selfish person egocentric revolving about self
erg, urg	work	energy power metallurgy science and technology of metals
err	to wander	error mistake erratic not reliable, wandering knight-errant wandering knight
eu	good, well, beautiful	eulogize praise euphemism substitution of pleasant way of saying something blunt
fall, fals	to deceive	fallacious misleading infallible not prone to error, perfect falsify lie

fer, lat	to bring, to bear	transfer bring from one place to another translate bring from one language to another conifer bearing cones, as pine trees
fid	belief, faith	infidel nonbeliever, heathen confidence assurance, belief
fin	end, limit	confine keep within limits finite having definite limits
flect, flex	bend	flexible able to bend deflect bend away, turn aside
fort	luck, chance	fortuitous accidental, occurring by chance fortunate lucky
fort	strong	fortitude strength, firmness of mind fortification strengthening fortress stronghold
frag, fract	break	fragile easily broken infraction breaking of a rule fractious unruly, tending to break rules
fug	flee	fugitive someone who flees refuge shelter, home for someone fleeing
fus	pour	effusive gushing, pouring out diffuse widespread (poured in many directions)
gam	marriage	monogamy marriage to one person bigamy marriage to two people at the same time polygamy having many wives or husbands at the same time
gen, gener	class, race	genus group of animals with similar traits

		generic characteristic of a class gender class organized by sex
grad, gress	go, step	digress go astray (from the main point) regress go backwards gradual step by step, by degrees
graph, gram	writing	epigram pithy statement telegram instantaneous message over great distance stenography shorthand (writing narrowly)
greg	flock, herd	gregarious tending to group together as in a herd aggregate group, total egregious conspicuously bad; shocking
it, itiner	journey, road	exit way out itinerary plan of journey
jac (jact, jec)	to throw	projectile missile; something thrown forward trajectory path taken by thrown object ejaculatory casting or throwing out
jur, jurat	to swear	perjure testify falsely jury group of men and women sworn to seek the truth
labor, laborat	to work	laboratory place where work is done collaborate work together with others laborious difficult
leg (lect, lig)	to choose, to read	election choice legible able to be read eligible able to be selected

leg	law	legislature law-making body legitimate lawful legal lawful
liber, libr	book	library collection of books libretto the “book” of a musical play libel slander (originally found in a little book)
liber	free	liberation the fact of setting free liberal generous (giving freely); tolerant
log	word, study	entomology study of insects etymology study of word parts and derivations monologue speech by one person
loqu, locut	to talk	soliloquy speech by one individual loquacious talkative elocution speech
luc	light	elucidate enlighten lucid clear translucent allowing some light to pass through
magn	great	magnify enlarge magnanimity generosity, greatness of soul magnitude greatness, extent
mal	bad	malevolent wishing evil malediction curse malefactor evil-doer
man	hand	manufacture create (make by hand) manuscript written by hand emancipate free (let go from the hand)

mar	sea	maritime connected with seafaring submarine undersea craft mariner seaman
mater, matr	mother	maternal pertaining to motherhood matriarch female ruler of a family, group, or state matrilineal descended on the mother's side
mit, miss	to send	missile projectile dismiss send away transmit send across
mob (mot, mov)	move	mobilize cause to move motility ability to move immovable not able to be moved
mon, monit	to warn	admonish warn premonition foreboding monitor watcher (warner)
mori, mort	to die	mortuary funeral parlor moribund dying immortal not dying
morph	shape, form	amorphous formless, lacking shape metamorphosis change of shape anthropomorphic in the shape of man
mut	change	immutable not able to be changed mutate undergo a great change mutability changeableness, inconstancy
nat	born	innate from birth prenatal before birth

		nativity birth
nav	ship	navigate sail a ship circumnavigate sail around the world naval pertaining to ships
neg	deny	negation denial renege deny, go back on one's word renegade turncoat, traitor
nomen, nomin	name	nomenclature act of naming, terminology nominal in name only (as opposed to actual) cognomen surname, distinguishing nickname
nov	new	novice beginner renovate make new again novelty newness
omni	all	omniscient all knowing omnipotent all powerful omnivorous eating everything
oper	to work	operate work cooperation working together
pac	peace	pacify make peaceful pacific peaceful pacifist person opposed to war
pass	feel	dispassionate free of emotion impassioned emotion-filled impassive showing no feeling
pater, patr	father	patriotism love of one's country (fatherland) patriarch male ruler of a family, group, or state

		paternity fatherhood
path	disease, feeling	pathology study of diseased tissue apathetic lacking feeling; indifferent antipathy hostile feeling
ped, pod	foot	impediment stumbling block; hindrance tripod three-footed stand quadruped four-footed animal
ped	child	pedagogue teacher of children pediatrician children's doctor
pel, puls	to drive	compulsion a forcing to do repel drive back expel drive out, banish
pet, petit	to seek	petition request appetite craving, desire compete vie with others
phil	love	philanthropist benefactor, lover of humanity Anglophile lover of everything English philanderer one involved in brief love affairs
pon, posit	to place	postpone place after positive definite, unquestioned (definitely placed)
port, portat	to carry	portable able to be carried transport carry across export carry out (of country)
poten	able, powerful	omnipotent all-powerful potentate powerful person

		impotent powerless
psych	mind	psychology study of the mind psychosis mental disorder psychopath mentally ill person
put, putat	to trim, to calculate	putative supposed (calculated) computation calculation amputate cut off
quer (ques, quir, quis)	to ask	inquiry investigation inquisitive questioning query question
reg, rect	rule	regicide murder of a ruler regent ruler insurrection rebellion; overthrow of a ruler
rid, ris	to laugh	derision scorn ridiculous deserving to be laughed at
rog, rogat	to ask	interrogate question prerogative privilege
rupt	to break	interrupt break into bankrupt insolvent rupture a break
sacr	holy	sacred holy sacrilegious impious, violating something holy sacrament religious act
sci	to know	science knowledge omniscient knowing all conscious aware

scop	watch, see	periscope device for seeing around corners microscope device for seeing small objects
scrib, script	to write	transcribe make a written copy script written text circumscribe write around, limit
sect	cut	dissect cut apart bisect cut into two pieces
sed, sess	to sit	sedentary inactive (sitting) session meeting
sent, sens	to think, to feel	consent agree resent show indignation sensitive showing feeling
sequi (secut, seque)	to follow	consecutive following in order sequence arrangement sequel that which follows non sequitur something that does not follow logically
solv, solut	to loosen	absolve free from blame dissolute morally lax absolute complete (not loosened)
somn	sleep	insomnia inability to sleep somnolent sleepy somnambulist sleepwalker
soph	wisdom	philosopher lover of wisdom sophisticated worldly wise
spec, spect	to look at	spectator observer

		aspect appearance circumspect cautious (looking around)
spir	breathe	respiratory pertaining to breathing spirited full of life (breath)
string, strict	bind	stringent strict constrict become tight stricture limit, something that restrains
stru, struct	build	constructive helping to build construe analyze (how something is built)
tang (tact, ting)	to touch	tangent touching contact touching with, meeting contingent depending upon
tempor	time	contemporary at same time extemporaneous impromptu temporize delay
ten, tent	to hold	tenable able to be held tenure holding of office retentive holding; having a good memory
term	end	interminable endless terminate end
terr	land	terrestrial pertaining to earth subterranean underground
therm	heat	thermostat instrument that regulates heat diathermy sending heat through body tissues
tors, tort	twist	distort twist out of true shape or meaning torsion act of twisting

		tortuous twisting
tract	drag, pull	distract pull (one's attention) away intractable stubborn, unable to be dragged attraction pull, drawing quality
trud, trus	push, shove	intrude push one's way in protrusion something sticking out
urb	city	urban pertaining to a city urbane polished, sophisticated (pertaining to a city dweller) suburban outside of a city
vac	empty	vacuous lacking content, empty-headed evacuate compel to empty an area
vad, vas	go	invade enter in a hostile fashion evasive not frank; eluding
veni (vent, ven)	to come	intervene come between prevent stop convention meeting
ver	true	veracious truthful verify check the truth verisimilitude appearance of truth
verb	word	verbose wordy verbiage excessive use of words verbatim word for word
vers, vert	turn	vertigo turning dizzy revert turn back (to an earlier state) diversion something causing one to turn aside

via	way	deviation departure from the way viaduct roadway (arched) trivial trifling (small talk at crossroads)
vid, vis	to see	vision sight evidence things seen vista view
vinc (vict, vanq)	to conquer	invincible unconquerable victory winning vanquish defeat
viv, vit	alive	vivisection operating on living animals vivacious full of life vitality liveliness
voc, vocat	to call	avocation calling, minor occupation provocation calling or rousing the anger of invocation calling in prayer
vol	wish	malevolent wishing someone ill voluntary of one's own will
volv, volut	to roll	revolve roll around evolve roll out, develop convolution coiled state

Common Suffixes

Suffixes are syllables that are added to a word. Occasionally, they change the meaning of the word; more frequently, they serve to change the grammatical form of the word (noun to adjective, adjective to noun, noun to verb).

Suffix	Meaning	Illustration
able, ible	capable of (adjective suffix)	portable able to be carried interminable not able to be limited legible able to be read
ac, ic	like, pertaining to (adjective suffix)	cardiac pertaining to the heart aquatic pertaining to the water dramatic pertaining to the drama
acious, icious	full of (adjective suffix)	audacious full of daring perspicacious full of mental perception avaricious full of greed
al	pertaining to (adjective or noun suffix)	maniacal insane final pertaining to the end logical pertaining to logic
ant, ent	full of (adjective or noun suffix)	eloquent pertaining to fluid, effective speech suppliant pleader (person full of requests) verdant green
ary	like, connected with (adjective or noun suffix)	dictionary book connected with words honorary with honor luminary celestial body
ate	to make (verb suffix)	consecrate to make holy enervate to make weary mitigate to make less severe
ation	that which is (noun suffix)	exasperation irritation

		irritation annoyance
cy	state of being (noun suffix)	democracy government ruled by the people obstinacy stubbornness accuracy correctness
eer (er, or)	person who (noun suffix)	mutineer person who rebels lecher person who lusts censor person who deletes improper remarks
escent	becoming (adjective suffix)	evanescent tending to vanish pubescent arriving at puberty
fic	making, doing (adjective suffix)	terrific arousing great fear soporific causing sleep
fy	to make (verb suffix)	magnify enlarge petrify turn to stone beautify make beautiful
iferous	producing, bearing (adjective suffix)	pestiferous carrying disease vociferous bearing a loud voice
il, ile	pertaining to, capable of (adjective suffix)	puerile pertaining to a boy or child ductile capable of being hammered or drawn civil polite
ism	doctrine, belief (noun suffix)	monotheism belief in one god fanaticism excessive zeal; extreme belief
ist	dealer, doer (noun suffix)	fascist one who believes in a fascist state

		<p>realist one who is realistic</p> <p>artist one who deals with art</p>
ity	state of being (noun suffix)	<p>annuity yearly grant</p> <p>credulity state of being unduly willing to believe</p> <p>sagacity wisdom</p>
ive	like (adjective suffix)	<p>expensive costly</p> <p>quantitative concerned with quantity</p> <p>effusive gushing</p>
ize, ise	make (verb suffix)	<p>victimize make a victim of</p> <p>rationalize make rational</p> <p>harmonize make harmonious</p> <p>enfranchise make free or set free</p>
oid	resembling, like (adjective suffix)	<p>ovoid like an egg</p> <p>anthropoid resembling man</p> <p>spheroid resembling a sphere</p>
ose	full of (adjective suffix)	<p>verbose full of words</p> <p>lachrymose full of tears</p>
osis	condition (noun suffix)	<p>psychosis diseased mental condition</p> <p>neurosis nervous condition</p> <p>hypnosis condition of induced sleep</p>
ous	full of (adjective suffix)	<p>nauseous full of nausea</p> <p>ludicrous foolish</p>
tude	state of (noun suffix)	<p>fortitude state of strength</p> <p>beatitude state of blessedness</p> <p>certitude state of sureness</p>