**sycophant** (noun)

**definition:** someone who uses flattery to try to get what he/she wants from an authority figure

**synonym:** flatterer/schmoozer

**antonym:** rebel

**sentence:** The professor recognized the overly attentive student as nothing more than a sycophant.
pernicious (adj.)

definition: intending to cause harm

synonym: harmful/dangerous

antonym: kind/benevolent

sentence: The pernicious ice storm attacked the small coastal town.
ubiquitous (adj.)

definition: appearing everywhere

synonym: omnipresent/pervasive

antonym: scarce/rare

sentence: Baseball caps are ubiquitous among our male student population.
**non sequitur** (noun)

definition: a statement that does not logically follow a conversation's flow

synonym: interruption

antonym: support

sentence: One of the kids in my group of friends is so random; he constantly drops non sequiturs into our conversations.
diatribe (noun)

definition: a forceful and bitter verbal attack

synonym: rant

antonym: conversation

sentence: The candidate for governor lost voter approval when her diatribe about immigration was posted on YouTube.
slipshod (adj.)

definition: showing a lack of care or thought

synonym: botched/sloppy

antonym: exact/perfect

sentence: Greedy contractors ruined my aunt's house with slipshod work.
**nefarious** (adj.)

definition: wicked or criminal

synonym: evil

antonym: angelic

sentence: The nefarious activities of the mafia family were caught on tape.
**precursor** (noun)

**definition:** a person or thing that comes before another of a similar kind

**synonym:** forerunner

**antonym:** result

**sentence:** Seedless watermelons were a precursor to a slew of new bioengineered foods.
impregnable (adj.)

definition: unable to be captured or broken into

synonym: secure

antonym: vulnerable

sentence: The castle was surrounded by an impregnable stone wall.
demure (adj.)

definition: shy or modest

synonym: reserved

antonym: obnoxious

sentence: The demure girl blushed during the health teacher's lecture.
Lesson #3
jingoistic (adj.)

definition: overly patriotic
synonym: nationalistic
antonym: unbiased
sentence: The jingoistic tone of the politician's speech made the audience squirm.
implacable (adj.)

definition: unable to be soothed

synonym: relentless/unyielding

antonym: merciful/yielding

sentence: After the dry cleaner ruined her wedding dress, my sister was filled with implacable rage.
affinity (noun)

definition: a natural skill

synonym: talent

antonym: weakness

sentence: With her affinity for performing, it was no surprise that Julia won the lead in the school musical.
coquette (noun)

definition: a woman who flirts to get what she wants

synonym: tease/vamp

antonym: prude

sentence: The girl coquettishly batted her eyelashes and giggled as the boy told a lame story.
harangue (verb)

definition: lecture at length in an aggressive way

synonym: accost/rant

antonym: discuss

sentence: My cousin is the type of guy who will harangue strangers about smoking in public.
bemoan (verb)

definition: express discontent or sorrow over

synonym: lament/complain

antonym: celebrate/enjoy

sentence: My single friends often bemoan the lack of high-quality people on the dating scene.
misogynist (noun)

definition: someone who hates women

synonym: chauvinist

antonym: feminist

sentence: The supervisor's misogynistic attitude led to an expensive lawsuit.
abhor (verb)
definition: hate
synonym: loathe
antonym: love
sentence: Professional tax preparers abhor a flat tax because it would dry up their business.
talisman (noun)

definition: an object with magical powers to bring good luck

synonym: charm

antonym: jinx

sentence: In many quest stories, an unlikely hero must deliver a talisman to its rightful owner.
placid (adj.)

definition: not easily upset or excited

synonym: calm

antonym: agitated

sentence: The yoga teacher's placid demeanor was soothing to the class.
**bovine** (adj.)

definition: in the manner of a cow

synonym: slow/dim

antonym: quick/bright

sentence: He stared at me with a dull, bovine expression.
facetious (adj.)

definition: treating serious issues with inappropriate humor

synonym: flippant

antonym: respectful

sentence: The girl's snarky, facetious manner made her unpopular with both her peers and adults.
**contrite** (adj.)

**definition:** deeply remorseful for a bad action

**synonym:** apologetic

**antonym:** unrepentant

**sentence:** The contrite boy offered all of his birthday money to fix the window he broke.
erudite (adj.)

definition: showing great knowledge or learning

synonym: intelligent

antonym: dumb/bovine

sentence: The erudite philosopher's lecture drew a large crowd of deep-thinking students.
anomaly (noun)

definition: something that deviates from what is expected or normal

synonym: exception/outlier

antonym: norm

sentence: It was a complete anomaly when Caroline, a freshman, won the title of Homecoming Queen, an honor usually reserved only for senior girls.
**noxious** (adj.)

**definition:** very harmful

**synonym:** poisonous/dangerous

**antonym:** healthful/beneficial

**sentence:** The victims were overcome by noxious fumes.
bilk (verb)

definition: to cheat someone out of money
synonym: scam
antonym: earn
sentence: Bernie Madoff bilked thousands of investors out of their life savings.
replete (adj.)

definition: well-supplied with something

synonym: full

antonym: empty

sentence: The novel, replete with humor and drama, rocketed up the best-sellers' charts.
blasphemy (noun)

definition: profane talk about holy or sacred things

synonym: heresy/sacrilege

antonym: piety/reverence

sentence: The protesters screamed vile blasphemies during the Pope's speech.
absolution (noun)

definition: formal release from guilt or punishment

synonym: forgiveness

antonym: condemnation

sentence: The priest administered absolutions to the sinners.
Lesson #7
cantankerous (adj.)

definition: argumentative and uncooperative

synonym: bad-tempered

antonym: kind/happy

sentence: The crusty, cantankerous old man bellowed at the children as they walked past his house.
deride (verb)

definition: to verbally rip apart
synonym: mock/insult
antonym: compliment
sentence: The professor derided my essay as a clumsy attempt at literary analysis.
debacle (noun)
definition: a disaster
synonym: failure
antonym: success
sentence: The mortgage industry's financial debacle has wounded the entire nation's economy.
temerity (noun)

definition: excessive or foolish boldness

synonym: nerve/rashness

antonym: caution

sentence: She had the temerity to illegally jaywalk right in front of the police officer's car.
ennui (noun)

definition: dissatisfaction or exhaustion caused by boredom

synonym: fatigue

antonym: enthusiasm

sentence: Facing staggering piles of homework with no hope for relief, a heavy sense of ennui filled my soul.
abstain (verb)

definition: restrain oneself from doing or enjoying something

synonym: refrain

antonym: indulge

sentence: To win a bet, he agreed to abstain from junk food for one year.
haughty (adj.)

definition: arrogantly superior

synonym: snobbish/snooty

antonym: accepting/nonjudgmental

sentence: When the boy belched at the dinner table, a look of haughty disdain crossed the hostess' face.
tenacious (adj.)

definition: not letting go of or giving up on something one holds dear

synonym: relentless/adamant

antonym: weak/surrendering

sentence: With tenacious determination, the hobbled runner crawled across the marathon's finish line.
acquiesce (verb)

definition: accept something reluctantly, but without protest

synonym: agree/cave

antonym: disagree/refuse

sentence: The exhausted mother acquiesced to her toddler's demands for a new toy.
lampoon (verb)

definition: publicly ridicule

synonym: mock

antonym: revere

sentence: Jon Stewart has made a career of lampooning politicians.
Lesson #9
curmudgeon (noun)

definition: a bad-tempered person
synonym: crab/grouch
antonym: angel
sentence: The complaining man who works in the next cubicle is nothing but a tired, old curmudgeon.
sojourn (noun)
definition: a temporary stay
synonym: journey
antonym: relocation
sentence: A visit to Shakespeare's Globe Theater made my sojourn to England complete.
gregarious (adj.)

definition: fond of company

synonym: outgoing/social

antonym: shy/anti-social

sentence: My gregarious neighbors are the most popular couple on the block.
augment (verb)

definition: to increase

synonym: add/enlarge

antonym: reduce

sentence: The professor augments his salary by moonlighting as a book editor.
**insidious (adj.)**

definition: advancing in a gradual way to cause harm

synonym: treacherous/crafty

antonym: benign/harmless

sentence: Bed bugs are insidious little creatures; you don't know they're there until it's too late.
engender  (verb)

definition: to cause or give rise to

synonym: create/produce

antonym: destroy/ruin

sentence: Hoping to engender confidence in the economy, the Senate approved the tax cut.
nuance (noun)

definition: a subtle difference

synonym: shade/distinction

antonym: opposite/separation

sentence: Experts on lying can read subtle nuances of facial expressions to determine a suspect's truthfulness.
**covert** (adj.)

**definition:** not openly displayed

**synonym:** secret/hidden

**antonym:** overt/open

**sentence:** The F.B.I. agent was sent on a covert operation.
renown (noun)

definition: the state of being known and celebrated by many

synonym: honor/glory

antonym: disgrace/ridicule

sentence: Many writers of great renown fill the shelves of the school's library.
tangent (noun)

definition: a completely different line of thought

synonym: non sequitur/digression

antonym: point

sentence: My French teacher is well-known for going off on tangents during her lectures.
kismet (noun)

definition: destiny

synonym: fate/serendipity

antonym: coincidence

sentence: When the pretty girl he'd noticed on the bus sat next to him in economics class, the smitten boy knew it was kismet.
exonerate (verb)

definition: remove blame or guilt for a wrongdoing

synonym: clear/erase

antonym: condemn/convict

sentence: After D.N.A. evidence was used to show that the suspect was never at the crime scene, he was exonerated and released from prison.
altruism (noun)
definition: a selfless act
synonym: philanthropy
antonym: greed
sentence: In an act of pure altruism, an anonymous donor paid the college expenses of the entire senior class.
**myopic** (adj.)

**definition:** so focused on one small thing that the whole picture can't be seen

**synonym:** *shortsighted*

**antonym:** *thoughtful/wise*

**sentence:** Historians have been criticized for their myopic viewpoint that most medical advancements came from Europe.
**galvanize** (verb)

definition: shock or excite, typically into taking action

synonym: jolt/inspire

antonym: depress/deter

sentence: The candidate's speech galvanized the young voters to work to change the unjust law.
gauche (adj.)

definition: lacking social grace

synonym: unsophisticated

antonym: classy/refined

sentence: My mother-in-law's formal manners always make me feel gauche.
zenith (noun)

definition: the top of a trajectory; the highest point

synonym: peak/apex

antonym: low/bottom

sentence: The missile reached its zenith and then fell on its target.
**futile** (adj.)

**definition:** incapable of producing any result

**synonym:** useless

**antonym:** effective

**sentence:** With a 17 percent in the class, any efforts to pass the final exam would be futile.
**ruminate (verb)**

definition: to think deeply

synonym: **ponder**

antonym: **ignore**

sentence: The professor asked us to ruminate on the nature of human existence.
**acrimony** (noun)

**definition:** tense bitterness in a relationship

**synonym:** tension/drama

**antonym:** harmony/peace

**sentence:** The acrimony of my parents' divorce was impossible to hide.
Lesson #3
**solace** (noun)

definition: comfort in a time of stress or sadness

synonym: **succor/aid**

antonym: **agitation/stressor**

sentence: When times are tough, many people seek solace in religion.
**insipid** (adj.)

**definition:** lacking taste or class

**synonym:** dumb/trashy

**antonym:** intelligent/sophisticated

**sentence:** Many of today's pop songs are filled with shallow, insipid lyrics.
pedestrian (adj.)

definition: lacking inspiration

synonym: common/flat

antonym: unique/refined

sentence: His pedestrian tastes were satisfied with a diet of mac-n-cheese and frozen pizza.
**visceral (adj.)**

**definition:** from the gut

**synonym:** animalistic/emotional

**antonym:** logical

**sentence:** The voters' visceral fear of change led to the election of the status-quo candidate.
inept (adj.)

definition: having or showing no skill

synonym: clumsy/unskilled

antonym: astute/keen

sentence: His inept handling of the employees' complaints led to a lawsuit.
Lesson #4
mitigate (verb)

definition: to make less severe, serious, or painful

synonym: ease/soften

antonym: enflame/worsen

sentence: She wanted to mitigate misery in the world.
anodyne (noun)

definition: something that kills pain

synonym: soother

antonym: stressor

sentence: The best anodyne for a broken heart is a new love.
vacillate (verb)

definition: to alternate indecisively between two choices

synonym: waver

antonym: decide

sentence: Early in his career, he vacillated between journalism and engineering.
**incendiary** (adj.)

**definition:** designed to start fires or conflict

**synonym:** inflammatory

**antonym:** calming

**sentence:** The girl's incendiary lies required a response.
depravity  (noun)

definition: moral corruption
synonym: wickedness/evil
antonym: benevolence/good
sentence: Edgar Allan Poe's gothic tales are filled with depravity.
Lesson #5
bulwark (noun)

definition: a defensive wall

synonym: shield/fortress

antonym: doorway/entrance

sentence: Well-trained police forces are a bulwark against the breakdown of society.
cajole (verb)

definition: persuade by flattering or gently teasing

synonym: coax

antonym: demand

sentence: He tried to cajole his girlfriend into breaking her curfew.
harbinger (noun)

definition: something that marks the approach of something else

synonym: forerunner

antonym: effect

sentence: The storm clouds on the horizon were a harbinger of doom.
impetuous (adj.)

definition: acting quickly without thought

synonym: impulsive

antonym: cautious

sentence: The impetuous teen had a long history of shoplifting arrests and traffic violations.
extemporaneous (adj.)

definition: spoken or done without preparation

synonym: improvised

antonym: rehearsed/planned

sentence: The student's extemporaneous speech wowed his classmates and teacher alike.
Lesson #6
fetid (adj.)

definition: smelling very unpleasant

synonym: rancid/putrid

antonym: aromatic/perfumed

sentence: The smell of Tom's fetid P.E. uniform, which hadn't been washed in a month, was overwhelming.
**perfunctory** (adj.)

definition: carried out with minimum effort to satisfy the situation

synonym: *cursory/automatic*

antonym: *thoughtful/concerned*

sentence: He gave a perfunctory nod to all of the dinner party guests at the table.
**fracas** (noun)

definition: a noisy disturbance

synonym: **ruckus**

antonym: **peace**

sentence: It took two referees and all of the coaches to end the fracas on the field.
foible (noun)

definition: a small flaw

synonym: defect/kink

antonym: strength

sentence: In marriage, spouses learn to tolerate each other's little foibles.
vacuous (adj.)

definition: showing a lack of thought or intelligence

synonym: \textcolor{green}{dumb/empty-headed}

antonym: \textcolor{red}{intelligent}

sentence: From his vacuous expression, I could tell that he didn't know anything about the homework reading.
reticent (adj.)

definition: not revealing one's thoughts or feelings easily

synonym: hesitant/shy

antonym: open/unrestrained

sentence: The reticent boy rarely spoke about his family.
farcical (adj.)

definition: in a ridiculous manner

synonym: absurd

antonym: realistic/sensible

sentence: Facing a farcical tangle of travel delays, the commuters were trapped for seven hours as they tried to leave the city.
egalitarian (adj.)

definition: relating to the idea of all people deserving equal rights

synonym: fair

antonym: biased

sentence: Our laws should promote a fair, more egalitarian society.
palpable (adj.)

definition: able to be touched or felt

synonym: real/discernable

antonym: hidden/obscure

sentence: The tension between the warring couple was palpable.
charlatan (noun)

definition: a person falsely claiming to have special talents or skills

synonym: fraud/swindler
antonym: talent/expert

sentence: In *Huckleberry Finn*, the King and the Duke are a pair of charlatans.
atrophy (v.)

definition: to gradually decline or waste away

synonym: deteriorate/wither

antonym: grow/strengthen

sentence: A child's imagination will likely atrophy if too much time is spent watching T.V.
quaff (v.)

definition: to drink heartily

synonym: chug

antonym: sip/savor

sentence: Ron eagerly quaffed his mug of Butterbeer while dining at the Three Broomsticks.
collusion (n.)

definition: secret or illegal cooperation, esp. to cheat others

synonym: conspiracy

antonym: disinterest

sentence: A shocking act of collusion between political leaders and media owners was revealed in the testimony.
drivel (n.)

definition: nonsense
synonym: babble
antonym: wisdom
sentence: That critic's reviews are nothing but self-important drivel.
stoic (adj.)

definition: able to endure hardship without showing pain or complaining

synonym: unemotional/staid

antonym: weepy/wimpy

sentence: The stoic soldier held his salute while his comrade was laid to rest.
**intrepid (adj.)**

**definition:** brave and adventurous

**synonym:** bold

**antonym:** fearful/cautious

**sentence:** The intrepid reporter eagerly accepted the assignment in the war-torn country.
balk (v.)

definition: to be unwilling to accept an idea or request

synonym: refuse

antonym: embrace/accept

sentence: When the 12-year-old asked for an iPhone, her parents balked at the idea.
**gaunt** (adj.)

definition: too thin, as in suffering from hunger or illness

synonym: bony/undernourished

antonym: corpulent/fleshy

sentence: The gaunt faces of District 12 haunted Katniss' dreams.
persnickety (adj.)

definition: placing too much emphasis on minor or unimportant details

synonym: fussy

antonym: unconcerned/easy-going

sentence: The persnickety teacher took points from my score because I used blue ink instead of black.
**whet (v.)**

**definition:** to sharpen the point of something

**synonym:** hone

**antonym:** dull/weaken

**sentence:** Allow me to whet your appetite with a description of the chef's specials.