CULTURAL LITERACY

WHAT EVERY AMERICAN NEEDS TO KNOW

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With an Appendix
WHAT LITERATE AMERICANS KNOW

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BOSTON
THE LIST

1066
1492
1776
1861-1865
1914-1918
1939-1945

abbreviation (written English)
abolitionism
abominable snowman
abortion
Abraham and Isaac
Absence makes the heart grow fonder.
absenteeism
absolute monarchy
absolute zero
abstract expressionism
academic freedom
a cappella
accelerator, particle
accounting
AC/DC (alternating current / direct current)
Achilles
Achilles’ heel
acid
acid rain
acquittal
acronym
acrophobia
Acropolis
Actions speak louder than words.
active voice
act of God
actuary
acupuncture
A.D. (anno domini)
Adam and Eve
Adams, John
Adams, John Quincy
adaptation
Addams, Jane
ad hoc
ad hominem
adieu
Adirondack Mountains
adjective
Adonis
adrenal gland
adrenaline (fight or flight)
Adriatic Sea
adultery
adverb
AEC (Atomic Energy Commission)
Aegean Sea
Aeneas
Aeneid, The (title)
aerobic
Aeschylus
Aesop’s Fables (title)
aesthetics
affirmative action
affluent society
Afghanistan
aficionado
AFL-CIO
Africa
Agamemnon
aggression
Agnew, Spiro
agnosticism
agreement (granular)
agribusiness
air pollution
air quality index
Akron, Ohio
Alabama
à la carte
Aladdin and the Wonderful Lamp (title)
Alamo, the
Alaska
Alaska pipeline
Albania
Albany, New York
albatross around one’s neck
Alberta
Albuquerque, New Mexico
alchemy
Alcott, Louisa May
Aleutian Islands
Alexander the Great
Alexandria, Egypt
alfresco
algae
Alger, Horatio
Algeria
Algerians
Ali, Muhammad
alias
Alice in Wonderland (title)
Alien and Sedition Acts
alienation
alkaline
Allah
Allegheny Mountains
allegory
allegro
Alliance for Progress
Allies (World War II)
alliteration
alloy
All roads lead to Rome.
All’s fair in love and war.
All’s well that ends well.
All that glitters is not gold.
All the world’s a stage (text)
allusion
alma mater
alpha and omega
Alps
alter ego
alternator
alto
altruism
Amazonian
Amazon River
ambiguity
American Legion
American Stock Exchange
America the Beautiful (song)
amicus curiae
Am I my brother’s keeper?
amino acids
amnesia
amnesty
amniotic sac
amoeba
amortization
amp (ampere)
amphersand (written English)
amphibian
amplifier
Amsterdam
anaerobe
analogy
anal personality
anarchy
Anchorage, Alaska
ancien régime
Andante
Andersen, Hans Christian
Andes Mountains
Anglican church (Church of England, Episcopal church)
Angola
angst
animal kingdom
animal/vegetable/mineral
animism
Ankara
Annapolis
Ann Arbor, Michigan
anno domini (A.D.)
nanuity
annus mirabilis
anorexia
Antarctica
Antarctic Ocean
antebellum
Anthony, Susan B.
antropology
anthropomorphism
antiballistic missile (ABM)
antibiotic
antibody
anticlericalism
antigen
Antigone (title)

antimatter
antipodes
anti-Semitism
antitrust legislation
Anthony and Cleopatra (title)
antonym
Antony's speech at Caesar's funeral
anxiety
any port in a storm
aorta
Apache Indians
apartheid
aphorism
aphrodisiac
Aphrodite (Venus)
apocalypse
apocryphal
Apollo (mythology)
Apollo program
apostle
Apostles
apostrophe
Appalachian Mountains
appeasement
appendix (anatomy)
Appleseed, Johnny
Appomattox
appropriation
April showers bring May flowers
apropos
aquifer
Aquinas, Saint Thomas
Arab-Israeli conflict
arbitration
arch (architecture)

Archimedes
archipelago
Arctic Circle
Arctic Ocean
area
aristocracy
Aristophanes
Aristotle
Arizona
Arkansas
Armageddon
Armstrong, Louis
Arnold, Benedict
arrivederci
art deco
Artemis (Diana)
artherosclerosis
artery
arthritis
article (grammar)
Articles of Confederation
art nouveau
ascription
ascorbic acid
asexual reproduction
Asia
Asia Minor
Ask and it shall be given.
Ask not what your country can do for you. Ask what you can do for your country.
as rich as Croesus
assembly line
assessment (tax)
assimilation
Astaire, Fred, and Ginger Rogers
asteroid belt

as the crow flies
astrology
astronomy
asymmetry
As you make your bed so must you lie in it.
atheism
Athena (Minerva)
Athens
Atlanta, Georgia
Atlantic Charter
Atlantic City, New Jersey
Atlantic Ocean
at large
Atlas (Titan)
atlas (book)
atmosphere (earth's)
atmospheric pressure
atom
atom bomb
atomic number
atomic weight
atrium (of heart)
attracted
attorney general of the United States
audit
auditory nerve
Audubon, John
auf Wiedersehen
Augen blinde
Augustine, Saint
Augustus Caesar
au revoir
auricle
aurora borealis (northern lights)
Auschwitz
Austen, Jane
Austin, Texas
Australia
Austria
autistic
autobiography
autocracy
automation
autonomic nervous system
autonomy
auxiliary verb
axiom
axis (mathematics)
Axis powers
azimuth
Aztec empire
Baa, Baa, Black Sheep (text)
Babbitt
Babel, Tower of
Babylon
bacchanalian
Bacchus
Bach, Johann Sebastian
bacillus
Bacon, Sir Francis
Baconian method (scientific
method, induction)
bacteria
Bad news travels fast.
bad penny always turns up, A
bad workman blames his tools, A
Baghdad
Bahamas
bail
baker's dozen
balance of nature
balance of payments
balance of power
balance of terror
balance sheet
Balkans
ballad
ballet
balletina
ballistic missile
Baltic Sea
Baltimore, Maryland
Balzac
banana republic
Bangkok
bank run
bankruptcy
baptism
Baptist
Barber of Seville, The (title)
Barcelona
Bard of Avon
baritone
bark is worse than his bite, His
bar mitzvah
Barnum, P. T.
barometer (barometric pres-
sure)
baroque
Bartymores, the
Barton, Clara
basal metabolism
basalt
base (chemistry)
basilica
bas-relief
bass
bass drum
bass fiddle
basso
bassoon
basta
Basile
bat mitzvah
Battle Hymn of the Republic
(song)
Battle of Britain
Battle of Bunker Hill
Battle of Concord
Battle of Gettysburg
Battle of Hastings
Battle of Lexington
Battle of Marathon
Battle of Midway
Battle of Stalingrad
Battle of the Bulge
Battle of Waterloo
Battle of Yorktown
Baudelaire
Bavaria
Bay of Biscay
Bay of Pigs
bayou
bear market
beat about the bush
Beatitudeus (text)
Beatles, the
beau
beauty and the Beast (title)
beauty's but skin deep.
bee in one's bonnet
Beethoven, Ludwig van
Beggars can't be choosers.
begging, In the
beg the question
behaviorism
Belfast
Belgium
Belgrade
Bell, Alexander Graham
belles lettres
Bergen
Bering Sea
Berkeley, California
Berkshire hills
Berlin, Irving
Berlin
Berlin wall
Bermuda
Bernhardt, Sarah
best things in life are free,
The
bête noire
Bethlehem
Better late than never.
Better safe than sorry.
Beverly Hills, California
Beware the ides of March.
Bible Belt
bibliography
bicameral legislature
big bad wolf
big bang theory
Big Ben
big board
Big Brother
big business
Big Dipper
bigger they come the harder
they fall, The
big-stick diplomacy
bilateralism
Bill of Rights
Billy the Kid
biochemical pathways
biochemistry
biofeedback
biography
biology
biomass
Birch Society, John
bird in the hand is worth two
in the bush, A
Birds of a feather flock to-
gether.
Birmingham, Alabama
birth control
birthday suit
Birth of a Nation (title)
Birth of Venus (image)
bishop
Bismarck, Otto
bit between one's teeth
bite the bullet
bite the dust
biting the hand that feeds one
Bizet, Georges
blackball
blackbody radiation
Black Boy (title)
Black Death
Black Hills
black hole of Calcutta
black holes
blacklist
black magic
black marker
Black Muslims
Black Power
Black Sea
black sheep
Blake, William
blank verse

Blarney Stone
blind leading the blind
blitzkrieg
Blood is thicker than water.
blood, sweat, and tears
blood type
bloody but unbowed
slow hot and cold
Blue and the Gray, the
blue-chip stock
blue-collar worker
blue laws
Blue Ridge Mountains
Blue-tailed Fly (song)
boat people
Boer
Bogart, Humphrey
bohemian
Bohr, Niels
boiling point
Boleyn, Anne
Bolivia
Bolshevik
bolt from the blue
Bombay
bona fide
bond (chemical)
bond (economic)
bone to pick
Bonn
Book of Common Prayer
boom (economic)
boom (sonic)
Boone, Daniel
Booth, John Wilkes
Bordeaux
Borgia, Lucretia
Borneo

born with a silver spoon in
one's mouth
Bosporus
Boston, Massachusetts
Boston Massacre
Boston Tea Party
Boswell, James
botany
Botticelli
bottom line
botulism
bounty
Bourbon kings
bourgeoisie
bowdlerize
Bowery
boycott
Boy Scouts of America
Boys will be boys.
Boy Who Cried Wolf, The
(title)
brackets (written English)
Bradley, Omar
Brahms, Johannes
brain trust
brainwashing
Brasilia
brass (top brass, big brass)
brass band
brave new world
Brazil
breach of contract
bread and circuses
break the ice
Brevity is the soul of wit.
brinkmanship
Brisbane
Britain

Britain, Battle of
British Columbia
broker
bronchial tubes
Brotné, Charlotte
Brotné, Emily
Bronx, The, New York
Bronze Age
Brooklyn, New York
Brooklyn Bridge
Brown, John
Brownian motion
Browning, Elizabeth Barrett
Browning, Robert
Brown v. Board of Education
(Brown decision)
Brueghel
Brussels
Brutus
Bryan, William Jennings
bubble (economic)
bubble chamber
Bucharest
buck stops here, The
Budapest
Buddha
Buddhism
Buenos Aires
Buffalo, New York
Buffalo Bill
buffer (chemistry)
built in air
Bulgaria
Bulge, Battle of
bull in a china shop
bull market
Bull Run, Battle of
Bundestag
Bunker Hill, Battle of
Bunyan, Paul
brevity
bureaucracy
bureaucrat
burgher
Burke, Edmund
Barma
Barns, Robert
burnt child fears the fire, The
burn the candle at both ends
burn the midnight oil
burn with a hard, gemlike flame
Burr, Aaron
Barr-Hamilton duel
bury the hatchet
business before pleasure
business cycle
bust (economic)
buy a pig in a poke
briber’s market
Byron, Lord
Byronic
byte
Byzantine (complexity)
Byzantine empire
cabinet (government)
cadre
Caesar, Julius
Caesar Augustus
Caesarean section
Cain and Abel
Cairo
calculus
Calcutta
Calder
Calhoun, John C.
California
caligula
call a spade a spade
Calvary
Calvin, John
Calvinism
cambium
Cambodia
Cambridge, Massachusetts
Cambridge University
Camelot
camp follower
Camptown Races (song)
Canada
Canal Zone
Canberra
Candidate (title)
canine
Canterbury Tales, The (title)
can’t hold a candle to...
Canterbury Tales, The (title)
can’t hold a candle to...
Canton
capacitor
Cape Cod
Cape Hatteras
Cape Town
capillary
capital (architecture)
capital expenditure
capital formation
capital gains
capitalism
capital letter
capital punishment
Capitol Building, U.S.
Capitol Hill
Capri
Caracas
carbohydrate
carbon
carbon cycle
carbon dioxide
carbon-14 dating
carbon monoxide
cardinal number
Caribbean Sea
caricature
Carnegie, Andrew
Carnegie, Dale
carnivorous
carpetbagger
Carroll, Lewis
carry a torch for
carry coals to Newcastle
carry the torch
carte blanche
cartel
Carter, Jimmy
Carthage
cartilage
Caruso, Enrico
Carver, George Washington
Casablanca
Casanova
Cascade Mountains
Casey at the Bat (title)
Casey Jones (song)
Cassandra
Cassatt, Mary
cast bread upon the waters
caste
Castile
cast pearls before swine
Castro, Fidel
catalyst
Catch-22 (title)
catch as catch can
Catcher in the Rye, The (title)
catharsis
Cather, Willa
Catherine the Great
cathode ray tube (CRT)
Catholic
catholicism
Caucasus Mountains
caucus
cause célèbre
caveat emptor
cell
cell differentiation
cello
cellulose
cell wall
celsius
center of gravity (center of mass)
centigrade
centimeter
Central America
Central Intelligence Agency
(CIA)
centrifugal force
centrifugal force
cerebrospinal fluid
Cerebral cortex
Ceres (Demeter)
Cervantes
Ceylon
Cézanne
cf. (confer)
chain reaction
chain store
Chamberlain, Neville
Appendix: What Literate Americans Know

champ at the bit
change of phase
Chanukah
Chaplin, Charlie
charge (electric)
Charge of the Light Brigade,
The (text)
charisma
Charlemagne
Charles I (Great Britain)
Charleston (dance)
Charleston, South Carolina
Charleston, West Virginia
Charlotte, North Carolina
Charon
Chartrres, cathedral of
Chattanooga, Tennessee
Chaucer, Geoffrey
chauvinism
checks and balances
chef-d’oeuvre
Chekhov, Anton
chemical bond
chemical element
chemical equilibrium
chemistry
chemotherapy
Cherokee Indians
cherubim
Chesapeake Bay
Cheshire cat
Chiang Kai-shek
Chicago, Illinois
Chicano
Chicken Little
chickens come home to roost
child labor laws
Children’s Hour, The (text)

Chile
China
chip off the old block
chip on one’s shoulder
chivalry
chloroform
chlorophyll
cholesterol
Chopin
cordes
chordates
choreography
Chosen People
Chou En-lai
Christ
Christian
Christianity
Christian Science
Christie, Agatha
Christmas Carol, A (title)
chromosomes
Chungking
Churchill, Winston
chutzpah
CIA (Central Intelligence Agency)
cicero
Cincinnati, Ohio
Cinderella
CIO
circe
circuit, electric
circumcision
circumlocution
cirrus clouds
civil disobedience
civil liberties
civil rights
Civil Rights Movement
civil service
Civil War
clarinet
class consciousness
classical antiquity
classical music
classicism
class struggle
clause (written English)
claustrophobia
Clay, Henry
clean bill of health
clear and present danger
Clemens, Samuel (Mark Twain)
Clementine (song)
Cleopatra
Cleveland, Grover
Cleveland, Ohio
cliche
close
closed shop
closure
cloud chamber
cloud seeding
colalition
coalition government
coat of many colors
Cobb, Ty
cockles of the heart, warm the COD
coda
coeexistence (peaceful)
Cohan, George M.
coherence (written English)
cold hands, warm heart
cold shoulder, get the cold war
Coleridge, Samuel Taylor
collateral
collective bargaining
collective farm
College of Cardinals
Cologne
Colombia
colon (anatomy)
colon (written English)
colonialism
Colorado
Colorado River
coloratura
Colosseum, the
Columbus River
Columbus the Gem of the Ocean (song)
Columbus, Christopher
Columbus, Ohio
combustion
comedy
comet
comma
comme il faut
commissar
commissioned officer
commodity
common denominator
common law
common-law marriage
Common Market
Common Sense (title)
communism
Communist Manifesto, The (title)
Comparisons are odious.
compass
complex sentence
composite materials
compound-complex sentence
compound interest
compound sentence
compulsion (psychology)
Conan Doyle, Sir Arthur
concerto
conciseness
Concord, Battle of
condensation point
conditioned reflex
conduction
conductor
Coney Island, New York
Confederacy
confederation
Confessions (title) (Rousseau)
Confessions (title) (Saint Augustine)
conflict of interest
conformity
Confucius
congenital disease
conglomerate
Congo River
Congressional Medal of Honor
Congressional Record
Congress of the United States
Congress of Vienna
conjunction
Connecticut
connotation
Conrad, Joseph
conscientious objector
consent of the governed
conservation of energy, law of
conservatism
Consider the lilies of the field.
consonant
conspicuous consumption
Constable
constant dollars
Constantine the Great
Constantinople
constellation
Constitution
Constitutional Convention
constitutional monarchy
consumerism
consumer price index
containment, policy of
contempt of Congress
count of court
Continental Congress
continental divide
continental drift
continental shelf
contour map
contraband
contralto
Cook, Captain
Coolidge, Calvin
cool one's heels
Cooper, James Fenimore
coordination (grammar)
Copenhagen
Copernicus
copulation
copyright
coral reef
core (geology)
Corinthian order (of architecture)
cornea
Cornwallis, Lord
coronary artery
corporal punishment
corporation
Corsica
cosmology
Cossack
Costa Rica
cost-of-living allowance
cotton to a person
Council of Trent
counterinsurgency
counterpoint
Counter-Reformation
coup de grace
coup d'état
couplet
course of true love never did
run smooth, The
Court of Appeals
Court of St. James's
court packing
covalent bond
covenant (politics)
Covenant (Bible)
covered wagon
crater
creationism
creature comforts
creditor
credit rating
crime de la crème
Creole
crescendo
Cretan
Crick, Francis, and James Watson
Crime and Punishment (title)
Crimean War
critical mass
Cro-Magnon man
Crockett, Davy
crocodile tears
Croesus, rich as
Cromwell, Oliver
crossing the Rubicon
cross the bridge till you come
to it, Don't
crown of thorns
Crucifixion, the
cruel and unusual punishment
crusades
Crusoe, Robinson (title)
crust (geology)
cry over spilt milk
crystal (chemistry)
Crystal Palace
Cuba
Cuba missile crisis
Cubism
cult
cultural imperialism
Cumberland Gap
Cumberland Mountains
cummings, e. e.
cumulus clouds
Cupid (Eros)
cupola
Curie, Marie
curriculum vitae
Currier and Ives
curry favor
Custer's Last Stand
cut off one's nose to spite
one's face
cyclone
Cyclops
cyclotron
cymbal
Cyprus
Cyrillic alphabet
cytoplasm
czar
Czechoslovakia
dacha
Dachau
Daedalus
Daley, Mayor
Dali, Salvador
Dallas, Texas
Damascus
Damn the torpedoes. Full speed ahead.
damn with faint praise
Damocles’ sword
Daniel in the lions’ den
danke schön
Dante
Danton
Danube River
Dark Ages
dark horse
Darrow, Clarence
Darwin, Charles
David (image)
David and Goliath
David Copperfield (title)
Davis, Jefferson
Davy Jones’s locker
DC/AC (direct current / alternating current)
D-day
death heat
dead languages
Dead Sea
Death of a Salesman (title)
Death Valley
Debs, Eugene
debtor nation
decadence
deciduous
Deck the Halls (song)
declaration of Independence (text)
declarative sentence
deduction
de facto
de facto segregation
default (economics)
defense mechanism
deficit financing
definite article (grammar)
deflation (economics)
Degas
De Gaulle, Charles
deism
déjà vu
de jure
Delaware
Delhi
Delphic oracle
delta
delusion (psychology)
demagogue
Demeter (Ceres)
democracy
Democratic Party
demography
demonstrative adjective
demonstrative pronoun
Denmark
denotation
Denver, Colorado
Department of Agriculture
Department of Commerce
Department of Defense (DOD)
Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) / Health and Human Services (HHS)
Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)
Department of Justice
Department of Labor
Department of State
Department of the Interior
Department of the Treasury
Department of Transportation
dependent clause (grammar)
deposition allowance
deposit (grammar)
depreciation
Depression, Great
de rigueur
desalination
Descartes, René
Des Moines, Iowa
despotism
de-Stalinization
détente
determinism
deterrence
Detroit, Michigan
dey ex machina
devaluation
developmental psychology
devil can cite Scripture, The
Dewey, John
dialectic
dialectical materialism
Diana (Artemis)
diaphragm (anatomy)
Dickens, Charles
Dickinson, Emily
dictatorship
Dido
diehard
Dien Bien Phu
diffraction
diffusion
dime novels
dinosaur
Diogenes
Dionysus (Bacchus)
diplomacy
diplomatic immunity
direct object
direct primary
Disciples
Discretion is the better part of valor.
disenfranchise
Disney, Walt
Disraeli, Benjamin
dissident
distillation
district attorney
District of Columbia
divestiture
dividend
Divine Comedy, The (title)
divine right of kings
division of labor
Dixiecrat
DNA
Doctor Livingstone, I presume?
dog days
dog in the manger
dogma
dollar diplomacy
Doll's House, A (title)
dominant trait
Dominican Republic
domino theory
Don Giovanni (title)
Don Juan
donkey (political symbol)
Donne, John
Donner Pass
donnybrook
Don Quixote (title)
Don River
don't count your chickens before they are hatched.
don't fire until you see the whites of their eyes.
don't give up the ship.
don't judge a book by its cover.
don't look a gift horse in the mouth
don't put all your eggs in one basket.
don't put the cart before the horse.
doppler effect
doric order (of architecture)
Dos Passos, John
double entendre
double helix
double indemnity
double jeopardy
Douglas, Stephen A.
Douglas, William O.
douglass, frederick
do unto others as you would
have them do unto you.
doves (hawks and doves)
dow jones average
down in the valley (song)
down payment
down's syndrome
down under
draconian
Dracula
Drake, Sir Francis
-dramatis personae
Dred Scott case
Dresden
Dreyfus affair
drive a nail into one's coffin
Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde (title)
dualism
Dublin
Du Bois, W. E. B.
due process of law
Dulles, John Foster
dummy corporation
dumping
Dunkirk
duodenum
Dürer, Albrecht
dust bowl
Dutch treat
dyslexia
E = mc²
eardrum
early bird catches the worm,
The
Early to bed and early to rise,
/ Makes a man healthy,
wealthy, and wise.
Earp, Wyatt
earth
earthquake
easier said than done
Easter
Eastern bloc
Eastern Establishment
East Germany
East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet.
Easy come, easy go.
eat crow
Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die.
eat humble pie
eat out of house and home
eclecticism
eclipse
ecological niche
ecology
ecosystem
Ecudder
ecumenism
Eddy, Mary Baker
Eden, Garden of
Edinburgh
Edison, Thomas A.
editorial
Edwardian
Edwards, Jonathan
ego
ego-centric
egomania
egotism
Egypt
Eichmann, Adolf
Eiffel Tower (image)
Eighteenth Amendment
Einstein, Albert
Eisenhower, Dwight D. (Ike)
elasticity
Elbe River
El Dorado
Electoral College
electric charge
electric field
electrocardiograph
electrolysis
electromagnet
electromagnetic radiation
electron
electron microscope
electroplating
elegy
Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard (text)
elementary, my dear Watson
elementary particle
elephant (political symbol)
ephephant never forgets, an
eleventh hour
El Greco
Eliot, George
Eliot, T. S.
elite
Elizabeth I, Queen
Elizabeth II, Queen
Elizabethan period
Ellington, Duke
elipse
Ellis Island
Ellison, Ralph
El Paso, Texas
El Salvador
Elysian Fields
Emancipation Proclamation
embargo
embezzlement
embryo
embryology
Emerson, Ralph Waldo
eminence grise
criminology
empathy
Emperor's New Clothes, The
(title)
Empire State Building
empirical
empiricism
Empyrean
encyclopaedia
endocrine
effluent terribile
Engels
England
English Channel
Enlightenment
en masse
entangling alliances with none
(text)
entourage
entrepreneur
entropy
environment/heredity controversy
Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
enzyme
epic
Epicurean
epigram
epilepsy
epistemology
c pluribus unum
epoxy
Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC)
equal protection of the laws
equal sign
equal time
equation
equator
equilibrium
equity
Erasmus
ergo
Erie Canal
Eros (Cupid)
erosion
escalation
Esquimaux
esophagus
ESP (extrasensory perception)
esprit de corps
established church
Establishment, the
estuary
ethical relativism
ethics
Ethiopia
ethnocentrism
ethos
ethyl alcohol
et tu, Brute
Euclid
eugenics
euphemism
Euphrates River
Eurasia
eureka
Euripides
Eurocommunism
European Common Market

Eustachian tube
euthanasia
evaporation
Every cloud has a silver lining.
Every dog has his day.
evolution
ex cathedra
exchange rate
excise tax
exclamation point
executive branch
exeunt
existentialism
Exodus (Bible)
ex officio
expanding universe
expatriation
expense account
Experience is the best teacher.
expletive
exponential growth
export quota
exposition (written English)
ex post facto
expressionism
expropriation
extended family
extradition
extraterrestrial
extrovert/introvert
eye for an eye, an
eye of a hurricane

Fabian tactics
faction
Fagin
Fahrenheit
fair exchange is no robbery,
A
fair-weather friends
fait accompli
Falkland Islands
fallacy
Fall of France
Fall of Man
Fall of Rome
Fall of the House of Usher
(title)
fallopian tubes
Falstaff
Falwell, Jerry
Familiarity breeds contempt.
Faraday, Michael
Far East
Farewell Address (Washington)
farm bloc
Farmer, Fanny
Farragut, Admiral David
Far West
fascism
fatalism
father of His Country
fat of the land
Faulkner, William
fault (geology)
fauna
Faust (title)
Faustian
faux pas
fear itself, have nothing to fear
but
featherbedding
feather in one's cap, a
feather one's nest
Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)
Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC)
federalism
fossil fuel
fossil record
Foster, Stephen
Founding Fathers
Four Freedoms
four-letter words
Fourteen Points
Fourteenth Amendment
fourth estate, the
Fourth of July
France
franchise (economics)
franchise (politics)
Francis Ferdinand, Archduke
Francis of Assisi, Saint
Franco
Frankenstein’s monster
Frankfurt
Franklin, Benjamin
freedom of religion
freedom of speech
freedom of the press
Freedom Riders
free enterprise
free fall
free trade
free verse
free will
freezing point
French and Indian Wars
French châteaux
French horn
French Impressionism
French Revolution
frequency modulation (FM)
fresco
Fresno, California
Freud, Sigmund
friar
friction
Friedan, Betty
Friedman, Milton
friend in need is a friend indeed, A
friend of the court
Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears (text)
Friends, Society of
frieze
frippery
from the sublime to the ridiculous
front (frontal zone)
frontier
Frost, Robert
Fujiiyama (Mount Fuji)
Fulbright scholarship
full employment
Fulton, Robert
functionalism (architecture)
fundamentalism
Furies
fusion, nuclear
Galahad, Sir
galaxy
Galileo Galilei
gallbladder
gallstone
Gallup poll
galvanize
game is not worth the candle, The
gamma rays
gamut, run the
Gandhi, Indira
| Gandhi, Mahatma | Gershwin, George |
| Ganges River | gerund |
| Gang of Four | gestalt psychology |
| Garbo, Greta | Gestapo |
| gargoyles | Gesundheit |
| Garibaldi | get a dose of one's own medicine |
| gas (physics) | get down to brass tacks |
| Gather ye rosebuds while ye may. | get out of bed on the wrong side |
| Gauguin, Paul | Get thee behind me, Satan. |
| gay rights | Gettyburg, Battle of |
| Geiger counter | Gettyburg Address (text) |
| geisha | ghetto |
| gene | Gibbon, Edward |
| general anesthetic | GI Bill |
| general strike | Gibraltar |
| generating plant | GI Joe |
| generation gap | Gilbert and Sullivan |
| generator | gilded cage |
| Genesis, Book of | Giotto |
| generic code | Girl Scouts of America |
| genetic engineering | Give him enough rope and he'll hang himself. |
| genomics | Give me liberty, or give me death. |
|George III, King | Give me your tired, your poor, give the devil his due |
| Georgia | glacier |
| geothermal energy | glad hand |
| Geronimo | Gladstone, William |
| | Glasgow |
| | glucose |
| | glut |
| | GNP (gross national product) |
| | Gobi Desert |
| | God Bless America (song) |
| God helps those who help themselves. | graft (politics) |
| Goebbels, Joseph | Graham, Billy |
| Goering, Hermann | Grand Canyon |
| Goethe, Johann Wolfgang | grand jury |
| Golan Heights | Grandma Moses |
| golden calf | granite |
| golden fleece | Grant, Ulysses S. |
| Golden Gate Bridge | Grapes of Wrath, The (title) |
| golden mean | grass is always greener on the other side, The |
| golden rule | gravity |
| Goldilocks and the Three Bears (title) | grazie |
| gold standard | greatest good for the greatest number |
| Goldwater, Barry | Great Expectations (title) |
| Golgotha | Great Gatsby, The (title) |
| gonad | Great Lakes |
| Gone With the Wind (title) | Great oaks from little acorns grow. |
| Gonna Lay Down My Burden (song) | Great Plains |
| Good fences make good neighbors. | Great proletarian cultural revolution |
| Good Friday | Great Salt Lake |
| good man is hard to find, A good-neighbor policy | Great Smoky Mountains |
| Good Samaritan | Great Wall of China |
| goosestep | Great War |
| Goose with the Golden Eggs (title) | Greece |
| GOP | Greek Orthodox Church |
| Gordian knot, cut the | Greeks bearing gifts |
| Gospel | Greetly, Horace |
| go to pot | greenbacks |
| Go west, young man. | greenhouse effect |
| Goya | Greenland |
| gracias | Greenwich mean time |
| gradualism | Greenwich Village, New York |
| Gresham's law | Grenada |
| Griffith, D. W. | |
Hanoi
Hansel and Gretel (title)
Harajuku
Harding, Warren G.
hard water
hardwired
Hare and the Tortoise, The
(title)
Harlem (New York)
Harper's Ferry
harpischord
Harpy
Harte, Bret
Hartford, Connecticut
Haste makes waste.
Hastings, Battle of
Havana
Hawaii
hawk and dove
Hawthorne, Nathaniel
Haydn
Hearing, they hear not.
Hearst, William Randolph
heart
heat (nature of)
heavy water
Hector
hedonism
Hep, Uriah
Hegel
Hegelian dialectic
Heisenberg, Werner
Heisenberg uncertainty principle
Helen of Troy
helium
Helsinki
Hemingway, Ernest

dehisphère
dehemoglobin
dehemothilic
Henry, Patrick
Henry the Eighth
hepatitis
Hepburn, Katharine
Hera (Juno)
deherbaceous
deherbivore
deherculean effort
dehercules
deherdity
deheretic
dehere today, gone tomorrow.
dehere We Go Round the Mulberry Bush (song)
dehermès (Mercury)
deherodorus
dehertz (Hz)
deheterogeneity
dehis who hesitates is lost.
dehy Diddle Diddle (text)
dehiawatha (title)
dehibernation
dehickory, Dickory Dock (text)
dehide your light under a bushel,
dehon't
dehierarchy
dehieroglyphics
dehighlands, the
dehigh tech
dehimalayas
dehimmler, Heinrich
dehinduism
dehippie
dehippocrates
dehippocratic oath
Hiroshima
Hit, Alger
Hitch your wagon to a star.
Hitler, Adolf
hit the nail on the head
hoarding
Hobbes, Thomas
Ho Chi Minh
hoi polloi
holding company
holistic
Holland
Hollywood, California
Holmes, Oliver Wendell
Holocaust
Holy Grail
Holy Roman Empire
Holy See
holy writ
Home on the Range (song)
dehomeostasis
Homer
Homer, Winslow
Homestead Act
Home Sweet Home (song)
dehomicide
dehomo geneity
dehomo sapiens
dehomosexuality
Honduras
Honesty is the best policy.
Hong Kong
Hono lulu, Hawaii
Hoosier
Hoover, Herbert
Hoover, J. Edgar
Hoover Dam
Hope springs eternal in the human breast.
Horace
horrible hole, stir up a horns of a dilemma
horse! a horse! my kingdom for a horse!
horticulture
Houdini
house arrest
House of Commons
House of Lords
House of Representatives
Houston, Sam
Houston, Texas
Huckleberry Finn (title)
Hudson Bay
Hudson River
hue and cry
Hugo, Victor
Huguenots
humanist
humanitarianism
human rights
Hume, David
humidity (relative and absolute)
Humpty Dumpty
Hun
Hunchback of Notre Dame, The (title)
Hundred Years War
Hungary
hurricane
Huxley, Aldous
Huxley, Julian
hybridization
hydraulic
hydrocarbon
hydroelectric
hydrogen bomb (H-bomb)
hydroponics
hydropower
Hymen (mythology)
hymen (physiology)
hyperbola
hyperbole
hypertension
hyphen
hypnosis
hypochondriac
hypothetise
hypothalamus
hypothesis
hysteria
Hz
Iacocca, Lee
lago
iambic pentameter
I am the state.
I-beam
I Been Workin' on the Railroad (song)
ibid.
lb, Henrik
I came, I saw, I conquered.
I cannot tell a lie.
Icarus
ICBM (intercontinental ballistic missile)
Ice Age
iceberg
Iceland
id, the
Idaho
ideal gas
ideology
ides of March
idiom
i.e.
If at first you don't succeed, try, try again.
If music be the food of love, play on.
If the mountain won't come to Mohammed . . .
If you can't stand the heat, get out of the kitchen.
igloo
igneous rock
Ignorance is bliss.
I Have a Dream (text)
I have not yet begun to fight.
Iliad, The (title)
illegitimacy
illinois
imagery
Immaculate Conception
imagination
immunity
impeachment
impedance
imperative (grammar)
imperialism
import quota
impressario
impressionism
I never met a man I didn't like.
Incarnation, the
Incas
incest
incumbent
indefinite article
indentation
indentured servant
Independence, Missouri
Independence Day
independent clause
India
Indiana
Indianapolis, Indiana
Indian file
Indian summer
indirect object
individualism
Indochina
Indo-European
Indonesia
inductance
induction (philosophy)
indulgences
industrial relations
industrial revolution
inference
infinite
inflammation
inflation
influence
influenza
infrared
inhibition
injunction
in loco parentis
in medias res
in memoriam
inoculation/vaccination
inquisition, the
in situ
insomnia
installment buying
instinct
insulator
insulin
integrated circuit
integration
intelligence quotient (IQ)
intelligentsia
intercontinental ballistic missile
(ICBM)
interest (commerce)
interest rate
interjection
internal combustion engine
Internal Revenue Service (IRS)
internationalism
international law
International Monetary Fund
(IMF)
interrogative sentence
Interstate Commerce Commission
(ICC)
interventionism
intestine, large
in toto
intransitive verb
intrauterine device (IUD)
introspection
introvert
inventory
inversion (weather)
invertebrate
investment
in vino veritas
invisible hand
Invisible Man, The (title)
in vitro
in vivo
ion
ionic bond
Ionic order (of architecture)
ionization
ionosphere
IOU
Iowa
Iran
Iraq
Ireland
Irish potato famine
Irish Republic
Irish Republican Army (IRA)
Iron Age
Iron Curtain
irony
Iroquois Indians
irregular verb
irrigation
Irving, Washington
Isaiah
I shall return.
Islam
isolationism
isotope
Israel
Istanbul
isthmus
italics
Italy
I think, therefore I am.
It never rains but it pours.
It's always darkest before the
dawn.
It's better to give than to re-
ceive.
It takes two to tango.
Ivan the Terrible
ivory tower

Ivy League
I wandered lonely as a cloud
Iwo Jima

Jack and Jill (text)
Jack and the Beanstalk (title)
Jack Be Nimble (text)
Jack Frost
jack-of-all-trades, master of
none
Jackson, Andrew
Jackson, Jesse
Jackson, Stonewall
Jacksonian democracy
Jacksonville, Florida
Jack Sprat
Jacob and Esau
Jacobin
Jacob's Ladder (song)
Jamaica
James, Henry
James, Jesse
James, William
Jamestown settlement
Janus
Japan
jargon
Java
jazz
Jazz Age
Jefferson, Thomas
Jeffersonian democracy
Jeffersonianism versus Hamil-
tonianism
Jehovah
Jehovah's Witness
je ne sais quoi
jeremiad
Jeremiah
Jericho, Battle of
Jersey City, New Jersey
Jerusalem
Jesuit
Jesus
jet stream
Jew
Jezebel
jihad
Jim Crow
jingoism
Joan of Arc
Job
Johannesburg
John, Saint, Gospel according
to
John Brown's Body (song)
John Bull
John Doe
John Henry (song)
Johnny Appleseed
John Paul II, Pope
Johnson, Andrew
Johnson, Lyndon B. (LBJ)
Johnson, Samuel
John the Baptist
John XXIII, Pope
joie de vivre
joint chiefs of staff
joint resolution
Jolly Roger
Jonah and the whale
Jones, John Paul
Joplin, Scott
Jordan
Jordan River
Joseph and his brothers
Joshua
Joshua Fit the Battle of Jericho
(song)
journeyman
Joyce, James
Judaism
Judas Iscariot
Judgment Day
Judgment of Paris
judicial branch
judicial review
Julius Caesar
Jung, Carl
Junio (Hera)
Jupiter (planet)
Jupiter (Zeus)
justification by faith

Kepler, Johannes
keel
Kettle drum
Key, Francis Scott
Keynes, John Maynard
Keynesian economics
KGB
Khomeini, Ayatollah
Khrushchev, Nikita
kibbutz
Kidd, Captain
kidney
Kiev
Kilimanjaro
kill with kindness
kilometer
kilowatt-hour (kWh)
kinesics
King, Jr., Martin Luther
King Arthur stories
King James Version (Bible)
King Kong
King Lear (title)
kingdom come
kingdom was lost, For want of
a nail
King's English, speak the
Kinsey, Alfred
Kipling, Rudyard
Kissinger, Henry
Kitty Hawk
kleptomania
Klondike gold rush
knee-jerk reflex
Knesset
Knights of the Round Table
Knock on wood
Knowledge is power
Know-Nothing
Koran
Korea
Korean War
kosher
Kremlin
Ku Klux Klan (KKK)
Kuwait

Labor Day
labor market
labor movement
labor union
Labrador
labyrinth (mythology)
La Cucaracha (song)
Lafayette
La Guardia, Fiorello
laisséz faire
Lake Erie
Lake Huron
Lake Michigan
Lake Ontario
Lake Superior
Lake Victoria
Lamb of God
lame duck
Lancelot, Sir
land breeze
land flowing with milk and
honey, a
land grant
land of Nod
Land Was Ours, The (text)
Laocoon
laser
Last of the Mohicans, The
(title)

last straw that breaks the cam-
el's back, It's the
Last Supper, the
Las Vegas, Nevada
latent heat
Latin
Latin America
latitude and longitude
Latter-Day Saints
lattice structure
laughs last, laughs best, He
who
lava
Lavoisier, Antoine
law of contradiction
Lawrence, D. H.
Lawrence of Arabia (T. E.)
layoff
leading question
League of Nations
lean and hungry look
Leaning Tower of Pisa
leap year
Leave well enough alone.
Leaves of Grass (title)
Lebanon
Leda and the swan
Lee, Robert E.
left-handed compliment
leftist
left wing
legal tender
Legend of Sleepy Hollow, The
(title)
legislative branch
legitimate government
Legree, Simon
Leibnitz
lemmings to the sea
lend lease
Lenin
Leningrad
lens
Lent
Leonardo da Vinci
leopard doesn’t change its spots, A
leprechaun
leprosy
lesbian
Let bygones be bygones.
Let sleeping dogs lie.
Letter from the Birmingham Jail (title)
let the cat out of the bag
Levant, the
Lewis, Sinclair
Lewis and Clark expedition
Lexington, Battle of
Leyden jar
liaison
libel
liberal
liberal arts
liberalism
Liberty, Statue of
Liberty Bell
libido
Library of Congress
Libya
lien
lightning (electricity)
lightning rod
light year
Lilliputian
Lima

Limbo
limerick
limestone
Lincoln, Abraham
Lincoln-Douglas debates
Lincoln Memorial
Lincoln’s Second Inaugural Address (title)
Lindbergh, Charles A.
linear momentum
Linnaeus
Lippmann, Walter
lip service
liquid asset
liquidation
liquidity
Lisbon
list price
Liszt, Franz
litany
literati
limus test
Little Big Horn
Little Bo-Peep (text)
Little Boy Blue (text)
Little Jack Horner (text)
little learning is a dangerous thing, A
Little Miss Muffet (text)
Little pitchers have big ears.
Little Red Hen, The (title)
Little Red Riding Hood (title)
Little Rock, Arkansas
Little strokes fell great oaks.
Little Women (title)
Live and learn.
Live and let live.
liver (detoxification)

Liverpool
Lloyd George, David
loaves and fishes (Matthew)
lobby (politics)
lobotomy
local anesthetic
Loch Lomond (song)
Locke, John
lockout
lock, stock, and barrel
lock the stable door after the horse is stolen, Don’t
focus
lodestar
limestone
logic
logrolling (politics)
London
London Bridge Is Falling Down (song)
Long, Huey
Longfellow, Henry Wadsworth
Long Island
Look before you leap.
Lord’s Prayer, The (text)
Los Angeles, California
lost generation
Lothario
Lot’s wife
Louis, Joe
Louis XIV
Louisiana
Louisiana Purchase
Louisville, Kentucky
Love conquers all.
Love makes the world go round.
Love thy neighbor as thyself.

lowbrow
Low Countries
lowercase
lowest common denominator
Loyola, Saint Ignatius of
Lucifer
Luddite
Luftwaffe
Luke, Saint. Gospel according to
lunatic fringe
Lusitania, sinking of the
Luther, Martin
Lutheranism
Luxembourg
lymph
lynch
lymph mob
lyric

MacArthur, Douglas
Macbeth (title)
Machiavelli
Machiavellian tactics
Mach number
macho
macrocosp/microcosm
macroeconomics
Madagascar
mad as a hatter
Madison, Dolley
Madison, James
Madison Avenue
Madonna, the
Madrid
maestro
Mafia
Magellan, Ferdinand
Appendix: What Literate Americans Know

Memento mori
Memphis, Tennessee
Mencen, H. L.
Mendel, Gregor
Mendeleev
Mendelian genetics
Mendelsohn, Felix
meningitis
Mennonite
menopause
menstrual cycle
Mephistopheles
mercantilism
Merchant of Venice, The (title)
merci
mercury (element)
Mercury (Hermes)
Mercury (planet)
merger
meridian
merit system
Merlin
meson
Messiah
métier
Miami, Florida
Michigan
Middle America
Middle West
Milwaukee, Wisconsin
Minerva
Minneapolis, Minnesota
Minnesota
MIRV (Multiple Independently
Targeted Re-entry Vehicle)
Misery loves company.
Mississippi
Mississippi River
Missouri
Missouri River
Modest Proposal, A (title)
Mohammed
Mojave Desert
Money is the root of all evil
money market
Mongolia
mongolism
menism
Monitor vs. Merrimack
monogamy
mononucleosis
monopoly
monothemism
Monroe, James
Monroe, Marilyn
Monroe Doctrine
monsieur
monsoon
mortage
Montaigne
Montana
Mont Blanc
Montesquieu
Montessori, Maria
Montessori schools
Montezuma
month of Sundays
Monticello
Montreal
moon made of green cheese
Moral Majority
moratorium
More, Saint Thomas
more the merrier, the
Morgan, J. P.
Mormon

Morocco
Morpheus
Morse, Samuel F. B.
Morse Code
mortal sin / venial sin
mortgage
Mosaic Law
Moscow
Moses
Moslem
mosque
most unkindest cut of all
Mother Goose rhymes
motif
motor development
mountain labored and brought
forth a mouse, A
Mount Everest
Mount Hood
Mount McKinley
Mount Olympus
Mount Rainier
Mount Vernon
Mount Vesuvius
Mount Whitney
Mount Zion
movement, symphonic
Mozambique
Mozart, Wolfgang Amadeus
Mrs. Malaprop
Ms.
muckraking
mulatto
multilateral
multiple sclerosis (MS)
Munch
Murder will out.
muscular dystrophy

Muses, the
Music hath charms to soothe
the savage breast.
music of the spheres
Mussolini, Benito
mutation
mutual fund
mutual insurance
MX missile
My Country 'Tis of Thee
(song)
My Lai massacre
myopia
mysticism
myth
mythology
NAACP (National Association
for the Advancement of Col-
ored People)
Nader, Ralph
Nantes, Edict of
Nantucket, Massachusetts
Naples
Napoleon
narcissism
Narcissus
narration
Narrative of the Life of Freder-
wick Douglass (title)
NASA
Nashville, Tennessee
Nasser, Gamal Abdel
National Aeronautics and
Space Administration
(NASA)
national anthem (song)
National Guard
nationalism
nationalist China
nationalization
National Labor Relations Board (NLRB)
national liberation movements
National Organization for Women (NOW)
national self-determination
National Weather Service
Native Son (title)
Nativity, the
NATO
naturalism
natural law
natural rights
natural selection
Nature abhors a vacuum.
nature-nurture controversy
Navajo Indians
Nazi invasion of Poland
Nazism
Nazi-Soviet nonaggression pact n.b.
Neanderthal man
Nebraska
nebula
Necessity is the mother of invention.
née
negative income tax
Nehru, Jawaharlal
Nelson, Admiral Horatio Nemesis
neoclassicism
neocolonialism
Nepal
nepotism
Neptune (Poseidon)
Nero fiddled while Rome burned.
Ness, Loch
Netherlands, the neurons
neurosis
neutron
neutron star
Nevada
Never say die.
New Amsterdam
Newark, New Jersey
new broom sweeps clean, A New Deal
New Delhi
New England
Newfoundland
New Frontier
New Guinea
New Hampshire
New Haven, Connecticut
New Jersey
New Left
New Mexico
New Orleans, Louisiana
Newport, Rhode Island
New Testament
Newton, Isaac
Newton's laws of motion
new wine in old bottles
New York (state)
New York, New York
New York Stock Exchange
New Zealand
Niagara Falls, New York
Nicaragua
Nice
Nicholas, Saint
nicotine
Nietzsche
Nigeria
Niger River
Night Before Christmas, The (text)
Nightingale, Florence
nihilism
Nijinsky
Nile River
nimbus clouds
nine days' wonder
Nirvana
nitrogen fixing
nitrogenous wastes
Nixon, Richard M.
Noah and the Flood
Nobel Prize
noble gas
noblest Roman of them all
Nobody Knows the Trouble I've Seen (song)
Noël
no-fault insurance
nolo contendere
No man can serve two masters.
No man is an island (text)
nom de plume
nonaligned nations
non compos mentis
No news is good news.
nonperson
non sequitur
nonviolent resistance
Norfolk, Virginia
Norman Conquest
Norse myth
North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)
North Carolina
North Dakota
Northern Hemisphere
Northern Ireland
northern lights
North Korea
North Pole
North Sea
North Star (Polaris)
Northwest Passage
Norway
tone out of joint
tone to the grindstone
Nothing is certain but death and taxes.
Nothing succeeds like success.
nothing to fear but fear itself
Notre Dame Cathedral
not with a bang but a whimper noun
nouveau riche
nova
novel
novella
nuance
nuclear energy
nuclear family
nuclear fission
nuclear-free zone
nuclear fusion
nuclear power
nuclear reactor
nuclear testing
nucleic acids
nucleotide
nucleus (atomic)
nucleus (cellular)
Nuremberg trials
nymphomania

Oakland, California
Oak Ridge
OAS (Organization of American States)
O beautiful for spacious skies
(America the Beautiful, song)
object (grammar)
objet d'art
oboe
obscenity laws
obsolescence
obtuse angle
O Captain! my Captain! (text)
Oedipus's razor
O Come, All Ye Faithful (Adeste, Fideles, song)
October Revolution
ode
Ode on a Grecian Urn (text)
Odyssey, The (title)
Oedipus
Oedipus complex
Oedipus Rex (title)
oeuvre
off-Broadway
Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO)
offshore drilling
Off with their heads!
Ohio
Ohio River
ohm

Oil and water don't mix.
oil sands (tar shales)
Okinawa
Oklahoma
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma
Old Glory
Old King Cole (text)
Old Mother Hubbard (text)
Old Testament
Old World
oligarchy
Oliver Twist (title)
Olympian heights
Omaha, Nebraska
Omar Khayyam
ombudsman
omnivore
Onan
Once bitten twice shy.
once in a blue moon
Once more into the breach, dear friends.
one for all and all for one
One good turn deserves another.
O'Neill, Eugene
one man, one vote
One man's meat is another man's poison.
One rotten apple spoils the barrel.
on his last legs
Ontario
on tenterhooks
on the Hill (Capitol Hill)
On Top of Old Smoky (song)
op art
OPEC

Open Door policy
open primary
open shop
opera
operetta
Oppenheimer, J. Robert
opposable thumbs
optic nerve
optics
orbit
ore (ore deposit)
Oregon
Oregon Trail
Orestes
organic chemistry
organization man
Organization of American States (OAS)
Orient
Origin of Species, The (title)
Orion
Orpheus
Orwell, George
Oslo
osmosis
O, Susanna (song)
Othello (title)
Ottawa
Ottoman Empire
ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure, An
Our country, right or wrong.
Our Town (title)
Out of sight, out of mind.
out of the mouths of babes
ovary
ovarian cycle
ovary
overage (commerce)
overdraft
overhead (economics)
overkill
overture
Ovid
ovum (ova)
Owens, Jesse
Oxford University
oxidation
ozone layer

Pacific Ocean
pacifism
pagoda (image)
Paine, Thomas
Painted Desert
Pakistan
paleontology
Palestine
Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO)
Palm Sunday
Pan
Panama
Panama Canal
pancreas (insulin)
pandemonium
Pandora's box
pantheism
Panza, Sancho
papacy
papal infallibility
parables
parabola
paradigm
paradise
Paradise Lost (title)
paradox
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>paragraph</th>
<th>Patton, General George</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paraguay</td>
<td>Paul, Saint</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>parallelogram</td>
<td>Pauling, Linus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>parameter</td>
<td>pauper</td>
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<td>paranoia</td>
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<td>Paraphrase</td>
<td>pay the piper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>parapsychology</td>
<td>Peace Corps, the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>parathyroid</td>
<td>peaceful coexistence</td>
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<tr>
<td>parenthesis</td>
<td>Pearl Harbor</td>
</tr>
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<td>pariah</td>
<td>pearl of great price</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paris (city)</td>
<td>peasant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paris (Greek myth)</td>
<td>pediatrics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>parity price</td>
<td>peeping Tom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parkinson's disease</td>
<td>Pegasus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parkinson's Law</td>
<td>Peking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>parliament</td>
<td>pell-mell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>parliamentary system</td>
<td>Peloponnesian War</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parnassus</td>
<td>Penelope</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>parody</td>
<td>penicillin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parthenon (image)</td>
<td>peninsula</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>participle</td>
<td>penis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>particle accelerator</td>
<td>pen's envy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parting is such sweet sorrow.</td>
<td>pen is mightier than the sword, The</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>partition (politics)</td>
<td>Penn, William</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>partnership (economics)</td>
<td>Pennsylvania</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>parvenu</td>
<td>Pennsylvania Dutch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>passe</td>
<td>penny saved is a penny earned, A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>passim</td>
<td>pension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>passive voice</td>
<td>Pentagon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passover</td>
<td>Pentagon Papers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pass the buck</td>
<td>People's Republic of China</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pasteur, Louis</td>
<td>per capita</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pasteurization</td>
<td>percentage</td>
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<tr>
<td>pastoral (literary genre)</td>
<td>per diem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>patience of Job</td>
<td>perfectibility of man</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>patience of Penelope</td>
<td>Pericles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>patriarchy</td>
<td>photoelectric cell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>photosynthesis</td>
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<td>periodic table of the elements</td>
<td>phrase</td>
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<tr>
<td>Perón, Eva</td>
<td>phylum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perón, Juan</td>
<td>physics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>perpetual motion machine</td>
<td>pianissimo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pershing, General John (Black Jack)</td>
<td>piazz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persian Empire</td>
<td>Picasso, Pablo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persian Gulf</td>
<td>piccolo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>person (first, second, third)</td>
<td>Pickwickian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>personal pronoun</td>
<td>pièce de résistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>persona non grata</td>
<td>Pied Piper of Hamelin, The</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>perspective (optics)</td>
<td>(title)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peru</td>
<td>pie in the sky</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter, Saint</td>
<td>Pierce, Charles Sanders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter Pan</td>
<td>Pietà (image)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter Piper (text)</td>
<td>pig in a poke, buy a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter the Great (Peter I)</td>
<td>Pike's Peak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petrified Forest</td>
<td>Pilate, Pontius</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>petrochemical</td>
<td>pilgrims</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pH</td>
<td>Pilgrim's Progress (title)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>phallic symbol</td>
<td>pill, the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>phallus</td>
<td>Pinocchio (title)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pharaoh</td>
<td>pistil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pharisees</td>
<td>Pitt, William (Elder)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phi Beta Kappa</td>
<td>Pitt, William (Younger)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philadelphia, Pennsylvania</td>
<td>Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania</td>
</tr>
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<td>Philippine Islands</td>
<td>pituitary gland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philistines</td>
<td>placenta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>philistinism</td>
<td>plagiarism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>philosopher king</td>
<td>plague</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>philosopher's stone</td>
<td>plagues of Egypt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>philosophy</td>
<td>Planck, Max</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>phloem</td>
<td>Planck's constant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>phobia</td>
<td>plane geometry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phoenixia</td>
<td>planetarium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phoenix, Arizona</td>
<td>planets</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
planned obsolescence
plant kingdom
plasma (biology)
plasma (physics)
platelets
plate tectonics
platform (politics)
Plato
platonic love
platonism
play second fiddle
playwright
pleasure principle
plebiscite
Pledge of Allegiance to the
Flag, The (text)
Plessy vs. Ferguson
plural
pluralism
Plutarch
Pluto (planet)
plutocracy
Plymouth Colony
Plymouth Rock
pneumonia
Pocahontas
Poe, Edgar Allan
poetry
Poets are born, not made.
pogrom
Poland
polarization
police state
polio
political machine
political science
Polk, James K.
polka

poll tax
pollen
pollination
Pollock, Jackson
pollution
Pollyanna
Polo, Marco
Polonius's advice to Laertes
(text)
polygamy
polymer
Polynesia
polytheism
Pompeii
Ponce de León
pontiff
pony express
Pooh-Bah
Poor Richard's Almanac (title)
pop art
Pope, Alexander
Pope, the
Pop Goes the Weasel (song)
pop the question
populism
Populist Party
pork-barrel legislation
pornography
Porter, Cole
Portland, Oregon
Portugal
Poseidon (Neptune)
possessive
Post, Emily
posthaste
postmaster general
postmortem
postulate

potato famine, Irish
pot calls the kettle black, The
potluck
Potomac River
pound of flesh
pour oil on troubled waters
Practice makes perfect.
Practice what you preach.
pragmatism
Prague
prayer rug
Preamble to the Constitution
(text)
precedent
precipitate
precipitation
précis
predestination
predicate (grammar)
preemptive strike
prefix
prejudice
premier (prime minister)
première
preposition
pre-Raphaelite
Presbyterian
Presley, Elvis
pressure
pressure group
Pretoria
prevailing westerlies
Pride and Prejudice (title)
Pride goeth before a fall.
priest (minister, pope, bishop)
prima ballerina
prima donna
prime
prime minister
prime number
prime rate
primitivism
primogeniture
primrose path
Prince, The (title)
Prince Albert
Prince of Wales
Princess and the Pea, The
(title)
prism
private enterprise
private sector
probate court
probation
procrustean bed
prodigal son, the
profit sharing
pro forma
prognosis
programming language
progressive education
progressive tax
Prohibition
Prokofiev, Sergei
proletariat
Prometheus
Promised Land
pronoun
proof of the pudding is in the
eating, The
propaganda
proportional representation
pro rata
prorate
prose
prosecution
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
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</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>protagonist</td>
<td>Punic Wars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>protective tariff</td>
<td>pupil (eye)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>protectorate</td>
<td>purgatory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>protein</td>
<td>purge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pro tempore (pro tem)</td>
<td>Puritan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protestant</td>
<td>Pushkin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protestant ethic (work ethic)</td>
<td>Puss-in-Boots</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>proton</td>
<td>Pygmalion (title)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>protoplasm</td>
<td>pyramid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>protozoa</td>
<td>Pyramids, the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proust, Marcel</td>
<td>Pyrenees, the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>providence, divine</td>
<td>pyromania</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providence, Rhode Island</td>
<td>Pyrrhic victory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>proxy</td>
<td>Qaddafi, Muammar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pseudoscience</td>
<td>quadratic equation</td>
</tr>
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<td>Quaker</td>
</tr>
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<td>quality of mercy is not strained</td>
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<td>psychoanalysis</td>
<td>(text)</td>
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<td>quantum leap</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>psychopath</td>
<td>quantum mechanics</td>
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<td>psychosis</td>
<td>quark</td>
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<td>quasars</td>
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<td>psychotherapy</td>
<td>quasi</td>
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<td>Ptolemy</td>
<td>Quebec</td>
</tr>
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<td>public be damned, The</td>
<td>Que serà serà (What will be will be,)</td>
</tr>
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<td>public defender</td>
<td>quid pro quo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>public utility</td>
<td>quintet</td>
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<td>public works</td>
<td>Quisling</td>
</tr>
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<td>quixotic</td>
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<td>quod erat demonstrandum</td>
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<td>(Q.E.D.)</td>
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<td>read between the lines</td>
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<td>read the riot act</td>
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<td>pulpwood</td>
<td>Reagan, Ronald</td>
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<td>realism</td>
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<td>Recommended Daily Allowance (RSA)</td>
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<td>Reconstruction</td>
</tr>
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<td>recorder (musical instrument)</td>
</tr>
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<td>Red Badge of Courage, The (title)</td>
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<td>red blood cell</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Red China</td>
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<td>Red Cross</td>
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<td>Red Guards</td>
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<td>red herring</td>
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<td>Red River Valley (song)</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Red Sea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Red Sea, parting of</td>
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<td>red shift</td>
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</tr>
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<td>reflex, conditioned</td>
</tr>
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<td>Reformation, the</td>
</tr>
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<td>refugee</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
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<td>regret that I have but one life to lose for my country, I only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>regular verb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reign of Terror</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
relative humidity
relativism
relativity
Rembrandt
Remember Pearl Harbor!
Remember the Alamo!
Remember the Maine!
Renaissance
Renaissance man
Render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's.
renewable resource
Reno, Nevada
Renoir
repatriation
resistance
resistance movement
respiration
Restoration (of the British monarchy)
Resurrection, the
Revelation
revenue sharing
Revere, Paul
revision (written English)
revivals
Revolutionary War
Revolutions of 1848
rhetoric
rhetorical question
rheumatic fever
rheumatoid arthritis
Rhine River
Rhode Island
Rhodes
Rhodes scholarships
Rhone River
rhyme
rhythm
ribonucleic acid
Richard the Lion-Hearted
Richelieu, Cardinal
Richmond, Virginia
Richer scale
Ride a Cock Horse (text)
rider (legislation)
right angle
right-to-work law
right triangle
right wing
rigor mortis
Rime of the Ancient Mariner (text)
Ring around the Rosies (text)
Rio de Janeiro
Rio Grande
Rip Van Winkle (title)
risk capital (venture capital)
rissqué
Rivera, Diego
Rivera, the
RNA
Road Not Taken, The (text)
road to hell is paved with good intentions, The
Roaring Twenties
robber baron
Robert's Rules of Order
Robeson, Paul
Robespierre, Maximilien
Robin Hood
Robinson Crusoe (title)
Robinson, Jackie
Rochester, New York
Rock-a-Bye-Baby (song)
Rockefeller, John D.
Rockefeller, Nelson
Rock of Gibraltar
Rockwell, Norman
Rocky Mountains
rococo
Rodin
Rogers, Ginger, and Fred Astaire
Rogers, Will
role conflict
role model
rolling stone gathers no moss, A
roman à clef
Roman Catholic church
Roman Empire
Romanesque
Roman numerals: I, V, X, L, C, D, M
romanticism
Rome
Romeo and Juliet (title)
Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo?
Rome wasn't built in a day.
Romulus and Remus
Roosevelt, Eleanor
Roosevelt, Franklin Delano (FDR)
Roosevelt, Theodore (Teddy)
Roosevelt's court-packing plan
Roots (title)
Rorschach rest
rose is a rose is a rose, A (text)
Rosenberg case
Roses, War of the
Rosetta stone
Rosch Hashanah
Ross, Betsy
Rotterdam
Rough Riders
Rousseau, Jean Jacques
Row, Row, Row Your Boat (song)
royalty (economic)
Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám, The (title)
Rube Goldberg
Rubens
rugged individualism
rule of thumb
rule the roost
Rumania
Rumplestiltskin (title)
run of the mill
run-on sentence
Russell, Bertrand
Russia
Russian Revolution
Russo-Japanese War
Ruth, Babe
Sabbath, the
Sabin vaccine
Sacco-Vanzetti case
sacrament
Sacramento, California
Sacramento Valley
sacred cow
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sadat, Anwar</th>
<th>San Joaquin Valley</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sade, Marquis de Sa</td>
<td>San Jose, California</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sadism</td>
<td>San Salvador</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sahara</td>
<td>Sanskrit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saigon</td>
<td>Santa Fe, New Mexico</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saint George and the dragon</td>
<td>Santa Fe Trail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saint Lawrence River</td>
<td>Santiago</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saint Paul, Minnesota</td>
<td>Sao Paulo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saint Paul's Cathedral</td>
<td>Sapello</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saint Petersburg, Florida</td>
<td>Sarajevo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saint Peter's Church</td>
<td>sarcasm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saint Sophia (basilica)</td>
<td>Sardinia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>salad days</td>
<td>Sartre, Jean Paul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salem witch trials</td>
<td>Satan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>saliva</td>
<td>satellite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salk vaccine</td>
<td>satire</td>
</tr>
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<td>saturated fatty acid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>salon</td>
<td>Saturn (planet)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salt Lake City, Utah</td>
<td>satyr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>salt of the earth</td>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>savanna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>salvation</td>
<td>savings and loan association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salvation Army</td>
<td>savings bond</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salzburg</td>
<td>savoir-faire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samaritan, the Good</td>
<td>saxophone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samson and Delilah</td>
<td>scab (labor)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Andreas Fault</td>
<td>Scandinavia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Antonio, Texas</td>
<td>Scarlet Letter, The (title)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sancho Panza</td>
<td>scarlet woman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sanerions</td>
<td>Scheherazade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sanctum sanctorum</td>
<td>Schiller</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sand, George</td>
<td>schism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandberg, Carl</td>
<td>schizophrenia</td>
</tr>
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<td>scholasticism</td>
</tr>
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<td>Schubert, Franz</td>
</tr>
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<td>Schweitzer, Albert</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>sang froid</td>
<td>scientific method</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scopes trial (monkey trial)</td>
<td>semantics</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scotland</td>
<td>semen</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scotland Yard</td>
<td>semicolon</td>
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<td>Scott, Sir Walter</td>
<td>semiconductor</td>
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<td>scrotum</td>
<td>Seminole Indians</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sisyphus and Charybdis</td>
<td>Semitic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sea legs</td>
<td>semper fidelis</td>
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<td>seams side</td>
<td>Senate, U.S.</td>
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<td>seasonal unemployment</td>
<td>seniority</td>
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<tr>
<td>Seattle, Washington</td>
<td>señor</td>
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<tr>
<td>SEC (Securities and Exchange Commission)</td>
<td>señora</td>
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<tr>
<td>secession</td>
<td>señora</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Coming, the</td>
<td>Seoul</td>
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<tr>
<td>second sight</td>
<td>separate but equal</td>
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<td>second wind</td>
<td>separation of church and state</td>
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<tr>
<td>Secretary of: Defense, State, Interior, Education, Treasury</td>
<td>separation of powers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Secret Life of Walter Mitty, The (title)</td>
<td>serf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secret Service</td>
<td>Sermon on the Mount (text)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sect</td>
<td>Serpent, the</td>
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<td>secular</td>
<td>service industry</td>
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<tr>
<td>Security Council</td>
<td>set one's teeth on edge</td>
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<td>sedimentary rock (sedimentation)</td>
<td>settlement house</td>
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<td>sedition</td>
<td>seven deadly sins</td>
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<td>Seeing is believing.</td>
<td>Seventh-Day Adventist</td>
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<td>segregation</td>
<td>Seven Wonders of the World</td>
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<td>Seville</td>
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<td>seismic waves</td>
<td>sexism</td>
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<td>seismology (seismograph)</td>
<td>sex-linked trait</td>
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<td>Seize the day.</td>
<td>sexual reproduction</td>
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<td>Shakespeare</td>
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<tr>
<td>Self-Reliance (title)</td>
<td>shale</td>
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<td>seller's market</td>
<td>shalom</td>
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<td>Selma, Alabama</td>
<td>Shanghai</td>
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<td>Shaw, George Bernard (GBS)</td>
<td>Shangri-la</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shawnee Indians</td>
<td>sharecropping</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Sheba, Queen of
Shelley, Percy Bysshe
Shenandoah Valley
Sherlock Holmes
Sherman's march to the sea
Sherwood Forest
shibboleth
shipshape
ships that pass in the night
shock therapy
short circuit
short story
shout fire in a crowded theater
show must go on, The
Shreveport, Louisiana
Shylock
Siberia
sic
Sicily
sickle cell anemia
sic transit gloria mundi
Sierra Madre
Sierra Nevada
siesta
sign of the cross
signor
signora
signorina
Silent Night (song)
silicates
silicon chip
Silicon Valley
sink
Simon Legree
simple sentence
Simple Simon (text)
Sinai
sine die
sine qua non
Singapore
Sing a Song of Sixpence (song)
singular (grammar)
sinking fund
Sink or swim.
Sioux Indians
Sirens, the
Sistine Chapel (image)
Sisyphus
sit-ins
sit on the fence
Sitting Bull
situation comedy
skepticism
skin of one's teeth
skull and crossbones (image)
skyscraper
slang
slavery
slave trade, the
Sleeping Beauty (title)
sliding scale
Slough of Despond
slow but sure
small intestine
smallpox
smell a rat
Smith, Adam
Smith, John
Smithsonian Institution
smog
snake in the grass
Snow White
socialism
social science
social security
sociobiology
sociology
sociopath
Socrates
Sodom and Gomorrah
soft answer turneth away
wrath, A
software
solar cell
solar energy
solar plexus
solar system
solipsism
Solomon
solstice
solvent
Something is rotten in the state
of Denmark.
sonata
sonic boom
sonnet
sophist
Sophocles
soprano
sour grapes
Sousa, John Philip
South Africa
South America
South Carolina
South Dakota
Southeast Asia
Southern Hemisphere
South Korea
South Pole
South Sea Islands
South Seas
sovereignty
Soviet Union
space shuttle
space station
space suit
Spain
Spanish-American War
Spanish Armada
Spanish Civil War
Spanish Inquisition
Spare the rod and spoil the
child.
Sparta
Speaker of the House
species
spectroscopy
spectrum
Speech is silver; silence is
golden.
speed of light
sperry
sperry whale
sphere
sphinx
Spinosa
Spirit of '76 (image)
split hairs
split infinitive
Spock, Dr. Benjamin
spoils system
spontaneous combustion
spore
spread oneself too thin
spuntik
staccato
staff of life
stagflation
stalactite
stalagmite
Stalin, Joseph
Stalingrad, Battle of
Stalinism
Stalin's purge trials
stamen
Stamp Act
standard deviation
standard of living
standing order
stanza
star (astronomy)
Star Chamber
star-crossed lovers
Stars and Stripes, the
Star-Spangled Banner, The
(song)
Star Wars
State of the Union address
States' rights
static electricity
statistics
Statue of Liberty
status
status quo
statute of limitations
steal one's thunder
Stein, Gertrude
Steinem, Gloria
Stendhal
steppe
stereotype
Stevenson, Robert Louis
Still waters run deep.
stitch in time saves nine, A
stock exchange / stock market
Stockholm
stoicism
stomach (anatomy)
Stone Age
Stonehenge

Stone walls do not a prison
make,
storage battery
Stowe, Harriet Beecher
Stradivarius
strain at a gnat and swallow a
camel
strange bedfellows
Strategic Arms Limitations
Talks (SALT)
strategy/tactics
stratification
stratosphere
Strauss, Johann
Strauss, Richard
Strauss waltzes
Stravinsky, Igor
straw in the wind
straw man
streamline
stream of consciousness
Streetcar Named Desire, A
(title)
strike
strikebreaker
Strike while the iron is hot.
Strindberg, August
string quartet
strip mine
Stuart, Gilbert (portrait of
Washington)
Sturm und Drang
Stuttgart
Stuyvesant, Peter
style (written English)
Styx
subconsciousness
subject (grammar)

subjunctive
sublimation (chemistry)
sublimation (psychology)
subordination (grammar)
subpoena
subsidiary
subsidy
subsistence farming
succession
Sudan, Republic of
Suez Canal
suffer fools gladly
suffix
suffrage
suffragette
sui generis
sulfur drug
summa cum laude
summit meeting
Sumter, Fort
Sun Also Rises, The (title)
Sun King, the
superconductor
superge
superlative (grammar)
supernova
supply side
Supreme Court
Supreme Court Building
surface tension
surrealism
surtax
survival of the fittest
swastika
sweatshop
Sweden
Sweet Adeline (song)
Swift, Jonathan
swing (music)
Swing Low, Sweet Chariot
(song)
Switzerland
Sword of Damocles
Sydney (Australia)
syllogism
symbol
symphony
synagogue
syndrome
synfuel
synonym
syntax
syphilis
Syracuse, New York
Syria

tabula rasa
tactics/strategy
Taft, William Howard
Taft-Hartley Act
Taipei
Taiwan
Taj Mahal (image)
take-home pay
Take Me Out to the Ball Game
(song)
Take the bitter with the sweet.
take the bull by the horns
tall tale
Talmud
Tampa, Florida
tangent
tango
Tantalus
Taoism
taproot
tesarf
tar with the same brush
Tarzan
Tasmania
taste bud
tax-deductible
tax loophole
taxonomic classification
tax shelter
Tchaikovsky
Teapot Dome
Technological unemployment
technology
Tecumseh
teenybopper
Teflon-coated
Teheran
Tel Aviv
telemetry
telepathy
telephoroscope
telephone
telecope
tell, William
Teller, Edward
tell'tales out of school
Tempest, The (title)
tempest in a teapot
temple
tempo
tenant farming
Ten Commandments
tenderfoot
Tennessee
Tennessee River
Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA)
Tennyson, Alfred Lord
tenor (music)
tense (grammar)
tenure
terra firma
tests
testosterone
tetus
tête-a-tête
Tet offensive
Texas
Thailand
thalidomide
Thames River
Thatcher, Margaret
theme
therapy
There are lots of fish in the sea.
There is a tide in the affairs of men (text)
There is a time to be born and a time to die.
There is no joy in Mudville.
There is no new thing under the sun.
There's more than one way to skin a cat.
There's no fool like an old fool.
There's no place like home.
There was an old woman who lived in a shoe (text)
thermal equilibrium
thermal pollution
thermodynamics
thermonuclear
thermostat
These are the times that try men's souls.
thesis
thiamine
thing of beauty is a joy forever, A
Third Reich
Third World
thirteen — as an unlucky number
Thirteen Colonies
Thirty days hath September (text)
three pieces of silver
Thirty Years War
This land is your land,
this land is my land (song)
Thor
Thoreau, Henry David
Thorpe, Jim
Three Bears, The (title)
Three Blind Mice (song)
three-D
Three Little Pigs, The (title)
Three Mile Island
three sheets to the wind
thriller
thrombosis
through thick and thin
throw out the baby with the bath water
throw pearls before swine
throw to the lions
throw weight
Thucydides
thunder
Thurber, James
thyroid
Tibet
ticker-tape parade
tides
tied to his mother's apron
strings
Tiffany glass (image)
Tigris
tilt at windmills
time and motion study
time and tide wait for no man.
time exposure
Time heals all wounds.
Times Square
Tin Pan Alley
Tintoretto
tip of the tongue
Titanic, the
Titans, the
tit for tat
Tito
titration
Tobacco Road (title)
Toqueville, Alexis de
Tokyo
Toledo, Ohio
Tolstoy, Leo
Tom, Dick, and Harry
Tommy gun
Tom Sawyer (title)
Tom Thumb
Too many cooks spoil the broth.
too many irons in the fire
tooth and nail
topic sentence
topsoil
Appendix: What Literate Americans Know

Torah, the
tornado
Toronto
torque
Torquemada
totalitarianism
to the manner/merit born
touch and go
touché
touchstone
tour de force
Tower of Babel
town and gown
trachea
trade wind
Trafalgar (Battle of; Square)
tragedy
transistor
transitive verb
transvestite
Transylvania
trapezoid
Trappist monks
trauma
Treasure Island (title)
Treaty of Versailles (18th and 20th centuries)
Trees (title)
trench warfare
trial and error
trial balloon
Tripoli
Trojan War
trombone
Trotsky, Leon
troubadour
Troy
Truman, Harry S.

Truman-MacArthur controversy
trump card
trumpet
trust busting
Truth is stranger than fiction.
Truth will out.
Tucson, Arizona
Tudor monarchy
Tulsa, Oklahoma
tundra
Tunis
Tunisia
turbine
Turk, Young
Turkey
Turkey in the Straw (tune)
Turn about is fair play.
Turner, Nat
turn over a new leaf
turn the other cheek
Tutankhamen
Twain, Mark
Tweed, Boss
Tweedledum and Tweedledee
Twenty-third Psalm (text)
Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star (text)
two China policy
two heads are better than one.
two's company, three's a crowd.
two shakes of a lamb's tail
two wrongs don't make a right.
tycoon
typhoid fever
Typhoid Mary

Uppercasing
upper crust
upward mobility
uranium
Uranus (planet)
urbanization
urban renewal
Ursa Major
Ursa Minor
uterus
Utah
utility
utopia
vaccine
vacuum
vagina
valence
Vahalla
Valley Forge
valley of the shadow of death
value judgment
Van Allen Belt
Vancouver
Vandals, The
Vanderbilts, the (tycoons)
van Gogh, Vincent
vanishing point
vaporization
vapor pressure
Variety is the spice of life.
vasectomy
vassal
Vatican, the
Vatican II
vector
V-E Day
velocity
venereal disease
Venezuela
venial sin; mortal sin
Venus
venus fly trap
venus fly trap
Veni, vidi, vici (I came, I saw, I conquered).
ventricle
Venus (Aphrodite)
Venus (planet)
Venus de Milo (image)
verb
Verdi, Giuseppe
Vermeer
Vermont
Verne, Jules
Versailles
vertebrate
vestal virgin
vested interest
Veteran's Administration (VA)
Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW)
veto
VHF (very high frequency)
vice versa
Vichy
vicious circle
Victoria, Queen
Victorian
Vienna
Vietcong
Vietnam
Vietnam War
vigilante
Vikings, the
Village Blacksmith, The (text)
Vinci, Leonardo da
Viola
violin
VIP (Very Important Person)
Virgil
Virginia
Virgin Islands
Virgin Mary
virtual image
vis-à-vis
visual aid
visual field
vital statistics
vitamin
rivissection
V-J Day
voilà
volcano
Volga River
Volstead Act
volt
Voltaire
Voting Rights Act of 1965
vowel
Vox populi vox Dei.
voyeurism
Vulcan
vulcanization
Vulgate
wage scale
Waiting (Western) Wall
wake (Irish)
Walden (title)
walkie-talkie
walking papers
walk on water
walkout
walk under a ladder
Wallace, George
walls have ears, The
Wall Street
Wall Street crash of 1929
wampum
wanderlust
War and Peace (title)
war crime
war hawk (hawk)
warhorse
War of 1812
war of nerves
War of the Roses
war on poverty
warp and woof
warpath, on the
warranty
Warren, Earl
Warren Court
Warsaw
Warsaw Pact
war to make the world safe for
democracy, the
wash dirty linen in public
Washington, Booker T.
Washington, George
Washington (state)
Washington, D.C.
Washington and the cherry
tree
Washington Crossing the Dela-
ware (image)
Washington Mall (image)
Washington Monument
WASP (white Anglo-Saxon
Protestant)
Waste Land, The (title)
Waste not, want not.
Watergate
Waterloo, Battle of
water pollution
water softener
water table
water; water everywhere
Watt, James
watt
Watts riot
wavelength
wave-particle duality
Way Down Upon the Swanee
River (song)
Ways and Means Committee
weather map
weather satellite
Webster, Daniel
Webster, Noah
weighed in the balance
Weimar Republic
welfare state
Well begun is half done.
Wells, H. G.
We Shall Overcome (song)
West, Mae
West Germany
West Indies
West Point
West Virginia
wetback
wet behind the ears
Wharton, Edith
What fools these mortals
be.
What's in a name? (text)
What will be will be.
wheel of fortune
When in Rome do as the Romans do.
When it rains it pours.
When the Saints Go Marching In (song)
Where are the snows of yesteryear?
Where there's a will there's a way.
Where there's life there's hope.
Where there's smoke there's fire.
Whig Party
Whistler's Mother (image)
white blood cell
White Christmas (song)
white collar
white dwarf
White House (image)
Whitman, Walt
Whitney, Eli
wholesale
whooping cough
Wichita, Kansas
wide-angle lens
Wild Bill Hickock
wildcat strike
Wilde, Oscar
Wilder, Thornton
Wild West
William and Mary
William the Conqueror
Williams, Roger
Wilson, Woodrow
windfall
Winnie the Pooh (title)

winter of our discontent
Win this one for the Gipper.
wiretapping
Wisconsin
wishbone
wishing well
wish is father to the thought,
The
witchcraft
witch-hunt
withdrawal symptoms
withholding tax
Wittgenstein, Ludwig
Wizard of Oz, The (title)
wolf in sheep's clothing
woman suffrage
Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU)
women's liberation movement
(women's lib)
Woolf, Virginia
Wordsworth, William
word to the wise is enough, A
work ethic
workmen's compensation
Works Progress Administration (WPA)
World Court
World Trade Center (image)
World War I
World War II
worm turns, The
worship the golden calf
Wounded Knee, massacre at
Wren, Sir Christopher
Wright Brothers
Wright, Frank Lloyd
Wright, Richard
write-in candidate
Wuthering Heights (title)
Wyeth, Andrew
Wynken, Blynken, and Nod (text)
Wyoming
X-chromosome
xenophobia
x-ray
xylem
Yalta agreements
Yangtze River
Yankee
Yankee Doodle (song)
Y-chromosome
Yeats, William Butler
Yellow Peril
yellow press
Yellowstone National Park
Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus.
yin/yang
Yom Kippur
Yorktown, Battle of
Yosemite National Park
You Are My Sunshine (song)
You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink.

You cannot serve God and mammon.
You can't fit a square peg in a round hole.
You can't have your cake and eat it too.
You can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear.
You can't teach an old dog new tricks.
You may fire when you are ready, Gridley.
Young, Brigham
Young Turk
You're never too old to learn.
Youth will have its fling.
Yucatán
Yugoslavia
Yukon
yuppie
Zapata
Zeitgeist
zero-sum
Zeus (Jupiter)
Zion, Mount
Zionism
zodiac
Zola, Emile
zoning
Zurich