



OBSOLETE AND ARCHAIC WORDS

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Annotation: *This article is about Obsolete and archaic words are words that are no longer in common use in a language. While both types indicate a decline in usage, they differ slightly in their status and how they are perceived.*

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Archaic Words.

- Archaic words are those that were once commonly used but are now rare. They are still recognized and understood by many speakers and readers of the language, especially those familiar with older literature or historical texts.

- Archaic words may occasionally be used intentionally to evoke a sense of the past, create a formal or old-fashioned tone, or add a touch of literary style. Here some examples about archaic words.

- Thou/Thee/Thy: (Old English second-person pronouns) "What sayest thou?"
- Hark: (Listen!) "Hark! I hear the church bells ringing."
- Ere: (Before) "Ere the sun sets."
- Methinks: (It seems to me) "Methinks he protests too much."
- Henceforth: (From this time forward) "Henceforth, this shall be our policy."
- Betwixt: (Between) "A choice betwixt two evils."



While not actively used in everyday conversation, archaic words are often included in dictionaries and are understood by many people these days.

Obsolete Words. Obsolete words are those that are no longer used at all in a language. They are considered dead words, and most speakers would not recognize them without looking them up in a dictionary.

Obsolete words are rarely used, even for stylistic effect. They are primarily of interest to linguists, historians, and those studying the evolution of language. Some examples for obsolete words

- Fardel: (A bundle or burden)
- Gramercy: (Thank you - an expression of gratitude)
- Eke: (Also, in addition)
- Swive: (An old, vulgar term for sexual intercourse - often not included in standard dictionaries)
- Hugger-mugger: (Secrecy or confusion)
- Wlonk: (Rich, proud, or haughty - very rarely encountered)

Obsolete words are often marked as such in dictionaries. They may be found in very old texts but are unlikely to be encountered elsewhere. Some reasons why do words become obsolete or archaic?

- **Language Change:** Languages are constantly evolving. New words are coined, and old words fall out of favor.
- **Cultural Shifts:** Changes in society, technology, and customs can lead to the disappearance of words related to those things. For example, words related to horse-drawn carriages have largely become obsolete.
- **Synonym Replacement:** A word may become obsolete because a synonym becomes more popular or is considered more fashionable.
- **Simplification:** Languages often tend to simplify over time, with longer or more complex words being replaced by shorter or simpler ones.
- **Taboo:** Words can become obsolete because they develop negative connotations or become associated with something considered offensive. This can lead to euphemisms being created, and eventually, the original word fades from use.



Why Study Obsolete and Archaic Words?

- **Understanding Literature:** Many classic works of literature use archaic and obsolete words. Understanding these words is essential for comprehending the texts fully.
- **Linguistic Insight:** Studying these words provides insight into the historical development of language and the processes of language change.
- **Historical Context:** Obsolete and archaic words can offer clues about the history, culture, and way of life of people in the past.
- **Vocabulary Enrichment:** While not for everyday use, knowing some archaic and obsolete words can enrich your understanding of language and its potential for expressiveness.

In conclusion, while archaic and obsolete words are no longer actively used, they offer a fascinating glimpse into the history of language and culture. Understanding them can deepen our appreciation of literature, history, and the dynamic nature of language itself. Ultimately, the story of obsolete and archaic words is a story about change, loss, and the ever-shifting nature of human expression. These forgotten words remind us that language is a living entity, constantly evolving and adapting to the needs of its speakers. By acknowledging and studying these linguistic remnants, we gain a deeper appreciation for the dynamic and ephemeral nature of language itself, and our own place within its ongoing narrative.

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