

The
**American
Heritage[®] Dictionary**
of the English Language

FOURTH EDITION



HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
Boston New York

Words are included in this Dictionary on the basis of their usage. Words that are known to have current trademark registrations are shown with an initial capital and are also identified as trademarks. No investigation has been made of common-law trademark rights in any word, because such investigation is impracticable. The inclusion of any word in this Dictionary is not, however, an expression of the Publisher's opinion as to whether or not it is subject to proprietary rights. Indeed, no definition in this Dictionary is to be regarded as affecting the validity of any trademark.

American Heritage® and the eagle logo are registered trademarks of Forbes Inc. Their use is pursuant to a license agreement with Forbes Inc.

Copyright © 2000 Houghton Mifflin Company. All rights reserved.

No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying and recording, or by any information storage or retrieval system without the prior written permission of Houghton Mifflin Company unless such copying is expressly permitted by federal copyright law. Address inquiries to Reference Permissions, Houghton Mifflin Company, 222 Berkeley Street, Boston, MA 02116.

Visit our Web site: www.hmco.com/trade.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

The American Heritage dictionary of the English language.—4th ed.
p. cm.
ISBN 0-395-82517-2 (hardcover) — ISBN 0-618-08230-1
(hardcover with CD ROM)
1. English language—Dictionaries
PE1628 .A623 2000
423—dc21

00-025369

Manufactured in the United States of America

chal·enge (chāl'ənj) *n.* **1a.** A call to engage in a contest, fight, or competition: *a challenge to a duel.* **b.** An act or statement of defiance; a call to confrontation: *a challenge to the government's authority.* **2.** A demand for explanation or justification; a calling into question: *a challenge to a theory.* **3.** A sentry's call to an unknown party for proper identification. **4.** A test of one's abilities or resources in a demanding but stimulating undertaking: *a career that offers a challenge.* **5.** A claim that a vote is invalid or that a voter is unqualified. **6.** Law A formal objection to the inclusion of a prospective juror in a jury. **7.** Immunology The induction or evaluation of an immune response in an organism by administration of a specific antigen to which it has been sensitized. **♦ v.** **-lenged, -leng·ing, -leng·es** —*tr.* **1a.** To call to engage in a contest, fight, or competition: *challenged me to a game of chess.* **b.** To invite with defiance; dare: *challenged him to contradict her.* See synonyms at **defy**. **2.** To take exception to; call into question; dispute: *a book that challenges established beliefs.* **3.** To order to halt and be identified, as by a sentry. **4.** Law To take formal objection to (a prospective juror). **5.** To question the qualifications of (a voter) or validity of (a vote). **6.** To have due claim to; call for: *events that challenge our attention.* **7.** To summon to action, effort, or use; stimulate: *a problem that challenges the imagination.* **8.** Immunology To induce or evaluate an immune response in (an organism) by administering a specific antigen to which it has been sensitized. —*in·tr.* **1.** To make or give voice to a challenge. **2.** To begin barking upon picking up the scent. Used of hunting dogs. [Middle English *chalege*, from Old French, from Latin *calumniā*, trickery, false accusation; see CALUMNY. *V.*, from Middle English *chalenen*, from Old French *chalengier*, from Latin *calumniari*, from *calumniā*.] —**chal·enge·a·ble** *adj.* **chal·lenged** (chāl'ənjd) *adj.* **1.** Having a disability or impairment. **2.** Deficient or lacking: *an ethically challenged politician.*

Usage Note People who object to the terms *disabled* and *handicapped* as being too negative sometimes propose the substitution of *challenged* instead, as in referring to persons with physical disabilities as *physically challenged*. While this particular phrase is quite popular, it is sometimes taken to be condescending, and similar usages such as *mentally challenged* have failed to win equal acceptance. Indeed, the widespread parody of *challenged* in such expressions as *electronically challenged* for "inept at using computers" has effectively eliminated it as an all-purpose alternative to *disabled* or *handicapped*.

chal·lenger (chāl'ənj-ə) *n.* **1.** One that challenges: *a challenger of established authority.* **2.** Sports One who competes against the holder of a title or championship, as in boxing.

chal·leng·ing (chāl'ənj-ŋ) *adj.* **1.** Calling for full use of one's abilities or resources in a difficult but stimulating effort: *a challenging course of study; a challenging role for an inexperienced performer.* **2.** Absorbing; intriguing: *a challenging idea.*

chal·lis (shāl'ē) *n.* A soft, lightweight, usually printed fabric made of wool, cotton, or rayon. [Possibly from the surname *Challis*.]

Chal·mette (shāl-mēt') *n.* A village of extreme southeast Louisiana on the east bank of the Mississippi River just below New Orleans. It is a processing center. Population: 31,860.

cha·lone (kā'lōn', kāl'ōn') *n.* Any of several polypeptides that are produced by a body tissue and that cause the reversible inhibition of mitosis in the cells of that tissue. [From Greek *khalōn*, present participle of *khalān*, to slacken.]

Chā·lons-sur-Marne (shā-lōn'sūr-mār'n', -sūr-) *n.* A city of northeast France east of Paris. The Huns under Attila were defeated here in A.D. 451. Population: 51,137.

cha·lyb·e·ate (kā-līb'ē-īt, -lē'bē-) *adj.* **1.** Impregnated with or containing salts of iron. **2.** Tasting like iron, as water from a mineral spring. **♦ n.** Water or medicine containing iron in solution. [New Latin *chalybeatus*, from Latin *chalybs*, steel, from Greek *khalyps*, *khalub-*, possibly from *Khalups*, sing. of *Khalubēs*, Chalybes, people of Asia Minor famous for their steel.]

cham (kām) *n.* *Archaic* A Tartar or Mogul khan. [French, from Turkish *khan*, lord, prince. See KHAN'.]

Cha·mae·leon also **Cha·me·leon** (kā-mē'lē-ən, -mē'lē-ən) *n.* A constellation in the southern polar region near Apus and Mensa. [Latin *chamaeleōn*, chameleon. See CHAMELEON.]

cham·ae·phyte (kām'a-fīt') *n.* A low-growing perennial plant whose dormant overwintering buds are borne at or just above the surface of the ground. [Greek *khamai*, on the ground; see *dhghem-* in Appendix I + *-PHYTE*.]

cham·ber (chām'ber) *n.* **1.** A room in a house, especially a bedroom. **2.** A room where a person of authority, rank, or importance receives visitors. **3.** **chambers** A room in which a judge may consult privately with attorneys or hear cases not taken into court. **4.** **chambers** Chiefly British A suite of rooms, especially one used by lawyers. **5.** A hall for the meetings of a legislative or other assembly. **6.** A legislative or judicial body. **7.** A board or council. **8.** A place where municipal or state funds are received and held; a treasury. **9a.** An enclosed space or compartment: *the chamber of a pump; a compression chamber.* **b.** An enclosed space in the body of an organism; a cavity: *the four chambers of the heart.* **10a.** A compartment in a firearm, as in the breech of a rifle or the cylinder of a revolver, that holds the cartridge in readiness for firing. **b.** An enclosed space in the bore of a gun that holds the charge. **♦ tr. v. -bered, -ber·ing, -bers** **1.** To put in or as if in a chamber; enclose or confine. **2.** To furnish with a chamber. **3.** To design or manufacture (a firearm) to hold a specific type of cartridge. [Middle English *chambre*, from Old French *chambre*, from Late Latin *camera*, chamber, from Latin, vault, from Greek *kamarā*.]

cham·bered nautilus (chām'berd) *n.* See *nautilus* (sense 1).

cham·ber·lain (chām'ber-lān) *n.* **1a.** An officer who manages the household of a sovereign or noble; a chief steward. **b.** A high-ranking official in various royal courts. **2.** An official who receives the rents and fees of a municipality; a treasurer. **3.** *Roman Catholic Church* An often honorary papal attendant. [Middle English *chamberleyn*, from Old French *chamberlenc*, from Frankish **kamerling*: Late Latin *camera*, chamber; see CHAMBER + Germanic **-linga-*, one connected with; see *-LING*.]

Cham·ber·lain (chām'ber-līn), (Arthur) Neville 1869–1940, British politician and prime minister (1937–1940) who advocated a policy of appeasement toward the fascist regimes of Europe. He was forced to declare war on Germany after its invasion of Poland in 1939.

Chamberlain, Sir (Joseph) Austen 1863–1937. British politician who helped establish the Locarno Pact. He shared the 1925 Nobel Peace Prize.

Chamberlain, Wilton Norman Known as "Wilt." 1936–1999. American basketball player. He ranks among the all-time leading NBA scorers and rebounders and holds the record for most points (100) scored in a single game.

Cham·ber·lin (chām'ber-līn), Thomas Chrowder 1843–1928. American geologist who with the astronomer Forest Ray Moulton (1872–1952) proposed (1906) the planetesimal hypothesis for the formation of the planets in the solar system.

cham·ber·maid (chām'ber-mād') *n.* A maid who cleans and cares for bedrooms, as in a hotel.

chamber music *n.* Compositions traditionally intended for performance in a private room or small concert hall and written for an instrumental ensemble, such as a trio or quartet, with one player for each part.

chamber of commerce *n., pl. chambers of commerce* *Abb.* C. of C. An association of businesspersons and merchants for the promotion of commercial interests in the community.

chamber pot *n.* A portable vessel used in a bedroom as a toilet.

Cham·bers (chām'berz), (Jay David) Whittaker 1901–1961. American journalist and onetime member of the Communist Party who testified before the House Un-American Activities Committee (1948), where he implicated Alger Hiss.

Cham·bers·burg (chām'berz-būrg') A borough of southern Pennsylvania southwest of Harrisburg. It was burned by the Confederate cavalry in July 1864 after the townspeople refused to pay an indemnity of \$100,000 in gold. Population: 16,647.

chamber tomb *n.* A Neolithic tomb consisting of a chamber built out of large upright stones with one or more capstones, buried in an earthen mound.

Cham·bord (shām-bōr') A village of north-central France northeast of Tours. It is noted for its magnificent Renaissance château built by Francis I.

cham·bray (shām'brā') *n.* A fine lightweight fabric woven with white threads across a colored warp. [Alteration of French *cambray*, *cambric*, after *Cambrat*, a city of northern France.]

cha·me·leon (kā-mē'lē-ən, -mē'lē-ən) *n.* **1.** Any of various tropical Old World lizards of the family Chamaeleonidae, characterized by their ability to change color. **2.** See **anole**. **3.** A changeable or inconstant person: "In his testimony, the nominee came off as . . . a chameleon of legal philosophy" (Joseph A. Califano, Jr.). [Middle English *camelion*, from Latin *chamaeleōn*, from Greek *khamailēōn*: *khamai*, on the ground; see *dhghem-* in Appendix I + *leōn*, lion (loan translation of Akkadian *nēš qaqqari*, ground lion, lizard); see **LION**.] —**cha·me·le·on'ic** (-lē-ōn'ik) *adj.*

Word History The words referring to the animal chameleon and the plant chamomile are related etymologically by a reference to the place one would expect to find them, that is, on the ground. The first part of both words goes back to the Greek form *khamai*, meaning "on the ground." What is found on the ground in each case is quite different, of course. The *khamailēōn* is a "lion [leōn] on the ground," a term translating the Akkadian phrase *nēš qaqqari*. The *khamaimēlon* is "an apple [mēlon] on the ground," so named because the blossoms of at least one variety of this creeping herb have an applelike scent. Both words are first found in Middle English, *chameleon* in a work composed before 1382 and *chamomile* in a work written in 1373.

Cha·me·leon (kā-mē'lē-ən, -mē'lē-ən) *n.* Variant of **Chamaeleon**. **cham·fer** (chām'far) *tr. v. -fered, -fer·ing, -fers* **1.** To cut off the edge or corner of; bevel. **2.** To cut a groove in; flute. **♦ n.** **1.** A flat surface made by cutting off the edge or corner of a block of wood or other material. **2.** A furrow or groove, as in a column. [Probably back-formation from *chamfering*, from French *chanfrein*, bevelled edge, from past participle of Old French *chanfreindre*, to bevel: *chant*, edge (from Latin *canthus*, iron tire; see **CANT**) + *freindre*, to break (from Latin *frangere*; see **bhreg-** in Appendix I).]

cham·fron (chām'frōn) *n.* Armor used to protect the front of a war horse's head in medieval times. [Middle English *shamfron*, from Old French *chanfrein*: Latin *cāmus*, horse-muzzle, heavy necklace (from Greek *kēmos*) + Latin *frēnum*, bridle, bit; see **FRENUM**.]

cha·mi·se (chā-mēz') also **cha·mi·so** (-mē'sō) *n., pl. -ses* also **-sos** An evergreen shrub (*Adenostoma fasciculatum*) in the rose family, native to California, having small needlelike leaves in fascicles and clusters of small white flowers. [Spanish *chamisa*, from Galician *chamiga*, dry brush, firewood, from *chama*, flame, from Latin *flamma*. See **FLAME**.]

Cha·mi·zal (shām'ī-zāl', chām'ī-sāl') An area on the northern bank of the Rio Grande near El Paso, Texas. It became part of the United States



chameleon
Meller's chameleon
Chamaeleo melleri

V V

𐤅 𐤅 𐤅
Phoenician

Ϝ
Greek

V
Roman

Early-twentieth-century Belgian letter by René Magritte from the cover of sheet music for Langlois's "Valse d'Amour."



v or **V** (vē) *n.*, *pl.* **v's** or **V's** also **vs** or **Vs** 1. The 22nd letter of the modern English alphabet. 2. Any of the speech sounds represented by the letter *v*. 3. The 22nd in a series. 4. Something shaped like the letter *V*. **V**¹ 1. The symbol for the element **vanadium**. 2. *Electricity* The symbol for **potential difference**. 3. also **v** The symbol for the Roman numeral 5. **V**² *abbr.* 1. velocity 2. victory 3. vocative 4. volt 5. volume 6. vowel **V-1** (vē'wūn') *n.* A robot bomb deployed by the Germans in World War II. [German *Vergeltungswaffe eins*, retaliation weapon (number) one.] **V-2** (vē'tōō') *n.* A long-range liquid-fuel rocket used by the Germans as a ballistic missile in World War II. [German *Vergeltungswaffe zwei*, retaliation weapon (number) two.] **V-6** (vē'sīks') *n.* A V-engine having six cylinders. **V-8** (vē'āt') *n.* A V-engine having eight cylinders. **v.** *abbr.* 1. verb 2. verse 3. version 4. verso 5. versus 6. vide 7. volume (book) **V.** *abbr.* 1. venerable (in titles) 2. very (in titles) 3a. viscount b. viscountess **VA** *abbr.* 1. Veterans Administration 2. vicar apostolic 3. also **Va.** Virginia 4. volt-ampere **.va** *abbr.* Vatican City (in Internet addresses) **Vaal** (vāl) A river rising in eastern South Africa and flowing about 1,207 km (750 mi) southwest to the Orange River. **VAB** *abbr.* voice answer back **VAC** (vāk) *n.* *Informal* A vacuum cleaner. **vac.** *abbr.* 1. vacancy 2. vacation 3. vacuum **vacancy** (vā'kən-sē) *n.*, *pl.* **-cies** 1. The condition of being vacant or unoccupied. 2. An empty or unoccupied space. 3. A position, office, or place of accommodation that is unfilled or unoccupied. 4. Emptiness of mind; inanity. 5. A crystal defect caused by the absence of an atom, ion, or molecule in a crystal lattice. 6. *Archaic* A period of leisure; idleness. **vacant** (vā'kənt) *adj.* 1. Containing nothing; empty. 2. Without an incumbent or occupant; unfilled: *a vacant position*. 3. Not occupied or put to use: *a vacant lot*. 4. *Law* Not claimed by an heir: *a vacant estate*. 5a. Lacking intelligence or knowledge: *a vacant mind*. b. Lacking expression; blank: *a vacant stare*. 6. Not filled with any activity: *vacant hours*. See synonyms at **empty**. [Middle English, from Old French, from Latin *vacāns*, *vacant-*, present participle of *vacāre*, to be empty. See **eue-** in Appendix I.] **vacantly** *adv.* **vacantness** *n.* **vacate** (vā'kāt', vā-kāt') *v.* **-catēd**, **-cat'ing**, **-cates** —*tr.* 1a. To cease to occupy or hold; give up. b. To empty of occupants or incumbents. 2. *Law* To make void or annul; countermand: *vacate a death sentence*. —*intr.* To leave a job, office, or lodging. [Latin *vacāre*, *vacāt-*, to be empty. See **eue-** in Appendix I.] **vacation** (vā-kā'shən, vā-) *n.* 1. A period of time devoted to pleasure, rest, or relaxation, especially one with pay granted to an employee. 2a. A holiday. b. A fixed period of holidays, especially one during which a school, court, or business suspends activities. 3. *Archaic* The act or an instance of vacating. ♦ *intr.v.* **-tioned**, **-tion'ing**, **-tions** To take or spend a vacation. [Middle English *vacacioun*, from Old French *vacation*, from Latin *vacātiō*, *vacātiōn-*, freedom from occupation, from *vacātus*, past participle of *vacāre*, to be empty, at leisure. See **eue-** in Appendix I.] **vacationeer**, **vac'ation'er** (vā-kā'shən-ēer') (-shā-nēr') *n.* **vacationist** (vā-kā'shə-nīst, vā-) *n.* One who is on vacation. **vacationland** (vā-kā'shən-lānd') *n.* A place with special attractions for those on vacation. **Vacaville** (vāk'ə-vīl') A city of central California west-southwest of Sacramento. It is a processing center. Population: 71,479. **vacational** (vāk'sə-nəl, vāk-sēl') *adj.* 1. Of or relating to vaccination or a vaccine. 2. Induced by vaccination. **vacinate** (vāk'sə-nāt') *v.* **-nat'ed**, **-nat'ing**, **-nates** —*tr.* To

inoculate with a vaccine in order to produce immunity to an infectious disease, such as diphtheria or typhus. —*intr.* To perform vaccinations or a vaccination. **vacination** (vāk'sə-nā'shən) *n.* 1. Inoculation with a vaccine in order to protect against a particular disease. 2. A scar left on the skin by vaccinating. **vaccine** (vāk-sēn', vāk'sēn') *n.* 1a. A preparation of a weakened or killed pathogen, such as a bacterium or virus, or of a portion of the pathogen's structure that upon administration stimulates antibody production or cellular immunity against the pathogen but is incapable of causing severe infection. b. A preparation from the cowpox virus that protects against smallpox. 2. *Computer Science* A software program designed to detect and stop the progress of computer viruses. [From Latin *vaccinus*, of cows, from *vacca*, cow.] **vacinee** (vāk'sə-nē') *n.* One that has been vaccinated. **vacinia** (vāk-sīn'ē-ə) *n.* 1. See **cowpox**. 2. The usually mild, cutaneous and sometimes systemic reaction in individuals who have been inoculated with smallpox vaccine. [New Latin *vaccinia*, from Latin *vaccinus*, of cows. See **VACCINE**.] **vacinal** *adj.* **vacinology** (vāk'sə-nōl'ə-jē) *n.* The science or methodology of vaccine development. **vacinologist** *n.* **vacillate** (vās'ə-lāt') *intr.v.* **-lat'ed**, **-lat'ing**, **-lates** 1. To sway from one side to the other; oscillate. 2. To swing indecisively from one course of action or opinion to another. See synonyms at **hesitate**. [Latin *vacillāre*, *vacillāt-*, to waver.] **vacillatingly** *adv.* **vacillation** *n.* **vacillator** *n.* **vacillatory** (vās'ə-lā-tōr'ē, -tōr'ē) *adj.* Inclined to waver; irresolute. **vacuum** (vāk'yōō-ə) *n.* A plural of **vacuum**. **vacuity** (vā-kyōō'tē, vā-) *n.*, *pl.* **-ties** 1. Total absence of matter; emptiness. 2. An empty space; a vacuum. 3. Total lack of ideas; emptiness of mind. 4. Absence of meaningful occupation; idleness: *"the crew, being patient people, much given to slumber and vacuity"* (Washington Irving). 5. The quality or fact of being devoid of something specified: *a vacuity of taste; a vacuity of emotions*. 6. Something, especially a remark, that is pointless or inane: *a conversation full of vacuities*. [Middle English *vacuite*, from Old French, from Latin *vacuitās*, from *vacuus*, empty. See **VACUUM**.] **vacuolar membrane** *n.* See **tonoplast**. **vacuolate** (vāk'yōō-ō-lā'tēd) also **vacuolate** (-lāt', -līt) *adj.* Containing vacuoles or a vacuole. **vacuole** (vāk'yōō-ōl') *n.* A small cavity in the cytoplasm of a cell, bound by a single membrane and containing water, food, or metabolic waste. [French, from Latin *vacuus*, empty. See **VACUUM**.] **vacuolar** (-ōl'ar, -lār') *adj.* **vacuolation** *n.* **vacuous** (vāk'yōō-əs) *adj.* 1. Devoid of matter; empty. 2a. Lacking intelligence; stupid. b. Devoid of substance or meaning; inane: *a vacuous comment*. c. Devoid of expression; vacant: *"The narrow, swinelike eyes were open, no more vacuous in death than they had been in life"* (Nicholas Proffitt). 3. Lacking serious purpose or occupation; idle. See synonyms at **empty**. [From Latin *vacuus*, empty. See **VACUUM**.] **vacuously** *adv.* **vacuousness** *n.* **vacuum** (vāk'yōō-əm, -yōōm, -yōm) *n.*, *pl.* **-uums** or **-u-a** (-yōō-ə) 1a. Absence of matter. b. A space empty of matter. c. A space relatively empty of matter. d. A space in which the pressure is significantly lower than atmospheric pressure. 2. A state of emptiness; a void. 3. A state of being sealed off from external or environmental influences; isolation. 4. *pl.* **-uums** A vacuum cleaner. ♦ *adj.* 1. Of, relating to, or used to create a vacuum. 2. Containing air or other gas at a reduced pressure. 3. Operating by means of suction or by maintaining a partial vacuum. ♦ *tr.* & *intr.v.* **-umed**, **-um'ing**, **-umes** To clean with or use a vacuum

cleaner. [Latin, empty space, from neuter of *vacuus*, empty, from *vacāre*, to be empty. See *eua-* in Appendix I.]

vacuum aspiration *n.* A method of abortion performed during the first trimester of pregnancy, in which the contents of the uterus are withdrawn through a narrow tube. Also called *suction curettage*, *vacuum curettage*.

vacuum bottle *n.* A bottle or flask having a vacuum between its inner and outer walls, designed to maintain the desired temperature of the contents. Also called *vacuum flask*.

vacuum casting *n.* The casting of metals under a vacuum.

vacuum cleaner *n.* An electrical appliance that cleans surfaces by suction.

vacuum curettage *n.* See *vacuum aspiration*.

vacuum drying *n.* Removal of liquid material from a solution or mixture under reduced air pressure, which results in drying at a lower temperature than is required at full pressure.

vacuum flask *n.* See *vacuum bottle*.

vacuum gauge *n.* A device for measuring pressures below atmospheric pressure.

vacuum-packed (vāk'yōō-əm-pākt', -yōōm-, vāk'yəm-) *adj.* 1. Packed in an airtight container. 2. Sealed under low pressure or a partial vacuum.

vacuum pump *n.* 1. A pump used to evacuate an enclosure. 2. See *pulsometer*.

vacuum tube *n.* *Abbr.* VT An electron tube from which all or most of the gas has been removed, permitting electrons to move with low interaction with any remaining gas molecules.

va-de me-cum (vā'dē mē'kəm, vā'dē mā'-) *n., pl. va-de me-cums* 1. A useful thing that one constantly carries about. 2. A book, such as a guidebook, for ready reference. [Latin *vade mecum*, go with me: *vade*, sing. imperative of *vādere*, to go + *mē*, ablative sing. of *egō*, I + *cum*, with.]

VADM *abbr.* vice admiral

Vadod-da-ra (vā-dō'dā-rā') or **Baro-da** (bā-rō'dā) A city of west-central India southeast of Ahmadabad. Once the capital of the princely state of *Baroda*, it is noted for its public buildings, palaces, and Hindu temples. Population: 1,031,346.

va-dose (vā'dōs') *adj.* Of, relating to, or being water that is located in the zone of aeration in the earth's crust above the ground water level. [Latin *vadōsus*, shallow, from *vadum*, a shallow, ford.]

Vaduz (vā-dōōts', fā-) The capital of Liechtenstein, in the western part of the country on the Rhine River. Destroyed during a conflict between Switzerland and the Holy Roman Empire (1499), it was rebuilt in the 1520s and is now a tourist center. Population: 4,927.

vag-a-bond (vāg'ə-bōnd') *n.* 1. A person without a permanent home who moves from place to place. 2. A vagrant; a tramp. 3. A wanderer; a rover. *adj.* 1. Of, relating to, or characteristic of a wanderer; nomadic. 2. Aimless; drifting. 3. Irregular in course or behavior; unpredictable. *intr.v.* **-bonded**, **-bonding**, **-bonds** To lead the life of a vagabond; roam about. [Middle English *vagabonde*, from Old French *vagabond*, from Late Latin *vagabundus*, wandering, from Latin *vagari*, to wander, from *vagus*, wandering.] **-vag'a-bond'age** *n.* **-vag'a-bond'ism** *n.*

vag-gal (vā'gal) *adj.* Of or relating to the vagus nerve. **-vag'gal-ly** *adv.*

vag-ga-ry (vā'gā-rē, vā-gār'ē) *n., pl. -ries* An extravagant or erratic notion or action. [From Latin *vagari*, to wander, from *vagus*, wandering.]

vag-gi (vā'gi, -jī) *n.* Plural of *vagus*.

vag-gile (vā'jīl, -il) *adj.* Characterized by vagility; able to move about or disperse in a given environment: a *vagile animal species*. [Latin *vagus*, wandering + *-ile*.]

vag-gil-ity (vā-jīl'itē, vā-) *n.* The capacity or tendency of an organism or a species to move about or disperse in a given environment.

vag-gi-na (vā-jī'nā) *n., pl. -nas* or **-nae** (-nē) 1. *Anatomy* a. The passage leading from the opening of the vulva to the cervix of the uterus in female mammals. b. A similar part in some invertebrates. 2. *Botany* A sheathlike structure, such as the leaf of a grass that surrounds a stem. [Latin *vagina*, sheath.]

vag-gi-nal (vā-jī'nāl) *adj.* 1. Of or relating to the vagina. 2. Relating to or resembling a sheath. **-vag'gi-nal-ly** *adv.*

vag-gi-nate (vā-jī'nāt, -nāt') also **vag-gi-nat'ed** (-nāt'id) *adj.* 1. Forming or enclosed in a sheath. 2. Resembling a sheath.

vag-gi-nec-to-my (vā-jī'nēk'tō-mē) *n., pl. -mies* 1. Surgical removal of all or part of the vagina. 2. Surgical removal of the serous membrane covering the testis and epididymus.

vag-gi-nis-mus (vā-jī'nīz'məs) *n.* A usually prolonged and painful contraction or spasm of the vagina. [New Latin *vaginismus*: *VAGIN(A)* + Latin *-ismus*, -ism.]

vag-gi-ni-tis (vā-jī'nīt'is) *n.* Inflammation of the vagina. Also called *colpitis*.

vag-gi-no-sis (vā-jī'nō'sīs) *n.* A disease of the vagina.

vag-got-o-my (vā-gōt'ō-mē) *n., pl. -mies* Surgical division of fibers of the vagus nerve, used to diminish acid secretion of the stomach and control a duodenal ulcer. [*VAG(US)* + *-TOMY*.]

vag-got-to-ni-a (vā-gōt'tō'nē-ā) *n.* Overactivity or irritability of the vagus nerve, adversely affecting function of the blood vessels, stomach, and muscles. [*VAG(US)* + *-TONIA*.] **-vag'go-ton'ic** (-tōn'ik) *adj.*

vag-got-tro-pic (vā-gōt'trō'pik, -trōp'ik) *adj.* Affecting or acting on the vagus nerve. Used chiefly of a drug. [*VAG(US)* + *-TROPIC*.]

vag-gran-cy (vā'grān-sē) *n., pl. -cies* 1a. The state or condition of being a vagrant. b. The conduct or mode of existence of a vagrant. c.

The offense of being a vagrant. 2. A wandering in mind or thought.

va-grant (vā'grānt) *n.* 1. One who wanders from place to place without a permanent home or a means of livelihood. 2. A wanderer; a rover. 3. One who lives on the streets and constitutes a public nuisance. *adj.* 1. Wandering from place to place and lacking any means of support. 2. Wayward; unrestrained; a *vagrant impulse*. 3. Moving in a random fashion; not fixed in place: "Thanks to a *vagrant current* of the Gulf Stream, a stretch of the Kola coast is free of ice year round" (Jack Beatty). [Middle English *vagraunt*, probably alteration of Old French *wacrant*, present participle of *wacrer*, to wander, of Germanic origin.] **-va-grant-ly** *adv.*

vague (vāg) *adj.* **vagu-er**, **vagu-est** 1. Not clearly expressed; inexplicit. 2. Not thinking or expressing oneself clearly. 3. Lacking definite shape, form, or character; indistinct: saw a *vague outline* of a building through the fog. 4. Not clear in meaning or application. See synonyms at *ambiguous*. 5. Indistinctly felt, perceived, understood, or recalled; hazy: a *vague uneasiness*. [French, from Old French *wacrant*, wandering, from Latin *vagus*.] **-vague-ly** *adv.* **-vague-ness** *n.*

va-gus (vā'gas) *n., pl. -gi* (-gī, -jī) The vagus nerve.

vagus nerve *n.* Either of the tenth and longest of the cranial nerves, passing through the neck and thorax into the abdomen and supplying sensation to part of the ear, the tongue, the larynx, and the pharynx, motor impulses to the vocal cords, and motor and secretory impulses to the abdominal and thoracic viscera. Also called *pneumogastric nerve*. [New Latin (*nervus*) *vagus*, wandering (nerve), from Latin.]

Váh (vā, vāh) A river, about 394 km (245 mi) long, of western Slovakia flowing west and south to the Danube River.

va-hi-ne (vā-hē'nē, -nā) *n.* Variant of *wahine*.

vail (vāl) *v.* **vailed**, **vailing**, **vails** *Archaic* —*tr.* 1. To lower (a banner, for example). 2. To doff (one's hat) as a token of respect or submission. —*intr.* 1. To descend; lower. 2. To doff one's hat. [Middle English *valen*, short for *avalen*, from Old French *avaler*, from *aval*, downward, from Latin *ad vallem*, to the valley: *ad*, to; see *AD-* + *vallem*, accusative of *vallēs*, valley; see *wel-* in Appendix I.]

vail (vāl) *n.* *Obsolete* Variant of *veil*.

vain (vān) *adj.* **vain-er**, **vain-est** 1. Not yielding the desired outcome; fruitless: a *vain attempt*. 2. Lacking substance or worth: *vain talk*. 3. Excessively proud of one's appearance or accomplishments; conceited. 4. *Archaic* Foolish. —*idiom*: **in vain** 1. To no avail; without success: *Our labor was in vain*. 2. In an irreverent or disrespectful manner: *took the Lord's name in vain*. [Middle English, from Old French, from Latin *vānus*, empty. See *eua-* in Appendix I.] **-vain-ly** *adv.* **-vain-ness** *n.*

Synonyms *vain*, empty, hollow, idle, nugatory, otiose These adjectives mean lacking value or substance: *vain regrets*; *empty pleasures*; *hollow threats*; *idle dreams*; *nugatory commentaries*; *an otiose belief in alchemy*. See also synonyms at *futile*.

vain-glo-ri-ous (vān-glōr'ē-əs, -glōr'ē-) *adj.* 1. Characterized by or exhibiting excessive vanity; boastful. 2. Proceeding from vainglory. **-vain-glo'ri-ous-ly** *adv.* **-vain-glo'ri-ous-ness** *n.*

vain-glo-ry (vān-glōr'ē, -glōr'ē, vān-glōr'ē, -glōr'ē) *n., pl. -ries* 1. Boastful, unwarranted pride in one's accomplishments or qualities. 2. Vain, ostentatious display. [Middle English *vein glory*, from Old French *vaine gloire*, from Latin *vāna glōria*, empty pride: *vāna*, feminine of *vānus*, empty; see *VAIN* + *glōria*, glory, pride.]

vair (vār) *n.* 1. A fur, probably squirrel, much used in medieval times to line and trim robes. 2. *Heraldry* A representation of fur. [Middle English, from Old French, variegated, vair, from Latin *varius*, variegated.]

Vaish-na-va (vīsh'nā-vā) *n.* *Hinduism* One who worships Vishnu. [From Sanskrit *vaishṇava-*, relating to Vishnu, from *Viṣṇuḥ*, Vishnu.] **-Vaish'na-ism** (-vīz'am) *n.*

Vais-ya (vī'shā, vīsh'yā) *n.* A member of the second-lowest of the four major castes of traditional Indian society, comprising farmers, herders, merchants, and businessmen. *adj.* Of or relating to the class of Vaisyas. [Sanskrit *vaiśyaḥ*, settler, homesteader, from *viśaḥ*, house. See *weik-* in Appendix I.]

Val *abbr.* valley

val-ance (vāl'əns, vāl'əns) *n.* 1. An ornamental drapery hung across a top edge, as of a bed, table, or canopy. 2. A short drapery, decorative board, or metal strip mounted especially across the top of a window to conceal structural fixtures. *tr.v.* **-anced**, **-ancing**, **-ances** To supply with valances or a valance. [Middle English.]

Val-dai Hills also **Val-day Hills** (vāl-dī') An upland region of northwest Russia between St. Petersburg and Moscow. It forms the watershed for numerous rivers, including the Volga, the Western Dvina, and the Dnieper.

Val-de-mar I (vāl'də-mār') See *Waldemar I*.

Val-dez (vāl-dēz') A city of southern Alaska on an inlet of Prince William Sound. A military base during World War II, it is the southern terminus of the oil pipeline from Prudhoe Bay. An oil spill in the waters of the sound caused extensive environmental damage in 1989. Population: 4,068.

Val-di-via (vāl-dē'vī-ə, bāl-dē'vī-ə) A city of south-central Chile near the Pacific Ocean south of Concepción. Founded in 1552, it grew rapidly after the arrival of German immigrants in the mid-19th century. Population: 113,512.

Val-do (vāl'dō, vāl'-), **Peter** See *Peter Waldo*.

Val-dos-ta (vāl-dōs'tā) A city of southern Georgia near the Florida border east-northeast of Tallahassee. Settled in 1859, it is a processing and trade center. Population: 39,806.

vale (vāl) *n.* A valley, often coursed by a stream; a dale. [Middle English, from Old French *val*, from Latin *vallis*. See *wel-* in Appendix I.]