

**Words Within Words
and
Classic Words**

Interdisciplinary
Latin-based
Vocabulary Development

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500 Greek and Latin Stems

Michael C. Thompson

Here are most of the Greek and Latin stems found in *The Word Within the Word* and within that group, those found in *Caesar's English*, which are in boldface.

ab	acr	acro	act	ad	aden	aer	ag	agog
alb	algia	alt	alter	amat	ambul	amphi	an-	andro
Anglo	anim	ann	ante	antho	anthro	anti	apo	apt
aqua	archy	arthro	ase	astr	ate	atmo	atom	audi
aur	austro	auto	bell	bene	bi	biblio	bio	bon
brachy	brev	caco	cad	calli	calor	cant	cap	capit
cardio	carn	cata	caust	cede	cent	centri	cephalo	chiro
chlor	chrom	chron	cide	circum	cirr	cise	clam	clud
co	cogn	com	con	contra	cosmo	counter	cracy	cranio
cred	crypt	cul	cyan	cyclo	cyt	dactylo	de	dec
derm	dextro	di	dia	dicho	dict	digit	dign	diplo
dis	dom	dorm	dors	dox	duct	dyna	dys	eco
ecto	ef	ego	emia	endo	enter	epi	equi	erg
err	erythro	ess	ethno	eu	ex	exo	extra	fer
fe	fiss	flect	flu	foli	fore	form	fort	fract
frat	fug	fus	fy	gamy	gastro	gen	geo	germ
gest	glott	glyc	gno	gon	grade	gram	graph	grat
grav	greg	gress	gymno	gyn	gyro	hema	hemi	hemo
here	hetero	hexa	hibern	hippo	hist	holo	homo	hyper
hypo	ichthy	ician	ideo	idio	ign	il	im	in
ine	infra	inter	intra	intro	ish	ism	iso	ist
itis	ium	ize	ject	junct	jur	jus	kilo	kin
labor	lachry	lat	leg	lent	lepsy	less	let	leuko
liber	lign	lin	lingu	lite	liter	lith	loco	lum
luna	lys	macro	magn	mal	man	mania	mar	matri
medi	mega	mel	mela	mem	mens	meso	meta	meteor
meter	micro	migr	milli	mir	mis	miss	mob	moll
myria	nano	narco	nat	nav	necro	neo	nesia	ness
neuro	nomy	nov	ocul	oid	oligo	oma	omni	oo
ophthal	opia	orb	ornith	ortho	oscu	ose	osis	oss
osteo	ous	ovi	pac	paleo	pan	par	para	parl
pater	path	patho	ped	pend	penta	per	peri	petr
phag	phan	phasia	phen	phile	phobia	phon	phor	phos
photo	phyll	phylo	phyte	pico	pithec	plu	pneum	pod
polis	poly	pond	pop	port	pos	post	pot	potent
pre	prim	pro	protero	proto	pseudo	psych	pter	pugn
pulse	punct	put	pyro	re	rid	rogat	rub	rupt
sacro	sanct	sangui	sapro	sat	saur	schizo	sci	scope
scrib	semi	sen	sens	sequ	sess	sine	sis	socio
sol	solv	som	somn	son	soph	soror	spec	spir
spor	sta	stell	stereo	strat	string	struct	sub	super
sur	surg	sym	taxis	tele	tempor	terr	tetra	theo
thermo	tion	tomy	topo	tort	tox	tract	trans	un
urb	ven	ventri	ver					

The Word Within the Word • List #1

ante	(before)	antedate, antecedent, antebellum, anterior, ante meridiem, antepenult
anti	(against)	anti-aircraft, antibody, anticlimax, anticline, antitoxin, antithesis
bi	(two)	bilateral, bicycle, binary, bimonthly, biped, bipolar, binocular, bicuspid
circum	(around)	circumnavigate, circumspect, circumvent, circumlocution, circus
com	(together)	combination, comfort, commensurate, common, complete, combo
con	(together)	contract, confidence, confine, confederate, conjunction, contact
de	(down)	deposit, descent, despicable, denounce, deduct, demolish, decrepit, deplete
dis	(away)	distract, distort, dispute, dissonant, disperse, dismiss, dissuade, disprove
equi	(equal)	equitable, equilateral, equivocate, equinox, equation, equilibrium
extra	(beyond)	extraterrestrial, extraordinary, extravagant, extrovert, extramural
inter	(between)	international, interdepartmental, interstellar, interject, interlude
intra	(within)	intracellular, intravenous, intracranial, intrastate, intrauterine
intro	(into)	introduce, introspective, introvert, introject, introrse, intromission
mal	(bad)	malevolent, malcontent, malicious, malign, malady, malapropism, malonym
mis	(bad)	misfit, mistake, misfortune, misfire, misery, miser, misdeed, misguided
non	(not)	nonstop, nonprofit, none, nonconformity, nonplussed, nonchalant
post	(after)	postgraduate, posthumous, postscript, posterity, posterior, postlude
pre	(before)	prelude, preposition, premonition, premature, predict, predecessor
semi	(half)	semitone, semiaquatic, semicircle, semiweekly, semiannual, semiformal
sub	(under)	subterranean, subtract, subordinate, submarine, subterfuge, substantial
super	(over)	supervise, superb, superior, superfluous, supercilious, supernatural
syn	(together)	synthetic, synchronize, syndrome, synonym, synopsis, syntax
sym	(together)	sympathy, symbiosis, symbol, symmetry, symphony, symposium
tri	(three)	tricycle, triangle, triceps, triad, trichotomy, triceratops, trivia, trialogue
un	(not)	unfit, unequal, undone, unequivocal, unearned, unconventional, untenable

The Word Within the Word • Sentences #1

1. The Civil War **antedates** the Korean War by decades.
2. The **anti-aircraft** fire shot down the enemy planes.
3. The two nations have a **bilateral** agreement.
4. The **circumspect** spy is difficult to catch.
5. The two together are an interesting **combination**.
6. He was **confined** to the asteroid's detention center.
7. The lunar lander **descended** through the atmosphere.
8. His attention was easily **distracted**.
9. She made an **equilateral** triangle with three straws.
10. It was an **extraordinary** achievement.
11. They were lost in **interstellar** space.
12. He received an **intravenous** solution through a tube in his arm.
13. The boy was a lonely **introvert** who kept to himself.
14. He looked fearfully at the glowing, **malevolent** demon.
15. He had the **misfortune** to forget his wallet.
16. The foundation is a **nonprofit** organization.
17. She added a **postscript** at the bottom of the letter.
18. Before Romeo left, Juliet had a frightening **premonition**.
19. The circle was divided into two equal **semicircles**.
20. The lieutenant gave a sharp order to her **subordinate**.
21. The talkative fool made several **superfluous** comments.
22. Please **synchronize** your watches at this time.
23. The **symbiotic** species could not survive without each other.
24. Rome was sometimes ruled by a **triumvirate**.
25. **Unearned** income must be reported to the Internal Revenue Service.

The Word Within the Word • Mystery Spelling #1

introvert	intro vert
supervise	super vise
circumvent	circum vent
synchronize	syn chron ize
symphony	sym phon y
postscript	post script
circumspect	circum spect
unequivocal	un equi voc al
sympathy	sym path y
intracellular	intra cell ul ar
submarine	sub mar ine
nonconformity	non con form ity
introspective	intro spect ive
equilateral	equi lat eral
semiaquatic	semi aqua tic
symbiosis	sym bio sis
dissonant	dis son ant
interstellar	inter stell ar
posthumous	post hum ous
superfluous	super flu ous
intravenous	intra ven ous
introject	intro ject
equinox	equi nox
subtract	sub tract

The Word Within the Word • Mystery Questions #1

1. Does a father's birthday **antedate** his son's?
2. Does an **anticlimax** enhance a play's conclusion?
3. Can the president make a **bilateral** decision by himself?
4. Does a drill sergeant encourage troops to **circumvent** rules?
5. Is a **distortion** a faithful account of what happened?
6. Is your **subordinate** your boss?
7. Is a **superfluous** comment unnecessary?
8. Can a book record your thoughts for **posterity**?
9. Do you mistrust a person who **equivocates**?
10. Are **sybiotic** creatures mortal enemies?

answers

1. Yes, it dates before (ante) the son's.
2. No, it works against (anti) the conclusion's drama.
3. No, a bilateral decision must be two (bi) sided (lat).
4. No, he doesn't want them going around (circum) the rules.
5. No, in a distortion the story is twisted (tort) away (dis).
6. No, the subordinate belongs to a lower (sub) order (ord).
7. Yes, it is an over (super) flow (flu).
8. Yes, posterity is the population that comes after (post) you.
9. Yes, we mistrust one who gives equal (equi) voice (voc) to both sides of an issue.
10. No, sybiotic creatures spend their lives (bio) together (sym).

The Word Within the Word • Ideas #1

SYNTHESIS:

1. Invent three words that each combine two or more of the stems on List #1. Write definitions for these words.
2. Write a paragraph about an **intracranial** operation, and use at least ten example words from List #1 in your paragraph.

DIVERGENCE:

1. List as many words as you can think of that contain the stem **pre**. Keep listing until you find unexpected, creative examples.
2. How many things can you think of that need to be **synchronized**?

ANALYSIS:

1. What is the difference between **interstate** highways and intrastate highways? Explain by examining parts of the words.
2. If **nav** means ship, explain the origin of the word **circumnavigate**.

EVALUATION:

1. Are politicians morally obligated to speak **unequivocally**, or do they have a practical right to be equivocal in order to be elected?
2. It is wrong to be an **introvert**, or is it just a matter of style? Is it better to be sociable? Should you force yourself to socialize if you feel like being alone?

INTUITION:

1. What images flash in your mind when you hear the following words: **preschool**, **misfortune**, **symbol**, **deposit**, **interstellar**, and **descent**?
2. If you could do something truly **extraordinary**, what would it be?

The Word Within the Word • Analogies #1

1. **antebellum : belligerency ::**
anti-aircraft : aircraft
nonstop : continuous
cause : effect
morning : afternoon
2. **interstellar : stellar ::**
submarine : marine
interstate : intrastate
mortar : bricks
intracellular : cell
3. **superfluous : inadequate ::**
excess : insufficiency
malevolence : benevolence
superior : mediocre
euphony : cacophony
4. **supercilious : idolizing ::**
depression : euphoria
condescension : admiration
synthesis : antithesis
zenith : nadir
5. **circumvent : comply ::**
noncooperation : complaisance
superior : subordinate
preposition : position
circumnavigate : navigate
6. **ancestry : posterity ::**
eohippus : horse
intracranial : cranial
anteroom : gazebo
syncline : anticline
7. **antecedent : precedent ::**
grammar : law
circumlocution : equivocation
malaprop : malevolence
inspection : introspection
8. **prenatal : posthumous ::**
bilateral : unilateral
pathogen : syndrome
intravenous : vein
subterfuge : evasion
9. **biped : bicycle ::**
quadruped : automobile
rectangle : tetragon
binary : unitary
biceps : triceps
10. **circumspect : reckless ::**
circumlocution : equivocation
conjunction : disjunction
supercilious : despicable
homophone : homonym

The Word Within the Word • Analogies #1

1. antebellum : belligerency :: morning : afternoon
Temporal relationship, A precedes B. The **antebellum** period precedes the period of **belligerency** as the morning precedes the afternoon.
2. interstellar : stellar :: mortar : bricks
Spatial relationship, A between B. The **interstellar** region is located between the stars as mortar is located between the bricks.
3. superfluous : inadequate :: excess : insufficiency
Quantity. Too much vs. too little. A and B are opposites, and left and right are synonyms. **Superfluous** means excess, as **inadequate** means insufficient.
4. supercilious : idolizing :: condescension : admiration
A and B are opposites of attitude. Looking down vs. looking up to. Also, the right terms are synonyms of the left terms.
5. circumvent : comply :: noncooperation : complaisance
To **circumvent** is to avoid cooperation, to be **complaisant** is to wish to comply. A and B are opposites, and left and right are near-synonyms.
6. ancestry : posterity :: eohippus : horse
Temporal relationship, A before B. The eohippus is an ancestor of the horse.
7. antecedent : precedent :: grammar : law
Both mean go before, but **antecedent** refers to grammar and **precedent** to law. The left terms are specific examples of words used in the larger categories at right.
8. prenatal : posthumous :: pathogen : syndrome
Temporal relationship, A before B. The **prenatal** period precedes the **posthumous** period as the **pathogen** precedes the **syndrome**.
9. biped : bicycle :: quadruped : automobile
Two feet/two wheels, four feet/four wheels. The relationship is two-fold: numerical identity and foot vs. wheel.
10. circumspect : reckless :: conjunction : disjunction
Opposites. **Circumspect** is the opposite of **reckless** as **conjunction** is the opposite of **disjunction**.

The Word Within the Word • Notes #1

1. The interior of a word often contains a striking image that only a person who knows the meaning of the stems will enjoy. In the case of **circumspect**, which means cautious, we see the cautious person looking (spect) around (circum) for signs of danger. In *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, Maya Angelou wrote, “If Dolores knew, she would crawl up in her blanket of affectations and die circumspectly.”

2. Many other **spect** words contain memorable images. The **introspective** person is not merely thoughtful, but is looking inside himself. And we **respect** a person when something that person does causes us to look at him again in a new way.

3. Some words offer moments of humor. The person who **equivocates** is deliberately ambiguous, but we see in the word an image of someone having problems with his mouth as he attempts to give equal (equi) voice (voc) to both sides of an issue!

4. Depending upon how it is used, **introvert** contains an unsettling, sad image. The intro (into) vert (turn) is turned into himself—his back to the beautiful, unnoticed world. In *Cheaper by the Dozen*, Gilbreth wrote that “they were quiet, introverted, and conservative.”

5. Even familiar words take on new light at times. Why is a **preposition** called a preposition? Because of its position—it always (almost) comes at the beginning of a prepositional phrase. It occupies the PRE position.

6. The word **posthumous**, as in posthumous award, contains a portrait of tragedy. A posthumous award is only granted after (post) its recipient has been buried in the ground (humus).

7. The foolishness of a too-talkative person’s excessive questions and comments is wittily described by the word **superfluous**. The talker has provided all of the comments that can be contained, and now the comments begin to over (super) flow (flu).

8. Can a word help to sharpen one’s senses? The beauty of a symphony arises largely from just what the word **symphony** emphasizes; the musicians play their instruments in unison so that the sounds (phon) rise together (sym).

The Word Within the Word • Test #1

MALady _____
INTRAcellular _____
BInary _____
SEMIncircle _____
DISmiss _____
ANTEcedent _____
NONstop _____
SUBmarine _____
UNdone _____
SUPERior _____
POSTerity _____
DEscend _____
CIRCUMnavigate _____
EXTRAterrestrial _____
INTROduction _____
EQUilateral _____
TRIceps _____
CONtact _____
ANTIthesis _____
SYNtax _____
INTERnational _____
MIStake _____
COMmon _____
SYMpathy _____
PREschool _____

Questions just for fun:

Is an **intradepartmental** memo shared with members of other departments?

Was the **antebellum** period just after the Civil War?

Is the sun a **binary** star?

Would someone enjoy receiving a **posthumous** award?

Is a **superfluous** comment welcome?

Is **interstellar** space the space within a star?

Does an **equilateral** triangle have sides of equal length?

Is an **introvert** a sociable person?

Are **dissonant** sounds beautiful?

Do **symbiotic** species live solitary lives?

Does a **malevolent** being have good will towards all?

The Word Within the Word • Answer Key #1

MALady *bad*
INTRACellular *within*
BINary *two*
SEMIcircle *half*
DISmiss *away*
ANTEcedent *before*
NONstop *not*
SUBmarine *under*
UNdone *not*
SUPERior *over*
POSTerity *after*
DESCend *down*
CIRCUMnavigate *around*
EXTRAterrestrial *beyond*
INTROduction *into*
EQUilateral *equal*
TRIceps *three*
CONtact *together*
ANTIthesis *against*
SYNtax *together*
INTERnational *between*
MISTake *bad*
COMMon *together*
SYMpathy *together*
PREschool *before*

Questions just for fun:

Is an **intradepartmental** memo shared with members of other departments? No

Was the **antebellum** period just after the Civil War? No

Is the sun a **binary** star? No

Would someone enjoy receiving a **posthumous** award? No

Is a **superfluous** comment welcome? No

Is **interstellar** space the space within a star? No

Does an **equilateral** triangle have sides of equal length? Yes

Is an **introvert** a sociable person? No

Are **dissonant** sounds beautiful? No

Do **symbiotic** species live solitary lives? No

Does a **malevolent** being have good will towards all? No

Thinking and *Feeling*

Adapted* by Michael C. Thompson

memory: recall

cognition: comprehending

reason: avoiding logical errors

synthesis: identifying similarities

divergence: thinking of alternatives

convergence: choosing one alternative

evaluation: deciding value

ethics: deciding moral value

analysis: breaking into components

application: using ideas

intuition: getting ideas from the blue

imagining: making mental images

emotion: feelings

aesthetics: having artistic experiences

disassumption: escaping assumptions

*This list is a synthesis of Bloom's Taxonomy, influences from Barbara Clark's research, and a few other ways of thinking that seem to me to be indispensable to teaching.

Micropoems

Repositories of Human Insight

Michael C. Thompson, selected from *The Word Within the Word*

Micropoem: Intractable is a wonderfully expressive adjective. It is not made of **intra** (within); it is made of **in** (not) and **tract** (pull). It suggests a mule-like stubbornness so firm that even pulling is of no avail. To be intractable is to be resistant to persuasion, logic, coercion, or compromise. Prejudice and bigotry are two of the most obvious intractable human phenomena, since they are so resistant to change. Adherence to political dogma is another often intractable behavior. The word **incorrigible** can also refer to a kind of stubbornness, but it really refers to misbehavior which can not be corrected or improved. If you are incorrigible, we find it impossible to teach you better. Another word which refers to stubbornness is **refractory**. A refractory person breaks (fract) the rules and breaks them again (re), regardless of supervision. These three words give an interesting insight into the nature of synonyms; they are synonyms, and they aren't. The stems in the words provide the best guide to the fine connotations which distinguish these words from each other. All three refer to someone who is stubborn, but the intractable person is not pullable, the incorrigible person is not correctable, and the refractory person breaks the rules again.

Micropoem: A desultory speech or conversation is one which is not coherent or connected; it is random and aimless, wandering. It is lacking in structure, sequence, purpose. The word desultory—pronounced DESultory—comes from *de* (down) and *salire* (leap), the idea being that in speaking so aimlessly and irrelevantly, you are leaping down or jumping off the subject. One common reason for losing the theme is that one really has no purpose or theme to care about.

Micropoem: Subterfuge is an especially descriptive noun. It refers to the evasions we use to avoid being pinned down. You can evade a question with a subterfuge, as by distracting the questioner with an unrelated counter-question. But the word contains a metaphorical image of what is really happening: to use a subterfuge is to duck, to flee (fug) underneath (sub).

Micropoem: When we say that a beginner is a **neophyte**, we are comparing the beginner to a new (neo) plant (phyte) that has just pushed through the surface of the ground. In other words, to call a person a neophyte is to use a metaphor—only we often become so accustomed to using a word in its metaphorical sense that we forget that we are even doing so. The word **neophyte** is also a good example of the way we borrow words from various fields (in this case botany) for more general usage.

Micropoem: The intransitive verb **tergiversate** means to desert, to turn renegade, to repeatedly change one's position toward something. The basis for this meaning is found in the imagery contained in the stems. **Tergiversate** contains our old friend, *vert* (turn), and the Latin *tergum* (back); to tergiversate is to turn one's back. Someone who tergiversates could become an apostate. In *A Tale of Two Cities*, Dickens refers to "the utmost tergiversation and treachery."

Sesquipedalian Neologisms

From *The Neologist's Lexicon*, Michael C. Thompson

- cosmoplexity** (koz mo pléx i tee) n. [cosmo (universe), plex (weave)] 1. chronic befuddlement over the meaning of life 2. extreme obsession with the size and scale of the universe resulting in overwhelming feelings of insignificance.
- carnorogation** (karn oh row gay' shun) n. [carn (flesh), rogat (ask), tion (act)] 1. the cheeky habit of asking others how much they weigh 2. the obsessive need to read all of the dietary information on every item of packaged food in the supermarket before adding it to the shopping cart.
- egomuric** (ee go myoor' ik) adj. [ego (I), mur (wall)] 1. putting up behavioral or psychological barriers which prevent people from knowing you 2. responding with subterfuges or circumlocutions to all personal questions.
- entomonomy** (in toe moe' no me) n. [entomo (insect), nomy (name or law)] 1. the unfortunate habitual reference to one's associates as forms of insects, as gadflies, wasps, social butterflies, busy bees, flies in the ointment, and so forth 2. excessive use of the phrase, "Stop bugging me."
- exism** (ecks' ism) n. [ex (out), ism (doctrine)] 1. the pathological addiction to the phrase, "I'm outa here." 2. chronic and habitual staring at the doors and windows during conversation.
- flagespection** (flaj' uh speck shun) n. [flag (whip), spect (look), tion (act)] 1. taking pleasure in seeing others punished 2. a form of crowd pathology characterized by gathering to observe tragedy.
- lithovidesis** (lith o vid' e sis) n. [lith (rock), vid (look)] 1. a look which turns one to stone, as the look of the Gorgon 2. the look of one whose name you have mispronounced.
- mendify** (men' dih fy) v. [mend (flaw), fy (make)] 1. to deliberately err in an assignment, so as to avoid receiving future assignments 2. any deliberate or dissembling introduction of flaws into one's work; sabotage.
- pecuniopia** (peh kyoo nee o' pia) n. [pecunia (money), opia (sight)] 1. an obsession with profit or financial concerns 2. seeing potential "dollar signs" in every activity.
- resequious** (ree seek' we ous) adj. [re (again), sequ (follow), ous (full of)] 1. following someone around, even after being asked not to 2. following someone as he or she performs a duty which requires them to move back and forth.
- sarcoposition** (sar ko po zish' un) n. [sarco (flesh), pos (put), tion (act)] 1. sitting in the middle of a seat for two, so that no one else will sit down, as on a bus 2. sprawling out with arms and legs in a movie theater seat, so that a stranger will not sit in either seat next to you.
- telependence** (tell uh pend' ence) n. [tele (far), pend (hang)] 1. the supernatural ability to hang someone from a distance, as in secret revenge 2. (rare) the handicap of being emotionally dependent upon someone who is far away.

The Querulous Cat

From *The Word Within the Word, Volume 2*

Michael C. Thompson

The moon didn't shine out
Effulgently bright
So we lay in our beds,
Subjugated all night.
When in jumped the Cat
The refractory Cat,
The querulous
Fearless, intractable Cat.
"Where's your Mother,"
He asked,
As he jumped through the door
And he waltzed with effusion
'Cross the subjacent floor.
To our nonplussed, incredulous
Neophyte minds
That omniscient Cat
Uttered omnibus kinds
Of retorts and strange malapropisms
You see, which we
Couldn't repeat, even in soliloquy.
Then he gathered up all
Of the objects with which
Our house was replete
And he thought he would snitch.
And he made such a face
That we found it condign
When in medias res
Mom came in from behind.

The Power of Greek and Latin Stems

From *The Word Within the Word*
Michael C. Thompson

- Efficiency in learning vocabulary
- Preparation for technical subjects
- Concealed meanings: Micropoems
- Spelling with Greek and Latin Stems

circum vent
super flu ous
post hum ous
geo logy
re cede
bio morph ic
hydro gen
omni potent
pseudo nym
mega lith
meso morph
acro phobia
magn anim ous
tetra meter
octa meter
pyro phobia
se cede
metro polis
homo nym
topo nym
theo logy
infra son ic
epi graph
erythro cyte
nihil ism

circum spect
post script
ex cise
biblio phile
pre cise
anthropo logy
pro duct
mono mania
neuro logy
xeno phobia
matri arch
acro nym
gyro scope
contra dict
re cogn ize
trans fer
osteo cyte
osteo logy
meta phor
mono lith
uni son
ichthy osis
leuco cyte
neo log ism
audio phile

equi nox
syn chron ize
matri cide
auto graph
dis miss
exo bio logy
hydro sphere
pseudo pod
hypo derm ic
ortho dox
ver dict
hetero dox
demo cracy
thermo meter
pyro mania
soph ist
ecto derm
dia meter
sacro sanct
poly graph
muta gen ic
psych osis
eco nomy
holo gram
cosmo logy

The Plague

A Sesquipedalian Fable

Like a cloud of Old Testament Locusts, stupid ideas infested the land—blotting out the sun, consuming all the energy, and making the future impossible. No one stupidity seemed to matter much, but in their swarming, ubiquitous, and myriad omnipresence, they vitiated all human dreams, engendering suspicion and ill will, confirming the obdurate and the ethnocentric, and providing umbrageous relief for Pharisaism and narcissism, hedonism and cupidity.

Altruism shrank quietly away.

Solicitude grew quiet.

Succinct expression was driven off.

Everything cogent and perspicuous was inundated under a clamoring and fatuous puerilism.

Grandiloquent egotism and acrimonious sarcasm overcame sagacity. Unique and original ideas were ridiculed in paroxysms of laughter. A truculent myopia raised an ignis fatuus of arrogant nationalism and isolationism amid garrulous diatribes against everything foreign. Aphorisms were ostracized.

The euphony of free debate was stifled.

Antediluvian prejudices were received with sanguine complacency.

The odious visage of misogyny muttered its cowardly and contumacious innuendoes with impunity. Casuistry and sophistry impersonated lucid logic, pontificating against every idea that was profound or unavoidably abstruse.

Iconoclasm was dragged screaming to the auto da fe.

The gravamen was lost.

Incisive comments were detained for questioning, and germane objections were summarily executed by uniformed simulacra of public order. Opulence shouted down stoicism, and defended refractory kleptomania. Coherency was covered with ugly contusions. Perplexity was left a mendicant. The brute ululations of certainty echoed through the night. Mendacious charges went unrefuted, and specious reasoning wore the glib confidence of the autodidact.

Patrician hauteur condescended to diffidence.

Supercilious indolence scoffed at assiduous erudition.

Egregious xenophobia rebuked tolerance with insidious epithets.

Exquisite epiphanies were inundated in gales of vituperation, and bathos was venerated as sublime entertainment.

Ecumenical ideas were stigmatized as unpatriotic.

Each *idée fixe* shouted deafening encomiums to itself.

Truths departed in a lachrymose diaspora.

The stupid ideas then turned on each other.

-Michael Thompson

Classic Words

Michael C. Thompson • www.classicwords.com

What words do students really need to know if they are to read comfortably in the classics of English and American literature? My own ten-year study of 30,000 examples from over 130 different works indicates that the following words appear with extraordinary frequency. They are the top 100 words in my *Classic Words* database, in descending order of frequency, and they appear even in so-called children's classics, such as *Tom Sawyer*, *Peter Pan*, *The Wind in the Willows*, and *The Call of the Wild*.

countenance

serene

singular

abate

undulate

venerate

incredulous

lurid

sagacity

tremulous

abyss

wistful

palpable

perplex

somber

expostulate

vivacious

pervade

procure

magnanimous

sallow

resolute

fain

affect

wan

reproach

conjure

alacrity

verdure

zenith

dilate

abash

conjecture

appellation

profound

sublime

clamor

allude

acute

exquisite

traverse

languid

vulgar

odious

stolid

prostrate

vex

portent

importune

subtle

despond

pensive

abject

oppress

ignominy

articulate

genial

billow

indolent

morose

retort

animated

adjacent

inexorable

fortnight

profane

swarthy

manifest

prodigious

visage

grotesque

vivid

melancholy

repose

superfluous

placid

pallor

condescend

remonstrate

amiable

peremptory

audible

tangible

doleful

apprehension

austere

oblique

eccentric

furtive

mien

confound

maxim

latter

antipathy

vestige

rebuke

livid

din

imperious

impute