

1. **assassin** - a person who murders an important person for political or religious reasons

e.g. Craig hired an assassin to eliminate his rival.  
John Lennon's assassin was Mark Chapman.

**etymology:** from the Arabic word *hashishin*, nickname for a fanatical Muslim sect

**interesting facts:** The Prime Minister of India, Indira Gandhi, was assassinated by her own bodyguards on 31 October 1984. Abraham Lincoln was the first US President who was assassinated in April 1865.

2. **bonsai** - a tree that has been dwarfed by pruning; a very small tree grown in a container

e.g. Jane's hobby was growing bonsai trees.

**etymology:** from the Japanese words *bon* - "basin, pot" and *sai* - "to plant"

**interesting facts:** the smallest bonsai tree in the world can fit in the palm of your hand; the most expensive bonsai tree was sold for 1.3 million dollars.

3. **bouquet** - a bunch of flowers

e.g. They received numerous bouquets for their wedding.  
Jane bought a nice bouquet of flowers for her mother's birthday.

**etymology:** from the French word *bouquet* which means "little wood"

4. **colonel** - an officer in the army or the air force

e.g. Mr. Johns was a Colonel in the US Army.  
Colonel is a rank above lieutenant colonel and below brigadier.

**etymology:** from the Italian word *colonnella*, "commander of the column of soldiers at the head of a regiment".

5. **cuckoo** - a common European bird

e.g. Cuckoos are medium-sized birds with long tails.  
Cuckoos lay their eggs in other birds' nests.

**etymology:** from the Old French word *cocu*

**interesting facts:** the male cuckoo is known for its characteristic "koo-koo" call; they migrate from North Africa and reach Europe in mid-April.

6. **diphtheria** - an infectious disease

e.g. Diphtheria is a serious infectious disease that causes fever and difficulty in breathing and swallowing.

At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century diphtheria was one of the most widespread infectious diseases.

**etymology:** from the French word *diphtherie*, coined by a French physician, from the Greek word *diphthera* - “leather”

**interesting facts:** diphtheria still occurs mainly in the temperate regions of the world and most often affects children under age 10.

7. **drought** - period of dry weather  
e.g. This year severe drought has ruined the corn.  
Africa is known for long periods of drought.

**etymology:** from the Proto Germanic word *drugothaz*, which means “dry”

**interesting facts:** a Californian drought once lasted 8 years; approximately 9-13 million people died when it didn't rain in Northern China from 1876 to 1879.

**antonyms:** plenty, wetness, abundance

8. **gorilla** - the largest of the anthropoid apes  
e.g. Gorillas are apes that live in the forests in Sub-Saharan Africa.

**etymology:** from the Greek word *gorillai* given to wild, hairy beings.

**interesting facts:** there are around a thousand remaining mountain gorillas on Earth; adult males weigh up to 200 kg, and females around half this size.

9. **graffiti** - markings or drawings on walls  
e.g. The walls of this subway train station were covered in graffiti.  
Someone had painted graffiti on the entire wall.

**etymology:** from the Italian word *graffito*, which means “a scribbling”, from the Greek word *graphein* - “to write, draw”

**interesting facts:** graffiti as it is known today began in the late 1960s in Philadelphia. Many graffiti artists remain anonymous to protect their identity and reputation.

10. **honeycomb** - the structure bees use to store honey, pollen and eggs.  
e.g. Honeycombs are natural products made by honey bees.

**etymology:** from the Old English word *hunigcamb*.

**interesting facts:** honeycomb wax can be used for making soap and candles; the hexagonal cells of honeycombs are very strong and a honeycomb of just 100 grams can support weight of up to 4 kg.

11. **horizon** - the line that forms the apparent border between earth and sky.

e.g. The moon rose slowly above the horizon.  
Do you think those are rain clouds on the horizon?

**etymology:** from the Greek word *horizon*, which means “limit, divide, separate”

12. **illiteracy** - lack of ability to read and write

e.g. The rates of illiteracy are highest in the poorest countries.  
Illiteracy is the main reason for unemployment.

**etymology:** noun derived from the Latin word *illiteratus*, which means “unlearned, ignorant”

**antonym:** literacy

**interesting facts:** around 757 million people in the world are illiterate; two thirds of these are women.

13. **incognito** - to conceal your identity

e.g. The prince often travelled abroad incognito.  
The famous actress checked into the hotel incognito.

**etymology:** from the Latin word *incognitus*, which means “unknown, not investigated”

**antonyms:** known, openly, unhidden

**interesting facts:** Walt Disney would often visit Disneyland incognito, wearing old clothes and a straw hat.

14. **knuckle** - joint of the finger

e.g. His knuckles were bruised in the fight.  
Martin broke two knuckles when he fell off the bike.

**etymology:** from the German word *knöchel*, which means “little bone”

15. **lamb** - a young sheep

e.g. Mary saw a lamb being born.  
There were around a dozen lambs in the herd.

**etymology:** from the Proto-Germanic word *lambaz*

**interesting facts:** lamb has the lowest cholesterol of all red meats.

16. **malice** - the desire to inflict harm on someone

e.g. There was no malice in her comments.

**etymology:** from the Latin word *malitia* which means “badness, ill will”

**antonyms:** good will, kindness, respect, sympathy

17. **mediocre** - of ordinary or moderate quality

e.g. Parents do not want their children to be mediocre students.

The actors in the film were mediocre.

**etymology:** from the Latin word *mediocris*, which means “moderate, ordinary”

**antonyms:** exceptional, excellent

18. **nausea** - the feeling that you are going to vomit

e.g. Signs of the illness include fever and nausea.

Jane has nausea when travelling by bus.

**etymology:** from the Latin word *nausea* , which means “seasickness”

19. **nocturnal** - of or pertaining to night

e.g. Owls are nocturnal animals.

He spends the nocturnal hours in his observatory.

**etymology:** from the Latin word *nocturnus*, which means “belonging to the night”

**antonyms:** daily, diurnal

20. **orator** - a public speaker

e.g. John was nervous, which made him a bad orator.

**etymology:** from the Latin word *orator*, which means “speaker”

**antonyms:** listener, audience

**interesting facts:** Martin Luther King is one of the most famous orators; he fought for change for African Americans who were denied their civil rights only because of their race.