

The Top 250 Most Difficult SAT Words

abjure

(v.) to reject, renounce (To prove his honesty, the president *abjured* the evil policies of his wicked predecessor.) _____

abrogate

(v.) to abolish, usually by authority (The Bill of Rights assures that the government cannot *abrogate* our right to a free press.) _____

acerbic

(adj.) biting, bitter in tone or taste (Jill became extremely *acerbic* and began to cruelly make fun of all her friends.) _____

acrimony

(n.) bitterness, discord (Though they vowed that no girl would ever come between them, Biff and Trevor could not keep *acrimony* from overwhelming their friendship after they both fell in love with the lovely Teresa.) _____

acumen

(n.) keen insight (Because of his mathematical *acumen*, Larry was able to figure out in minutes problems that took other students hours.) _____

adumbrate

(v.) to sketch out in a vague way (The coach *adumbrated* a game plan, but none of the players knew precisely what to do.) _____

alacrity

(n.) eagerness, speed (For some reason, Chuck loved to help his mother whenever he could, so when his mother asked him to set the table, he did so with *alacrity*.) _____

anathema

(n.) a cursed, detested person (I never want to see that murderer. He is an *anathema* to me.) _____

antipathy

(n.) a strong dislike, repugnance (I know you love me, but because you are a liar and a thief, I feel nothing but *antipathy* for you.) _____

approbation

(n.) praise (The crowd welcomed the heroes with *approbation*.) _____

arrogate

(v.) to take without justification (The king *arrogated* the right to order executions to himself exclusively.) _____

ascetic

(adj.) practicing restraint as a means of self-discipline, usually religious (The priest lives an *ascetic* life devoid of television, savory foods, and other pleasures.) _____

aspersion

(n.) a curse, expression of ill-will (The rival politicians repeatedly cast *aspersions* on each others' integrity.) _____

assiduous

(adj.) hard-working, diligent (The construction workers erected the skyscraper during two years of *assiduous* labor.) _____

B

blandish

(v.) to coax by using flattery (Rachel's assistant tried to blandish her into accepting the deal.)

boon

(n.) a gift or blessing (The good weather has been a boon for many businesses located near the beach.)

brusque

(adj.) short, abrupt, dismissive (The captain's brusque manner offended the passengers.)

buffet

1. (v.) to strike with force (The strong winds buffeted the ships, threatening to capsize them.)
2. (n.) an arrangement of food set out on a table (Rather than sitting around a table, the guests took food from our buffet and ate standing up.)

burnish

(v.) to polish, shine (His mother asked him to burnish the silverware before setting the table.)

buttress

1. (v.) to support, hold up (The column buttresses the roof above the statue.)
2. (n.) something that offers support (The buttress supports the roof above the statues.)

C

cacophony

(n.) tremendous noise, disharmonious sound (The elementary school orchestra created a cacophony at the recital.)

cajole

(v.) to urge, coax (Fred's buddies cajoled him into attending the bachelor party.)

calumny

(n.) an attempt to spoil someone else's reputation by spreading lies (The local official's calumny ended up ruining his opponent's prospect of winning the election.)

capricious

(adj.) subject to whim, fickle (The young girl's capricious tendencies made it difficult for her to focus on achieving her goals.)

clemency

(n.) mercy (After he forgot their anniversary, Martin could only beg Maria for clemency.)

cogent

(adj.) intellectually convincing (Irene's arguments in favor of abstinence were so cogent that I could not resist them.)

concomitant

(adj.) accompanying in a subordinate fashion (His dislike of hard work carried with it a concomitant lack of funds.)

conflagration

(n.) great fire (The conflagration consumed the entire building.)

contrite

(adj.) penitent, eager to be forgiven (Blake's contrite behavior made it impossible to stay angry at

him.)

conundrum

(*n.*) puzzle, problem (Interpreting Jane's behavior was a constant conundrum.)

credulity

(*n.*) readiness to believe (His credulity made him an easy target for con men.)

cupidity

(*n.*) greed, strong desire (His cupidity made him enter the abandoned gold mine despite the obvious dangers.)

cursory

(*adj.*) brief to the point of being superficial (Late for the meeting, she cast a cursory glance at the agenda.)

D

decry

(*v.*) to criticize openly (The kind video rental clerk decryed the policy of charging customers late fees.)

defile

(*v.*) to make unclean, impure (She defiled the calm of the religious building by playing her banjo.)

deleterious

(*adj.*) harmful (She experienced the deleterious effects of running a marathon without stretching her muscles enough beforehand.)

demure

(*adj.*) quiet, modest, reserved (Though everyone else at the party was dancing and going crazy, she remained demure.)

deprecate

(*v.*) to belittle, depreciate (Always over-modest, he deprecated his contribution to the local charity.)

deride

(*v.*) to laugh at mockingly, scorn (The bullies derided the foreign student's accent.)

desecrate

(*v.*) to violate the sacredness of a thing or place (They feared that the construction of a golf course would desecrate the preserved wilderness.)

desiccated

(*adj.*) dried up, dehydrated (The skin of the desiccated mummy looked like old paper.)

diaphanous

(*adj.*) light, airy, transparent (Sunlight poured in through the diaphanous curtains, brightening the room.)

diffident

(*adj.*) shy, quiet, modest (While eating dinner with the adults, the diffident youth did not speak for fear of seeming presumptuous.)

discursive

(*adj.*) rambling, lacking order (The professor's discursive lectures seemed to be about every subject except the one initially described.)

dissemble

(v.) to conceal, fake (Not wanting to appear heartlessly greedy, she dissembled and hid her intention to sell her ailing father's stamp collection.)

dither

(v.) to be indecisive (Not wanting to offend either friend, he dithered about which of the two birthday parties he should attend.)

E

ebullient

(adj.) extremely lively, enthusiastic (She became ebullient upon receiving an acceptance letter from her first-choice college.)

effrontery

(n.) impudence, nerve, insolence (When I told my aunt that she was boring, my mother scolded me for my effrontery.)

effulgent

(adj.) radiant, splendid (The golden palace was effulgent.)

egregious

(adj.) extremely bad (The student who threw sloppy joes across the cafeteria was punished for his egregious behavior.)

enervate

(v.) to weaken, exhaust (Writing these sentences enervates me so much that I will have to take a nap after I finish.)

ephemeral

(adj.) short-lived, fleeting (She promised she'd love me forever, but her "forever" was only ephemeral: she left me after one week.)

eschew

(v.) to shun, avoid (George hates the color green so much that he eschews all green food.)

evanescent

(adj.) fleeting, momentary (My joy at getting promoted was evanescent because I discovered that I would have to work much longer hours in a less friendly office.)

evince

(v.) to show, reveal (Christopher's hand-wringing and nail-biting evinced how nervous he is about the upcoming English test.)

exculpate

(v.) to free from guilt or blame, exonerate (My discovery of the ring behind the dresser exculpated me from the charge of having stolen it.)

execrable

(adj.) loathsome, detestable (Her pudding is so execrable that it makes me sick.)

exigent

(adj.) urgent, critical (The patient has an exigent need for medication, or else he will lose his sight.)

expiate

(v.) to make amends for, atone (To expiate my selfishness, I gave all my profits to charity.)

expunge

(v.) to obliterate, eradicate (Fearful of an IRS investigation, Paul tried to expunge all incriminating

evidence from his tax files.)

extant

(*adj.*) existing, not destroyed or lost (My mother's extant love letters to my father are in the attic trunk.)

extol

(*v.*) to praise, revere (Violet extolled the virtues of a vegetarian diet to her meat-loving brother.)

F

fallacious

(*adj.*) incorrect, misleading (Emily offered me cigarettes on the fallacious assumption that I smoked.)

fastidious

(*adj.*) meticulous, demanding, having high and often unattainable standards (Mark is so fastidious that he is never able to finish a project because it always seems imperfect to him.)

fatuous

(*adj.*) silly, foolish (He considers himself a serious poet, but in truth, he only writes fatuous limericks.)

fecund

(*adj.*) fruitful, fertile (The fecund tree bore enough apples to last us through the entire season.)

feral

(*adj.*) wild, savage (That beast looks so feral that I would fear being alone with it.)

fetid

(*adj.*) having a foul odor (I can tell from the fetid smell in your refrigerator that your milk has spoiled.)

florid

(*adj.*) flowery, ornate (The writer's florid prose belongs on a sentimental Hallmark card.)

fractious

(*adj.*) troublesome or irritable (Although the child insisted he wasn't tired, his fractious behavior—especially his decision to crush his cheese and crackers all over the floor—convinced everyone present that it was time to put him to bed.)

G

garrulous

(*adj.*) talkative, wordy (Some talk-show hosts are so garrulous that their guests can't get a word in edgewise.)

grandiloquence

(*n.*) lofty, pompous language (The student thought her grandiloquence would make her sound smart, but neither the class nor the teacher bought it.)

gregarious

(*adj.*) drawn to the company of others, sociable (Well, if you're not gregarious, I don't know why you would want to go to a singles party!)

H

hackneyed

(*adj.*) unoriginal, trite (A girl can only hear "I love you" so many times before it begins to sound hackneyed and meaningless.)

hapless

(*adj.*) unlucky (My poor, hapless family never seems to pick a sunny week to go on vacation.)

harangue

1. (*n.*) a ranting speech (Everyone had heard the teacher's harangue about gum chewing in class before.)
2. (*v.*) to give such a speech (But this time the teacher harangued the class about the importance of brushing your teeth after chewing gum.)

hegemony

(*n.*) domination over others (Britain's hegemony over its colonies was threatened once nationalist sentiment began to spread around the world.)

I

iconoclast

(*n.*) one who attacks common beliefs or institutions (Jane goes to one protest after another, but she seems to be an iconoclast rather than an activist with a progressive agenda.)

ignominious

(*adj.*) humiliating, disgracing (It was really ignominious to be kicked out of the dorm for having an illegal gas stove in my room.)

impassive

(*adj.*) stoic, not susceptible to suffering (Stop being so impassive; it's healthy to cry every now and then.)

imperious

(*adj.*) commanding, domineering (The imperious nature of your manner led me to dislike you at once.)

impertinent

(*adj.*) rude, insolent (Most of your comments are so impertinent that I don't wish to dignify them with an answer.)

impervious

(*adj.*) impenetrable, incapable of being affected (Because of their thick layer of fur, many seals are almost impervious to the cold.)

impetuous

(*adj.*) rash; hastily done (Hilda's hasty slaying of the king was an impetuous, thoughtless action.)

impinge

1. (*v.*) to impact, affect, make an impression (The hail impinged the roof, leaving large dents.)
2. (*v.*) to encroach, infringe (I apologize for impinging upon you like this, but I really need to use your bathroom. Now.)

implacable

(*adj.*) incapable of being appeased or mitigated (Watch out: Once you shun Grandma's cooking, she is totally implacable.)

impudent

(*adj.*) casually rude, insolent, impertinent (The impudent young man looked the princess up and down and told her she was hot even though she hadn't asked him.)

inchoate

(*adj.*) unformed or formless, in a beginning stage (The country's government is still inchoate and, because it has no great tradition, quite unstable.)

incontrovertible

(*adj.*) indisputable (Only stubborn Tina would attempt to disprove the incontrovertible laws of physics.)

indefatigable

(*adj.*) incapable of defeat, failure, decay (Even after traveling 62 miles, the indefatigable runner kept on moving.)

ineffable

(*adj.*) unspeakable, incapable of being expressed through words (It is said that the experience of playing with a dolphin is ineffable and can only be understood through direct encounter.)

inexorable

(*adj.*) incapable of being persuaded or placated (Although I begged for hours, Mom was inexorable and refused to let me stay out all night after the prom.)

ingenuous

(*adj.*) not devious; innocent and candid (He must have writers, but his speeches seem so ingenuous it's hard to believe he's not speaking from his own heart.)

inimical

(*adj.*) hostile (I don't see how I could ever work for a company that was so cold and inimical to me during my interviews.)

iniquity

(*n.*) wickedness or sin ("Your iniquity," said the priest to the practical joker, "will be forgiven.")

insidious

(*adj.*) appealing but imperceptibly harmful, seductive (Lisa's insidious chocolate cake tastes so good but makes you feel so sick later on!)

intransigent

(*adj.*) refusing to compromise, often on an extreme opinion (The intransigent child said he would have 12 scoops of ice cream or he would bang his head against the wall until his mother fainted from fear.)

inure

(*v.*) to cause someone or something to become accustomed to a situation (Twenty years in the salt mines inured the man to the discomforts of dirt and grime.)

invective

(*n.*) an angry verbal attack (My mother's irrational invective against the way I dress only made me decide to dye my hair green.)

inveterate

(*adj.*) stubbornly established by habit (I'm the first to admit that I'm an inveterate coffee drinker—I drink four cups a day.)

J

jubilant

(*adj.*) extremely joyful, happy (The crowd was jubilant when the firefighter carried the woman from the flaming building.)

juxtaposition

(*n.*) the act of placing two things next to each other for implicit comparison (The interior designer admired my juxtaposition of the yellow couch and green table.)

L

laconic

(*adj.*) terse in speech or writing (The author's *laconic* style has won him many followers who dislike wordiness.)

languid

(*adj.*) sluggish from fatigue or weakness (In the summer months, the great heat makes people *languid* and lazy.)

largess

(*n.*) the generous giving of lavish gifts (My boss demonstrated great *largess* by giving me a new car.)

latent

(*adj.*) hidden, but capable of being exposed (Sigmund's dream represented his *latent* paranoid obsession with other people's shoes.)

legerdemain

(*n.*) deception, slight-of-hand (Smuggling the French plants through customs by claiming that they were fake was a remarkable bit of *legerdemain*.)

licentious

(*adj.*) displaying a lack of moral or legal restraints (Marilee has always been fascinated by the *licentious* private lives of politicians.)

limpid

(*adj.*) clear, transparent (Mr. Johnson's *limpid* writing style greatly pleased readers who disliked complicated novels.)

M

maelstrom

(*n.*) a destructive whirlpool which rapidly sucks in objects (Little did the explorers know that as they turned the next bend of the calm river a vicious *maelstrom* would catch their boat.)

magnanimous

(*adj.*) noble, generous (Although I had already broken most of her dishes, Jacqueline was *magnanimous* enough to continue letting me use them.)

malediction

(*n.*) a curse (When I was arrested for speeding, I screamed *maledictions* against the policeman and the entire police department.)

malevolent

(*adj.*) wanting harm to befall others (The *malevolent* old man sat in the park all day, tripping unsuspecting passersby with his cane.)

manifold

(*adj.*) diverse, varied (The popularity of Dante's *Inferno* is partly due to the fact that the work allows for *manifold* interpretations.)

maudlin

(*adj.*) weakly sentimental (Although many people enjoy romantic comedies, I usually find them *maudlin* and shallow.)

mawkish

(*adj.*) characterized by sick sentimentality (Although some nineteenth-century critics viewed Dickens's writing as *mawkish*, contemporary readers have found great emotional depth in his works.)

mendacious

(*adj.*) having a lying, false character (The mendacious content of the tabloid magazines is at least entertaining.)

mercurial

(*adj.*) characterized by rapid change or temperamentality (Though he was widely respected for his mathematical proofs, the mercurial genius was impossible to live with.)

modicum

(*n.*) a small amount of something (Refusing to display even a modicum of sensitivity, Henrietta announced her boss's affair in front of the entire office.)

morass

(*n.*) a wet swampy bog; figuratively, something that traps and confuses (When Theresa lost her job, she could not get out of her financial morass.)

multifarious

(*adj.*) having great diversity or variety (This Swiss Army knife has multifarious functions and capabilities. Among other things, it can act as a knife, a saw, a toothpick, and a slingshot.)

munificence

(*n.*) generosity in giving (The royal family's munificence made everyone else in their country rich.)

myriad

(*adj.*) consisting of a very great number (It was difficult to decide what to do Friday night because the city presented us with myriad possibilities for fun.)

N**nadir**

(*n.*) the lowest point of something (My day was boring, but the nadir came when I accidentally spilled a bowl of spaghetti on my head.)

nascent

(*adj.*) in the process of being born or coming into existence (Unfortunately, my brilliant paper was only in its nascent form on the morning that it was due.)

nefarious

(*adj.*) heinously villainous (Although Dr. Meanman's nefarious plot to melt the polar icecaps was terrifying, it was so impractical that nobody really worried about it.)

neophyte

(*n.*) someone who is young or inexperienced (As a neophyte in the literary world, Malik had trouble finding a publisher for his first novel.)

O**obdurate**

(*adj.*) unyielding to persuasion or moral influences (The obdurate old man refused to take pity on the kittens.)

obfuscate

(*v.*) to render incomprehensible (The detective did not want to answer the newspaperman's questions, so he obfuscated the truth.)

oblique

(*adj.*) diverging from a straight line or course, not straightforward (Martin's oblique language confused

those who listened to him.)

obsequious

(*adj.*) excessively compliant or submissive (Mark acted like Janet's servant, obeying her every request in an obsequious manner.)

obstreperous

(*adj.*) noisy, unruly (Billy's obstreperous behavior prompted the librarian to ask him to leave the reading room.)

obtuse

(*adj.*) lacking quickness of sensibility or intellect (Political opponents warned that the prime minister's obtuse approach to foreign policy would embroil the nation in mindless war.)

odious

(*adj.*) instilling hatred or intense displeasure (Mark was assigned the odious task of cleaning the cat's litter box.)

officious

(*adj.*) offering one's services when they are neither wanted nor needed (Brenda resented Allan's officious behavior when he selected colors that might best improve her artwork.)

opulent

(*adj.*) characterized by rich abundance verging on ostentation (The opulent furnishings of the dictator's private compound contrasted harshly with the meager accommodations of her subjects.)

ostensible

(*adj.*) appearing as such, seemingly (Jack's ostensible reason for driving was that airfare was too expensive, but in reality, he was afraid of flying.)

P

palliate

(*v.*) to reduce the severity of (The doctor trusted that the new medication would palliate her patient's discomfort.)

pallid

(*adj.*) lacking color (Dr. Van Helsing feared that Lucy's pallid complexion was due to an unexplained loss of blood.)

panacea

(*n.*) a remedy for all ills or difficulties (Doctors wish there was a single panacea for every disease, but sadly there is not.)

paragon

(*n.*) a model of excellence or perfection (The mythical Helen of Troy was considered a paragon of female beauty.)

pariah

(*n.*) an outcast (Following the discovery of his plagiarism, Professor Hurley was made a pariah in all academic circles.)

parsimony

(*n.*) frugality, stinginess (Many relatives believed that my aunt's wealth resulted from her parsimony.)

pathos

(*n.*) an emotion of sympathy (Martha filled with pathos upon discovering the scrawny, shivering kitten at her door.)

paucity

(*adj.*) small in quantity (Gilbert lamented the paucity of twentieth-century literature courses available at the college.)

pejorative

(*adj.*) derogatory, uncomplimentary (The evening's headline news covered an international scandal caused by a pejorative statement the famous senator had made in reference to a foreign leader.)

pellucid

(*adj.*) easily intelligible, clear (Wishing his book to be pellucid to the common man, Albert Camus avoided using complicated grammar when composing *The Stranger*.)

penurious

(*adj.*) miserly, stingy (Stella complained that her husband's penurious ways made it impossible to live the lifestyle she felt she deserved.)

perfidious

(*adj.*) disloyal, unfaithful (After the official was caught selling government secrets to enemy agents, he was executed for his perfidious ways.)

perfunctory

(*adj.*) showing little interest or enthusiasm (The radio broadcaster announced the news of the massacre in a surprisingly perfunctory manner.)

pernicious

(*adj.*) extremely destructive or harmful (The new government feared that the Communist sympathizers would have a pernicious influence on the nation's stability.)

perspicacity

(*adj.*) shrewdness, perceptiveness (The detective was too humble to acknowledge that his perspicacity was the reason for his professional success.)

pertinacious

(*adj.*) stubbornly persistent (Harry's parents were frustrated with his pertinacious insistence that a monster lived in his closet. Then they opened the closet door and were eaten.)

petulance

(*n.*) rudeness, irritability (The nanny resigned after she could no longer tolerate the child's petulance.)

pithy

(*adj.*) concisely meaningful (My father's long-winded explanation was a stark contrast to his usually pithy statements.)

platitude

(*n.*) an uninspired remark, cliché (After reading over her paper, Helene concluded that what she thought were profound insights were actually just platitudes.)

plethora

(*n.*) an abundance, excess (The wedding banquet included a plethora of oysters piled almost three feet high.)

polemic

(*n.*) an aggressive argument against a specific opinion (My brother launched into a polemic against my arguments that capitalism was an unjust economic system.)

portent

(*n.*) an omen (When a black cat crossed my sister's path while she was walking to school, she took it

as a portent that she would do badly on her spelling test.)

precocious

(*adj.*) advanced, developing ahead of time (Derek was so academically precocious that by the time he was 10 years old, he was already in the ninth grade.)

prescient

(*adj.*) to have foreknowledge of events (Questioning the fortune cookie's prediction, Ray went in search of the old hermit who was rumored to be prescient.)

primeval

(*adj.*) original, ancient (The first primates to walk on two legs, called *Australopithecus*, were the primeval descendants of modern man.)

probity

(*n.*) virtue, integrity (Because he was never viewed as a man of great probity, no one was surprised by Mr. Samson's immoral behavior.)

proclivity

(*n.*) a strong inclination toward something (In a sick twist of fate, Harold's childhood proclivity for torturing small animals grew into a desire to become a surgeon.)

promulgate

(*v.*) to proclaim, make known (The film professor promulgated that both in terms of sex appeal and political intrigue, Sean Connery's James Bond was superior to Roger Moore's.)

propensity

(*n.*) an inclination, preference (Dermot has a propensity for dangerous activities such as bungee jumping.)

propitious

(*adj.*) favorable (The dark storm clouds visible on the horizon suggested that the weather would not be propitious for sailing.)

prosaic

(*adj.*) plain, lacking liveliness (Heather's prosaic recital of the poem bored the audience.)

proscribe

(*v.*) to condemn, outlaw (The town council voted to proscribe the sale of alcohol on weekends.)

protean

(*adj.*) able to change shape; displaying great variety (Among Nigel's protean talents was his ability to touch the tip of his nose with his tongue.)

prurient

(*adj.*) eliciting or possessing an extraordinary interest in sex (David's mother was shocked by the discovery of prurient reading material hidden beneath her son's mattress.)

puerile

(*adj.*) juvenile, immature (The judge demanded order after the lawyer's puerile attempt to object by stomping his feet on the courtroom floor.)

pugnacious

(*adj.*) quarrelsome, combative (Aaron's pugnacious nature led him to start several barroom brawls each month.)

pulchritude

(*n.*) physical beauty (Several of Shakespeare's sonnets explore the pulchritude of a lovely young man.)

punctilious

(*adj.*) eager to follow rules or conventions (*Punctilious* Bobby, hall monitor extraordinaire, insisted that his peers follow the rules.)

Q

quagmire

(*n.*) a difficult situation (We'd all like to avoid the kind of military *quagmire* characterized by the Vietnam War.)

querulous

(*adj.*) whiny, complaining (If deprived of his pacifier, young Brendan becomes *querulous*.)

quixotic

(*adj.*) idealistic, impractical (Edward entertained a *quixotic* desire to fall in love at first sight in a laundromat.)

R

rancor

(*n.*) deep, bitter resentment (When Eileen challenged me to a fight, I could see the *rancor* in her eyes.)

rebuke

(*v.*) to scold, criticize (When the cops showed up at Sarah's party, they *rebuked* her for disturbing the peace.)

recalcitrant

(*adj.*) defiant, unapologetic (Even when scolded, the *recalcitrant* young girl simply stomped her foot and refused to finish her lima beans.)

rectitude

(*n.*) uprightness, extreme morality (The priest's *rectitude* gave him the moral authority to counsel his parishioners.)

replete

(*adj.*) full, abundant (The unedited version was *replete* with naughty words.)

reprobate

(*adj.*) evil, unprincipled (The *reprobate* criminal sat sneering in the cell.)

reprove

(*v.*) to scold, rebuke (Lara *reproved* her son for sticking each and every one of his fingers into the strawberry pie.)

repudiate

(*v.*) to reject, refuse to accept (Kwame made a strong case for an extension of his curfew, but his mother *repudiated* it with a few biting words.)

rescind

(*v.*) to take back, repeal (The company *rescinded* its offer of employment after discovering that Jane's resume was full of lies.)

restive

(*adj.*) resistant, stubborn, impatient (The *restive* audience pelted the band with mud and yelled nasty comments.)

ribald

(*adj.*) coarsely, crudely humorous (While some giggled at the ribald joke involving a parson's daughter, most sighed and rolled their eyes.)

rife

(*adj.*) abundant (Surprisingly, the famous novelist's writing was rife with spelling errors.)

ruse

(*n.*) a trick (Oliver concocted an elaborate ruse for sneaking out of the house to meet his girlfriend while simultaneously giving his mother the impression that he was asleep in bed.)

S**sacrosanct**

(*adj.*) holy, something that should not be criticized (In the United States, the Constitution is often thought of as a sacrosanct document.)

sagacity

(*n.*) shrewdness, soundness of perspective (With remarkable sagacity, the wise old man predicted and thwarted his children's plan to ship him off to a nursing home.)

salient

(*adj.*) significant, conspicuous (One of the salient differences between Alison and Nancy is that Alison is a foot taller.)

sanctimonious

(*adj.*) giving a hypocritical appearance of piety (The sanctimonious Bertrand delivered stern lectures on the Ten Commandments to anyone who would listen, but thought nothing of stealing cars to make some cash on the side.)

sanguine

(*adj.*) optimistic, cheery (Polly reacted to any bad news with a sanguine smile and the chirpy cry, "When life hands you lemons, make lemonade!")

scurrilous

(*adj.*) vulgar, coarse (When Bruno heard the scurrilous accusation being made about him, he could not believe it because he always tried to be nice to everyone.)

serendipity

(*n.*) luck, finding good things without looking for them (In an amazing bit of serendipity, penniless Paula found a \$20 bill in the subway station.)

servile

(*adj.*) subservient (The servile porter crept around the hotel lobby, bowing and quaking before the guests.)

solicitous

(*adj.*) concerned, attentive (Jim, laid up in bed with a nasty virus, enjoyed the solicitous attentions of his mother, who brought him soup and extra blankets.)

solipsistic

(*adj.*) believing that oneself is all that exists (Colette's solipsistic attitude completely ignored the plight of the homeless people on the street.)

somnolent

(*adj.*) sleepy, drowsy (The somnolent student kept falling asleep and waking up with a jerk.)

spurious

(*adj.*) false but designed to seem plausible (Using a spurious argument, John convinced the others that he had won the board game on a technicality.)

staid

(*adj.*) sedate, serious, self-restrained (The staid butler never changed his expression no matter what happened.)

stolid

(*adj.*) expressing little sensibility, unemotional (Charles's stolid reaction to his wife's funeral differed from the passion he showed at the time of her death.)

stupefy

(*v.*) to astonish, make insensible (Veronica's audacity and ungratefulness stupefied her best friend, Heather.)

surfeit

(*n.*) an overabundant supply or indulgence (After partaking of the surfeit of tacos and tamales at the All-You-Can-Eat Taco Tamale Lunch Special, Beth felt rather sick.)

surmise

(*v.*) to infer with little evidence (After speaking to only one of the students, the teacher was able to surmise what had caused the fight.)

surreptitious

(*adj.*) stealthy (The surreptitious CIA agents were able to get in and out of the house without anyone noticing.)

sycophant

(*n.*) one who flatters for self-gain (Some see the people in the cabinet as the president's closest advisors, but others see them as sycophants.)

T

tacit

(*adj.*) expressed without words (I interpreted my parents' refusal to talk as a tacit acceptance of my request.)

taciturn

(*adj.*) not inclined to talk (Though Jane never seems to stop talking, her brother is quite taciturn.)

tantamount

(*adj.*) equivalent in value or significance (When it comes to sports, fearing your opponent is tantamount to losing.)

temerity

(*n.*) audacity, recklessness (Tom and Huck entered the scary cave armed with nothing but their own temerity.)

tenuous

(*adj.*) having little substance or strength (Your argument is very tenuous, since it relies so much on speculation and hearsay.)

timorous

(*adj.*) timid, fearful (When dealing with the unknown, timorous Tallulah almost always broke into tears.)

torpid

(*adj.*) lethargic, dormant, lacking motion (The torpid whale floated, wallowing in the water for hours.)

tractable

(*adj.*) easily controlled (The horse was so tractable, Myra didn't even need a bridle.)

transient

(*adj.*) passing through briefly; passing into and out of existence (Because virtually everyone in Palm Beach is a tourist, the population of the town is quite transient.)

transmute

(*v.*) to change or alter in form (Ancient alchemists believed that it was possible to transmute lead into gold.)

trenchant

(*adj.*) effective, articulate, clear-cut (The directions that accompanied my new cell phone were trenchant and easy to follow.)

truculent

(*adj.*) ready to fight, cruel (This club doesn't really attract the dangerous types, so why was that bouncer being so truculent?)

turgid

(*adj.*) swollen, excessively embellished in style or language (The haughty writer did not realize how we all really felt about his turgid prose.)

turpitude

(*n.*) depravity, moral corruption (Sir Marcus's chivalry often contrasted with the turpitude he exhibited with the ladies at the tavern.)

U

ubiquitous

(*adj.*) existing everywhere, widespread (It seems that everyone in the United States has a television. The technology is ubiquitous here.)

umbrage

(*n.*) resentment, offense (He called me a lily-livered coward, and I took umbrage at the insult.)

unctuous

(*adj.*) smooth or greasy in texture, appearance, manner (The unctuous receptionist seemed untrustworthy, as if she was only being helpful because she thought we might give her a big tip.)

undulate

(*v.*) to move in waves (As the storm began to brew, the placid ocean began to undulate to an increasing degree.)

upbraid

(*v.*) to criticize or scold severely (The last thing Lindsay wanted was for Lisa to upbraid her again about missing the rent payment.)

usurp

(*v.*) to seize by force, take possession of without right (The rogue army general tried to usurp control of the government, but he failed because most of the army backed the legally elected president.)

V

vacillate

(*v.*) to fluctuate, hesitate (I prefer a definite answer, but my boss kept vacillating between the distinct options available to us.)

vacuous

(*adj.*) lack of content or ideas, stupid (Beyoncé realized that the lyrics she had just penned were completely vacuous and tried to add more substance.)

vapid

(*adj.*) lacking liveliness, dull (The professor's comments about the poem were surprisingly vapid and dull.)

variegated

(*adj.*) diversified, distinctly marked (Each wire in the engineering exam was variegated by color so that the students could figure out which one was which.)

venerate

(*v.*) to regard with respect or to honor (The tribute to John Lennon sought to venerate his music, his words, and his legend.)

veracity

(*n.*) truthfulness, accuracy (With several agencies regulating the reports, it was difficult for Latifah to argue against its veracity.)

verdant

(*adj.*) green in tint or color (The verdant leaves on the trees made the world look emerald.)

vex

(*v.*) to confuse or annoy (My little brother vexes me by poking me in the ribs for hours on end.)

vicarious

(*adj.*) experiencing through another (All of my lame friends learned to be social through vicarious involvement in my amazing experiences.)

vicissitude

(*n.*) event that occurs by chance (The vicissitudes of daily life prevent me from predicting what might happen from one day to the next.)

vilify

(*v.*) to lower in importance, defame (After the Watergate scandal, almost any story written about President Nixon sought to vilify him and criticize his behavior.)

viscous

(*adj.*) not free flowing, syrupy (The viscous syrup took three minutes to pour out of the bottle.)

vitriolic

(*adj.*) having a caustic quality (When angry, the woman would spew vitriolic insults.)

vituperate

(*v.*) to berate (Jack ran away as soon as his father found out, knowing he would be vituperated for his unseemly behavior.)

W**wanton**

(*adj.*) undisciplined, lewd, lustful (Vicky's wanton demeanor often made the frat guys next door very excited.)

winsome

(*adj.*) charming, pleasing (After such a long, frustrating day, I was grateful for Chris's winsome attitude and childish naivete.)

wistful

(*adj.*) full of yearning; musingly sad (Since her pet rabbit died, Edda missed it terribly and was wistful all day long.)

wizened

(*adj.*) dry, shrunken, wrinkled (Agatha's grandmother, Stephanie, had the most wizened countenance, full of leathery wrinkles.)

Z

zenith

(*n.*) the highest point, culminating point (I was too nice to tell Nelly that she had reached the absolute zenith of her career with that one hit of hers.)

zephyr

(*n.*) a gentle breeze (If not for the zephyrs that were blowing and cooling us, our room would've been unbearably hot.)