

Equanimity	calmness of temperament; composure	
Substantiate	establish by evidence; verify; support	
Pathological	pertaining to disease	
Spectrum	colored band produced when a beam of light passes through a prism	
Empirical	based on experience	
Itinerary	plan of a trip	
Striated	marked with parallel bands; grooved	We were sitting in Frazier's office, in a back corner of the police station. He was preparing to retire, but had agreed to talk about the Bishop case. "This used to be Polio's office," Frazier said with a smile, adding, "but it didn't look like this." Polio was something of an autodidact, and he had helped design the police station—a squat complex of striated brown stone. Keeping the drapes of his office closed, he would sit in the amber light of a single bulb above his desk and glower at visitors, Frazier recalled, "like he was J. Edgar Hoover."
Endemic	prevailing among a specific group of people or in a specific area or country	
Torpor	lethargy; sluggishness; dormancy	For the world of books, for readers and writers, the torpor of the New York Times Book Review is more affecting. There come to mind all those high-school English teachers, those faithful librarians and booksellers, those trusting suburbanites, those bright young men and women in the provinces, all those who believe in the judgment of the Times and who need its direction.
Fatuous	brainless; inane; foolish, yet smug	I can remember thinking, of testing moments involving love and hate, that I had, so to speak, come out of them ahead, with some strength accrued from the experience that I couldn't have acquired any other way. And then once or twice, walking away from a car wreck or a close encounter with mayhem while doing foreign reporting, I experienced a rather fatuous feeling of having been toughened by the encounter. But really, that's to say

		no more than “There but for the grace of god go I,” which in turn is to say no more than “The grace of god has happily embraced me and skipped that unfortunate other man.”
Conundrum	riddle; difficult problem	This is exactly the kind of conundrum cohabitating straight couples of certain means have had to face from time to time.
Penchant	strong inclination; liking	Their apartments were cramped, even rundown, but for these families, it was home, and they wanted to stay. Over the years, each building had become a small community, one where people felt comfortable leaving their doors open and asking each other to watch their children. “If we left, where would we go?” Sau Ying Kwok, a feisty grandmother with a nimbus of frizzy hair, wondered aloud. She had become one of the more vocal leaders in the building, along with the soft-spoken You Liu Lin, a man in his middle years with a penchant for Brylcreeming his hair as well as shoving bottles of water and perfect Fuji apples into my hands whenever I knocked on his door.
Stint	be thrifty; set limits	
Implacable	incapable of being pacified	
Exigency	urgent situation; pressing needs or demands; state of requiring immediate attention	
Gouge	overcharge	Judging from its path—where it clipped a tree, smashed through a fence, and landed hard enough to gouge a foot-deep gash in Carolyn’s lawn before cartwheeling into her house—it, too, had been headed straight for him.”
Converge	approach; tend to meet; come together	
Beneficent	kindly; doing good	
Viable	practical or workable	
Facetious	joking (often inappropriately); humorous	In college, I had a professor who declared that every true work of Southern literature mentioned a dead mule. He was being facetious, of course, but he was not wrong—there are certain images that pervade regional literature over and over again, serving as signifiers or metaphors. Kudzu is one of those images. If you’ve

		never come across kudzu before, whether through literature or geography, it's a plant. Specifically, it's "a quick-growing eastern Asian climbing plant with reddish-purple flowers, used as a fodder crop and for erosion control." And: "It has become a pest in the southeastern US." (Thanks, Google Definitions.)
Prevaricate	lie	God knows if any of this is the president's fault, but in their handling of the preposterous scandal surrounding Illinois governor Rod Blagojevich, the Democratic Party leaders under Barack Obama have brought us all hurtling back to the nightmarish prevarication of the Clinton years — those horrifying days when the party's enduring inability to act decisively allowed Barnumesque con men like Ken Starr to hold all of America hostage.
Discrepancy	lack of consistency; difference	
Fawning	trying to please by behaving obsequiously, flattering, or cringing	If, to please them, I were to start fawning on them, agreeing with them, being familiar with them, entering into their various "qualities" in order to gain their sympathy—they would at once assume I was doing it out of fear and cowardice, and would treat me with contempt.
Reprobate	person hardened in sin; devoid of a sense of decency	Her father, Hugh Caldwell, was a Civil War veteran, Union tried and true, whose parents had come from Scotland to farm. He was famous for having raised his head above a stone wall in the heat of battle to see where the enemy was. He was wounded later and then lost his bad leg, and after the war he was considered an old reprobate with an affinity for gambling and a taste for whiskey. Her mother, Evelyn Esther Trowbridge, was of British decent, offspring of a clan of Trowbridges who came to America in the 1620s. She was not far removed from Levi Trowbridge, who fought in Capt. Thomas Clark's Derby Company in the Revolutionary War, and with the Green Mountain Boys under General Ethan Allen.
Ephemeral	short-lived; fleeting	For nearly two decades hand painted rock 'n' roll billboards loomed large over the Sunset Strip. The billboards were

		ephemeral, but a budding young photographer documented them throughout their heyday.
Assuage	ease or lessen (pain); satisfy (hunger); soothe (anger)	To assuage my disconcerted body, my doctors urged me to perform daily “low impact aerobics.” They tried to fool it with Xanax and Valium. This would make me relax and shrink the blister, they thought. Meds are okay, but aerobics?
Malleable	capable of being shaped by pounding; impressionable	
Bolster	support; reinforce	
Deride	ridicule; make fun of	
Impede	hinder; block	
Prodigal	wasteful; reckless with money	In the fall of 1966, Richard, dead-set against attending the newly opened ORU, headed for the University of Kansas instead. It was the best rebellion he could muster against his father. Out from under his parents’ roof, he could smoke, drink, and chase girls—a tale of wayward youth that he has deployed again and again during his adult life, calling himself “the prodigal son.” Home from college one break, father and son went golfing, according to Richard’s well-worn account. Oral asked Richard to sing for him in an upcoming crusade.
Discerning	mentally quick and observant; having insight	
Maverick	rebel; nonconformist	When Ken Bradshaw caught the largest wave ever surfed, in 1998, he was riding on pure, single-minded passion. But that same quality—plus a deep antipathy to hype—has put him at odds with the increasingly crowded, commercialized world of big-wave surfing. On Oahu's famed North Shore, the author learns about the 58-year-old maverick's record-breaking encounter with 85 feet of "Condition Black" water, the battles he still fights, and his unlikely friendship with the publicity-loving Mark Foo, who was killed on a wave he "stole" from Bradshaw.
Secrete	hide away or cache; produce and release a substance into an organism	
Convolved	coiled around; involved; intricate	

Pristine	characteristic of earlier times; primitive; unspoiled	
Recant	disclaim or disavow; retract a previous statement; openly confess error	A Chicago man is convicted and sentenced to death for a double murder that occurred in 1982. Years later, a journalism school teacher and his students work to free him, and in 1999 another man confesses to the crime, but later recants. Shaer walks us through a very complex story of how a broken system failed for decades to render justice in a 33-year-old crime.
Savor	enjoy; have a distinctive flavor, smell, or quality	
Emulate	imitate; rival	
Divest	strip; deprive	
Occlude	shut; close	I take (c) to describe a common postmodern situation: there is no type (a) ideal observer who holds in their mind the true story of me, therefore let me negotiate some kind of life-narration for myself, one that is prudently enough worked out to take type (b) observers into account, yet that feels honest and sincere, even though I know at the back of my mind that there are interests at work – interests to which I am blind – which have almost certainly dictated that certain parts of ‘the’ story – the full story, the type (a) story – should be occluded. I will not be able to put my finger on these occluded parts because ‘I’ am engaged in hiding them from ‘myself’.
Sanction	approve; ratify	
Engender	cause; produce	
Latent	potential but undeveloped; dormant; hidden	
Precursor	forerunner	
Foment	stir up; instigate	
Dissonance	discord; opposite of harmony	
Recalcitrant	obstinately stubborn; determined to resist authority; unruly	
Derivative	unoriginal; obtained from another source	
Cogent	convincing	
Ingenuous	naive and trusting; young; unsophisticated	No, but I have the urge to maybe write with my left hand, or maybe write with dirt and a stick. I use the typewriter a lot, also, because I just love the typewriter and

		making mistakes. I'd like to do anything that allowed me to make mistakes. Often mistakes have an ingenuousness about them: you're just trying to do your best and it doesn't always work out.
Gullible	easily deceived	What no one realized was that de Wohl's lecture was pure propaganda from the British government, which was attempting to drag the Roosevelt administration into WWII by any means necessary. De Wohl, who was employed by SOE (Special Operations Executive, the wartime sabotage unit), had been dispatched with instructions to present himself as a renowned astrologer with no connections to Britain, and to undermine America's belief in the invincibility of Hitler. As the spy novelist William Boyd put it in a 2008 radio interview: 'At the time, there was a perception of American people, in the minds of the British Security Services, that they were more gullible than us Brits.'
Refute	disprove	
Wary	very cautious	
Disingenuous	lacking genuine candor; insincere	
Felicitous	apt; suitably expressed; well chosen	he Sumerians also pioneered less felicitous institutions such as imperialism and slavery. As the idea of private property emerged and human society became organized around control over the surplus, writing also became a tool to record the resulting social conflicts.
Penury	severe poverty; stinginess	
Platitude	trite remark; commonplace statement	Brundage was a bull-headed simpleton who reduced every complex issue to a platitude, and he admired the Nazi credo of discipline, which he saw as a mirror of his own athletic values. After visiting Germany, he said the Third Reich was "efficient and hard-working," and concluded, "America could learn much from Germany."
Prohibitive	tending to prevent the purchase or use of something; inclined to prevent or forbid	
Insinuate	hint; imply; creep in	Very sound conclusions, no doubt. And yet some of us consumers are still not being told any such thing. It's been 10 years and

		more since the publication of these comments, and yet when you visit a neurologist, right now, to ask about treatment options for your multiple sclerosis, she may very well insinuate that published research equals proof. She may advise you that any therapy that “hasn’t been proved” should be ignored altogether.
Mundane	worldly as opposed to spiritual; everyday	“This was where the world came to an end. For a child, what could be better than growing up at the end of the world?” Having spent her childhood in East Berlin, Erpenbeck reflects on the Wall’s mundane presence for people of her generation, born into a world where it had always existed.
Qualified	limited; restricted	
Guileless	without deceit	
Contrite	penitent	At the end of every regret, there was always Huma. Oh, he showed contrition to the voters, but that was weak beer. He apologized to Huma and expressed his pain for her so frequently that there were times when I wondered whether he’d partly been trying to talk to her through the press.
Inured	accustomed; hardened	That is the essence of Morrissey: his brand of loneliness and longing and hopelessness (all the stuff he sings about) is that of a person who finds it natural to have relationships with the unreachable – that’s to say, with images and works rather than people. Nostalgia is the be-all-and-end-all of pop, and Morrissey is the king of all that, so when he became a star himself (and began featuring his own mug on his record sleeves) he had succeeded in creating an audience literally after his own image, a tribe inured to the modes and manners of heightened fandom.
Forestall	prevent by taking action in advance	
Perennial	something long-lasting	
Piety	devoutness; reverence for God	
Obsequious	lavishly attentive; servile; sycophantic	She is independent, spunky, friendly with boys but not obsequious toward them, moderately athletic, unabashedly sentimental, and assertive in the way that only girls who have grown up taking feminism for granted are able to be.

Truculence	aggressiveness; ferocity	I craved the right to turn my face to the wall, to create a death commensurate with bourgeois achievement, political awareness, and aesthetically compelling feminine despair. My first forays in this direction were petty. I conducted my own small battle of the books, purging my library of stalwart, valorous titles by black women and replacing them, whenever possible, with morbid, truculent ones by my sisters.
Indeterminate	uncertain; not clearly fixed; indefinite	
Morose	ill-humored; sullen; melancholy	Ellis the 'man of uncommon talents but dogged, brutal and morose,' sat leaning back in his easy chair—Acton was sewing.
Analogous	comparable	
Resolution	Determination	
Diverge	vary; go in different directions from the same point	
Insularity	narrow-mindedness; isolation	
Strut	pompous walk	
Proliferate	grow rapidly; spread; multiply	
Venerate	revere	What happens to age-old traditions when the animals on which their symbolism depends all but vanish? At Hakai Magazine, Jori Lewis chronicles her journey along the Senegal and Guinea-Bissau coast looking for sawfish — a creature so venerated it appears on all Senegalese currency, but which few people in the region have actually seen in recent decades.
Artless	without guile; open and honest	
Disseminate	distribute; spread; scatter (like seeds)	
Tenuous	thin; rare; slim	
Tirade	extended scolding; denunciation; harangue	I stifled a smirk, and was feeling particularly frazzled—the VCR wasn't working and the audiovisual man refused to help, and he launched into a tirade on the college cutbacks that robbed him of his assistant. My daughter had refused to brush her hair before leaving for school, and my students were now behaving badly, lurching in late and babbling at the back.

Esoteric	hard to understand; known only to the chosen few	How an esoteric piece of farm equipment created America's breadbasket — and threatens to destroy it.
Officious	meddlesome; excessively pushy in offering one's services	His vision of himself as an NYCTA worker is officious and uncompromising: "I'm a very good train operator. Even though I drive fast, don't get me wrong: I believe in coasting, I don't believe in excessive speeds. Even if you're late don't speed, because eventually you'll catch up.
Stolid	dull; impassive	For many colonists the war with Great Britain aroused a stolid nationalist piety, a consoling faith in "the sacred cause of liberty"—the belief that providence would guide the rebels to victory and that the fighting itself constituted an appeal to heaven. But in the hilly borderland between New York and Massachusetts, the anxiety and austerity of the long conflict inspired frenzied revival meetings.
Belie	contradict; give a false impression	
Indolent	Lazy	Commenting on the significance of the results, Stattin explained, "Prostate cancer is often a rather indolent disease with favourable prognosis that often doesn't require treatment but there are also aggressive types that can be mortal. The ability to differ between these types is therefore important. Up until now, there has been no knowledge about the absolute magnitudes of these risks."
Loquacious	talkative	
Supersede	cause to be set aside; replace; make obsolete	
Alacrity	cheerful promptness; eagerness	In recent work, Rand and his collaborators have shown that people are faster to make decisions to cooperate when they know someone is watching, as if aware that others will judge them by their alacrity. ¹⁰ Among other puzzles, Rand is currently trying to untangle this apparent paradox—the strategic use of intuition.
Soporific	sleep-causing; marked by sleepiness	Since Chinese medicines for insomnia are too mild to have anything beyond a soporific effect, only western sleeping pills can be repurposed for suicide, which is why this is a "capitalist" method. Trust the capitalists to invent a safe, painless,

		convenient form of suicide.
Dogmatic	opinionated; arbitrary; doctrinal	
Condone	overlook; forgive; give tacit approval; excuse	My mother didn't bother asking Danny for his permission before engaging Monique's services. She didn't ask my father to condone the transaction. Nor was she troubled by social mores or laws against solicitation. She deserves a Mother of the Year Award.
Quibble	minor objection or complaint	
Inherent	firmly established by nature or habit	
Pervasive	spread throughout	
Commensurate	corresponding in extent, degree, etc.; proportionate	
Deference	courteous regard for another's wishes	
Hyperbole	exaggeration; overstatement	
Mitigate	appease; moderate	
Rescind	cancel	It detailed all of the age, pregnancy, and marriage policies that the major airlines had rescinded after Title VII's enactment and warned that a ruling in Martin Marietta's favor could undo such progress.
Adulterate	make impure by adding inferior or tainted substances	
Antipathy	aversion; dislike	Criminalizing the publication of such secrets by someone who has no official obligation seems to me to run up against the First Amendment and the best traditions of this country. As one of my colleagues asks: If Assange were an understated professorial type rather than a character from a missing Stieg Larsson novel, and if WikiLeaks were not suffused with such glib antipathy toward the United States, would the reaction to the leaks be quite so ferocious? And would more Americans be speaking up against the threat of reprisals?
Digression	Wandering away from the subject	
Exculpate	clear from blame	On one side, the creatures make sounds like a cash register and a slot machine. They recite a poem written in business-ese: "Corporate profits, exculpates, mutual

		fund, interest rates.”
Negate	cancel out; nullify; deny	
Invective	abuse	Throughout his autobiographical essay, Borges hurls invectives at his early work: watery third-rate grandiose, preposterous, a riot of sham local color. He wanted to suppress most of these volumes, but his first short story he called an achievement. Ficciones and El Aleph, which he called his two major books, certainly drew from Borges’ extended childhood of literary privilege, but those patronage years alone could produce nothing of major literary value. For Borges, the catalyst of literary greatness was the problem of money.
Irresolute	uncertain how to act; weak	
Tractable	docile; easily managed	
Levee	stone embankment to prevent flooding	Hurricane Katrina, and all of the myriad events surrounding it, both good and bad, is that vast, sweeping layer within the lives of the people of New Orleans. Almost fifteen hundred people died. There was \$100 billion in damage. The levees failed. The city flooded. The city, state, and federal governments failed even worse than the levees did.
Lethargic	drowsy; dull	
Solicitous	worried; concerned	Afterward, I asked Tyler about the Bono joke. He said, 'Sounds like something goofy you would say.' But for me, the exchange was an eye-opener. Tyler was terse, even rude, but Bush was solicitous. Rather than being thrown by Tyler’s idiosyncrasies, he rolled with them, exactly as he had in the Oval Office nine years earlier. He responded to every clipped answer with another probing question. Bush, a man who famously doesn’t suffer fools or breaches of propriety, gave my son the benefit of the doubt. I was beginning to think that people are more perceptive and less judgmental toward Tyler than his own father is. Bush certainly was.
Harangue	long, passionate, and vehement speech	We craft fictional dialogue to practice standing up to someone who intimidates us or to reap the satisfaction of an imaginary harangue against someone who wronged us. We shuffle through all those neglected mental post-it notes listing half-finished

		projects and we mull over the aspects of our lives with which we are most dissatisfied, searching for solutions.
Resolve	determination; firmness of purpose	
Attenuate	make thinner	Andersen, seemingly chagrined, withdrew her complaint. The matter ended. But Walsh's exoneration was so attenuated from the scandal that it had little effect. Denunciations, misinformation, sensationalism, and pettiness prevailed; when the history of women's athletics is discussed, Walsh is rarely recognized, except as a curiosity, a fraud, a cheat, a man.
Arduous	hard; strenuous	The Oprah Winfrey Network's three-year gestation has been unusually arduous. Early on, Ms. Winfrey's partner in the joint venture, Discovery Communications, grew frustrated, and as boardroom tensions boiled over early last year she considered backing out altogether. The relationship has improved markedly since then. But as recently as late November, some producers working with OWN still doubted that the channel would actually come to life in January.
Banal	hackneyed; commonplace; trite; lacking originality	
Repudiate	disown; disavow	Desperate to keep his Senate seat, John McCain repudiated his record, his principles, and even his maverick reputation, entrenching himself as the anti-Obama. Which raises the issue of whether the leader so many Americans admired -- and so many journalists covered -- ever truly existed.
Enhance	increase; improve	
Plummet	fall sharply	
Capricious	unpredictable; fickle	His protagonist, a museum curator, sets out for the lake to fish but gets lost, and although he is an enlightened man who carries the natural sciences like a cast-iron defence against the dark powers, he soon finds himself entangled in a formless struggle with capricious malevolence. "He recognizes every sound and knows every plant and animal, so if he heard or saw anything strange, he would consider it

		impermissible.”
Supposition	hypothesis; surmise	
Indigence	poverty	On January 29, 2015, the D.O.I. released its report to the public. It excoriated the Bronx Defenders and said that Rao and Napoli “fell short of the basic integrity and competence that the City should expect of attorneys entrusted to provide essential legal services to indigent populations paid and paid for by City tax dollars.” Mayor Bill de Blasio called the Bronx Defenders’ actions “heinous.” Rao resigned the next day; Napoli two days after that.
Opprobrium	infamy; vilification	Not long ago, while reading James Michener's "Hawaii," he came upon an unfamiliar word: Opprobrium. He checked the dictionary and found that it means "disgrace or infamy attached to conduct viewed as grossly shameful." Such an ugly word -- he wondered with alarm if he was guilty of opprobrium. His English teacher, however, assured him that the word implies sustained conduct, not one mistake.
Disparage	belittle	
Misanthrope	one who hates mankind	
Incorporate	introduce something into a larger whole; combine; unite	
Impermeable	impervious; not permitting passage through its substance	
Alleviate	relieve	And besides, you will reason, this state of affairs was not created by you, nor can it be changed by you alone. Your awareness of it, then, will seem particularly admirable. This, again, will help to alleviate your guilt."
Castigation	punishment; severe criticism	That is a good point. They were eager, historically, to cover Paris, but they are exceedingly less eager to cover Perez. In part, I think because he has a platform via which to castigate, undermine and rebut? I think publications dislike both Hiltons equally. But they were never afraid of Paris, because she had no editorial product of her own.
Probity	uprightness; incorruptibility	Make no mistake: This is mostly a good thing. It makes you think and do things you probably wouldn't if watching alone, like for one thing to pray, silently and fervently,

		that you're wrong about Bush, that your view of him is distorted and he's actually far smarter and more substantial than you believe, not just some weird soulless golem or nexus of interests dressed up in a suit, but a statesman of courage and probity and ... and it's good, this is good to pray this way.