

The Scarlet Letter — Key Vocabulary

by Nathaniel Hawthorne

48 key English words, graded A2–C2 — each with a simple definition and an example. Learn them before you read, or review them after.

A2 words (10)

abandon /ə'bændən/

A2

the trait of lacking restraint or control

“she danced with abandon”

abroad /ə'brɔ:d/

A2

in a foreign country

“markets abroad”

absolutely /,æbsə'lutli/

A2

completely and without qualification

“an absolutely magnificent painting”

abuse /ə'bjuz/

A2

cruel or inhumane treatment

“the child showed signs of physical abuse”

accident /'æksədənt/

A2

an unfortunate mishap

“winning the lottery was a happy accident”

accompany /ə'kæmpəni/

A2

be present or associated with an event or entity

“French fries come with the hamburger”

acknowledge /æk'nɒlɪdʒ/

A2

declare to be true or admit the existence or reality or truth of

“He admitted his errors”

acquire /ək'waɪər/

A2

come into the possession of something concrete or abstract

“She got a lot of paintings from her uncle”

active /'æktɪv/

A2

chemical agent capable of activity

"The boy threw the ball' uses the active voice"

actor /'æktər/

A2

a theatrical performer

"he's a principal actor in this affair"

B1 words (10)

aboard /ə'bɔːd/

B1

on a ship, train, plane or other vehicle

"Their second homer with Bob Allison aboard"

absolute /'æbsə,lʊt/

B1

something that is conceived or that exists independently and not in relation to other things

"no mortal being can influence the absolute"

abstract /'æb,strækt/

B1

a concept or idea not associated with any specific instance

"he loved her only in the abstract--not in person"

acceptable /ək'septəbəl/

B1

worthy of acceptance or satisfactory

"acceptable levels of radiation"

acceptance /ək'septəns/

B1

the mental attitude that something is believable and should be accepted as true

"he gave credence to the gossip"

accomplish /ə'kɒmplɪʃ/

B1

put in effect

"carry out a task"

accordance /ə'kɔːdəns/

B1

concurrence of opinion

"we are in accord with your proposal"

accordingly /ə'kɔːdɪŋli/

B1

(sentence connectors) because of the reason given

"consequently, he didn't do it"

accurate /'ækjəreɪt/

B1

conforming exactly or almost exactly to fact or to a standard or performing with total accuracy

“an accurate reproduction”

acquisition /,ækwə'zɪʃən/

B1

the act of contracting or assuming or acquiring possession of something

“the acquisition of wealth”

B2 words (10)

abide /ə'baɪd/

B2

dwell

“You can stay with me while you are in town”

abode /ə'boʊd/

B2

any address at which you dwell more than temporarily

“a person can have several residences”

abomination /ə,bəmə'neɪʃən/

B2

a person who is loathsome or disgusting

“his treatment of the children is an abomination”

abound /ə'baʊnd/

B2

be abundant or plentiful

“The room abounded with screaming children”

absorb /əb'zɔːrb/

B2

become imbued

“The liquids, light, and gases absorb”

absorption /əb'zɔːrʃən/

B2

(chemistry) a process in which one substance permeates another

“the absorption of photons by atoms or molecules”

absurd /əb'sɜːd/

B2

a situation in which life seems irrational and meaningless

“The absurd is the essential concept and the first truth”

abundance /ə'bʌndəns/

B2

the property of a more than adequate quantity or supply

“an age of abundance”

abundant /ə'bʌndənt/

B2

present in great quantity

"an abundant supply of water"

abundantly /ə'bʌndəntli/

B2

in an abundant manner

"they were abundantly supplied with food"

C1 words (9)

abate /ə'beɪt/

C1

make less active or intense

"The storm abated"

abbreviate /ə'brɪvi,eɪt/

C1

reduce in scope while retaining essential elements

"The manuscript must be shortened"

abstruse /əb'strʊs/

C1

difficult to penetrate

"the professor's lectures were so abstruse that students tended to avoid them"

absurdly /əb'sɜːdli/

C1

in an absurd manner or to an absurd degree

"an absurdly rich young woman"

accrue /ə'kru/

C1

grow by addition

"The interest accrues"

accustom /ə'kʌstəm/

C1

make psychologically or physically used (to something)

"She became habituated to the background music"

acquaint /ək'weɪnt/

C1

cause to come to know personally

"permit me to acquaint you with my son"

acquiesce /,ækwi'ɛs/

C1

to agree or express agreement

"The Maestro assented to the request for an encore"

acrid /'ækɹɪd/

C1

strong and sharp

"the pungent taste of radishes"

C2 words (9)

abase

C2

cause to feel shame

"He humiliated his colleague by criticising him in front of the boss"

accost /ə'kɒst/

C2

speak to someone

"he was solicited by a prostitute"

acuteness /ə'kjʊtnəs/

C2

a sensitivity that is keen and highly developed

"dogs have a remarkable acuteness of smell"

adjudge /ə'dʒʌdʒ/

C2

declare to be

"She was declared incompetent"

affright

C2

an overwhelming feeling of fear and anxiety

"The stranger who hangs around the building frightens me"

agone

C2

gone by

"two years ago"

airily

C2

in a flippant manner

"he answered the reporters' questions flippantly"

antiquate /'æntɪk,weɪt/

C2

make obsolete or old-fashioned

"antique furniture"

appal

C2

strike with disgust or revulsion

"The scandalous behavior of this married woman shocked her friends"

Read it along with audio — tap any word to hear it and see it highlighted in the sentence:

<https://readingcorner.uk/books/the-scarlet-letter/vocabulary>