

blasphemous

meaning

profane; impious

example

The people in the room were shocked by his blasphemous language.

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bristling

meaning

rising like bristles; showing irritation

example

The dog stood there, bristling with anger.

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catharsis

meaning

purging or cleansing of any passage of the body

example

Aristotle maintained that tragedy created a catharsis by purging the soul of base concepts.

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congenital

meaning

existing at birth

example

His congenital deformity disturbed his parents.

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courier

meaning

messenger

example

The publisher sent a special courier to pick up the manuscript.

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dank

meaning

damp

example

The walls of the dungeon were dank and slimy.

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deprecate

meaning

express disapproval of; protest against; belittle

example

A firm believer in old-fashioned courtesy, Miss Post deprecated the modern tendency to address new acquaintances by their first names.

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discursive

meaning

digressing; rambling

example

They were annoyed and bored by her discursive remarks.

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dispassionate

meaning

calm; impartial

example

In a dispassionate analysis of the problem, he carefully examined the causes of the conflict and proceeded to suggest suitable remedies.

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ethnology

meaning

study of mankind

example

Sociology is one aspect of the science of ethnology.

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euthanasia

meaning

mercy killing

example

Many people support euthanasia for terminally ill patients who wish to die.

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exegesis

meaning

explanation, especially of biblical passages

example

I can follow your *exegesis* of this passage to a limited degree; some of your reasoning eludes me.

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fabricate

meaning

build; lie

example

Because of the child's tendency to fabricate, we had trouble believing her.

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fritter

meaning

waste

example

He could not apply himself to any task and frittered away his time in idle conversation.

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gazette

meaning

official publication

example

He read the gazettes regularly for announcement of his promotion.

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gerontocracy

meaning

government ruled by old people

example

Gulliver visited a gerontocracy in which the young people acted as servants to their elders, all the while dreaming of the day they would be old enough to have servants of their own.

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grotto

meaning

small cavern

example

The Blue Grotto in Capri can be entered only by small boats rowed by natives through a natural opening in the rocks.

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impromptu

meaning

without previous preparation

example

Her listeners were amazed that such a thorough presentation could be made in an impromptu speech.

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incredulous

meaning

withholding belief; skeptical

example

When Jack claimed he hadn't eaten the jelly doughnut, Jill took an incredulous look at his smeared face and laughed.

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inexorable

meaning

relentless; unyielding; implacable

example

After listening to the pleas for clemency, the judge was inexorable and gave the convicted man the maximum punishment allowed by law.

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kismet

meaning

fate

example

kismet is the Arabic word for "fate."

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larceny

meaning

theft

example

Because of the prisoner's record, the district attorney refused to reduce the charge from grand larceny to petit larceny.

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motif

meaning

theme

example

This simple motif runs throughout the score.

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nondescript

meaning

undistinctive; ordinary

example

The private detective was a short, nondescript fellow with no outstanding features, the sort of person one would never notice in a crowd.

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obloquy

meaning

slander; disgrace; infamy

example

I resent the obloquy that you are casting upon my reputation.

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obtuse

meaning

blunt; stupid

example

Because he was so obtuse, he could not fo...

paragon

meaning

model of perfection

example

The class disliked him because the teacher was always pointing him out as a paragon of virtue.

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penchant

meaning

strong inclination; liking

example

He had a strong penchant for sculpture and owned many statues.

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pinnacle

meaning

peak

example

We could see the morning sunlight illuminate the pinnacle while the rest of the mountain lay in shadow.

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propensity

meaning

natural inclination

example

Convinced of his own talent, Sol has an unfortunate propensity to belittle the talents of others.

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provincial

meaning

pertaining to a province; limited in outlook; unsophisticated

example

As provincial governor, Sir Henry administered the Queen's law in his remote corner of Canada.

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queasy

meaning

easily nauseated; squeamish

example

As the ship left the harbor, he became queasy and thought that he was going to suffer from seasickness.

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serrated

meaning

having a sawtoothed edge

example

The beech tree is one of many plants that have serrated leaves.

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shambles

meaning

slaughterhouse; scene of carnage

example

By the time the police arrived, the room was a shambles.

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suppliant

meaning

entreating; beseeching

example

He could not resist the dog's suppliant whimpering, and he gave it some food.

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tacit

meaning

understood; not put into words

example

We have a tacit agreement based on only a handshake.

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tranquillity

meaning

calmness; peace

example

After the commotion and excitement of the city, I appreciate the tranquillity of these fields and forests.

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visage

meaning

face; appearance

example

The stern visage of the judge indicated that she had decided to impose a severe penalty.

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vociferous

meaning

clamorous; noisy

example

The crowd grew vociferous in its anger and threatened to take the law into its own hands.

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waffle

meaning

speak equivocally about an issue

example

When asked directly about the governor's involvement in the savings and loan scandal, the press secretary waffled, talking all around the issue.

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advocate

meaning

urge; plead for

example

The abolitionists advocated freedom for the slaves.

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aggrandize

meaning

increase or intensify; raise in power, wealth, rank or honor

example

The history of the past quarter century illustrates how a President may aggrandize his power to act aggressively in international affairs without considering the wishes of Congress.

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analogy

meaning

similarity; parallelism

example

Your analogy is not a good one because the two situations are not similar.

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assurance

meaning

promise or pledge; certainty; self-confidence

example

When Guthrie gave Guinness his assurance that rehearsals were going well, he spoke with such assurance that Guinness was convinced.

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behemoth

meaning

huge creature; something of monstrous size or power

example

Sportcasters nicknamed the linebacker "The Behemoth."

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