


Definitions

Note carefully the spelling, pronunciation, part(s) of speech, and definition(s) of each of the following words. Then write the word in the blank space(s) in the illustrative sentence(s) following. Finally, study the lists of synonyms and antonyms given at the end of each entry.

- 1. abortive**
(ə bôr' tiv)

(*adj.*) failing to accomplish an intended aim or purpose; only partially or imperfectly developed

An _____ attempt to seize the throne ended badly for the participants.

SYNONYMS: miscarried, fruitless, premature
ANTONYMS: successful, realized, consummated
- 2. bruit**
(brüt)

(*v.*) to spread news, reports, or unsubstantiated rumors

News of the company's closing and the impending job losses was immediately _____ about the office.

SYNONYMS: noise abroad, broadcast, blazon
ANTONYMS: cover up, conceal, hush up
- 3. contumelious**
(kon tü mē' lē əs)

(*adj.*) insolent or rude in speech or behavior; insultingly abusive humiliating

The ambassador's _____ reply was completely unexpected.

SYNONYMS: vituperative, scurrilous, excoriating
ANTONYMS: laudatory, commendatory, deferential
- 4. dictum**
(dik' təm)

(*n.*) a short saying; an authoritative statement

According to the _____ of the critics, the play is not worth the price of admission.

SYNONYMS: maxim, precept, aphorism, axiom
- 5. ensconce**
(en skons')

(*v.*) to settle comfortably and firmly in position; to put or hide in a safe place

After a very long, difficult day at work, I gratefully _____ myself in my snug, warm bed.

SYNONYMS: nestle, lodge, entrench
ANTONYMS: unseat, displace, oust
- 6. iconoclastic**
(ī kon ə klas' tik)

(*adj.*) attacking or seeking to overthrow popular or traditional beliefs, ideas, or institutions

The writer's _____ opinions always seem to stir controversy.

SYNONYMS: image-breaking, irreverent, heretical
ANTONYMS: orthodox, conservative, reverent

- 7. in medias res**
(in med' ē əs
rās')
- (*adv.*) in or into the middle of a plot; into the middle of things
Since this episode begins _____,
we need to tape it and watch the earlier installments first.
- 8. internecine**
(int ə nes' ēn)
- (*adj.*) mutually destructive; characterized by great slaughter and bloodshed
An _____ feud has existed between the clans for generations.
SYNONYMS: murderous, savage, ruinous
ANTONYMS: peaceful, harmonious, constructive
- 9. maladroit**
(mal ə droit')
- (*adj.*) lacking skill or dexterity; lacking tact, perception, or judgment
The supervisor's _____ interference revealed a lack of experience.
SYNONYMS: inept, awkward, clumsy, gauche
ANTONYMS: skillful, dexterous, deft, tactful
- 10. maudlin**
(môd' lin)
- (*adj.*) excessively or effusively sentimental
The tenor sang a _____ ballad and then a humorous ditty.
SYNONYMS: mushy, mawkish
- 11. modulate**
(mod' yə lāt)
- (*v.*) to change or vary the intensity or pitch; to temper or soften; to regulate, adjust
Asked to _____ their voices, the choir responded adroitly.
SYNONYMS: adapt, moderate
- 12. portentous**
(pôr ten' təs)
- (*adj.*) foreshadowing an event to come; causing wonder or awe; self-consciously weighty, pompous
No one realized just how _____ the strange events of last week would turn out to be.
SYNONYMS: foreboding, ominous, pretentious
ANTONYMS: auspicious, propitious, encouraging
- 13. prescience**
(presh' əns)
- (*n.*) knowledge of events or actions before they happen; foresight
The detectives were skeptical about the psychic's _____ of the suspect's next crime.
SYNONYM: foreknowledge
ANTONYM: hindsight

14. quid pro quo
(kwid' prō kwō')

(*n.*) something given in exchange or return for something else
Before agreeing to give their support, the representatives insisted on some _____.
SYNONYMS: swap, trade

15. salubrious
(sə lū' brē əs)

(*adj.*) conducive to health or well-being; wholesome
Seeking the _____ effects of sea air, the family headed for a shore vacation.
SYNONYMS: beneficial, healthy, invigorating
ANTONYMS: harmful, unhealthy, deleterious, noxious

16. saturnalian
(sat ər nā' lyan)

(*adj.*) characterized by riotous or unrestrained revelry or licentiousness
The boisterously _____ spectacle was truly something to behold, even from a distance.
SYNONYMS: dissipated, debauched, orgiastic
ANTONYMS: sedate, prim, decorous, seemly

17. touchstone
(təch' stōn)

(*n.*) a means of testing worth or genuineness
A work's popularity among succeeding generations is thought to be a _____ of its merit.
SYNONYMS: criterion, yardstick, benchmark

18. traumatic
(traū mat' ik)

(*adj.*) so shocking to the emotions as to cause lasting and substantial psychological damage
People may feel the effects of a _____ experience for years afterward.
SYNONYM: jolting
ANTONYMS: soothing, comforting, agreeable, pleasant

19. vitiate
(vish' ē āt)

(*v.*) to weaken, debase, or corrupt; to impair the quality or value of
_____ by its lack of managerial skill, the company's fortunes went straight downhill.
SYNONYMS: degrade, undermine
ANTONYMS: purify, fortify, strengthen, enhance

20. waggish
(wag' ish)

(*adj.*) fond of making jokes; characteristic of a joker; playfully humorous or droll
The innkeeper's _____ stories lifted the flagging spirits of the weary travelers.
SYNONYMS: whimsical, jocular
ANTONYMS: serious, grave, grim, dour, humorless