

Word List 50 **volatile-zephyr**

**volatile ADJ.** //changeable; explosive; evaporating rapidly.

The political climate

today is extremely volatile: No one can predict what the electorate will do next. Maria Callas's temper

was extremely volatile: The only thing you could predict was that she was sure to blow up. Acetone is

an extremely volatile liquid: It evaporates instantly.

**volition N.** /act of making a conscious choice.

She selected this dress of her own volition.

**voluble ADJ.** /fluent; glib; talkative.

The excessively *voluble* speaker suffers from logorrhea: he runs off at the mouth a lot!

**voluminous ADJ.** //bulky; large.

A caftan is a voluminous garment; most people wearing one look as if they're draped in a small tent.

**voluptuous ADJ.** //gratifying the senses.

The nobility during the Renaissance led voluptuous lives.

**voracious ADJ.** /ravenous.

The wolf is a voracious animal, its hunger never satisfied.

**vortex N.** /whirlwind; whirlpool; center of turbulence

; predicament into

which one is inexorably plunged. Sucked into the vortex of the tornado, Dorothy and Toto were carried from Kansas to Oz.

**vouchsafe V.** //grant;

choose to give in reply; permit. Occasionally the rock star would drift out onto the balcony and *vouchsafe* the crowd below a glimpse of her celebrated features. The professor

*vouchsafed* not a word to the students' questions about what would be covered on the test.

**voyeur N.** /Peeping Tom.

Nancy called her brother a *voyeur* when she caught him aiming his binoculars at an upstairs window of the house of the newlyweds next door.

**vulnerable ADJ.** //susceptible to wounds.

His opponents could not harm Achilles, who was *vulnerable* only in his heel.

**waffle V.** //speak equivocally about an issue.

When asked directly about the governor's involvement in the savings and loan scandal, the press secretary *waffled*, talking all around the issue.

**waft V.** //moved gently by wind or waves.

Daydreaming, he gazed at the leaves that *wafted* past his window.

**waggish ADJ.** //mischievous; humorous; tricky

. He was a prankster who, unfortunately, often overlooked the damage he could cause with his *waggish* tricks. wag, **N.**

**waif N.** /homeless child or animal.

Although he already had eight cats, he could not resist adopting yet another feline waif.

**waive V.** /give up temporarily; yield

. I will *waive* my rights in this matter in order to expedite our reaching a proper decision.

**wake N.** /trail of ship or other object through water;

path of something that has gone before. The *wake* of the swan gliding through the water glistened in the moonlight. Reporters and photographers converged on South Carolina in the *wake* of the hurricane that devastated much of the eastern seaboard.

**wallow V.** //roll in; indulge in; become helpless.

The hippopotamus loves to wallow in the mud.

**wan ADJ.** / /having a pale or sickly color; pallid.

Suckling asked, "Why so pale and *wan*, fond lover?"

**wane V.** /decrease in size or strength;

draw gradually to an end. When lit, does a wax candle *wane*?

**wanton ADJ.** //unrestrained; willfully malicious; unchaste. Pointing to the stack

of bills, Sheldon criticized Sarah for her *wanton* expenditures. In response, Sarah accused Sheldon of making an unfounded, *wanton* attack.

**warble V.** //sing; babble.

Every morning the birds *warbled* outside her window. also **N.**

**warrant V.** //justify; authorize

. Before the judge issues the injunction, you must convince her this

action is *warranted*.

**warranty N. /guarantee;**

assurance by seller. The purchaser of this automobile is protected by the manufacturer's *warranty* that the company will replace any defective part for five years or 50,000 miles.

**wary ADJ. /very cautious.**

The spies grew *wary* as they approached the sentry.

**wastrel N. //profligate.**

His neighbors denounced him as a wastrel who had dissipated his inheritance.

**watershed N. /crucial dividing point.**

The invention of the personal computer proved a historic *watershed*, for it opened the way to today's Information Age.

**wax V/increase; grow**

. With proper handling, his fortunes waxed and he became rich.

**waylay V. ambush; lie in wait.**

They agreed to *waylay* their victim as he passed through the dark alley going home.

**wean V. /accustom a baby to not nurse; give up a cherished activity.**

He decided he would wean himself away from eating junk food and stick to fruits and vegetables.

**weather V. /endure the effects of weather or other forces.**

He *weathered* the changes in his personal life with difficulty, as he had no one in whom to confide.

**welter N. //turmoil; bewildering jumble.**

The existing welter of overlapping federal and state programs cries out for immediate reform.

**wheedle V. /cajole; coax; deceive by flattery.**

She knows she can *wheedle* almost anything she wants from her father.

**whelp N. /young wolf, dog, tiger, etc.**

This collie *whelp* won't do for breeding, but he'd make a fine pet.

**whet V/sharpen; stimulate.**

The odors from the kitchen are *whetting* my appetite; I will be ravenous by the time the meal is served.

**whiff N.** /puff or gust (of air, scent, etc.); hint

. The slightest *whiff* of Old Spice cologne brought memories of George to her mind.

**whimsical ADJ.** //capricious;

fanciful. In *Mrs. Doubtfire*, the hero is a playful, *whimsical* man who takes a notion to dress up as a woman so that he can look after his children, who are in the custody of his ex-wife. whimsy, **N.**

**whinny V./neigh like a horse.**

When he laughed through his nose, it sounded as if he *whinnied*.

**whittle V.** /pare; cut off bits.

As a present for Aunt Polly, Tom *whittled* some clothespins out of a chunk of wood.

**willful ADJ/intentional; headstrong.**

Donald had planned to kill his wife for months; clearly, her death was a case of deliberate, *willful* murder, not a crime of passion committed by a hasty, willful youth unable to foresee the consequences of his deeds.

**wily ADJ.** /cunning; artful

. She is as wily as a fox in avoiding trouble.

**wince V.** /shrink back; flinch.

The screech of the chalk on the blackboard made her *wince*.

**windfall N.** /unexpected lucky event.

This huge tax refund is quite a *windfall*.

**winnow V.** /sift;

separate good parts from bad. This test will *winnow* out the students who study from those who don't bother.

**winsome ADJ.** //agreeable; gracious; engaging.

By her *winsome* manner, she made herself liked by everyone who met her.

**wispy ADJ.** //thin; slight; barely discernible.

Worried about preserving his few wispy tufts of hair,

Walter carefully massaged his scalp and applied hair restorer every night.

**wistful ADJ/vaguely longing;**

sadly thoughtful. With a last wistful glance at the happy couples dancing in the hall, Sue headed back to her room to study for her exam.

**withdrawn ADJ.** // **introverted; remote.**

Rebuffed by his colleagues, the initially outgoing young researcher became increasingly *withdrawn*.

**witless ADJ** If Beavis is a half-wit, then Butthead is totally witless.

**witticism N.** I don't mean any criticism, but that last witticism totally hurt my feelings.

**wizardry N.** Merlin the Magician amazed the knights with his wizardry.

**woe N.** // **suffering.** Pale and wan with grief, Wanda was bowed down beneath the burden of her woes.

**worldly** You must leave your *worldly* goods behind you when you go to meet your Maker.

**wrath N.** She turned to him, full of wrath, and said, "What makes you think I'll accept lower pay for this job than you get?"

**wrench V.** // **pull; strain; twist.**

She *wrenched* free of her attacker and landed a powerful kick to his kneecap.

**writhe V.** // **twist in coils; contort in pain**

. In *Dances with Snakes*, the snake dancer wriggled sinuously as her boa constrictor *writhed* around her torso.

**wry ADJ.** // **twisted; with a humorous twist**

. We enjoy Dorothy Parker's verse for its wry wit.

**xenophobia N.** // **fear or hatred of foreigners**

. When the refugee arrived in America, he was unprepared for the *xenophobia* he found there.

**yen N.** // **longing; urge.**

She had a yen to get away and live on her own for a while.

**yield V.** // **give in; surrender.**

The wounded knight refused to yield to his foe.

**yield N.** // **amount produced;**

crop; income on investment. An experienced farmer can estimate the annual yield of his acres with surprising accuracy. also **V.**

**yoke V.** /join together, unite

. I don't wish to be *yoked* to him in marriage, as if we were cattle pulling a plow. also **N.**

**yore N.** //time past.

He dreamed of the elegant homes of yore, but gave no thought to their inelegant plumbing.

**zany ADJ.** //crazy;

comic. I can watch the Marx brothers' zany antics for hours.

**zeal N.** //eager enthusiasm.

Katya's zeal was contagious; soon all her fellow students were busily making posters, inspired by her ardent enthusiasm for the cause. zealous, **ADJ.**

**zealot N.** //fanatic; person who shows excessive zeal

. Though Glenn was devout, he was no zealot, he never tried to force his beliefs on his friends.

**zenith N.** //point directly overhead in the sky;

summit. When the sun was at its *zenith*, the glare was not as strong as at sunrise and sunset.

**zephyr N** /gentle breeze; west wind.

When these *zephyrs* blow, it is good to be in an open boat under a full sail.