

Words from Dickens's A Tale of Two Cities

ABYSS, APOCRYPHAL, AVOW, BARBAROUS, CADAVEROUS, CLEMENCY, ECCENTRIC, FERVENT, INCORRIGIBLE, INSENSATE, LANGUIDLY, MAGNANIMOUS, MERCENARY, OBLIVION, RESURRECTION, SACRISTAN, SAGACITY, TYRANNY, VEHEMENCE, VENGEANCE, VIVACIOUS



A wonderful fact to reflect upon, that every human creature is constituted to be that profound secret and mystery to every other. A solemn consideration, when I enter a great city by night, that every one of those darkly clustered houses encloses its own secret; that every room in every one of them encloses its own secret; that every beating heart in the hundreds of thousands of breasts there, is, in some of its imaginings, a secret to the heart nearest it! Something of the awfulness, even of Death itself, is referable to this. No more can I turn the leaves of this dear book that I loved, and vainly hope in time to read it all. No more can I look into the depths of this unfathomable water, wherein, as momentary lights glanced into it, I have had glimpses of buried treasure and other things submerged. It was appointed that the book should shut with a spring, forever and forever, when I had read but a page. It was appointed that the water should be locked in an eternal frost, when the light was playing on its surface, and I stood in ignorance on the shore. My friend is dead, my neighbour is dead, my love, the darling of my soul, is dead; it is the inexorable consolidation and perpetuation of the secret that was always in that individuality, and which I shall carry in mine to my life's end. In any of the burial-places of this city through which I pass, is there a sleeper more inscrutable than its busy inhabitants are, in their innermost personality, to me, or than I am to them?

The Night Shadows from A Tale of Two Cities

Exercise 25-1 Fill-in-the-blanks

Choose the best word to complete each of the following sentences:
(21 marks)

1. ... Glanced down from behind his chimneys at the darkening faces by the fountain below, and sent word to the _____ who kept the keys of the church, that there might be need to ring the tocsin by-and-by. *somebody who looks after the contents of a Christian church, especially those kept in the sacristy*
2. I see a beautiful city and a brilliant people rising from this _____, and, in their struggles to be truly free, in their triumphs and defeats, through long years to come, I see the evil of this time and of the previous time of which this is the natural birth, gradually making expiation for itself and wearing out. *a situation of apparently unending awfulness*
3. 'Well!' said his friend Stryver, 'you take to it more easily than I fancied you would and are less _____ on my behalf that I thought you would be; you know well enough by this time; though, to be sure, you know well enough by this time that your ancient chum is a man of a pretty strong will. *somebody who works or serves only for personal profit*
4. For the crowd came pouring out with a(n) _____ that nearly took him off his legs, and a loud buzz swept into the street as if the baffled blue-flies were dispersing in search of another carrion. *showing conviction or intense feeling*
5. That night—it was the fourteenth of August—he sat up late, and wrote two _____ letters; one was to Lucie, explaining the strong obligation he was under to go to Paris, and showing her, at length, the reasons that he had, for feeling confident that he could become involved in no personal danger there; the other was to the Doctor, confiding Lucie and their dear child to his care, and dwelling on the same topics with the strongest assurances. To both, he wrote that he would despatch letters in proof of his safety, immediately after his arrival. *showing ardent or extremely passionate enthusiasm*
6. Pride, contempt, defiance, stubbornness, submission, lamentation, succeeded one another; so did varieties of sunken cheek, _____ colour, emaciated hands and figures. *suggesting death or corpses*

7. Were but newly released from the horror of being ogled through the windows, by the heads exposed on Temple Bar with a(n) _____ brutality and ferocity worthy of Abyssinia or Ashantee. *entirely lacking in sympathetic feeling or human kindness*
8. The exquisite gentlemen of the finest breeding wore little pendent trinkets that chinked as they _____ moved; these golden fetters rang like precious little bell; *sluggishly or slowly*
9. 'Your _____, Monseigneur! He was not of this part of the country. Of all the days of my life, I never saw him' *Leniency and compassion shown toward offenders by a person or agency charged with administering justice*
10. No _____ Bacchanalian flame leaped out of the pressed grape of Monsieur Defarge; but, a smouldering fire that burnt in the dark, lay hidden in the dregs of it. *exhibiting or characterized by liveliness and high-spiritedness*
11. There was a time in my imprisonment, when my desire for _____ was unbearable. *punishment that is inflicted in return for a wrong*
12. Saint Antoine's blood was up, and the blood of _____ and domination by the iron hand was down – down on the steps of the Hotel de Ville where the governor's body lay—down on the sole of the shoe of Madame Defarge where she had trodden on the body to steady it for mutilation. *dominance through threat of punishment and violence*
13. Which is surely such a(n) _____ aggravation of an originally bad offence, as to justify any such offender's being carried off to some suitably retired spot, and there hanged out of the way. *impossible to correct or reform*
14. "My husband, it is so. I fear he is not to be reclaimed; there is scarcely a hope that anything in his character or fortunes is reparable now. But, I am sure that he is capable of good things, gentle things, even _____ things." *noble and generous in spirit*
15. 'As to the great service,' said Carton, 'I am bound to _____ to you, when you speak of it in that way, that it was mere professional claptrap...'*to state or affirm that something is a fact*
16. Another pause of _____, and he awoke in the sombre morning, unconscious where he was or what had happened, until it flashed upon his mind, "this is the day of my death!" *a state of forgetting everything or of being unaware of surroundings*
17. 'Father,' said Young Jerry, as they walked along: taking care to keep at arm's length and to have the stool well between them: 'what's a(n) _____-Man?' *a bringing back from the dead*
18. The grindstone had a double handle, and, turning at it madly were two men, whose faces, as their long hair Rapped back when the whirlings of the grindstone brought their faces up, were more horrible and cruel than the visages of the wildest savages in their most _____ disguise. False eyebrows and false moustaches were stuck upon them, and their hideous countenances were all bloody and sweaty, and all awry with howling, and all staring and glaring with beastly excitement and want of sleep. *primitive in customs and culture*
19. The kennel, to make amends, ran down the middle of the street - when it ran at all: which was only after heavy rains, and then it ran, by many _____ fits, into houses. *inconsistent; sporadic*
20. 'Why not?' The _____ of the man of business perceived an advantage here, and determined to hold it. *ability to make good judgments*
21. They had been able to extend it, by taking to themselves the upper rooms formerly belonging to the _____ invisible lodger, and they desired nothing more. *of questionable authenticity; not true*

Exercise 25-2 Synonyms

From the three choices, circle the one that is closest in meaning to the list word (in boldface) in the context shown. (21 marks)

- tumbles into a financial **abyss**
a) banking establishment b) pit c) swamp
- according to this somewhat **apocryphal** account
a) obvious b) substantiated c) questionable
- players **avow** that they have not previously been told
a) affirm b) conceal c) deny

4. one of the most **barbarous** and detestable regimes
a) kind b) savage c) sophisticated
5. wrinkles spread like cobwebs across **cadaverous** faces
a) haggard b) glowing c) sanguinary
6. write to the president to urge **clemency**
a) action b) recompense c) mercy
7. aired their frequently **eccentric** views
a) opposing b) conformist c) bizarre
8. offered **fervent** prayers for peace
a) pacific b) ardent c) dark
9. They think of him as an **incorrigible** criminal
a) uncorrectable b) clever c) wanton
10. **insensate** in his lack of reaction to the tragedy
a) tender b) inhumane c) non-vegetable
11. panther stretched **languidly** across the entire couch
a) extravagantly b) fiercely c) leisurely
12. It takes a mature soul to be **magnanimous** at 13 years old
a) exuberant b) generous c) egoistic
13. to serve as **mercenaries** in foreign conflicts
a) intermediaries b) professional soldiers c) ambassadors
14. teetering on **oblivion** after three conference losses
a) heaven b) hell c) limbo
15. prayed for her **resurrection**
a) expulsion b) revitalisation c) murder
16. **sacristan** for Carville's Sacred Heart Chapel
a) sexton b) rector c) spire
17. assets as **sagacity**, judgment, skills, and charisma
a) judgment b) imbecility c) naiveté
18. **tyranny** truly is a horror
a) monarchy b) monocracy c) democracy
19. the **vehemence** of his protest made you wonder
a) volume b) ferocity c) brevity

20. might stop the cycle of **vengeance**
a) retribution b) pardon c) venom
21. strong, **vivacious**, friendly and outgoing
a) vibrant b) sluggish c) innocent

Exercise 25-3 Antonyms

Provide an antonym for each of the following words. (10 x 1 marks)

1. apocryphal _____
2. barbarous _____
3. cadaverous _____
4. eccentric _____
5. fervent _____
6. insensate _____
7. languidly _____
8. sagacity _____
9. vehemence _____
10. vivacious _____

Exercise 25-4 FYI: Eponyms & the Guillotine

When a word derives from the name of a person (real or fictional) it is called an **eponym**. The guillotine is a great example. The **guillotine** is a machine for beheading; its name derives from *Joseph Guillotin*, a French physician who proposed its use in 1789 as more humane than hanging. Instruments used to behead people by means of a weighted blade that slides down vertical posts, had long been employed in Scotland, Germany, and some eastern countries before being introduced into France by Dr. Antoine Louis in the late 18th century. The device, therefore, was called in France a *louisette*. During the French Revolution, a member of the Constituent Assembly, Joseph Ignace Guillotin, urged the new government to adopt the *louisette* as a swift and humane means of carrying out executions. Throughout the months of June and July of 1792, when the Reign of Terror was at its height, more than a thousand people lost their heads to the device that was quickly renamed the *guillotine*, much to the horror and regret of Monsieur Guillotin.

Exercise 25-5 Making Connections

In a few sentences, describe the relationship between each pair of words. Use a good dictionary to clarify unclear words. (5 x 2 marks)

1. APOCRYPHAL LEGENDARY

2. BARBAROUS GENTLEMAN

3. CLEMENCY MERCIFUL

4. INCORRIGIBLE HOPELESS

5. MAGNANIMOUS MISANTHROPIC

