gambol: (n) to skip and frolic

Grandma was a fun friend; she gamboled through the field with me, collecting flowers and chasing butterflies.

exigent: (adj) urgent; demanding

This is an exigent matter: if you don't reach the client in time, we stand to lose millions of dollars.

Word Forms: exigently, exigence Antonym Forms: nonexigent, nonexigently, unexigent, unexigently

subversive: (adj) supporting the overthrowing of a government

The subversive group was arrested when one of the members told of the group's plot to overthrow the king.

Word Forms: subversive (n.), subversively, subversiveness, subversivism, subvert, subversion

parry: (vb) to ward off, avoid, or evade

The senator parried any questions about the scandal by focusing on the state of the economy. Word Forms: parriable, parrier Antonym Forms: unparried, unparrying

emissary: (n) a person sent on a mission to represent the interests of someone else The general sent an emissary to the enemy's camp to inquire about the terms of surrender. Related Words: emission, emissive, emit

prosaic: (adj) dull and lacking excitement

Pam claimed the movie was predictable and prosaic, causing her to fall asleep halfway through.

Word Forms: prosaical, prosaically, prosaicness, prosaicism

stultify: (vb) to make one appear foolish, stupid, or useless

The high school student stultified herself by insisting that Pittsburgh was in Tennessee.

Word Forms: stultifyingly, stultification, stultifier

enigma: (n) a puzzle

The dog's escape from the pen is an enigma; no one can figure out how she broke out of the locked enclosure.

nadir: (n) the lowest point

Nadia entered the nadir of despair when she lost her job and her fiance called off the wedding. Word Form: nadiral

effrontery: (n) shameless boldness

She had the effrontery to imply that I was pregnant when in fact I had just gained some weight.

blight: (n) any factor that causes decay or deterioration

The blight that killed Blake's corn was responsible for the destruction of crops throughout the county. Word Form: blightingly Antonym Forms: unblighted, unblightedly, unblightedness

putrefy: (vb) to decay

The forgotten vegetables putrefied in the hot sun.

Word Forms: putrefiable, putrefier Antonym Forms: unputrefiable, unputrefied Related Word: putrid

malediction: (n) a curse

The members of the team feared that the old woman had placed a malediction upon their season because they hadn't won a game since accidentally shattering her windshield with a foul ball.

Word Forms: maledictive, maledictory, maledict Antonym Forms: benediction, benedictive, benedictory Related Words: diction, dictate, dictionary

austere: (adj) 1. strict; disciplined; serious 2. simple; undecorated

Mr. Aston is the most austere teacher at school; he does not tolerate any talking nor does he accept late assignments. Word Forms: austerely, austereness, austerity

perquisite: (n) a payment or benefit in addition to one's regular pay

While working at the marina, my perquisites included free boat storage, a discount at the tackle shop, and daily tips.

martinet: (n) a person who rigidly demands that rules are followed; a strict disciplinarian

Marty realized that the drill sergeant was a martinet, so his best course of action was to closely follow all the rules. Word Forms: martinetish, martinetism

"To An Athlete Dying Young" is a heartbreaking elegy written by A. E. Housman. Word Forms: elegize, elegist elicit: (vb) to call or bring out

The woman elicits sympathy from her audience by telling the story of her difficult childhood.

peccadillo: (n) a minor fault or sin

Mr. Peck brought a bottle of white wine instead of a bottle of red wine to the dinner, but was forgiven for this peccadillo when he also produced a box of luxurious European chocolates.

axiom: (n) principle or rule

The golden rule is a good axiom to live by.

Word Forms: axiomatic, axiomatical, axiomatization Antonym Forms: nonaxiomatic, nonaxiomatical, unaxiomatic

canard: (n) false story or rumor

The belief that Napoleon was short is a canard; he was actually 5'7", an above average height for a Frenchman in 1800.

levity: (n) inappropriate lack of seriousness

The teenagers' levity during the assembly on drinking and driving cost them six Saturdays in detention.

nascent: (adj) being born or beginning

The nascent hockey team did not have much experience, as this was their first year in the league. Word Forms: nascence, nascency

insidious: (adj) intended to entrap, deceive, or harm

Sid devised an insidious plan to get the witness to admit he hadn't really witnessed the crime.

disparage: (vb) to belittle or criticize

My mom's feelings were hurt when I disparaged her cooking skills.

Word Forms: disparagement, disparaging (adj.), disparagingly, disparager

perfunctory: (adj) done only as a matter of routine, with indifference and a lack of enthusiasm

The principal gave a perfunctory speech about attendance, even though the students had heard the same speech a dozen times before.

Word Forms: perfunctorily, perfunctoriness

esoteric: (adj) intended for a select group of people; secret or confidential

Esteban was a member of an esoteric club, whose membership consisted strictly of men over fifty who lived in the city.

Word Forms: esoterically, esotericism, esotericist Antonym Forms: exoteric, exoterically, exotericism

sardonic: (adj) characterized by bitter mocking Sara's sardonic reply was meant to ridicule the boy.

Word Forms: sardonically, sardonicism Antonym Forms: unsardonic, unsardonically

lassitude: (n) lack of energy; weariness

One symptom of the illness was lassitude; Leslie learned early on that she had no energy during an attack.

nihilism: (n) belief in the rejection of rules and the destruction of social and political order During the rebellion, the followers of nihilism were the first to break the laws in the city.

Word Forms: nihilistic, nihilistically, nihility, nihilist

parsimonious: (adj) extremely reluctant to spend money; frugal and stingy

The parsimonious woman told her grandchildren that the gumballs in the candy machine were too expensive.

Word Forms: parsimoniously, parsimoniousness, parsimony

disdain: (n) a lack of respect accompanied by a feeling of intense dislike

The suspect was looked upon with disdain by the detectives who investigated the terrible crime.

Word Forms: disdain (vb.), disdainful, disdainfully, disdainfulness Related Word: deign

catholic: (adj) universal; liberal

Cathy had very catholic tastes, enjoying a wide array of food and drink.

Word Forms: catholically, catholicly, catholicalness, catholicness

edify: (vb) to benefit by instruction

The art teacher edified his students by taking them to a premier art gallery to teach about painting techniques. Word Forms: edifier, edifyingly, edifying, reedify Antonym Forms: nonedified, unedified

intransigent: (adj) refusing to yield or compromise

When it came to Edgar's hunting trophies, Enid was intransigent; she refused to hang the deer heads on the wall. Word Forms: intransigent (n.), intransigently, intransigence, intransigency

endemic: (adj) natural to a local area

Fire ants are endemic to the southeastern coastal plains, but they have started to migrate to the interior.

Word Forms: endemically, endemism Antonym Forms: nonendemic, unendemic Related Words: epidemic, pandemic

dirge: (n) a funeral song

As the dirge played, mournful cries could be heard throughout the funeral.

Word Forms: dirgeful

dilatory: (adj) intending to delay

Dillon asked nearly twenty dilatory questions at the start of class in an attempt to postpone the scheduled math test. Word Forms: dilatorily, dilatoriness Related Word: delay

eclectic: (adj) made up of choices from diverse sources

Mrs. Eckert has an eclectic music collection; her albums span from classic jazz to hip hop to disco.

Word Forms: eclectically, eclecticist Related Word: select

ribald: (adj) vulgar

The comedian's ribald humor was offensive to many of the audience members who walked out of the club.

Word Form: ribaldly

fetid: (adj) stinky; smelling of decay

I hated turning the compost pile because of its fetid smell.Word Forms: fetidly, fetidness, fetidity

empirical: (adj) resulting from an experiment

As a scientist, Emmie relied on empirical data every day, which is why it was hard for her to trust her intuition. Word Forms: empirically, empiricalness

supercilious: (adj) arrogantly disdainful

Sue, who always wore designer clothes, glanced at my generic shoes with a supercilious sneer.

Word Forms: superciliously, superciliousness

panache: (n) dashing style, flair, or manner

Penny only dates men with panache; she prefers to be seen with flamboyant boyfriends.

bromide: (n) a common saying

As true as the old bromides are, such as “It is better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all,” none of them are much comfort to a newly-broken heart.

Word Forms: bromidic, bromidically

inchoate: (adj) in the early stages of development

Your inchoate plan for the fund-raiser has a lot of potential, but we need to discuss some details before moving forward.

Word Forms: inchoately, inchoateness, inchoation, inchoative, inchoatively

epistolary: (adj) relating to letters

The couple has an epistolary relationship; although they have never met, they communicate regularly through letters.

Word Forms: epistle, epistolatory, epistolic, epistolical, epistolize, epistoler, epistolist

circumspect: (adj) cautious; discreet

Given the recent theft of passwords, you need to be circumspect when sharing personal information on the internet.

Word Forms: circumspectly, circumspectness Antonym Forms: noncircumspect, noncircumspectly, noncircumspectness

craven: (adj) cowardly

Rather than face her landlord and explain the damage to the house, the craven tenant packed up and moved in the night.

Word Forms: craven (n), cravenly, cravenness Antonym Form: uncraven

obtuse: (adj) intellectually slow; dull

You might have to simplify your explanation of photosynthesis because Obie is a bit obtuse.

Word Forms: obtusely, obtuseness

palatial: (adj) like a palace; magnificent

Polly bought a palatial home that had eight bedrooms, two kitchens, a ballroom, and a six car garage.

Word Forms: palatially, palatialness Antonym Form: unpalatial

convoluted: (adj) complicated

sentient: (adj) experiencing sense perception and consciousness

In the film, the robot becomes sentient, experiencing human emotions and senses.

Word Forms: sentiently, sentience, sentiency Antonym Forms: insentient, insentience, insentiency

stymie: (vb) to stump or hinder

The warden was stymied by the escape; the prisoners' cell doors were still locked, and there were no holes in the walls.

Word Form: stymie (n.)

precocious: (adj) advanced in development or maturity (especially in mental aptitude)

The precocious little boy was able to solve the algebraic equation without any help from his teacher.

Word Forms: precociously, precociousness, precocity

investiture: (n) ceremony for bestowing an official title At the investiture, the detective was promoted to sergeant. Word Form: investitive

Word Forms: insidiously, insidiousness insipid: (adj) bland, dull, or uninteresting

rebuke: (vb) to sharply criticize or reprimand

The principal rebuked the three students who wandered away from their chaperone on the field trip.

Word Forms: rebuke (n.), rebukingly, rebukable, rebuker

reticent: (adj) inclined to keep quiet and private

Ironically, the actor once known for his outspoken behavior became reticent in later years, refusing to grant interviews.

Word Forms: reticently, reticence, reticency

bonhomie: (n) friendliness

Bonnie had many friends who admired her kind nature and bonhomie. Word Form: bonhomous

imbue: (vb) to inspire

After the seminar, our supervisor was imbued with the teachings of the keynote speaker, a management expert. Word Form: imbuement Antonym Form: unimbue

slake: (vb) to relieve thirst, hunger, desire, etc.; to make less intense The ice cold soda slaked my thirst.

Word Forms: slakable, slakeless Antonym Forms: unslakable, unslaked

ingrate: (n) an ungrateful person

Inga came off as an ingrate when she failed to thank her hosts for dinner.

Word Form: ingrately Related Word: grateful

refulgent: (adj) radiant; shining

The movie star's refulgent dress sparkled in the lights on the red carpet.

Word Forms: refulgence, refulgency, refulgentness, refulgently Antonym Forms: unrefulgent, unrefulgently

efficacious: (adj) effective

The pest repellent was efficacious in keeping the mosquitoes away; none of the guests were bothered by the bugs.

Word Forms: efficaciously, efficaciousness, efficacy, efficacity

Antonym Forms: inefficacious, inefficaciously, inefficaciousness, inefficacy, inefficacity

Related Words: effect, effective

melange: (n) a mixture

Melanie's walls are decorated with a mélange of surfing posters and beach photographs.

malleable: (adj) capable of being shaped or influenced

Mallory worried that her malleable son would learn inappropriate behavior from the older boys he played with at school.

Word Forms: malleably, malleableness, malleability Antonym Forms: unmalleable, unmalleability

dubious: (adj) doubtful; questionable

The candidate's dubious past came back to haunt her in the election.

Word Forms: dubiously, dubiousness, dubitable Antonym Forms: indubious, indubiously Related Word: doubt

vociferous: (adj) marked by loud outcry

When the newspaper ran an article on the benefits of a dress code, there were vociferous complaints from the students.

Word Forms: vociferously, vociferousness, vociferate, vociferation, vociferant, vociferator Related Word: voice

mercurial: (adj) apt to change; volatile; lively

Meryl was known for her mercurial moods; she could be charming and kind one minute and caustic and hateful the next.

Word Forms: mercurially, mercurialness Antonym Forms: unmercurial, unmercurially, unmercurialness Related Word: mercury

inimical: (adj) harmful or hostile

Oscar cast an inimical sneer at Melissa when she took credit for his idea.

Word Forms: inimically, inimicalness, inimicality, inimicable Related Word: enemy

demagogue: (n) a political leader who seeks support by appealing to popular passions and prejudices Hitler was a demagogue who gained power by exploiting religious prejudices in Germany.

Word Forms: demagoguery, demagogism, demagogic, demagogical, demagogically

foster: (vb) to encourage or care for

The arts foundation hopes to foster art education in the schools by donating supplies and materials.

Word Forms: fostered (adj.), fosteringly, fosterer

pious: (adj) religiously devoted

The pious woman attended a church service seven days a week.

Word Forms: piously, piousness Antonym Form: impious

juncture: (n) a critical point in time

At this juncture, I think it's important to merge the Human Resources and Marketing departments.

interregnum: (n) a period of time free from authority

When the king died, there was a two week interregnum as the prince returned from abroad for his coronation.

Word Form: interregnal

explicator: (n) a person who explains or interprets

My attorney was an excellent explicator; he clearly interpreted each clause of the legal contract.

Word Forms: explicate, explication, explicative, explicatively, explicatory Related Word: explicit

superfluous: (adj) having more than needed or wanted; excessive

The lawyer's continuing arguments were superfluous, as the jury had already reached a verdict.

Word Forms: superfluously, superfluousness, superfluity

censure: (n) strong disapproval

High school teachers voiced their censure of the new novel due to mature themes and profanity. Word Forms: censurer, censureless Related Words: miscensure, precensure, procensure

fortuitous: (adj) fortunate; by chance

Getting stuck in an elevator with a head hunter on my way to a job interview turned out to be a fortuitous event.

Word Forms: fortuitously, fortuitousness, fortuity Antonym Form: nonfortuitous, nonfortuitously, nonfortuitousness Related Word: fortunate

august: (adj) noble and dignified

The august king was admired for his good work. Word Forms: augustly, augustness

machination: (n) a crafty plot

The fairy tale follows the machinations of an evil stepsister who is out to steal the prince from the heroine. Word Forms: machinate, machinator

whimsical: (adj) characterized by carefree impulses

The babysitter's whimsical personality meant that the kids were never bored; one minute they were making peanut butter cookies, and the next they were reenacting a scene from a famous play.

Word Forms: whimsically, whimsicality Related Words: whim, whimsy

ersatz: (adj) artificial; serving to substitute

Aspertame is an ersatz sugar that has caused a lot of controversy in recent years.

distaff: (n) the female part of a family

Driving skills clearly fell on the distaff side of the family; the ladies had clean driving records but the men had sixteen traffic tickets among them.

disenfranchise: (vb) to deprive of voting rights

viscous: (adj) sticky; thick

The viscous nature of maple syrup makes it difficult to remove from dishes once it hardens.

Word Forms: viscously, viscousness, viscosity

morose: (adj) gloomy

After his girlfriend moved away, Morris became morose and depressed. Word Forms: morosely, moroseness, morosity

didactic: (adj) educational

The children's book is not only entertaining, but also didactic; the story teaches the dietary habits of marine animals. Word Forms: didactical, didactically, didacticism, didact Related Words: autodidactic, autodidact

accretion: (n) an increase

Akeem's gradual accretion of duties at work did not go unnoticed; he was given a raise for taking on the extra work. Word Forms: accrete, accretive, accretionary Antonym Forms: nonaccretion, nonaccretive

opulent: (adj) rich and luxurious

The opulent kitchen had marble countertops and solid gold fixtures.

Word Forms: opulently, opulence, opulency

surly: (adj) bad tempered or rude

The surly customer was unhappy with every aspect of his meal.

Word Forms: surlily, surliness Antonym Forms: unsurlily, unsurliness, unsurly

ignoble: (adj) dishonorable; common

Your ignoble behavior at the dinner party will keep you off of invitation lists in the future.

Word Forms: ignobility, ignobleness, ignobly Antonym Forms: noble, nobility, nobly

invoke: (vb) to summon into action or bring into existence

The psychic claimed that he could invoke the spirits in the house through an old-fashioned séance.

Word Forms: invocable, invocation, invocational, invoker Related Words: evoke, provoke, revoke

polyglot: (adj) able to speak, read, or write in many languages

The polyglot woman was an asset to the company; she could speak with customers in Japan, Germany, Spain, and

Italy.

Word Forms: polyglot (n.), polyglotism Related Word: monoglot

raconteur: (n) a skilled storyteller

Raquel was a true raconteur; by the time she finished telling the story about her vacation, everyone in the room was intently listening.

Word Form: raconteuse Related Word: recount

bevy: (n) a large group

The picnic lunch on the beach attracted a bevy of birds.

permeate: (vb) to spread throughout

partisan: (adj) tending to favor one group or one way of thinking

Gun control is a partisan issue; one party favors government management while the other prefers individual authority.

Word Forms: partisanship, partisanry, partisan (n.) Antonym Forms: nonpartisan, bipartisan Related Word:

party

disseminate: (vb) to spread widely

The police hoped the information about the suspect would disseminate quickly; the more people who knew, the better chances of apprehending the wanted man.

Word Forms: dissemination, disseminative, disseminator

hermetic: (adj) isolated and protected

Many of the sea islands were hermetic during the Civil War, making them a safe place for runaway slaves to hide. Word Forms: hermetical, hermetically Antonym Form: unhermetic Related Word: hermit

hackneyed: (adj) repeated too often; overfamiliar through overuse

Instead of relying on hackneyed clichés in your essay, try to create original metaphors and similes. Word Form: hackney (vb.)

trenchant: (adj) keen, cutting, or energetic

Trent's trenchant wit was a bit too caustic for some of the audience, while others found him to be an effective speaker.

Word Forms: trenchancy, trenchantly

parenthetical: (adj) characterized by the use of parenthesis

A remark in parenthesis is called a parenthetical remark, which is usually used to explain the sentence.

Word Forms: parenthetic, parenthetically, parentheticalness Related Word: parentheses

wily: (adj) sly and cunning

The wily real estate agent tried to get us to buy the house even though it was full of termites.

Word Forms: wile, wilily, wiliness Antonym Form: unwily

opprobrium: (n) disgrace or severe criticism due to shameful behavior

The team owner faced public opprobrium when he was caught making racial remarks.

Word Forms: opprobrious, opprobriously, opprobriousness Antonym Form: nonopprobrious

harangue: (n) a long, pompous speech

At the assembly, the principal delivered a harangue on the merits of perfect attendance and good behavior.

Word Forms: harangue (vb.), harangueful, haranguer

lapidary: (adj) relating to polished stones; characterized by exactness and extreme polishing The author's lapidary manuscript was so carefully crafted that editors could find no mistakes. Word Forms: lapidarian, lapidarist

halcyon: (adj) joyful, peaceful, or prosperous

During the company's halcyon days, the employees were making higher than average wages and enjoying benefits unmatched by other corporations.

Word Forms: halcyonian, halcyonic

mollify: (vb) to soften or soothe

Molly was able to mollify the crying child by offering him an ice cream cone.

Word Forms: mollification, mollifier, mollifyingly, mollifiable

desiccate: (vb) to dry up

When the flowers in my bouquet desiccate, I can preserve them as dried flowers. Word Forms: desiccation, desiccative, desiccated, desiccator

ornate: (adj) highly decorated

The ornate palace had colorful paintings and intricate wood carvings in every room.

Word Forms: ornately, ornateness Related Word: ornament

quaff: (vb) to drink a beverage

Quinn quaffed three sodas as if she had an unquenchable thirst.

Word Forms: quaffer, quaffable Antonym Form: unquaffed

reviler: (n) a person who uses abusive language

Reva's husband was a reviler who constantly criticized her appearance and behavior.

Word Forms: revile, revilement, revilingly Related Word: vile

vim: (n) energy and enthusiasm; vitality

Surprisingly, Victor attacked the science project with vim; he usually procrastinated and bemoaned such homework.

ingenious: (adj) clever and inventive

Jeannie invented an ingenious device for the beach that combined a cooler, radio, and portable fan.

Word Forms: ingeniously, ingeniousness, ingenuity Related Word: genius

iniquity: (n) wickedness

The wicked witch's iniquity kept Dorothy from returning to Kansas.

Word Forms: iniquitous, iniquitously, iniquitousness

renounce: (vb) to give up; to turn away from

The king renounced the thrown when he married a woman who was not accepted by the royal family. Word Forms: renounceable, renouncement, renouncer Related Words: announce, denounce

impugn: (vb) to attack as false or wrong

The candidate impugned his opponent's voting record, proving that she had voted against reform she now supports. Word Forms: impugnable, impugnability, impugnment, impugner Related Word: oppugn

laconic: (adj) expressing much in few words

A laconic essay will be scored higher than an essay with unnecessary words or sentences.

Word Forms: laconically, laconism Antonym Form: unlaconic

vitriolic: (adj) harsh or corrosive in tone

The orchestra teacher's vitriolic criticism stung Victoria; she had practiced all week only to be harshly critiqued in front of the entire class.

Word Forms: vitriolically, vitriol

cloying: (adj) wearying through excess

Her perfume smelled sweet at first but became cloying after sitting in the car with her for an hour.

Word Forms: cloy, cloyingly Antonym Form: uncloying

trite: (adj) repeated too often; overfamiliar through overuse

Be sure to avoid trite expressions in your essay; instead of writing clichés like “I learned my lesson the hard way,” choose original sentences such as “It was a difficult lesson to learn.”

Word Forms: tritely, triteness

unctuous: (adj) unpleasantly and excessively suave

The unctuous salesman winked at the ladies and flashed his college football ring at the men; ironically, his “charm” chased most customers away.

Word Forms: unctuously, unctuousness, unctuosity

rejoinder: (n) a response

Reggie's rejoinder did not sufficiently answer the question.

Antonym Form: nonrejoinder

cynical: (adj) distrusting and pessimistic

Cyndi's cynical attitude made it hard for her to believe in anyone's good intentions. Word Forms: cynically, cynicism, cynic

sully: (vb) to make dirty or unpure

Mrs. Sullivan's reputation was sullied by accusations that she was embezzling money from the PTA.

Word Form: sulliable Antonym Form: unsullied

pervasive: (adj) spreading or spread throughout

The pervasive odor of garlic quickly spread throughout the entire house.

Word Forms: pervasively, pervasiveness, pervade, pervadingly, pervadingness, pervasion, pervader Related Words: invade, invasive

abstruse: (adj) hard to understand

Mr. Abbot tried to teach us how to solve an abstruse math problem, but it was too complicated for us to understand. Word Forms: abstrusely, abstruseness, abstrusity

plethora: (n) overabundance

At 300 applications, there are a plethora of qualified applicants for the program, but only 100 spots to fill. Word Forms: plethoric, plethorically

prattle: (vb) to babble

The child prattled on about his love of robots. Word Forms: prattler, prattingly

despot: (n) a ruler with complete power

The despot was a harsh ruler who imposed outrageous taxes and unreasonable upon against his subjects.

Word Forms: despotic, despotical, despotically, despotism

monastic: (adj) relating to monasteries or relating to a dedicated way of life

Mona lived a monastic life, refraining from sensual pleasures and the accumulation of material possessions.

Word Form: monastically Antonym Forms: nonmonastic , nonmonastically

Related Words: pseudomonastic, monastery

malevolent: (adj) evil

The malevolent old man plotted the demise of his neighbor's barking dog.

Word Forms: malevolently, malevolence, malevolency

pejorative: (n) a word that is derogatory or belittling

At one time, 'imbecile' meant weak, but it has since become a pejorative to describe a person who is intellectually slow.

Word Forms: pejorative (adj), pejoratively, pejoration

Antonym Forms: nonpejortaive, nonpejoratively, unpejorative, unpejoratively

malinger: (vb) to fake an illness to avoid responsibility

Malinda claims to have strep throat, but since she has been known to malinger in the past make sure she brings a doctor's note when she returns to work.

Word Form: malingerer

incarnadine: (adj) red or pink; flesh-colored

For Valentine's Day, I gave my girlfriend incarnadine carnations since red is the color of love and passion.

Word Form: incarnadine (vb) Related Word: carnation

cavalier: (n) a man who is chivalrous and gallant

The young cavalier was rewarded for his gallant behavior when he was chosen to escort the princess to the ball. Word Forms: cavalier (adj.), cavalierly, cavalierness, cavalierism

exegesis: (n) an explanation or critical interpretation (especially of the Bible)

The minister is delivering an exegesis on the first two books of the Bible, where he will interpret the lessons from Genesis and Exodus and apply them to modern times.

Word Forms: exegetic, exegetical, exegetically, exegete, exegetist

tenacious: (adj) unyielding; stubborn

The tenacious defense refused to let the opponent score.

Word Forms: tenaciously, tenaciousness, tenacity

bombast: (n) pompous or pretentious talk or writing

Be sure that your speech isn't pretentious or inflated, as the audience has no time to listen to bombast.

Word Forms: bombastic, bombastically, bombaster

ostensible: (adj) pretended

Austin's ostensible excuse for missing school was that his grandmother was in the hospital; the real reason, however, was that he went to the beach.

Word Forms: ostensibly, ostensive Related Word: ostentatious

pugilist: (n) a person who fights with his fists; a boxer

The two pugilists entered the ring for the first round of the boxing match.

Word Forms: pugilistic, pugilistically, pugilism

amalgamation: (n) a combination

Amy's new dance routine is an amalgamation of styles, including ballet and jazz. Word Forms: amalgam, amalgamate, amalgamable, amalgamative, amalgamator

pragmatic: (adj) practical; guided by practice rather than theory

When her bobby pin broke, Penelope found a pragmatic solution; she used a paper clip to hold back her stray hair. Word Forms: pragmatical, pragmatically, pragmaticalness, pragmatism, pragmatistic, pragmatist

inveigle: (vb) to persuade with smooth talk

Vicki inveigled Vivianne into playing checkers, even though Vivianne would have rather played chess.

Word Forms: inveiglement, inveigler Antonym Form: uninveigled

alacrity: (n) liveliness and eagerness

Alaina impressed her new boss by accepting the task with alacrity; she was both eager and excited to get started.

Word Form: alacritous

American citizens who are convicted of a felony are disenfranchised, losing their right to vote in any election. Word Forms: disenfranchisement, disfranchise Antonym Forms: enfranchise, franchise disillusion: (vb) to free from false beliefs

As a young politician, Dane believed he could stop the corruption that ran through the county government, but he was quickly disillusioned by the extent of the illegal activity.

affable: (adj) friendly

In the fable, the affable princess was adored by all except for her three stepsisters who were angered by her friendliness.

Word Forms: affably, affability, affableness Antonym Forms: inaffable, inaffibility

hoary: (adj) old or stale

Harry tells the same hoary stories at every dinner party.

Word Forms: hoarily, hoariness Antonym Form: unhoary

Word Forms: enigmata (plural), enigmatic, enigmatical, enigmatically ennui: (n) boredom

The monotony of my job produces utter ennui.

misanthrope: (n) a person who hates and distrusts mankind

The main character is a bitter misanthrope who learns to trust again through her friendship with the children next door.

Word Forms: misanthropist, misanthropic, misanthropical, misanthropically, misanthropy

innocuous: (adj) harmless

No one had to be evacuated after the tanker spill, as the gas released was innocuous.

Word Forms: innocuously, innocuousness, innocuity Antonym Forms: nocuous, nocuously, nocuousness Related Word: inoculate

amortize: (vb) to eliminate debt by making payments

For most borrowers, it takes thirty years to amortize their mortgage.

Word Forms: amortized, amortizable, amortizement, amortization Antonym Forms: unamortized

dilettante: (n) a person who engages in an activity (such as art) without serious intentions or inquiry

Although Dylan started painting, he was merely a dilettante; his paintings were amateur attempts at a part-time hobby.

Word Forms: dilettantish, dilettanteism

syncopated: (adj) to cut short; to accent beats that are not usually accented

Because the readers longed for fluency and completion, the syncopated poem seemed unfinished.

Word Forms: syncopate, syncopation, syncopator Antonym Form: unsyncopated

predilection: (n) a preference

Preston has a predilection for cheddar so be sure not to serve mozzarella when he visits.

expatriate: (n) a person who lives outside his own country, often to renounce allegiance

The little village in Costa Rica is filled with American expatriates who moved there for a more relaxed lifestyle.

Word Forms: expatriate (vb.), expatriation Related Word: patriot

opaque: (adj) not clear; not allowing light to pass through

The glass on the bathroom shower has an opaque layer that prevents people from seeing through it.

Word Forms: opaquely, opaqueness Related Word: opacity

philistine: (n) a person who resists culture, the arts, or intellectual pursuits

Phil is such a philistine; he'd rather sit at home and watch reality shows than go see a play or visit a museum. Word Forms: philistine (adj), philistinism

recondite: (adj) difficult to understand without special knowledge

The recondite blueprints were meant to be understood by architects, not by the layperson.

Word Forms: reconditely, reconditeness

earnest: (adj) serious; sincere

The earnest student took the SAT seriously; he bought several study guides, and dedicated two hours a day to practice.

Word Forms: earnestly, earnestness

impecunious: (adj) poor

In less than a year, Imogen had lost all of her money, going from a wealthy businesswoman to a impecunious beggar. Word Forms: impecuniously, impecuniousness, impecuniosity

obdurate: (adj) stubborn

The obdurate child refused to eat his vegetables and sat at the dinner table with the untouched broccoli until bedtime.

Word Forms: obdurately, obdurateness, obduracy Related Word: indurate

exonerate: (vb) to clear from blame

The use of DNA helped exonerate the innocent man; twenty years after he was sent to prison, he was released. Word Forms: exoneration, exonerative, exonerator

ascetic: (n) a person who practices self-denial as a spiritual discipline

To prove his devotion to the religion, the ascetic did not own anything that might provide comfort or pleasure, such as a mattress or television set.

Word Forms: ascetic (adj.), ascetical, ascetically, asceticism

cosset: (vb) to pamper

Cossette cosseted the puppy, providing him with diamond collars, caviar dinners, and doggy massages.

Word Form: cosseted Antonym Form: uncosseted

onerous: (adj) oppressive; burdensome

Cinderella was saddled with onerous household duties while she lived with her wicked stepmother.

Word Forms: onerously, onerousness, onerosity Antonym Forms: nononerous, nononerously, nononerousness

malice: (n) a desire to make others suffer

Malika's sharp comment was delivered with malice; she knew that her words would hurt her mother's feelings. Word Forms: malicious, maliciously, maliciousness Antonym Form: unmalicious

orthodox: (adj) customary; traditional

Maria and Bryan chose an orthodox ceremony with the standard wedding vows and the typical progression of events.

Word Forms: orthodoxly, orthodoxness, orthodoxal, orthodoxical, orthodoxy Antonym Forms: unorthodox, unorthodoxical, heterodox

obviate: (vb) to prevent any perceived difficulty

The car seat manufacturer obviated the risk of injury by removing the cup holder from the most recent model. Word Forms: obviable, obviation, obviator, preobviate Antonym Form: unobviable

immutable: (adj) unchangeable

We are born with some immutable characteristics, such as race, gender, height, and eye color.

Word Forms: immutability, immutableness, immutably Antonym Form: mutable Related Word: mutation

concomitant: (adj) existing or occurring at the same time

Building a home can be an exciting process, but it also has concomitant stress associated with difficult decisions.

Word Forms: concomitant (n.), concomitantly, concomitance

blithe: (adj) cheerful

Blythe was know for her blithe spirit; she was always happy and cheerful.

Word Forms: blitheful, blithefullly, blithely, blitheness, blithesome Related Word: overblithe

remuneration: (n) payment

Each of the workers received remuneration for helping Remy paint his house.

Word Forms: remunerate, remunerable, remunerability, remunerably, remunerative, remuneratively, remunerativeness,

remuneratory, remunerator

garrulous: (adj) excessively talkative or wordy

The garrulous hairdresser talked the entire time he cut my hair.

avuncular: (adj) resembling an uncle in kindness or indulgence

Mr. Avery developed an avuncular affection for his neighbor's children after having spent so many years next door. Word Forms: avuncularly, avuncularity Related Word: uncle

turpitude: (n) vile, shameful behavior

In the play, the character's turpitude exceeds the villainous behavior exhibited by typical antagonists.

redoubtable: (adj) worthy of fear and respect

Forrest is a redoubtable opponent on the tennis court; he has not lost a set in his last twenty games.

Word Forms: redoubtableness, redoubtably, redoubted

vacillate: (vb) to waver or move back and forth

Vanessa vacillated between the two universities; one minute she was attending the in-state school, and the next she was going to the college three states away.

Word Forms: vacillatingly, vacillation, vacillant, vacillator Related Word: oscillate

tyro: (n) a beginner

As a tyro at snow skiing, Tyrone hired an instructor to give him a lesson before heading up the mountain.

Word Form: tyronic

peregrinate: (vb) to travel

After high school, Perry chose to peregrinate through Europe before attending college.

Word Forms: peregrinator, peregrination Related Words: peregrine, peregrinity

scintillating: (adj) brilliantly clever or flashy and exciting

The animated movie has been praised for its scintillating dialogue, which is intended more for adults than children.

Word Forms: scintillatingly, scintillate, scintillant, scintillantly, scintillation

repudiate: (vb) to reject

The celebrity repudiated claims that she had undergone plastic surgery.

Word Forms: repudiable, repudiative, repudiation, repudiatory, repudiator

munificent: (adj) very generous

The munificent donor gave the hospital enough money to build a specialized center for heart patients.

Word Forms: munificently, munificentness, munificence

despoiler: (n) a person who steals goods

The despoilers from the pirate ship stripped the village members of all their possessions. Word Forms: despoil, despoilment Related Word: spoils (n.)

torpid: (adj) sluggish; lacking energy

After the long weekend, Tony was torpid; even with multiple cups of coffee, he was sluggish all morning. Word Forms: torpidity, torpidness, torpidly

Miss Walter demanded meticulous essays; perfect spelling and punctuation were essential for a high grade. Word Forms: meticulously, meticulousness, meticulosity militate: (vb) to have substantial influence

Millie's grandfather's significant donations to the university militated for her acceptance in the admissions process. Word Form: militation Related Words: military, militia

upbraid: (vb) to criticize severely

The sergeant upbraided the cadet for failing to put his gun together correctly. Word Form: upbraider Antonym Form: unupbraided

assiduous: (adj) constant and attentive

Ashley is an assiduous researcher; she was able to find articles on the poet that even the librarian could not locate. Word Forms: assiduously, assiduousness, assiduity

provincial: (adj) unsophisticated and limited; associated with the country

The officer judged Prescott by his provincial dress; she assumed he was unsophisticated just because he wore overalls.

Word Forms: provincially, provincialism, provincialize, provincialist Related Word: province

Imelda had imperturbable composure, which is why she was selected to tackle the nerve-wracking feat. Word Forms: imperturbability, imperturbableness, imperturbably Antonym Forms: perturb, perturbable impervious: (adj) not capable of being affected

Ima was impervious to Jack's insults; nothing he said seemed to affect her.

Word Forms: imperviously, imperviousness, imperviable Antonym Forms: pervious, perviously, perviousness

quell: (vb) to put an end to

The coach quelled the rumor that he was taking another job by signing an extension of his current contract. Word Forms: quellable, queller

remiss: (adj) careless and neglectful

Rebekkah was criticized for being remiss in her work; she had made many careless mistakes this week. Word Forms: remissly, remissness

posit: (vb) to assume as fact; to put in place

The teacher posited that the children had cheated without hearing their side of the story.

Word Form: posit (n) Related Word: deposit

solicitous: (adj) anxious, eager, or worried

The solicitous applicant was forced to wait three months before he received a response from the college.

prodigy: (n) a person, often a child, who is extraordinarily gifted or talented

The musical prodigy could play the most complicated Mozart composition on a piano by the time he was five years old.

Related Word: prodigious

stentorian: (adj) very loud

The best cheerleaders have stentorian voices.

Word Form: stentorianly Antonym Form: unstentorian

amiable: (adj) friendly

The amiable celebrity was known for his willingness to sign autographs and visit with his fans.

Word Forms: amiably, amiability, amiableness Antonym Form: unamiable Related Word: amicable

replete: (adj) filled; complete

My professor returned my essay replete with comments, suggestions, and criticisms.

Word Forms: repletely, repleteness, repletive, repletively Antonym Form: unreplete

gregarious: (adj) sociable

Greg is a gregarious student who finds it difficult to avoid socializing during class.

Word Forms: gregariously, gregariousness Antonym Form: ungregarious

sycophant: (n) a person who flatters others in order to gain personal favor; a brown-noser

Sidney is a sycophant who compliments our English teacher in order to get a better grade on his assignments.

Word Forms: sycophantic, sycophantical, sycophantically, sycophantish, sycophantishly, sycophantism

abjure: (vb) to give up, often in a formal manner

King Edward VIII abjured the throne in order to marry Mrs. Wallis Simpson, a divorced American.

Word Forms: abjuratory, abjurer, abjuration Antonym Forms: unabjuratory, unabjured, nonabjuratory

destitute: (adj) completely wanting or lacking (usually money, food, and shelter)

The homeless man wasn't always destitute; he once had a job, but poor money management led to bankruptcy. Word Forms: destitutely, destituteness, destitution

umbrage: (n) offense; displeasure

The customer took umbrage at the clerk's rudeness and reported him to the corporate office.

surreptitious: (adj) stealthy and secret

relegate: (vb) to assign to a less important position; to demote

Rae Ann was relegated to dishwashing when she was caught being rude to the restaurant customers she was serving. Word Forms: relegable, relegation Antonym Forms: unrelagable, unrelegated

auspicious: (adj) favorable; fortunate

Austin waited for an auspicious time to ask his father to borrow the car; he finally had his chance on the day that his dad received a sizable raise at work.

Word Forms: auspiciously, auspiciousness

dupe: (vb) to deceive

Dupree was duped into investing in the scam.

Word Forms: dupe (n), dupable, dupability, duper, dupery Antonym Form: undupable

guile: (n) a skillful deception

The sneaky woman used guile to get close to the withdrawn millionaire; she pretended to have known his brother who died in the war.

Word Forms: guileful, guilefully, guilefulness Antonym Forms: guileless, guilelessly, guilelessness Related Words: guise, disguise

jingoism: (n) noisy and excessive patriotism for one's country

The candidate's jingoism cost him the election, as constituents did not believe he could tactfully handle foreign policy.

Word Forms: jingo, jingoish, jingoist, jingoistic, jingoistically

quiescent: (adj) being quiet or still or inactive

diffident: (adj) shy; reserved

Daphne was diffident when she first made the team, but by the end of the season, she was clearly a leader on the court.

Word Forms: diffidently, diffidenness, diffidence Antonym Forms: nondiffident, nondiffidently, undiffident

expurgate: (vb) to revise by removing offensive text; to purify by cleansing

Recent versions of Huckleberry Finn have been expurgated to remove racial slurs and references.

Word Forms: expurgated, expurgation, expurgator Antonym Form: unexpurgated

ingratiate: (vb) to put oneself in another's good graces

Ingrid's boyfriend ingratiated himself with her father by sharing a love of classic movies and old cars.

Word Forms: ingratiation, ingratiatory, ingratiating

elucidate: (vb) to make clear by explanation

The story in the newspaper elucidated some of the details of the mystery that had previously raised questions.

Word Forms: elucidation, elucidative, elucidatory, elucidator Related Word: lucid

dither: (vb) to be indecisive

Dillon dithered on whether to go to business school or law school.

Word Forms: ditherer, dithery

equivocal: (adj) uncertain; open to multiple interpretations

The politician's equivocal statement about the environment could support either side of the issue.

Word Forms: equivocality, equivocacy, equivocally, equivocalness

Antonym Forms: unequivocal, unequivocally, unequivocalness

paradox: (n) a statement that contradicts itself but nevertheless may still be true

Parker said, “I always lie,” but this is a paradox; if the statement is true, then he must be lying.

Word Forms: paradoxal, paradoxical, paradoxically, paradoxicalness, paradoxicality, paradoxology

nefarious: (adj) extremely wicked

In the novel, the nefarious character plotted to financially destroy the hero.

Word Forms: nefariously, nefariousness

exorbitant: (adj) greatly exceeding bounds of reason or moderation

I am forced to stop shopping at that grocery store until the owners lower the exorbitant prices on meats and produce.

Word Forms: exorbitantly, exorbitance

verbose: (adj) using or containing too many words

At the graduation ceremony, the valedictorian gave a verbose speech that caused many people to fall asleep.

Word Forms: verbosely, verboseness, verbosity Related Word: verbal

taciturn: (adj) silent; not willing to talk

The detective asked the lost girl her name, but the child remained taciturn, making it impossible to locate her parents.

Word Forms: taciturnly, taciturnity Antonym Forms: untaciturn, untaciturnly

derelict: (n) a person without a home, job, or property

The derelict spent his days begging on the street corner and his nights sleeping in the alley.

Word Forms: derelict (adj.), derelictly, derelictness, dereliction Related Word: relinquish

nebulous: (adj) vague or cloudy

When I woke up in the hospital, I only had a nebulous memory of the accident.

Word Forms: nebulously, nebulousness Antonym Forms: nonnebulous, nonnebulously, nonnebulousness

rhapsodize: (vb) to talk with great enthusiasm

The saleswoman rhapsodized about the benefits of her company's product.

Word Forms: rhapsody, rhapsodic, rhapsodical, rhapsodically, rhapsodist

sinecure: (n) a paid job with little work

Cindy was fortunate to find a sinecure; she simply had to show up three days a week to collect a paycheck. Word Forms: sinecureship, sinecurism, sinecurist

zealous: (adj) enthusiastic and devoted

The zealous sports fan had a tattoo of his favorite team's logo on his ankle.

Word Forms: zealously, zealousness, zealot Related Word: zeal

keen: (adj) sharp as in a point, or sharp as in intelligence It will take a keen mind to solve this difficult puzzle.

Word Forms: keenly, keenness

emulate: (vb) to imitate in order to match or excel

Emily hoped to emulate her older sister's success on the tennis court.

Word Forms: emulative, emulatively, emulation, emulator

cataclysm: (n) a violent upheaval

The political uprising against the dictator is a cataclysm that will hopefully result in a more democratic regime.

Word Forms: cataclysmic, cataclysmically, cataclysmal Related Word: catastrophe

autonomy: (n) independence

The Confederate states fought to gain autonomy from the Union during the Civil War.

Word Forms: autonomous, autonomously, autonomist

incontrovertible: (adj) unquestionable; impossible to deny

Protesters demanded the release of the imprisoned woman, saying there was incontrovertible proof of her innocence.

Word Forms: incontrovertibly, incontrovertibility, incontrovertibleness

Antonym Forms: controvertible, controvertibly, controvertibility, controvertibleness, controvert

martial: (adj) relating to war

The mayor was in favor of taking a martial approach to the problem, preferring to send soldiers into the abandoned houses to remove the squatters and drug dealers.

Word Forms: martialism, martialist, martially, martialness Antonym Form: nonmartial

subtle: (adj) difficult to detect

The subtle irony throughout the novel is missed by most readers.

Word Forms: subtly, subtleness, subtlety Antonym Forms: unsubtle, unsubtly

veracity: (n) honesty; truthfulness

The mechanic was known for his veracity, so customers trusted his diagnoses of their car problems.

Word Form: veracious Antonym Form: nonveracity Related Words: verify, verisimilitude

oblique: (adj) slanting; not straight; indirect or evasive

The politician made oblique comments about his opponent, hinting at corruption but not actually saying it was an issue.

Word Forms: obliquely, obliqueness

squalid: (adj) filthy and repulsive

The abandoned home was squalid; it was infested with rats and filled with trash.

Word Forms: squalidly, squalidness, squalidity

egregious: (adj) outrageously bad or offensive

Edie made the egregious mistake of asking the slightly overweight woman if she were expecting a baby.

Word Forms: egregiously, egregiousness

pusillanimous: (adj) timid; cowardly

The pusillanimous lion asked the wizard for courage in the old fairy tale.

Word Forms: pusillanimously, pusillanimity

contrite: (adj) feeling guilty and remorseful

The contrite criminal broke into sobs as he apologized to the victim's family for the suffering he had caused. Word Forms: contritely, contriteness, contrition

luminous: (adj) radiating light; enlightening; easily understood

The meeting was luminous because we finally figured out the reason that the mayor was backing the construction project.

Word Forms: luminously, luminousness Antonym Forms: nonluminous, nonluminously, nonluminousness Related Words: luminary, illuminate, luminescent

debutante: (n) a young woman making her debut into society

The debutantes were introduced at a formal ball, after which they were considered members of the aristocratic society.

exculpate: (vb) to clear from blame

The arson suspect was exculpated when forensics revealed that the fire had been the result of faulty wiring.

Word Forms: exculpable, exculpation, exculpatory Related Words: culpable, culprit

Antonym Forms: inculpate, inculpable, inculpation, inculpably, inculpatory, inculpability, inculpableness

conflagration: (n) a destructive fire

The fire department determined that the conflagration in the old warehouse was a result of faulty wiring.

Word Forms: conflagrative, conflagrate, conflagrant

formidable: (adj) causing fear due to powerful strength

Forrest is a formidable opponent on the tennis court; he has not lost a set in his last twenty games.

Word Forms: formidably, formidableness, formidabilty

cacophony: (n) harsh, jarring sound

On the first day of school, the band's output was a cacophony of trumpets and horns; however, by the end of the year, the horn section blended well with the rest of the ensemble.

Word Forms: cacophonic, cacophonous, cacophonously

panoply: (n) complete or impressive array

Penelope has managed to attract a panoply of bird species to her backyard bird feeder. Word Form: panoplied Antonym Form: unpanoplied

sagacious: (adj) acutely insightful and wise

The sagacious teacher was quickly able to pinpoint Sarah's learning disability, and thus tailor lessons to better help the child comprehend the material.

Word Forms: sagaciously, sagaciousness, sagacity Related Word: sage

fulminate: (vb) to explode loudly or to loudly pronounce

Phil was angry at his boss and fulminated his frustrations to his coworkers at lunch.

Word Forms: fulminator, fulminatory, fulmination Antonym Form: nonfulminating, unfulminated, unfulminating

amenable: (adj) agreeable

Amy was amenable to changing my schedule at work so that I could attend my son's baseball games.

Word Forms: amenability, amenableness, amenably Antonym Forms: nonamenable, nonamenability, nonamenableness

pristine: (adj) pure, clean, or unused

The interior of the old car was in pristine condition; the upholstery was spotless and the equipment worked perfectly.

Word Form: pristinely

intractable: (adj) stubborn; difficult to manage

The intractable child refused to let the babysitter into the room. Word Forms: intractability, intractableness, intractably

precipitate: (vb) to bring about abruptly

Prescott's sudden decision to move to a smaller apartment was precipitated by the loss of his job.

Word Forms: precipitate (adj.), precipitately, precipitateness, precipitative, precipitator Related Word:

precipitous

morass: (n) 1. a swamp 2. a difficult situation

After Morgan accepted Jill's invitation to the dance, he found himself in a morass; his friend offered him a ticket to a concert that he really wanted to see, but it happened to be on the same night as the dance.

engender: (vb) to produce

Divorce can engender feelings of anger, loss, and powerlessness.

Word Forms: engenderer, engenderment Antonym Form: unengendered Related Word: generate

wizened: (adj) shriveled

The old man's face was wizened with age.

Word Form: wizen

germane: (adj) related to; relevant

lugubrious: (adj) excessively mournful; sad and gloomy

Lucy's lugubrious behavior has started to annoy her friends; it has been two months since her breakup with Josh, but she is still as gloomy as if it had happened yesterday.

Word Forms: lugubriously, lugubriousness, lugubriosity

spurious: (adj) false; not legitimate

The applicant made spurious claims about attending a prestigious private school, but when the college learned the truth, they denied his application.

Word Forms: spuriously, spuriousness

virtuoso: (n) a person who has mastered a certain skill or field

Tonight I am attending a free concert in the park that features a young virtuoso on the violin.

Word Forms: virtuoso (adj.), virtuosic, virtuosity Related Words: virtue, virtuous

pugnacious: (adj) tending to quarrel or fight easily

Paul cannot walk his pugnacious dog in the park because she always starts fights with the other dogs. Word Forms: pugnaciously, pugnaciousness, pugnacity Related Word: pugilistic

precis: (n) a short summary

Rather than submit the entire manuscript, I sent the publishing company a precis of my novel. Word Form: precis (vb)

affected: (adj) fake; phony

Afton had never traveled outside of the United States, but he used an affected French accent to attract attention. Word Forms: affectedly, affectedness

charlatan: (n) a person who falsely claims to possess skills or knowledge; an imposter

The charlatan tricked the unsuspecting customers out of money by pretending to be able to predict the future. Word Forms: charlatanic, charlatanish, charlatanical, charlatanically, charlatanistic, charlatanry, charlatanism

pretense: (n) a false act intending to deceive

He got an interview with the pretense that he had a doctorate from Yale, but the interviewer quickly discovered the lie.

Word Forms: pretenseful, pretension, pretentious, pretentiously Antonym Forms: pretenseless, unpretentious Related Word: pretend

sibilant: (adj) having a hissing sound

The patient's respiration was weak and sibilant, the result of smoking for so many years.

Word Forms: sibilantly, sibilance, sibilancy

eschew: (vb) to avoid; to shun

Attempting to follow a low carb diet, Essie eschewed all foods containing sugar. Word Forms: eschewal, eschewer Antonym Form: uneschewed

miscreant: (n) a person who is evil or villainous

The miscreant came to town with the intention of creating strife and commotion, as he enjoyed watching others argue.

Word Forms: miscreant (adj.), miscreance, miscreancy

ingenue: (n) an artless, innocent young girl (especially as portrayed on the stage)

The young actress will play the part of the ingenue, an innocent girl who becomes caught up in the plot in Act II.

Related Word: ingenuous

mundane: (adj) ordinary and somewhat boring

While a trip to the beach had once been exciting, we went so often that it had become mundane.

Word Forms: mundanely, mundaneness, mundanity

rancorous: (adj) showing deep-seated resentment

In the fairy tale, the rancorous stepmother is jealous of the young maiden's beauty, youth, and innocence.

Word Forms: rancor, rancorously, rancorousness Related Word: rancid

prescience: (n) knowledge of events before they happen

Grandma had an eerie prescience about my accident before it happened but I was too foolish to listen to her warnings.

Word Forms: prescient, presciently

eminent: (adj) distinguished and prominent

The eminent professor has taught at distinguished colleges, which is why he is such a remarkable addition to the faculty.

Word Forms: eminently, eminence Note: eminent is often confused with imminent, which means about to occur

scoff: (vb) to laugh at and show open disrespect

Scott scoffed at the skate park rules; after the park closed, he hopped the fence and continued to skate until dark. Word Forms: scoff (n.), scoffingly, scoffer

chicanery: (n) the use of tricks to deceive someone

The con artist relied on chicanery to get his victims to reveal their Social Security numbers; he promised them a tropical vacation for simply listing their personal information. Word Forms: chicane, chicaner

philanthropist: (n) a person who makes charitable donations intended to increase human well-being As a young philanthropist, Phillip used to donate his allowance to the homeless shelter.

Word Forms: philanthropy, philanthropic, philanthropical, philanthropically

obstructionist: (n) a person who purposely blocks progress

Alberta worried that obstructionists would interfere with her environmental bill, ending her efforts to save the eagles.

Word Forms: obstructionistic, obstructionism Related Words: obstruct, obstruction, obstructive

scrupulous: (adj) abiding by morals or strict rules

The scrupulous executive would not let the advertisement run with the misleading information printed in it.

Word Forms: scrupulously, scrupulousness, scrupulosity

Antonym Forms: unscrupulous, unscrupulously, unscrupulousness, unscrupulosity Related Word: scruples

aberrant: (adj) unusual

My dog displayed aberrant behavior when he refused to greet me at the door or eat any of the treats I offered.

Word Forms: aberrance, aberrancy, aberrantly, aberrate, aberrational

temerity: (n) fearless daring

Tim jumped from the plane with temerity; he seemed so fearless and relaxed that it was difficult to tell that this was his first skydiving experience.

Word Forms: temerarious, temerariously, temerariousness

verisimilitude: (n) the appearance of truth; the quality of seeming to be true Even though the movie was based on a true story, the film lacked verisimilitude.

Word Forms: verisimilitudinous, verisimilar, verisimilarly Related Words: veracity, similitude

ameliorate: (vb) to make better

Amelia was an outstanding caregiver; she could ameliorate a patient's discomfort just by smiling kindly. Word Forms: ameliorable, ameliorableness, ameliorant, ameliorative, amelioratory, ameliorator

equanimity: (n) steadiness of mind under stress

Eva made an excellent emergency room doctor because she handled trauma with equanimity; she was clear-headed during the most stressful situations.

Word Forms: equanimous, equanimously, equanimousness Related Word: longanimity

panegyric: (n) a formal expression of praise

The director delivered a panegyric about the center's most helpful volunteer, praising her for helping the needy.

Word Forms: panegyrical, panegyrically, panegyrist, panegyrize, self-panegyric

consummate: (adj) perfect and complete

Constantine is the consummate host; he greets his guests, makes sure they are comfortable and enjoying themselves, and introduces new friends to everyone.

Word Forms: consummate (vb.), consummately, consummatory, consummation, consummator

cupidity: (n) excessive greed

Cullen's downfall was his cupidity; he couldn't walk away with the money he had already embezzled and was caught when he went back for more.

Word Form: cupidinous

incipient: (adj) beginning; just starting

The zinc lozenges will help an incipient cold, but do nothing for a well-established virus.

Word Forms: incipiently, incipience, incipiency

chary: (adj) cautious; timid; choosy

Charlie was chary of sitting on the wobbly chair; he was afraid it would break under his weight.

Word Form: charily Antonym Form: unchary

limpid: (adj) clear; calm

The limpid waters provided opportunity for the anglers to sight cast directly to the fish they could see in the clear water.

Word Forms: limpidity, limpidness, limpidly

husband: (vb) to manage wisely or thriftily

Henry husbanded his finances so that he would have plenty to live on in retirement.

Word Form: husbander Antonym Form: unhusbanded Related Word: husband (n)

irascible: (adj) quickly aroused to anger

The irascible old lady caused a scene at the restaurant by yelling at the manager when her hamburger was overcooked.

Word Forms: irascibly, irascibleness, irascibility Related Word: ire

Word Forms: garrulously, garrulousness, garrulity genial: (adj) polite and friendly

It's important for a kindergarten teacher to be genial; young children respond positively to a friendly adult.

Word Forms: genially, genialness, geniality Related Word: congenial

The danger of a carbon dioxide leak is that the noxious fumes are odorless. Word Forms: noxiously, noxiousness nuance: (n) a subtle difference

The nuances between the two fonts are often missed by the untrained graphic designer.

Word Form: nuanced

maudlin: (adj) foolishly emotional

When Maude drinks too much, she becomes maudlin, crying over silly things like her shoelaces coming untied.

Word Forms: maudlinism, maudlinly, maudlinness Antonym Forms: unmaudlin, unmaudlinly

audacious: (adj) bold and fearless

Audrey asked audacious questions that most people would be scared to ask.

Word Forms: audaciously, audaciousness, audacity Antonym Forms: unaudacious, unaudaciously, unaudaciousness

doctrinaire: (adj) impractical; insistent about one's own theory

The doctor believed that the lack of exercise was the single cause of high blood pressure and was doctrinaire in his inability to accept genetic factors.

Word Forms: doctrinaire (n), doctrinairism Antonym Forms: nondoctrinaire, undoctrinaire

restive: (adj) nervous; restless; impatient with authority

The restive suspect was frustrated with the booking process; he was anxious to call his lawyer and post bond.

Word Forms: restively, restiveness

apostate: (n) person who abandons their religion or cause

I had been an apostate from my religion for years, but recently had started thinking about rejoining the church. Word Forms: apostatic, apostatical, apostatically, apostasy, apostatize

sedulous: (adj) marked by care and persistent effort

Siera was impressed by Wayne's sedulous pursuit of a date; every day for the last three weeks, he had sent her a flower.

Word Forms: sedulously, sedulousness, sedulity

puerile: (adj) childish; immature

Your puerile jokes are suitable for the playground, but they won't get many laughs in a comedy club.

Word Forms: puerilely, puerilism Antonym Forms: nonpuerile, nonpuerilely

ignominious: (adj) disgraceful and shameful

Izzy's ignominious crime brought shame and embarrassment to her entire family.

Word Forms: ignominiously, ignominiousness, ignominy

daunt: (vb) to cause to lose courage

Don had finally worked up the courage to ride the roller coaster when he was daunted by the pale faces of the riders who had just completed the ride.

Word Forms: dauntingly, dauntingness Antonym Forms: dauntless, dauntlessly, dauntlessness, undaunted, undauntedly

wanton: (adj) unrestrained; immoral; unjustified

The pundit released wanton criticism on the book, even though it had been reviewed positively by other critics.

Word Forms: wantonly, wantonness Antonym Form: unwanton

supplant: (vb) to replace or take the place of

In the early 1990s, compact discs supplanted long-playing records.

Word Forms: supplantation, supplanter

obfuscate: (vb) to confuse or make unclear

If a solution to a math question requires units to be in inches, the test makers may obfuscate the question by using feet.

Word Forms: obfuscation, obfuscatory

frugal: (adj) characterized by the avoidance of excessive spending

A frugal shopper will always wait for items to go on sale or clearance before purchasing them.

Word Forms: frugally, frugalness, frugality

stricture: (n) a criticism

The film critic made several strictures about the movie's poor dialogue. Word Form: strictured

vitiate: (vb) to make imperfect; to corrupt

The king was vitiated by power; soon after his coronation, he began to abuse his subjects and destroy the fair laws.

Word Forms: vitiable, vitiation, vitiator

implacable: (adj) incapable of being pacified or appeased

Inez was so upset at the waiter that she became implacable; nothing the manager offered was going to make her happy.

Word Forms: implacability, implacableness, implacably Antonym Forms: placable, placably, placability Related Word: placid

ubiquitous: (adj) existing everywhere at once; omnipresent The fog was ubiquitous, blanketing the countryside.

Word Forms: ubiquitously, ubiquitousness Antonym Form: nonubiquitary, nonubiquitous, nonubiquitously

sobriquet: (n) a nickname

The baby's full name was long and burdensome, so his parents used the sobriquet "Peanut." Word Form: sobriquetical

callous: (adj) insensitive; emotionally hardened

The senator's callous indifference to the suffering of the people in the war-torn country cost him reelection.

Word Forms: callously, callousness Related Word: callus

incredulous: (adj) skeptical; not willing to believe

The incredulous car buyer did not believe the dealer's claim that the car was accident-free; he insisted on seeing a report on the car's history.

Word Forms: incredulously, incredulousness, incredulity Related Word: incredible

Antonym Forms: credulous, credulously, credulousness, credulity

perspicacity: (n) intelligence manifested by being astute

My accountant's perspicacity saved me thousands of dollars on my tax returns because he found hidden rebates. Word Forms: perspicacious, perspicaciously, perspicaciousness Related Words: perspicuity, perspicuous

stifle: (vb) to stop or hold back

I stifled a yawn so Grandpa wouldn't know that I was bored by his story.

Word Forms: stiflingly, stifler

oration: (n) a formal speech

The political candidate delivered an oration about the benefits of her universal health care plan. Word Forms: orate, oratorical, orator

The cantankerous old man took the little boy's sucker and refused to give it back. Word Forms: cantankerously, cantankerousness capricious: (adj) apt to change suddenly

Cane's capricious personality made him a fun friend but a terrible boss; social spontaneity was exciting but workplace unpredictability was frustrating.

Word Forms: capriciously, capriciousness, caprice

repugnant: (adj) offensive

The spoiled eggs that had sat in the hot car for several weeks offered the most repugnant smell I had ever experienced.

Word Forms: repugnantly, repugnance, repugnancy

furtive: (adj) sneaky

Frank devised a furtive plan in which he would sneak onto the rival's campus and steal their school flag. Word Forms: furtively, furtiveness

petulant: (adj) easily irritated over small issues

The petulant actress stormed off the set when she discovered that her dressing room did not have bottled water.

Word Forms: petulantly, petulance, petulancy Related Word: petty

fomentation: (n) a push for trouble or rebellion

The juniors would not have participated in skip day if it weren't for the fomentation of their senior friends.

Word Forms: foment, fomenter

Word Forms: extemporary, extemporaneity, extemporaneously, extemporarily, extemporaneousness, extemporariness extol: (vb) to praise highly

The critic extolled the works of Shakespeare, citing them as the most important contribution to the English language. Word Forms: extollingly, extolment, extoller

obscure: (adj) not clearly understood or expressed

Most of the movie audience did not understand the obscure reference to the other movie.

Word Forms: obscure (vb.), obscurely, obscureness, obscuredly, obscurity

inure: (vb) to become used to

People in Alaska were inured to cold weather.

Word Forms: inuredness, inurement Antonym Form: uninured

lavish: (adj) very generous or extravagant

The lavish wedding reception had a steak and lobster dinner, several intricate ice sculptures, and a famous jazz band.

Word Forms: lavishly, lavishness, lavishment, lavisher

wistful: (adj) expressing longing or yearning

Willie gave the car one last wistful look before he left the dealership; he wished he had the money to buy it. Word Forms: wistfully, wistfulness

populist: (n) a person who supports the rights and powers of the common people The candidate is a populist who believes in promoting the causes of the working classes.

Word Forms: populist (adj.), populistic, populism

dictum: (n) a formal statement

The president released a dictum forbidding texting while at work.

coalesce: (vb) to blend into one The two streams coalesced into a river.

Word Forms: coalescence, coalescent Antonym Forms: noncoalescence, noncoalescent

neophyte: (n) a beginner

Neil is a neophyte at downhill skiing, so he should stick to the smaller hills today.

Word Forms: neophytic, neophytish, neophytism

exasperate: (vb) to intensely irritate

The airline passenger was exasperated by the last minute cancellation of his flight.

Word Forms: exasperatedly, exasperatingly, exasperation, exasperator

Related Word: asperate

Note: exasperate is often confused with exacerbate (meaning to increase).

Word Forms: disillusionment, disillusive, disillusionize, disillusionist disingenuous: (adj) insincere

Denise's disingenuous apology was just an attempt to get out of her punishment; she was not truly sorry for going to the concert without permission.

Word Forms: disingenuously, disingenuousness, disingenuity Antonym Forms: ingenuous, ingenuously, ingenuousness

Related Word: genuine

Word Forms: platitudinous, platitudinarian, platitudinize plebeian: (adj) of the common people; lacking sophistication

The queen looked down upon her plebeian subjects who did not know anything about refinement or sophistication. Word Forms: plebeianism, plebeianly, plebeianness Antonym Form: unplebeian Related Word: plebe

obstreperous: (adj) noisily defiant or aggressive

The obstreperous students crowded the school board meeting to protest the new dress code.

Word Forms: obstreperously, obstreperousness, obstreperosity

felicity: (n) pleasing and appropriate style; happiness

The book review highlighted both the felicities and the imperfections of the novel.

Word Forms: felicitous, felicitously, felicitousness Antonym Forms: infelicity, infelicitous, infelicitously

paucity: (n) an insufficient quantity or number Pam realized there was a paucity of hamburger buns.

desultory: (adj) disconnected and random

People wondered about Desiree's mental state when her conversation turned desultory; she jumped from topic to topic with seemingly no connection.

Word Forms: desultorily, desultoriness, desultorious

penchant: (n) a strong liking

Penny has a penchant for poetry; she has filled two notebooks with poems and poetic lines.

kinetic: (adj) characterized by motion

Some students are kinetic learners who learn best when they are moving around.

Word Form: kinetically Antonym Form: nonkinetic Related Words: telekinesis, kinetics

sonorous: (adj) full and loud and deep, as a sound

The sound from the sonorous bell echoed throughout the cathedral.

Word Forms: sonorously, sonorousness, sonority Antonym Form: insonorous

latent: (adj) existing but not visible or obvious

Latika clearly had latent ability in math, but she failed to put forward any effort in the subject so no one knew how bright she really was.

Word Forms: latently, latency

stasis: (n) state of inaction or lack of progress

The company fluctuated between periods of growth and periods of stasis.

Word Form: stases Related Word: static

naïve: (adj) inexperienced and gullible

Nan was naïve in thinking that no one looked at her online social page except her friends; her father looked at it daily.

Word Forms: naïvely, naïveness, naïveté

malodorous: (adj) having an unpleasant smell

My malodorous shoe smelled so terrible that my mom threw it away.

Word Forms: malodorously, malodorousness Related Words: odor, odorously

declivity: (n) a downward slope

The backyard's declivity caused rainwater to wash down it, creating a pool of standing water at the bottom of the slope.

Word Forms: declivitous, declivous, declivent Antonym Form: acclivity

transient: (adj) passing quickly or staying briefly

The most transient years of your life are those spent in high school; someday when you realize how quickly your time there passed, you'll wish you had spent more time enjoying your youth.

Word Forms: transient (n.), transiently, transientness, transience Antonym Form: intransient Related Word: transitory

tawdry: (adj) gaudy and cheap

The pretentious members of the club gawked at the guest's tawdry jewelry but she was impervious to their rude stares.

Word Forms: tawdrily, tawdriness Antonym Form: untawdry

pungent: (adj) sharp; biting

Cosette's pungent remark stung Kent; he could handle criticism about his job, but her bitter words were personal.

Word Forms: pungency, pungently Antonym Forms: nonpungency, nonpungent, nonpungently

fractious: (adj) unruly; irritable

Fido was a fractious dog who refused to cooperate even after months of obedience classes.

Word Forms: fractiously, fractiousness Antonym Form: unfractious, unfractiously, unfractiousness

invidious: (adj) intended to hurt, offend, or discriminate

Ivan's invidious remarks to his wife shocked their guests; they had no idea that he could be so cruel.

Word Forms: invidiously, invidiousness

juxtapose: (vb) to place side by side

When Justin's picture was juxtaposed with his father's picture, the resemblance between the two was remarkable. Word Form: juxtaposition Related Word: pose

Word Forms: solicitously, solicitousness solvent: (adj) able to meet financial obligations Sully worked three jobs in order to remain solvent. Word Forms: solventless, solvently

alchemy: (n) magical power; process of turning base metals into gold

Al uses alchemy in the kitchen, turning simple ingredients into delicious culinary works of art.

Word Forms: alchemic, alchemical, alchemistic, alchemistical, alchemically, alchemist, alchemistry Related: chemistry

collusion: (n) a secret agreement; conspiracy

The founding fathers worked in collusion to revolt against the British government.

Word Forms: collusive, collusively, collusory Antonym Forms: noncollusion, noncollusive Related Word: collude

pundit: (n) a critic or expert

The political pundits are employed by newspapers and television networks to evaluate the actions of the President. Word Forms: punditic, punditically, punditry, punditocracy

encomium: (n) high praise

The chairwoman delivered an encomium about Enzo before introducing him as the employee of the month. Word Form: encomia

garner: (vb) to earn or to collect

Garrett garnered a reputation as a fierce lawyer after winning the trial amid national scrutiny. Antonym Form: ungarnered

grovel: (vb) lowering oneself as in asking forgiveness or showing respect Grover groveled for forgiveness from his mother after he broke her favorite vase.

Word Forms: groveler, grovelingly Antonym Form: ungroveling

analgesic: (adj) capable of relieving pain

Although Andy was in the most painful stages of the disease, his daughter's visit was analgesic; he was so happy to see her that his pain was significantly reduced.

Word Forms: analgesic (n.), analgetic Related Word: analgesia

wraith: (n) a ghost

Ray was upset after seeing a wraith which he believed forecasted his death.

Word Form: wraithlike

raiment: (n) clothes

Raymond brought a change of raiment with him so that he could shower and dress after basketball practice.

Related Word: array

erudition: (n) knowledge gained from study

Erik's erudition is sure to help him win a lot of money on the trivia-based quiz show.

Word Forms: eruditional, erudite, eruditely, eruditeness

illusory: (adj) creating illusions; deceiving

The illusory sweepstakes isn't really a contest at all; “winners” think they have won a free cruise, but the trip actually costs several hundred dollars and requires attendance at marketing seminars.

Word Forms: illusorily, illusoriness, illusive Related Word: illusion

rococo: (adj) ornate style in language, music, etc.

Her first novel was too rococo for the editor, who recommended that she delete some of the flowery language.

odious: (adj) offensive; hateful

The majority of Americans view dog fighting as an odious crime. Word Forms: odiously, odiousness Related Word: odium

stoic: (adj) free from emotion; unmoved

Mr. Stone's face remained stoic despite the pain and anger he was experiencing.

Word Forms: stoic (n), stoical, stoically, stoicalness Antonym Form: unstoic

numismatic: (adj) pertaining to coins or medals

The archeologist found numismatic evidence of the ancient civilization, including three coins with depictions of animals.

Word Forms: numismatics, numismatical, numismatically

peripatetic: (adj) traveling about

Perry had a peripatetic nature, so after high school, he spent several years traveling Europe before attending college. Word Forms: peripatetic (n), peripatetically, peripateticism

licentious: (adj) unrestrained by morals

Libby had no scruples and thus made licentious choices, never worrying about those affected or what others would think.

Word Forms: licentiously, licentiousness Antonym Form: nonlicentious, nonlicentiously, nonlicentiousness Related Word: license

burgeon: (vb) to flourish

Under the mayor's direction, the quiet town burgeoned into an active city.

fallow: (adj) not in use

The fallow field had not been used for crops in over a decade so the farmer had to till and aerate the soil.

Word Forms: fallowness Antonym Form: unfallowed

penitent: (adj) feeling or expressing remorse for misdeeds

The penitent criminal asked for forgiveness from the family he had robbed.

Word Forms: penitently, penitence Antonym Forms: impenitent, impenitently, impenitence Related Words: repentant, penance, penitentiary

glower: (vb) to stare with dislike or anger Mr. Glover glowered at me after I walked on his flowers.

Word Form: gloweringly Antonym Forms: unglowering, ungloweringly

fallible: (adj) capable of making a mistake

Fallon knew that her boyfriend was fallible, but she was still disappointed to learn that he had lied to her.

Word Forms: fallibly, fallibility, fallibleness Antonym Forms: infallible, infallibly, infallibility, infallibleness Related Word: fall

proselytize: (vb) to convert someone to another belief, religion, party, or cause Prewitt spent the summer proselytizing for the governor's re-election campaign.

iconoclast: (n) a person who who attacks cherished ideas or traditional institutions

Many religious leaders accused the author of being an iconoclast for presenting evidence that contrasted with the religion's long-standing beliefs.

Word Forms: iconoclastic, iconoclastically, iconoclasm

draconian: (adj) harsh and severe

In the novel, the king used draconian forms of punishment—such as torture or starvation—on any one caught plotting against the monarchy.

Word Forms: draconic, draconically

treacly: (adj) overly sweet or sentimental

The movie is treacly, with several emotional scenes; it should be viewed with a box of tissues instead of a box of popcorn.

Word Form: treacle

untenable: (adj) impossible to defend

Tina made an untenable argument that fell apart on cross examination.

Word Forms: untenably, untenability, untenableness Antonym Form: tenable

foible: (n) a minor flaw or weakness of character Foster's only foible is his inability to make a decision. Related Word: feeble

vicissitude: (n) a change or variation

After a period of vicissitude in which Vin experienced much loss, he rebounded and regained control of the company. Word Forms: vicissitudinous, vicissitudinary

cabal: (n) a secret group of plotters or schemers

The cabal met in a church basement to plan the overthrow of the government.

Word Form: caballer Related Word: cabala

verdant: (adj) green with color or green with inexperience The verdant garden was lush with plants.

Word Forms: verdancy, verdantly Antonym Forms: unverdant, unverdantly

molt: (vb) to shed feathers

The cockatoo molted every spring in preparation for new feathers.

Word Form: molter

indolent: (adj) lazy

India was an indolent worker, and was thus fired when it was discovered that she was lazy.

Word Forms: indolently, indolence

inexorable: (adj) unyielding

Mary Ingalls was aware that she would lose her sight before she began her inexorable decline into blindness.

Word Forms: inexorability, inexorably, inexorableness Antonym Form: exorable

polemical: (adj) controversial; causing opposition

Polly published a polemical article about vaccinations that caused much debate among her readers.

Word Forms: polemic, polemically, polemicist, polemicize Antonym Forms: nonpolemic, nonpolemical, nonpolemically

raze: (vb) to tear down

The old abandoned buildings were razed in preparation for the construction of the new baseball stadium. Word Form: razer

perfidious: (adj) tending to betray

The perfidious soldier was selling classified secrets to the army's enemies.

Word Forms: perfidiously, perfidiousness, perfidy

propriety: (n) accepted or appropriate standards

When traveling abroad, it is important to observe the proprieties of your host country.

Antonym Form: nonpropriety

surfeit: (n) surplus; extra

There is a surfeit of gasoline this month so the price will be lowered significantly.

Word Form: surfeiter Antonym Forms: unsurfeited, unsurfeiting

plucky: (adj) brave

The plucky little duck jumped right into the water without waiting for its mother to lead the way. Word Forms: pluckily, pluckiness

Word Forms: elicitation, elicitor Related Word: solicit Note: elicit is often confused with illicit, which means illegal eloquent: (adj) expressing oneself powerfully and effectively The minister's eloquent sermon stirred the members of the church.

Word Forms: eloquently, eloquenceAntonym Forms: ineloquent, ineloquently, ineloquence

legerdemain: (n) trickery; sleight of hand

The magician employed legerdemain to fool the audience into believing he pulled a rabbit from his hat. Word Form: legerdemainist

inundate: (vb) to flood

After the newspaper ran the controversial story, the editor was inundated with calls from hundreds of angry subscribers.

Word Forms: inundation, inundatory, inundator

tome: (n) a long, heavy book

The professor wants a short summary of your biography, not a tome he has to lug home with him.

denigrate: (vb) to damage the reputation of

The candidate hoped to denigrate his opponent's character by exposing the embezzlement scandal.

Word Forms: denigration, denigrative, denigratory, denigrator

Connor was unable to finish the seventeenth-century novel due to the convoluted language of the period. Word Forms: convolutedly, convolutedness Related Word: involuted corpulent: (adj) excessively fat

The corpulent man purchased two adjacent airline seats in order to have a more comfortable flight.

Word Forms: corpulently, corpulence, corpulency

revere: (vb) to regard with respect and awe

Paul Revere was one of many colonists who revered freedom and democracy.

Word Forms: reverable, reverent, reverently, reverence, reverential, reverer

Antonym Forms: irreverent, irreverently, irreverence Related Word: reverend

avarice: (n) extreme greed for material wealth

Avery amassed million-dollar homes, luxury cars, and exquisite jewelry to satisfy her avarice, but still wanted more. Word Forms: avaricious, avariciously, avariciousness

culpable: (adj) worthy of blame

The jury found the suspect culpable for the break-ins.

Word Forms: culpability, culpableness, culpably Antonym Form: nonculpable, nonculpableness, nonculpably Related Word: exculpate, culprit

kindle: (vb) to light up or to excite

The novel "Jurassic Park" kindled his interest in dinosaurs.

Word Form: kindler Related Word: kindling

sanguine: (adj) confidently optimistic and cheerful

Dr. Sanchez enjoyed working with Sandy, his most sanguine patient; she was always confident that her test results would be good, and if they weren't, she was optimistic about her treatment. Word Forms: sanguinely, sanguineness, sanguinity

delineate: (vb) to outline

In her speech, Delilah clearly delineated her plans for changing several policies should she be elected class president.

Word Forms: delineable, delineative, delineation, delineament, delineatory, delineator Antonym Form: undelineated

vituperate: (vb) to use abusive language

A children's welfare agency was contacted when the mother vituperated her son in the doctor's office.

Word Form: vituperator Antonym Form: unvituperated

adroit: (adj) highly skilled, especially with one's hands

The adroit mechanic was able to fix Addy's old car, even though six other mechanics said it couldn't be repaired.

Word Forms: adroitly, adroitness

demur: (vb) to object

I was surprised when my father did not demur to me attending the rival college of his alma mater.

Word Forms: demurrable, demurral, demurrer Antonym Form: undemurring

arrogate: (vb) to claim without rights

The government arrogated Arianna's land, so she hired a lawyer to prove it did not have any rights to her property. Word Forms: arrogatingly, arrogation, arrogator, arrogative Antonym Forms: unarrogated, unarrogating

effusive: (adj) excessive enthusiasm or emotion

Effie's effusive praise was so excessive and over-the-top that it almost seemed insincere.

Word Forms: effusively, effusiveness Related Words: effuse, infuse

politic: (adj) ingenious, wise, or diplomatic

Paul made a politic manager; he kept employees happy and productive using tactful approaches and strategies. Word Form: politicly Related Word: political

indigenous: (adj) native to

Although the flower can now be found all over the eastern United States, it is indigenous to Florida.

Word Forms: indigenously, indigenousness, indigenity, indigen, indigene

sage: (n) a person who is very wise

Villagers who have seemingly unsolvable problems often seek the advice of the sage.

Word Forms: sage (adj.), sagely, sageness Related Word: sagacious

acumen: (n) good judgment

The judge was respected for his acumen when sentencing convicted defendants.

Word Forms: acuminous, acuminate, acumination Antonym Form: unacuminous

disabuse: (vb) to free someone from false ideas

Dixon believed tomatoes were vegetables but I disabused him of that idea when I revealed they are actually fruits.

Word Form: disabusal

banal: (adj) repeated too often; overfamiliar through overuse

The plot of the movie is banal; everything that takes place in this film has happened in a dozen other movies. Word Forms: banally, banalize, banality

impasse: (n) blocked progress; deadlock

We came to an impasse in our discussion about our wedding colors; we both refused to compromise.

overwrought: (adj) extremely excited or disturbed Eva became overwrought when she lost her cell phone. Related Word: overwork

schism: (n) division of a group into opposing factions

The disagreement in the teacher's lounge created two schisms in the school: teachers who approved of the rule change, and those who opposed it.

Word Forms: schismatic, schismatically, schismaticalness, schismatize, schismatist Antonym Form: schismless

fawn: (vb) to seek attention through flattery

The associate fawned over his supervisor in an attempt to receive a raise.

Word Forms: fawner, fawningly, fawningness

curmudgeon: (n) cranky, difficult person

The old curmudgeon complained about every part of his meal.

Word Form: curmudgeonly Related Word: cur

espouse: (vb) to adopt or marry (such as an idea or cause)

Although Esmerelda had never practiced a formal religion, she espoused her fiancé's faith in order to join his church.

Word Forms: espousal, espouser Related Word: spouse

ephemeral: (adj) lasting a very short time

Effie's sadness over her breakup is ephemeral; she will quickly find a new boyfriend to help her forget the last.

Word Forms: ephemeral (n.), ephemerally, ephemeralness, ephemerality, ephemerous, ephemeron

truculence: (n) brutal cruelty and aggressiveness

After the fight in school, Truman was expelled; the school board said that his truculence was a danger to the others. Word Forms: truculent, truculently, truculency

vestige: (n) a small trace

The bricks from one corner of the foundation were the last vestiges of the historic hotel.

Word Forms: vestigial, vestigially, vestigium

augment: (vb) to enlarge or increase

In an effort to augment her paper on William Faulkner, Aubrey added three pages about the author's childhood. Word Forms: augmentation, augmentable, augmentative, augmentatively, augmenter

Word Forms: exuberantly, exuberance, exuberate facetious: (adj) not intended to be taken seriously

Fatima, who hated getting her teeth cleaned, was being facetious when she said, “I love going to the dentist!” Word Forms: facetiously, facetiousness

turgid: (adj) pompous or swollen

Turner wrote a turgid speech that was sure to alienate at least half the audience with its pompousness.

Word Forms: turgidity, turgidness, turgidly Antonym Forms: unturgid, unturgidly

grievous: (adj) causing grief or very serious

During the war, families feared news from a grievous telegram indicating that their loved one had been injured or killed.

Word Forms: grievously, grievousness Antonym Forms: nongrievous, nongrievously, nongrievousness

noxious: (adj) harmful

anachronistic: (adj) out of chronological order

Today's announcement about the impending demolition of the baseball stadium is anachronistic; the stadium was razed early last week.

Word Forms: anachronistically, anachrony, anachronic, anachronism, anachronous, anachronously

Related Word: chronological, chronology

demarcate: (vb) to set, mark, or draw the boundaries of something

The twins demarcated the room after their fight; Demarcus was only allowed access to the right side of their room, while Demonte had to stay on the left side.

Word Forms: demarcation, demarcator

fallacy: (n) a false idea

Many textbooks teach the fallacy that George Washington cut down a cherry tree; it is widely believed that an author made up that story to increase the sales of his book.

Word Forms: fallacious, fallaciously, fallaciousness

obsequious: (adj) overly flattering or obedient

The new employee was distrusted by his co-workers because of his obsequious behavior; he agreed with everything the boss said and laughed at all of her bad jokes.

Word Forms: obsequiously, obsequiousness, obsequence

deleterious: (adj) harmful

The deleterious effects of cigarette smoking, such as lung cancer, are highlighted in the public service campaign. Word Forms: deleteriously, deleteriousness Related Word: delete

frivolous: (adj) not serious; silly

The author's new novel is a frivolous look at life in the city; although it lacks the serious tones of his previous novels, it's a fun and enjoyable story.

Word Forms: frivolously, frivolousness, frivolity, frivol, frivoler

derivative: (n) something that came from an original

The Pilates exercise system is a derivative of the ancient Indian practice of yoga.

Word Forms: derivative (adj.), derivatively, derivativeness, derive, derivation

repast: (n) a meal

We sat down to a repast of fried chicken, corn on the cob, and coleslaw.

Word Form: repast (vb)

diatribe: (n) bitter criticism; verbal attack

It was clear from Diana's diatribes against her mother that their relationship was beyond repair. Word Form: diatribist

mendacious: (adj) lying, false, or untrue

The mendacious girl said that she didn't take her mother's lipstick, but the bright red evidence was all over her face. Word Forms: mendaciously, mendaciousness, mendacity

belfry: (n) a bell tower

No one volunteered to clean out the belfry because of all the bats that live in it.

magnanimous: (adj) noble and generous in spirit

The magnanimous donor has given over ten million dollars to children's charities in the city.

Word Forms: magnanimously, magnanimousness, magnanimity

indignant: (adj) displaying anger due to unfairness

The seniors were indignant over their disqualification in the homecoming contest, claiming that the decision was unfair.

Word Forms: indignantly, indignation

pedagogical: (adj) relating to education or teaching

The course for new teachers taught the pedagogical principal that all children could learn.

Word Forms: pedagogy, pedagogic, pedagogically, pedagogism, pedagogery, pedagogish, pedagog, pedagogue

gustatory: (adj) relating to the sense of taste

The restaurant provides a gustatory experience by offering skewers of beef, pork, and poultry marinated in exotic oils.

Word Forms: gustatorily, gustation, gustative, gustativeness

myopic: (adj) lacking long-term vision

Maya has a myopic outlook when it comes to investment; she complains about the money she is investing now, rather than focusing on the money she will make in the future. Word Forms: myopically, myopia

truncated: (adj) shortened by cutting off a part

The author published a truncated version of the novel, because most people would not read a book with so many pages.

Word Forms: truncate, truncately, truncation Related Word: trunk

potentate: (n) a powerful ruler

The potentate was born into the power of the monarchy; his family had ruled the country for over six hundred years.

Related Word: potent

missive: (n) a letter

The governor sent out missives to her supportive constituents, thanking them for their contributions to her campaign.

somnolent: (adj) sleepy or drowsy

The somnolent truck driver had been awake all night and was anxious to find a rest area so she could sleep.

Word Forms: somnolently, somnolence, somnolency, somnolescent

Antonym Forms: insomnolent, insomnolently, insomnolence, insomnolency Related Word: insomnia

succinct: (adj) expressed in few words; concise

Your summary must be succinct, highlighting the main ideas but omitting the bulk of the text.

Word Forms: succinctly, succinctness Antonym Forms: unsuccinct, unsuccinctly

cantankerous: (adj) ill-tempered and unwilling to cooperate

itinerant: (adj) traveling from place to place to work

The itinerant pastor was transferred to our church from a ministry in Ohio; he will stay with us for six months before going to New Hampshire.

Word Forms: itinerant (n.), itinerantly, itinerate, itineration Related Word: itinerary

sportive: (adj) playful

The sportive kitten chased the ball of yarn.

Word Forms: sportively, sportiveness, sportability Antonym Forms: unsportive, unsportively, unsportiveness Related Word: sport

satiate: (vb) to fill to satisfaction

After a day without anything to eat, the huge spaghetti dinner satiated my appetite.

Word Forms: satiated, satiation Antonym Forms: nonsatiation, unsatiated, unsatiating Related Word: sate

narcissist: (n) a person who has excessive love or admiration of oneself

Nancy is a narcissist who is unable to love her husband or her children as much as she loves herself.

Word Forms: narcist, narcissism, narcistic, narcissistic, narcissistically

specious: (adj) 1. plausible but false 2. deceptively pleasing

The merits of the diet are specious; while we want to believe we can eat unlimited protein, there are many health risks associated with the high-cholesterol plan.

Word Forms: speciously, speciousness, speciosity

elegy: (n) a sad poem or song

reproach: (vb) to blame; to express criticism towards

The board of directors reproached the company president for falling profits and decreased revenue.

Word Forms: reproach (n.), reproachingly, reproachable, reproachableness, reproachably

Antonym Forms: irreproachable,unreproachable, reproachless Related Word: reproachful

stevedore: (n) a laborer who loads and unloads vessels in a port

Before the ship left port, the stevedores loaded it with nearly four tons of food and supplies for the long voyage.

Word Form: stevedore (vb.)

querulous: (adj) complaining

Quentin's querulous tone irritated Nina; he always found something about which to complain.

Word Forms: querulously, querulousness

boor: (n) a person who is rude, clumsy, and lacking social manners

Boris was a boor at the dinner party; after telling the host that her house was cheaply decorated, he ate his steak with his fingers and burped during the meal.

Word Forms: boorish, boorishly, boorishness

Note: Be careful not to confuse a boor (a rude person) with a bore (a boring person).

diurnal: (adj) daily; daytime

Humans are diurnal creatures, so working the night shift can disrupt our natural sleep rhythms.

Word Forms: diurnally, diurnalness Antonym Forms: undiurnal, undiurnally Related Word: nocturnal

implicit: (adj) implied though not directly expressed

Although we never mentioned the fight, there seemed to be an implicit agreement not to talk about it.

Word Forms: implicitly, implicitness, implicity Antonym Forms: explicit, explicitly, explicitness

coterie: (n) an exclusive group of people; a clique

The town's wealthiest socialites formed a coterie and few people were able to gain entrance to the circle.

assail: (vb) to attack

Asa was determined to master the GRE Verbal Reasoning section, so she assailed vocabulary words with determination.

Word Forms: assailable, assailableness, assailer, assailment, assailant Antonym Form: unassailed

circumscribed: (adj) restricted

Her driving privileges are circumscribed by the state; she is only allowed to drive at night if she is returning from work.

Word Forms: circumscribable, circumscriber Related Word: circle

imprecation: (n) a curse

The old woman dabbled in voodoo, and was known for casting imprecations on her enemies.

Word Forms: imprecate, imprecator, imprecatory Antonym Form: unimprecated

magnate: (n) an important person in a field of business

Henry Ford was an automotive magnate, manufacturing the first automobile that was affordable to the middle class. Word Form: magnateship

acerbic: (adj) sour; harsh

Sour Patch Kids candy tastes like acerbic gummy bears.

Word Forms: acerbically, acerbate, acerbity Antonym Forms: unacerbic, unacerbically

euphony: (n) pleasant sound

When the orchestra started to play, a euphony ensued that made audience members smile.

Word Forms: euphonize, euphonious, euphoniously, euphoniousness

Antonym Forms: noneuphonious, noneuphoniously, noneuponiousness

propitiate: (vb) to calm or pacify

The king was able to propitiate the mob by agreeing to meet with their leader.

Word Forms: propitiable, propitiatingly, propitiative, propitiator Antonym Form: nonpropitiable

lachrymose: (adj) tearful; sad

Lakeisa tends to get lachrymose over animal rescue commercials depicting cats and dogs in abusive situations. Word Forms: lachrymosely, lachrymosity

platitude: (n) remark repeated too often

"The customer is always right" is just a platitude in which very few service-industry workers believe anymore.

cathartic: (adj) inducing a release of tense emotions

Painting was a cathartic exercise for Cathy; through her paintings she was able to release anger and fear. Word Forms: cathartically, catharticalness

dearth: (n) a lack in supply

proletarian: (adj) of the working class

Education is an important proletarian value; working class parents believe that a college degree will offer their children many more career choices.

Word Forms: proletarian (n.), proletarianly, proletarianness, proletarianism, proletary, proletariat

clandestine: (adj) secret

The school administrators held clandestine meetings about the school uniform policy; they were afraid that if the public knew they were contemplating a new policy, the outcry would squash the issue.

Word Forms: clandestinely, clandestineness, clandestinity

laud: (vb) to praise, glorify, or honor

Landon was lauded for his achievements at the laboratory; he had made more progress in a year than most scientists had made in a decade.

Word Forms: laudable, laudably, laudation, laudative, laudatory, laudator

panacea: (n) a cure for all diseases, or a solution to all problems

The manager believed the new software was a panacea for all of the company's computer problems, but Pam was skeptical of its ability to improve the entire system.

Word Form: panacean

Before the colonists declared independence, they held a series of surreptitious meetings to secretly discuss their plan. Word Forms: surreptitiously, surreptitiousness sybarite: (n) a person devoted to luxury

Sybil was a difficult dinner guest because she was a sybarite, insisting on the finest china, most luxurious decor, and the most expensive food.

Word Forms: sybarite (adj), sybaritism

Word Forms: lampoon (n), lampooner, lampoonist, lampoonery Antonym Form: unlampooned languid: (adj) lacking in energy or spirit

My boss's languid response to my proposal wasn't expected; I thought he'd be excited about my initiative and creativity.

Word Forms: languidly, languidness Antonym Forms: unlanguid, unlanguidly, unlanguidness Related Word: languish

canonical: (adj) authorized or accepted

Pluto is no longer a canonical planet; due to its small mass, it was reclassified as a “dwarf planet” in 2006. Word Forms: canonically, canon, canonic Antonym Forms: uncanonical, uncanonically

impetuous: (adj) impulsive

While at the airshow to see old war planes, Ivan made an impetuous decision to go skydiving.

Word Forms: impetuously, impetuousness, impetuosity Related Word: impetus

progenitor: (n) a direct ancestor or originator

Although dogs now come in all shapes, sizes, and temperaments, the progenitor of their species was the wild wolf. Word Forms: progenitorial, progenitorship Related Word: genitor

acme: (n) the highest point

The Roman Empire reached its acme of power around 11 AD, but a slow decline occurred over the next four centuries.

Word Forms: acmic, acmatic,

euphemism: (n) an inoffensive word or phrase used in place of one that is hurtful or harsh

In the hospital's yearly report, the euphemism "negative patient outcome" is used instead of "death."

Word Forms: euphemistic, euphemistically, euphemist, euphemistical, euphemious, euphemously, euphemize Antonym Forms: uneuphemistic, uneuphemistical

nominal: (adj) in name only; minimal

The president was a nominal leader; the real people making the important decisions were his advisors. Word Form: prenominal Antonym Forms: unnominal, unnominally

dyspeptic: (adj) irritable and gloomy

Dyson was dyspeptic about his acceptance into business school; everyone tried to cheer him up, but he was convinced he would be rejected.

Word Forms: dyspeptically Antonym Forms: nondyspeptic, nondyspeptical, nondyspeptically

nettle: (vb) to irritate

I was nettled by her annoying voice.

Word Forms: nettle (n), nettler, nettly Antonym Form: unnettled

tacit: (adj) unspoken and implied

Although she never commented on our performance, the principal gave her tacit approval of our band by asking us to play at the next school function.

Word Forms: tacitly, tacitness Related Word: taciturn

patriarch: (n) the male head of a family

As the oldest of the seven, Uncle Pat was the patriarch of the family and thus gave the toasts at all family gatherings.

Word Forms: patriarchal, patriarchic, patriarchalism, patriarchy

Antonym Forms: matriarch, matriarchal, matriarchic, matriarchalism, matriarchy Related Words: pa, paternal

deject: (vb) to lower someone's spirits; make downhearted

The news of her father's declining condition dejected Denise, as she had been sure his health was starting to improve.

Word Forms: dejected (adj.), dejectedly, dejectedness, dejectory, dejection Related Words: reject, eject

inculcate: (vb) to teach through persistent repetition

Ms. Ingles inculcated her students with a love of reading; many years later, an overwhelming majority reported that they were still voracious readers.

Word Forms: inculcation, inculcative, inculcator

ardor: (n) intense passion

Mrs. Armstrong, my English teacher, is known for her ardor for the literature of William Faulkner; last summer she even visited his hometown in Mississippi in order to better visualize the settings of his books.

ominous: (adj) threatening or foreshadowing evil

The dark clouds in the distance were ominous and threatened to ruin the picnic.

Word Forms: ominously, ominousness Related Word: omen

cumbersome: (adj) clumsy, awkward, and heavy

The old television set was cumbersome, making it difficult to move into the other room.

Word Forms: cumbersomely, cumbersomeness Related Words: cumber, encumber

exponent: (n) one who explains or interprets

The teacher was an exponent of turn of the century literature, explaining the themes that populated novels at that time.

Word Forms: exponent (adj), exponential, exponentially Antonym Forms: nonexponential, nonexponentially

lissome: (adj) flexible

The lissome gymnast dazzled the audience with her tumbling routine.

Word Forms: lissomely, lissomeness

Spartan: (adj) strict; simple; serious

Spencer's Spartan apartment at Michigan State University was clean and neat, free of clutter or any luxuries.

Word Forms: Spartanism, Spartanly, Spartanically Antonym Form: non-Spartan

archaic: (adj) so extremely old as seeming to belong to an earlier period

The college cannot have sorority or fraternity houses because of an archaic town law that does not allow unmarried people to live together.

Word Forms: archaically, archaism, archaistic, archaist Related Word: archaeology

obstreperous: (adj) noisily defiant or aggressive

The obstreperous students crowded the school board meeting to protest the new dress code.

Word Forms: obstreperously, obstreperousness, obstreperosity

byzantine: (adj) highly complex or intricate

In a home loan, the byzantine language and unfamiliar terminology can be intimidating to a first-time home buyer.

sacrosanct: (adj) sacred; not to be criticized or violated

Mr. Sackett considered his baseball cards sacrosanct; they were displayed proudly in his office behind thick plexiglass so no one would disturb them.

Word Forms: sacrosanctity, sacrosanctness

obstinate: (adj) extremely stubborn

Mr. O'Brien was obstinate about eating at the bistro; he refused to eat anywhere else.

Word Form: obstinately, obstinateness, obstinacy

frenetic: (adj) frantic

The castaways were frenetic in waving down the rescue plane.

Word Forms: frenetically, frenetical Antonym Form: nonfrenetic, nonfrenetically

occlude: (vb) to shut or block

Plaque buildup in the arteries can occlude the flow of blood resulting in heart disease.

Word Forms: occludent, occlusion, occlusal Antonym Forms: include, nonocclusion

pith: (n) the essential part

The pith of the argument was that Ren wanted Grayden's toy.

Related Word: pithy

raucous: (adj) unpleasantly loud and harsh Rachel's raucous laughter often drove people away.

Word Forms: raucously, raucousness, raucity

deride: (vb) to ridicule

The unsupportive team captain derided Desiree's attempts to make the volleyball squad.

Word Forms: deridingly, derision, derisive, derisible, derider

aerie: (n) a nest; a home high on a mountain

Our aerie atop Roan Mountain was a cozy escape from the hustle and bustle of city life. Related Word: aerial

pariah: (n) a person who is rejected; an outcast

Pamela became the pariah of the company when she was caught stealing money from her co-workers. Word Forms: pariahdom, pariahism

enumerate: (vb) to count; to name one by one The blog enumerated the top five study tips for the GRE.

Word Forms: enumerative, enumerator, enumerable Antonym Forms: nonenumerated, nonenumerative

Related Words: numeral, number

antipathy: (n) strong dislike

Antonio's antipathy for reporters stemmed from his childhood, when journalists hassled him about his father's trial.

Word Forms: antipathist, antipathize, antipathic Related Words: sympathy, empathy, apathy

evanescent: (adj) vanishing

corroborate: (vb) to confirm or support with evidence

Coral's thesis was corroborated by three supporting paragraphs, each presenting an example that proved her main idea.

Word Forms: corroborated, corroboration, corroborative, corroboratively, corroboratory, corroborant, corroborator Antonym Form: uncorroborated

pastiche: (n) a work that is a mixture of styles, materials, or sources

Patsy's composition was truly a pastiche, borrowing musical elements from Bach, Beethoven, and Mozart. Word Forms: pasticcio, pasticheur, pasticheuse

impious: (adj) lacking respect or devotion, usually for a god or religion

Imogene had a difficult time convincing her impious husband to attend church with the family.

Word Forms: impiously, impiousness Antonym Forms: pious, piously, piousness

diaphanous: (adj) sheer; nearly translucent

Daphne would be wise to wear a slip under that diaphanous skirt.

Word Forms: diaphanously, diaphanousness, diaphaneity Antonym Forms: nondiaphanous, nondiaphanously

overt: (adj) open and observable; not secret or hidden

The candidate's overt support of stem cell research was unusual; he made it clear that if elected, he would work to increase research efforts.

Word Forms: overtly, overtness Antonym Forms: covert, covertly, covertness

mitigate: (vb) to make less intense or severe

Mitch was grounded for a week when he broke curfew, but his mom mitigated his punishment by several days when she learned that he had been late because he was taking a sick friend to the hospital.

Word Forms: mitigable, mitigatedly, mitigation, mitigative, mitigatory, mitigator

Antonym Forms: immitigable, immitigably, immitigability, unmitigable, unmitigated, unmitigatedly

bucolic: (adj) relating to country life; rural

The farmer lived a bucolic lifestyle, rising with the sun to tend the farm and retiring at sundown. Word Forms: bucolical, bucolically

pacify: (vb) to calm; to bring peace

ineffable: (adj) incapable of being put into words

Effie's joy at being reunited with her long-lost brother was ineffable; words could not explain her happiness. Word Forms: ineffably, ineffableness, ineffability Antonym Form: effable

insular: (adj) narrow-minded; isolated

The culture is criticized for its insular ideas, such as the belief that women should not be allowed to attend school. Word Forms: insularly, insularism, insularity

histrionic: (adj) overly dramatic

The histrionic patient pretended to faint when he saw the needle used for the vaccination.

Word Forms: histrionic (n.), histrionics, histrionical, histrionically

abdicate: (vb) to give up, often in a formal manner

King Edward VIII abdicated the throne in order to marry Mrs. Wallis Simpson, a divorced American.

Word Forms: abdicable, abdicative, abdicator, abdication Antonym Form: unabdicative

vainglorious: (adj) feeling excessive self-importance or pride for one's own accomplishments

The vainglorious actor brushed aside the reporter's question about the charity in order to talk about the Oscar he won.

Word Forms: vaingloriously, vaingloriousness, vainglory Related Word: vain:

acidulous: (adj) sour; sharp

Her acidulous criticism of my paper on Shakespeare was disappointing since I had invested many hours in research. Word Forms: acidulent, acidulation Related Words: subacidulous, acid

churlish: (adj) rude and vulgar

Cheryl did not think the man's churlish jokes were appropriate, and asked that he apologize for his vulgarity. Word Forms: churlishly, churlishness, churl

quotidian: (adj) daily or commonplace

The teacher completed a quotidian report that tracked her student's absences.

Word Forms: quotidianly, quotidianness

salubrious: (adh) healthy; wholesome

This salubrious tea is said to help cure many ailments.

Word Forms: salubriously, salubriousness, salubrity Antonym Forms: nonsalubrious, nonsalubriously, nonsalubriousness

voluble: (adj) talkative or fluent with words

The voluble hairdresser talked the entire time he cut my hair.

Word Forms: volubility, volubly Antonym Forms: nonvolubility, nonvoluble, nonvolubleness

ascertain: (vb) to make certain

The detective was able to ascertain the suspect's whereabouts on the night of the burglary through surveillance video.

Word Forms: ascertainable, ascertainableness, ascertainably, ascertainment, ascertainer

proclivity: (n) a natural tendency

Prescott had a proclivity to lie, so few people trusted him.

cajole: (vb) to influence by gentle urging, caressing, or flattering

Caleb cajoled his mother into letting him borrow the car by telling her how young and pretty she looked today. Word Forms: cajolement, cajolingly, cajolery, cajoler

lucid: (adj) clear; easy to understand

If your directions had been more lucid, I might have made it to the party on time.

Word Forms: lucidly, lucidness, lucidity Related Word: elucidate

augury: (n) divine prediction

Augustus believed the groundhog's shadow was an augury of a delayed springtime.

Word Forms: augural, augurate, auguration, augur

reprehensible: (adj) deserving of punishment

It's a harsh punishment, but I do not feel sorry for you; stealing from a charity is a reprehensible crime.

Word Forms: reprehensibly, reprehensibility, reprehensibleness, reprehension Related Word: reprehend

zephyr: (n) a soft breeze

The cool zephyr coming off the water was refreshing in the hot sun.

exuberant: (adj) overflowing, especially with joy

The young wife was exuberant when her husband returned safely from the military after a year-long tour of duty.

assuage: (vb) to relieve or ease

The shoplifter assuaged his guilt by confessing to the crime.

Word Forms: assuagement, assuager Antonym Forms: unassuaged, unassuaging

opine: (vb) to express an opinion

The editor opined about the evils of genetically modified foods in today's opinion section of the newspaper.

Antonym Form: unopined Related Word: opinion

venerated: (adj) highly respected

The venerated teacher had earned the respect of his students by helping them meet the high expectations he set for them.

Word Forms: venerate, venerable, venerably, venerability, veneration, veneratively, venerator

castigate: (vb) to criticize or punish severely

Cassie was castigated by her parents and the school principal for her role in the cheating scam.

Word Forms: castigation, castigative, castigatory, castigator

When I left for college, the insipid cafeteria food made me miss my father's home-cooked meals. Word Forms: insipidly, insipidness, insipidity Antonym Forms: sipid, sipidity insolence: (n) rudeness

The headmaster said that insolence would not be tolerated; rude behavior towards a teacher would result in suspension.

Word Forms: insolent (n.), insolently, insolence

The babysitter used a teething ring to pacify the crying baby. Word Forms: pacifiable, pacifyingly, pacific, pacifier, pacifist paean: (n) a song of praise

The ancient Greeks sang paeans to Apollo and other gods.

Word Form: paeanism

redress: (vb) to correct or to relieve

The newspaper redressed the issue by offering an apology and printing the correct name of the suspect.

Word Forms: redress (n), redressable, redresser Antonym Form: unredressable

rhetoric: (n) skill in using language to persuade; empty talk

The real estate agent was well-versed in the rhetoric needed to sell the broken-down house.

Word Forms: rhetorical, rhetorically, rhetoricalness Antonym Forms: nonrhetorical, unrhetorical

profligate: (adj) shamelessly immoral or recklessly wasteful

The profligate prince was criticized when his wasteful spending was documented by the tabloid.

Word Forms: profligate (n), profligately, profligateness

peruse: (vb) to read

After the lawyer perused the motion to suppress evidence, she declared it was a flimsy attempt that no judge would grant.

Word Forms: perusable, peruser, preperuse, reperuse

During the Second World War, the dearth of male baseball players led to the creation of a women's baseball league. debunk: (vb) to prove untrue

The reporter debunked the urban legend about the witch in the woods by revealing wild goats as the sources of the noises.

Word Form: debunker

foppish: (adj) affecting extreme elegance in dress and manner The foppish fellow wore a three piece suit and a top hat to the wedding.

Word Forms: foppishly, foppishness, foppery, fop

parley: (vb) to talk or confer

The two generals met to parley their demands for surrender.

Word Forms: parley (n), parleyer

anodyne: (n) something that relieves pain

The comedy club was an anodyne to Annika's grief; while she was there, she could forget her pain and sadness.

Word Form: anodynic

imperturbable: (adj) calm; incapable of agitation

conciliate: (vb) to win over; to make peace

The manager was able to conciliate the angry customer by offering her a fifty dollar gift certificate.

Word Forms: conciliable, conciliation, conciliatory, conciliatorily, conciliatoriness Related Word: reconcile

bilk: (vb) to cheat or swindle

Bill was bilked out of $10,000 when he invested in the phony scheme.

Word Form: bilker

knell: (n) sound of a bell at a funeral or a sign of looming death or destruction

The town was quiet, with boarded up buildings and no sign of life, a knell of the impending war. Word Form: knell (vb)

When the mine closed, the once-bustling town became quiescent and forlorn. Word Forms: quiescently, quiescence, quiescency Related Word: quiet quixotic: (adj) not sensible about practical matters; idealistic and unrealistic

I let Quincy make his quixotic plans for our summer vacation; he would soon realize that his itinerary was too expensive and unrealistic.

Word Forms: quixotical, quixotically, quixotism, quixote Related Name: Don Quixote

mar: (vb) to make imperfect; to disfigure

My nearly-perfect report card was marred by a low grade in speech class.

Word Forms: mar (n.), marred (adj.) Antonym Form: unmarred

effigy: (n) a representation of someone

The mayor's effigy was unveiled as a sculpture in the park, erected to honor his lifelong service. Word Form: effigial

toady: (n) a person who flatters others in order to gain personal favor; a brown-noser

The professional athlete has several toadies who play to his ego in order to enjoy the perks of being in his entourage. Word Forms: toady (vb.), toadyish, toadyism

requite: (vb) to repay or retaliate

I made a casserole for Rebecca last week and she requited the favor by returning my casserole dish filled with cookies.

Word Forms: requitable, requitement, requiter Antonym Forms: unrequitable, unrequited, unrequiting

emollient: (n) that which has a softening or soothing effect, especially to the skin Emmaline applied an emollient lotion to the rough calluses on her hands.

Word Form: emollient (adj.), emollience

incorrigible: (adj) incapable of being corrected or punished

The incorrigible child continued to throw his vegetables even after the mother threatened to send him to his room.

Word Forms: incorrigibly, incorrigibleness, incorrigibility

Antonym Forms: corrigible, corrigibly, corrigibleness, corrigibility

picayune: (adj) small and of little importance

The man is a fool to let a picayune argument destroy his friendship with his neighbor.

Word Forms: picayunish, picayunishly, picayunishness

lament: (vb) to express grief; to mourn

When Lamont left for college, his little sister lamented his absence for weeks.

Word Forms: lament (n.), lamentingly, lamentable, lamentably, lamenter Antonym Form: unlamented

approbation: (n) approval

Apollo's proposal for new lighting on campus was met with approbation, as the board agreed there was a safety issue.

Word Forms: approbate, approbative, approbator, approbatory Related Word: preapprobation, subapprobation

refute: (vb) to prove to be false; to deny as true

The senator refuted claims he was arrested for careless driving by publishing his flawless driving record in the paper.

Word Forms: refutable, refutably, refutability, refutation, refutal, refuter

Antonym Forms: irrefutable, irrefutably, irrefutability

paragon: (n) a perfect example

Parmida is a paragon of professionalism; she arrives on time, treats co-workers with respect, and refrains from gossip.

Word Forms: paragon (vb.), paragoned

listless: (adj) lacking energy or spirit

My boss's listless response to my proposal wasn't expected; I thought he'd be excited about my initiative and creativity.

Word Forms: listlessly, listlessness

palliate: (vb) to relieve or lessen

Aloe will palliate the pain from a sunburn.

Word Forms: palliation, palliator, palliative Antonym Forms: nonpalliation, unpalliated

dissembler: (n) a person who conceals his real feelings by professing false beliefs

The dissembler pledged allegiance to the rebel group, but he was really working undercover for the opposing army. Word Forms: dissemble, dissemblingly, dissemblance Related Words: resemble, semblance

solecism: (n) an error, especially in grammar

The contraction "ain't" is a solecism that should be removed from your vocabulary. Word Forms: solecist, solecistic, solecistical, solecistically

mendicant: (adj) begging

In the poverty-stricken country, mendicant children approach tourists to ask for food and money.

Word Forms: mendicancy, mendicity

dogmatic: (adj) characterized by assertion of unproved or unprovable principles The dogmatic scientist continued to publish his theory, despite the fact that it was unproven.

Word Forms: dogmatically, dogmaticalness, dogmatize, dogmatism, dogmatist Related Words: dogma

loquacious: (adj) extremely talkative

Lance was disappointed in his loquacious date; she talked so much that she never had time to listen to any of his stories.

Word Forms: loquaciously, loquaciousness, loquacity Related Words: eloquent, ventriloquist, soliloquy

enervated: (adj) lacking strength or vigor

After an entire weekend of moving furniture, Enrico was enervated; he would need to rest to get his strength back. Word Forms: enervate (vb.), enervation, enervative, enervator

temperate: (adj) moderate; not extreme

The plants prefer a temperate climate—not too hot and not too cold.

Word Forms: temperately, temperateness, temperance, temper (vb.)

Antonym Forms: intemperate, intemperately, intemperateness

Word Forms: hegemonic, hegemonical Antonym Form: antihegemony heretical: (adj) characteristic of an opinion at odds with accepted beliefs

Many people in the church believe the heretical teaching of evolution should be banned.

Word Forms: heresy, heretic, heretically, hereticalness Antonym Forms: nonheretical, nonheretically

dissonance: (n) harsh, jarring sound

On the first day of school, the band's output was a dissonance of trumpets and horns; however, by the end of the year, the horn section blended well with the rest of the ensemble.

Word Form: dissonancy Antonym Form: consonance Related Words: assonance, resonance

phlegmatic: (adj) unemotional; calm

I thought the kids would be excited about our trip to the amusement park, but their reaction was much more phlegmatic.

Word Forms: phlegmatical, phlegmatically, phlegmaticalness Antonym Forms: unphlegmatic, unphlegmatical

soporific: (adj) tending to make sleepy or drowsy

Sophie sang the soporific lullaby to help her young daughter fall asleep.

Word Forms: soporifically, soporiferous, soporiferously, soporiferousness Related Words: soporose, soporous

usury: (n) the practice of lending money at an extremely high interest rate

If you borrow money from a loan shark instead of from a bank, nothing can protect you from the resulting usury.

Word Form: usurious

placid: (adj) calm

When the wind died down, the lake became placid, with hardly a ripple disturbing the surface.

Word Forms: placidly, placidness, placidity

I have some ideas germane to the discussion that might resolve some of the issues we are having.Word Forms: germanely, germaneness Antonym Forms: nongermane, ungermane glib: (adj) fluent and talkative, often insincerely so

The glib salesman promised me that the car had been inspected, but the transmission blew two days after I bought it. Word Forms: glibly, glibness Antonym Forms: unglib, unglibly

fastidious: (adj) giving careful attention to detail; hard to please

Mrs. Foster, my teacher, is a fastidious grader; she deducts points for any error in grammar, punctuation, or spelling. Word Forms: fastidiously, fastidiousness Antonym Form: unfastidious

moratorium: (n) suspension of an ongoing activity

When many students were late returning from lunch, the principal placed a moratorium on off-campus lunch privileges.

Word Form: moratory

fecund: (adj) productive; fruitful

The fecund field has been producing record-setting crops for many years.

Word Forms: fecundity, fecundate, fecundator, fecundatory

invective: (n) violent criticism

The governor was quick to issue an invective denouncing the show that portrayed her state's residents as vulgar and obscene.

Word Forms: invective (adj), invectively, invectiveness Antonym Form: uninvective

symbiosis: (n) a mutually beneficial relationship

Bees and flowers live in symbiosis; the bees pollinate the flowers while the flowers feed the bees. Word Forms: symbiotic, symbiotical, symbiont

mores: (n) important customs or beliefs of a group

The advertisements in the housekeeping magazine from 1950 reflect the social mores of the time.

punctilious: (adj) marked by precise accordance with details

Mr. Putnam is punctilious about punctuation; all of his students must correctly use periods, commas, and semicolons.

Word Forms: punctiliously, punctiliousness, punctilio Related Word: punctual

epicure: (n) a person with refined tastes, particularly of food and wine

The reality show features several epicures judging the cooking skills of America's best chefs.

Word Forms: epicurean, epicureous, epicurism

meretricious: (adj) insincere; flashily attractive

Meredith bestowed meretricious praise upon Mark on-camera, but she had nothing nice to say about him off-camera.

Word Forms: meretriciously, meretriciousness Antonym Form: unmeretricious, unmeretriciously, unmeretriciousness

seraphic: (adj) of an angel or celestial being

The toddler looks so seraphic when he sleeps at night that it's easy to forget what a devil he is by day.

Word Forms: seraph, seraphim, seraphical, seraphically, seraphicalness Antonym Form: nonseraphic

impute: (vb) to attribute or credit to

The doctors imputed her sudden weight loss to a problem with her thyroid gland.

Word Forms: imputable, imputably, imputative, imputatively, imputativeness, imputedly, imputer Related Word: putative

miser: (n) a stingy person who lives in miserable conditions in order to save money

The old miser lives in a rat-infested apartment even though he has more than enough money to live in a nice home. Word Forms: miserly, miserliness Related Words: misery, miserable

libertine: (adj) unrestrained by morals

Libby had no scruples and thus made libertine choices, never worrying about those affected or what others would think.

Word Forms: libertine (n), libertinage, libertinism

amulet: (n) magical charm to ward off evil

Amos placed a small amulet in his pocket, a charm that he believed helped him advance to the state tennis finals.

Word Form: amuletic

egalitarian: (adj) characterized by the belief in equal rights for all people

Edgar's egalitarian beliefs made him an excellent husband; he divided the housework equally, helping his wife with cooking, cleaning, and childcare.

Word Forms: egalitarian (n.), egalitarianism, egality Related Word: equality

matriarch: (n) the female head of a family

As the matriarch of the family, Grandma sat at the head of the Thanksgiving dinner table.

Word Forms: matriarchal, matriarchic, matriarchalism, matriarchy

Antonym Forms: patriarch, patriarchal, patriarchic, patriarchalism, patriarchy Related Words: ma, maternal

Many people believe that youth is evanescent, quickly vanishing before it can be truly appreciated. Word Forms: evanescently, evanesce, evanescence Related Word: vanish exacerbate: (vb) to increase the harshness or bitterness of

My headache was exacerbated by the child playing drums on the pots and pans. Word Forms: exacerbatingly, exacerbation Related Word: acerbate Note: exacerbate is often confused with exasperate (meaning to irritate).

lampoon: (vb) to mock in a satire

The actors of "Saturday Night Live" make a living by lampooning current events.

meticulous: (adj) extremely careful and precise with details

orotund: (adj) a rich voice or pompous speech

The millionaire's orotund speech at the graduation ceremony was shocking; he was not normally known for being pompous and pretentious.

Word Form: orotundity Related Word: rotund

subterfuge: (n) something intended to deceive

Susan used the subterfuge of homework to avoid going to her grandmother's house with the rest of her family.

Related Word: fugitive

burnish: (vb) to polish

In preparation for his dinner party, Bernie burnished the silverware and serving platters.

Word Forms: burnishable, burnishment, burnisher Antonym Form: unburnished

proliferate: (vb) to grow rapidly

The franchise has proliferated; there were just two restaurants ten years ago, but now there are more than two hundred.

Word Form: proliferative, proliferation

calumny: (n) a false statement intended to harm someone's reputation

Callie delivered the calumny about Brittany to an audience in the cafeteria; she hoped the lie would keep the other girl from becoming Prom queen.

Word Forms: calumniate, calumniation, calumnious, calumniously, calumniatory, calumniator

caustic: (adj) burning or stinging

Cosette's caustic remark stung Kent; he could handle criticism about his job, but her bitter words were personal.

Word Forms: caustically, causticly, causticness, causticity

idolatrous: (adj) great adoration

The young girl's idolatrous worship of the teen heartthrob began to worry her mother.

Word Forms: idolatry, idolatrously, idolatrousness

Antonym Forms: nonidolatrous, nonidolatrously, nonidolatrousness Related Words: idol, idolize

cartographer: (n) a person who makes maps

Amerigo Vespucci was one of the first cartographers to create a map of North America.

Word Forms: cartography, cartograph, cartographic, cartographical, cartographically

pithy: (adj) brief but meaningful

The pastor made a pithy remark about integrity that made me reflect on my own habits long after the short sermon. Word Forms: pithily, pithiness Related Word: pith

jocular: (adj) characterized by joking

Jack's speeches were always entertaining because they were peppered with jocular anecdotes.

Word Forms: jocularly, overjocular, jocularity Related Word: joke

crescendo: (n) peak of growth

The cheers in the audience reached a crescendo when the concert headliner was introduced.

Antonym Form: decrescendo Related Word: crescent

explicit: (adj) clearly expressed or demonstrated

Mr. Jones left explicit directions for the substitute so he was surprised when they were not followed.

Word Forms: explicitly, explicitness Antonym Forms: inexplicit, inexplicitly, implicit, implicitly, implicitness

recalcitrant: (adj) stubbornly resistant to authority or control

The recalcitrant protesters were not fazed by the presence of the campus security officer, and only a handful of them disbanded when the police arrived.

Word Forms: recalcitrant (n.), recalcitrance, recalcitrancy, recalcitrate, recalcitration

conspicuous: (adj) obvious

The realtor put the “For Sale” sign in a conspicuous spot in the front yard so that people in traffic could easily see it.

Word Forms: conspicuously, conspicuousness, conspicuity

Antonym Forms: inconspicuous, inconspicuously, inconspicuousness

meritocracy: (n) a form of social system in which power goes to those with superior abilities

Critics argue that a meritocracy cannot be fairly created, as intelligence and ability are difficult to measure accurately.

Word Form: meritocratic Related Word: merit

ossify: (vb) to harden like bone; to become inflexible in habits or beliefs

Oscar was open-minded prior to college, but after graduation he began to ossify concerning politics.

Word Form: ossifier Antonym Form: unossifying

droll: (adj) amusing; comical

The droll little man amused the children with his odd gait and his quaint way of speaking. Word Forms: drollness, drolly, drollery

rebut: (vb) to prove false using evidence

The lawyer rebutted the witness's testimony by providing contrary evidence.

Word Forms: rebuttable, rebuttal, rebutter Related Word: but (conj.)

insurrection: (n) a rebellion or uprising

King George ordered British troops to quash the colonist's insurrection, but the uprising led to the Revolutionary War.

Word Forms: insurrectional, insurrectionally, insurrectionism, insurrectionist

pulchritude: (n) beauty

The model's pulchritude earned her the coveted spot on the cover of the magazine.

Word Form: pulchritudinous

fervid: (adj) hot or passionate

The fervid senator fought passionately for victim's rights.

Word Forms: fervidity, fervidly, fervidness Antonym Form: nonfervid, nonfervidly, nonfervidness Related Word: fervent

hapless: (adj) unlucky

The hapless fellow was in a car accident on the same day he lost the winning lottery ticket.

Word Forms: haplessly, haplessness

sanctimonious: (adj) being hypocritically religious or righteous

The principal gave me a sanctimonious lecture about my tardiness, even though he was late to our last two meetings.

Word Forms: sanctimoniously, sanctimoniousness, sanctimony, sanctimonial Related Words: sanctity, sanctify

stolid: (adj) unemotional; unmoved

Mr. Stone's face remained stolid despite the pain and anger he was experiencing.

Word Form: stolidity, stolidness, stolidly

noisome: (adj) offensive (especially odors)

My noisome shoe smelled so terrible that my mom threw it away.

Word Forms: noisomely, noisomeness

rescind: (vb) to revoke or repeal

The prospective buyers rescinded their offer on the house when they learned it had a termite infestation. Word Forms: rescindable, rescinder, rescindment Antonym Form: unrescinded

discern: (vb) to perceive or understand with sight or other senses The captain discerned another ship in the fog.

Word Forms: discernible, discernibly, discernment, discernibility, discernableness, discerner

Antonym Forms: indiscernible, indiscernibly, indiscernibility, indiscernibleness

The smell of sweet apples permeated the room when Grandma pulled the apple pie from the oven. Word Forms: permeation, permeative, permeator, interpermeate Antonym Form: nonpermeation pernicious: (adj) exceedingly harmful

The pernicious rumor could ruin several lives if permitted to spread.

Word Forms: perniciously, perniciousness

apathy: (n) an absence of emotion or enthusiasm

The teacher was disappointed in the students' apathy toward the field trip; she had mistakenly believed that this trip would finally excite them about learning.

Word Forms: apathetic, apathetical, apathetically, apathist Related Words: sympathy, empathy, antipathy

disparate: (adj) different and distinct

The mixture of three disparate styles—jazz, rock, and country—created a unique sound and a diverse audience.

Word Forms: disparately, disparateness Related Word: disparity

propensity: (n) a natural tendency

Mrs. Petty loved to talk to friends and neighbors, so it was no surprise that she had a propensity to gossip.

lexicography: (n) the act of writing dictionaries

Noah Webster's career in lexicography developed from his dissatisfaction with British school books; he wrote his first dictionary to help his elementary students learn to spell.

Word Forms: lexicographic, lexicographical, lexicographically, lexicographer Related Words: lexicon, dyslexic

decorous: (adj) proper and dignified

The decorous host made sure that she had proper table settings; each was arranged correctly for the five-course meal.

Word Forms: decorously, decorousness Antonym Forms: indecorous, indecorously, indecorousness Related Word: decorum

contumacious: (adj) willfully disobedient

The contumacious convict spat at the judge and refused to acknowledge his sentence.

Word Forms: contumaciously, contumaciousness, contumacity Antonym Form: noncontumacious, noncontumaciously, noncontumaciousness Related Words: contumely, contumelious, contumeliously, contumliousness

ethos: (n) the spirit or attitude of a group

The ethos of 4-H is education resulting in positive change for the community.

jettison: (vb) to throw away

Jett was arrested when he jettisoned old boat fuel into the harbor. Word Form: jettisonable

sophistry: (n) a false argument meant to trick someone

The mayor used sophistry to trick most of the town residents into believing that the property tax increase was necessary.

Word Forms: sophism, sophist, sophister

parody: (n) a humorous imitation

The awards show opened with a parody of a movie; all of the characters were played by monkeys dressed like the actors.

Word Forms: parody (vb.), parodiable, parodic, parodist

zenith: (n) the highest point

The actress reached the zenith of her career when she won an Oscar for her role in the blockbuster. Word Form: zenithal

pedantic: (adj) overly focused on small details while teaching or learning

It was difficult to be Penny's partner because she was pedantic about recording every single step of the scientific method.

Word Forms: pedantical, pedantically, pedanticalness, pedanticism, pedantism, pedantry, pedant, pedantesque

neologism: (n) a new word

Each year Merriam Webster decides which neologisms will be granted entry into their dictionaries.

Word Forms: neologist, neologistic, neologistical, neology

flotsam: (n) floating wreckage or useless, discarded items

In the filthy city, the gullies are filled with flotsam that finds its way into the sewer after a heavy rain.

Related Word: jetsam Note: Flotsam originally referred to the floating wreckage of a boat, while jetsam referred to the items discarded by a ship in distress. Both are loosely used today to refer to useless, discarded items.

officious: (adj) aggressively forward

My officious neighbor insisted on helping me after my accident, but I really just wanted to be left alone. Word Forms: officiously, officiousness, overofficious

largess: (n) generous gift-giving

Larissa's largess at the twins' birthday party would not soon be forgotten; she gave them enough toys to keep them busy for a year.

Related Word: large

coffer: (n) a box for storing valuables; funds

Keifer depleted the organizations coffers, but his plan was to replenish the funds.

Word Form: cofferlike

abstemious: (adj) sparing in consumption, especially of food and drink

Abby's emaciated figure was the result of her abstemious lifestyle; she never ate breakfast or lunch, and rarely ate dinner.

Word Forms: abstemiously, abstemiousness

abeyance: (n) temporary suspension

The council voted to place the decision in abeyance for a month while more research was conducted. Word Forms: abeyant, abeyancy

multifarious: (adj) having many parts and much variety

The school offers multifarious activities after school; children should have no problem finding a program that matches their interests.

Word Forms: multifariously, multifariousness

prevaricate: (vb) to lie or deceive

Presley prevaricated about her grades, claiming to have a 3.5 GPA even though it was below 2.0.

Word Forms: prevarication, prevaricative, prevaricatory Antonym Form: unprevaricating

hedonist: (n) a person dedicated to the pursuit of pleasure

After working for years as a hospice nurse, Heidi had no respect for the hedonist who lived next door; by only seeking pleasure, he left the more unpleasant activities to caretakers like Heidi.

Word Forms: hedonist (adj.), hedonistic, hedonistically, hedonism, hedonic, hedonically

phalanx: (n) a closely massed group

The soldiers formed a phalanx to protect the building from the protestors.

repose: (n) state of calmness; peace

The artist likes to paint his subjects in repose as they lounge on the couch.

Word Forms: repose (vb), reposedly, reposedness, reposer

fatuous: (adj) foolish and silly

The professor made a fatuous argument that everyone dismissed due to its extreme foolishness.

Word Forms: fatuously, fatuousness

maverick: (n) a person who chooses to be independent in behavior or thought

Even though the other ranchers were branding their cattle, Sam was a maverick who believed he did not need to follow the rules set by his associates.

circumlocution: (n) an indirect way of expressing something

Sergio hoped that his circumlocution would stall the reporters long enough to think of a better answer to their question.

Word Forms: circumlocutory, circumlocutorily, circumlocutional, circumlocutionary

prodigal: (adj) recklessly wasteful or lavishly abundant

The prince was criticized when his prodigal spending was documented by the tabloid. Word Forms: prodigal (n), prodigally

bifurcate: (vb) to divide into two branches

Biff's family tree bifurcated in 1946 when his grandmother remarried, thus creating a second branch of relatives. Word Forms: bifurcately, bifurcation, bifurcous Related Word: fork

liberate: (vb) free; unrestrained

When the farmer accidentally left the stall door open, the liberated horse sprinted for the woods.

Word Forms: liberated, liberative, liberatory, liberation, liberator Antonym Form: unliberated

hegemony: (n) leadership

The country exerted its hegemony over the smaller territories.

anthropocentrism: (n) theory that regards humans as the central element of the universe

People who support the theory of anthropocentrism have a difficult time believing in intelligent life on other planets. Word Forms: anthropocentric, anthropocentrically, anthropocentricity Related Word: anthropology

divine: (vb) to predict using supernatural means

Devina asked the psychic to divine her future using the crystal ball.

Word Forms: divinable, divinely, divineness, divination, divinator Related Word: divine (adj)

ford: (n) a shallow portion of a river used for crossing

Pioneers often would travel miles out of their way in order to find a ford that would allow them to safely cross a river.

Word Forms: ford (vb), fordable

idiosyncrasy: (n) a characteristic that is peculiar to a specific person

Some people found Ida's idiosyncrasy a source of humor, but I never made fun of her for wearing her shirt backwards.

Word Forms: idiosyncratic, idiosyncratically

gratuitous: (adj) free; given without reason

On Monday, our supervisor announced that all employees were receiving two gratuitous tickets to this weekend's concert.

Word Forms: gratuitously, gratuitousness, gratuity

sedition: (n) instigation of rebellion

If the founding fathers had been caught, they would have faced charges of sedition for starting the American Revolution.

Word Forms: seditionary, seditionist, seditious, seditiously, seditiousness Antonym Forms: antisedition, nonseditious

hubris: (n) pride; arrogance

If pride goes before a fall, hubris goes before a downfall.

Word Form: hubristic Antonym Forms: nonhubristic, unhubristic

salient: (adj) easily observable; prominent

Sally's most salient trait was her nose; it was large and slender, but somehow fit with her other delicate features. Word Forms: saliently, salience Antonym Forms: unsalient, unsaliently

cogent: (adj) convincing; telling

Craig presents a cogent argument through sound evidence and logical conclusions.

Word Forms: cogency, cogently Antonym Form: noncogent, noncogently, uncogent, uncogently

wane: (vb) to grow smaller

Wayne's interest in basketball began to wane after he played hockey; he even sold his basketball shoes to buy skates. Antonym: wax Note: These two words are often used to describe the fullness of the moon.

aggrandize: (vb) increase in size

Agatha, an avid baseball enthusiast, used her inheritance to aggrandize her collection of baseball cards.

Word Forms: aggrandizement, aggrandizer, aggrandizable Related Words: aggrade, grand

stigma: (n) a mark of disgrace

Steve was able to find a job despite the stigma of having served time in prison.

probity: (n) honesty and integrity

Prudence was often selected as hall monitor because of her probity; the teacher knew he could trust her.

inter: (vb) to bury

James Garfield, the 20th President of the United States who was assassinated in 1881, was interred in Cleveland, Ohio.

Word Form: reinter Antonym Form: uninterred

flippant: (adj) disrespectful; lacking seriousness

Floyd was grounded for making flippant remarks about the new rules his father set for him.

Word Forms: flippantly, flippantness, flippancy

maelstrom: (n) a powerful whirlpool or turbulent chaos

When the manager was fired, he left the office in a maelstrom; there was frequent infighting and little leadership.

attenuate: (vb) to weaken

Atticus' muscles slowly attenuated when he quit working out at the gym.

Word Forms: attenuation, attenuator, attenuatedly Antonym Forms: unattenuated, unattenuatedly

Related Words: overattenuate, subattenuate, tenuous

divert: (vb) to turn away from a course

Traffic was diverted through side streets in order to avoid an accident on the main road.

Word Forms: divertedly, diversion, divertible Related Words: invert, convert, revert

inherent: (adj) existing as a natural and essential characteristic

The abused dog had an inherent distrust of men, so only female volunteers at the shelter could get close to him.

Word Forms: inherently, inhere, inherence Related Word: inherit

gradation: (n) gradual or successive changes

The bumble bee can see subtle gradations in color that humans are unable to notice.

Word Forms: gradational, gradationally Related Word: regradation

prudent: (adj) careful and sensible

Perry made a prudent decision when he chose not to ride home with his friend who had been drinking.

Word Forms: prudently, prudence, prudency, prudential

Antonym Forms: imprudent, imprudently, imprudence, imprudential Related Word: prude

extemporaneous: (adj) done without advance preparation

I was not expecting to be called to the stage, so I gave an extemporaneous speech.

eulogy: (n) a formal expression of praise (often delivered at funerals)

The director delivered a eulogy about the center's most helpful volunteer, praising her for helping the needy. Word Forms: eulogize, eulogist

penurious: (adj) extremely reluctant to spend money; stingy and frugal or extremely poor The penurious old man refused to donate his spare change to the charity.

Word Forms: penuriously, penuriousness, penury

pallid: (adj) pale; lacking energy

Palmer did not look healthy; his pallid skin had lost all trace of color. Word Forms: pallidly, pallidness

pliant: (adj) capable of being bent or capable of being influenced The pliant plastic can be easily molded into any shape, size, or design.

Word Forms: pliantly, pliantness, pliancy Related Word: pliable

interlocutor: (n) a person who takes part in a conversation

At the apartment complex, the two interlocutors continued to debate the merits of television outside my bedroom window until well after midnight.

Word Forms: interlocution, interlocutory, interlocutorily Related Words: locution, eloquent

benevolent: (adj) charitable; kind

The benevolent nun spent her entire life working with the poor.

Word Forms: benevolently, benevolentness, benevolence Related Words: benefactor, benefit

sublime: (adj) of high value; supreme

The sublime chef was well known for her amazing dishes.

Word Forms: sublimely, sublimeness, sublimer, sublimity Antonym Form: unsublimed

embroil: (vb) to bring into an argument or negative situation

Emory is embroiled in a lawsuit with his former landlord over the condition of the apartment when he moved out. Word Forms: embroilment, embroiler

mirth: (n) laughter or merriment

Even the old scrooge could not resist the mirth of the holiday season, as he eventually joined in the celebration.

Word Forms: mirthful, mirthfully, mirthfulness, Antonym Forms: mirthless, mirthlessly, mirthlessness

dalliance: (n) the deliberate act of delaying and playing instead of working

Dalton's dalliance at the basketball court kept him from working on the term paper that was due tomorrow.

Word Forms: dally, dallyingly, dallier Related Word: dilly-dally

extraneous: (adj) not relevant or essential

When studying for the SAT, be sure to ignore the extraneous information in the book, such as the history of the test. Word Forms: extraneously, extraneousness Related Word: extra

apocryphal: (adj) fake; untrue

April told an apocryphal tale about my mother; I wanted so much to believe it even though I knew it wasn't true.

Word Forms: apocryphally, apocryphalness, apocryphalist

ebullient: (adj) extremely excited or enthusiastic

The ebullient child clapped her hands and jumped up and down as she waited to ride the pony at the party. Word Forms: ebulliently, ebullience

aesthetic: (adj) relating to beauty

Alaina chose this church because of its aesthetic qualities; it was the most beautiful wedding chapel she had ever seen.

Word Forms: aesthetically, aesthetics (n.), aestheticize, aesthete, aesthetician Antonym Form: unaesthetic