

Words of the Day - 1st Semester Unit 1

1) Word: herculean (adj.)

Synonym(s): mighty, powerful, massive, immense

Etymology: Hercules was the greatest hero in Greek mythology. He accomplished 12 super-human tasks known as the "Labors of Hercules."

2) Word: bowdlerize (v.)

Synonym(s): delete, censor, expurgate

Etymology: In 1818, Thomas Bowdler published censored versions of Shakespeare's plays. He then went on to censor other works.

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3) Word: pandemonium (n.)

Synonym(s): disorder, chaos, noisy confusion

Etymology: John Milton, in Paradise Lost, named the capitol of Hell "Pandemonium."

Pan = "all" Daimon = "demon"

4) Word: pander (v.)

Synonym(s): indulge, gratify, cater

Etymology: In Chaucer's long poem Troilus and Creseyde, Pandarus arranges for the couple to make love in his home.

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5) Word: quixotic (adj.)

Synonym(s): romantic, visionary, fanciful, chimerical

Etymology: Don Quixote, a novel by Cervantes, has its hero engaging in wildly impractical feats.

6) Word: cynical (adj.)

Synonym(s): distrustful, sneering, derisive

Etymology: The Greek philosopher Antisthenes's gymnasium, *Cynosarges* ("white dog") taught that most men scorn virtue for wealth and power.

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7) Word: stoical (adj.)

Synonym(s): self-controlled, imperturbable

Etymology: The Greek philosopher Zeno met his students by the porch (*stoa* or *stoikos*) and taught them that one should calmly accept fortune or misfortune.

8) Word: stigma (n.)

Synonym(s): stain, taint

Etymology: In ancient Greece, captured runaway slaves were branded on the forehead with a *stigma* ("tattoo") to make future escapes more difficult.

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9) Word: impede (v.)

Synonym(s): block, delay, thwart

Etymology: Slaves and convicts in ancient Rome were sometimes shackled with leg irons.

Latin – *im* ("in") *pedio* ("foot") – "to chain the feet"

10) Word: expedite (v.)

Synonym(s): accelerate, quicken, facilitate

Etymology: see above.

Latin – *ex* ("out") *pedio* ("foot") – "to release the feet"

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11) Word: tantalize (v.)

Synonym(s): tempt, tease, entice

Etymology: Tantalus, a son of Zeus, fed the gods his son at a banquet. As a punishment, the gods placed him in a pool of clear water beneath delicious fruit. Whenever he reached for food or drink, he was denied.

12) Word: labyrinth (n.)

Synonym(s): maze, tangle, conundrum

Etymology: King Minos had Daedalus build him a maze, called the Labyrinth, for the half-human, half-bull Minotaur, the offspring of a white bull and his wife.

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13) Word: Machiavellian (adj.)

Synonym(s): cunning, crafty, deceitful, guileful

Etymology: Machiavelli (1469-1572) was a political theorist in Italy who counseled reliance on fear and lying to seize and maintain power.

14) Word: laconic (adj.)

Synonym(s): brief, to the point, concise, terse

Etymology: The Spartans, or Laconians, were famous for the hardships they bore as part of their military training. They were taught to speak briefly and only when necessary.

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15) Word: maudlin (adj.)

Synonym(s): mushy, tear-jerking, mawkish

Etymology: Because of her continual crying, Mary Magdalene became associated with tearful sentimentality.

16) Word: galvanize (v.)

Synonym(s): excite, stimulate, animate

Etymology: The Italian physiologist Luigi Galvani (1737-1798) demonstrated that a muscle could be shocked into movement.

Words of the Day - 1st Semester Unit 1

17) Word: lethargic (adj.)

Synonym(s): drowsy, torpid, lazy

Etymology: Ancient Greeks believed that the spirits of the deceased drank from the river Lethe, which erased all earthly memories. Consequently, Greek physicians named a disease characterized by extreme drowsiness after this river – *lethargia*.

18) Word: ostracize (v.)

Synonym(s): reject, isolate, shun

Etymology: In order to protect their new democracy from a political dictator, Athenians cast ballots on tiles (*ostrakon*) naming potentially dangerous politicians.

Words of the Day - 1st Semester Unit 1

19) Word: gregarious (adj.)

Synonym(s): sociable, social, convivial

Etymology: *Gregis* (Latin) means "flock" or "herd" and is used to describe animals that like to be with others of their kind.

20) Word: egregious (adj.)

Synonym(s): outrageous, flagrant, outstandingly bad

Etymology: see above

E grege means "out of the herd or flock"