

# AP Literature Allusion Cheat Sheet

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## I. MYTHOLOGICAL ALLUSIONS

**Achilles' heel** – today, one spot that is most vulnerable; one weakness a person may have. Achilles was invulnerable except for his heel (achilles tendon).

**Adonis** – handsome young man; Aphrodite loved him.

**Aeolian** – anything pertaining to wind; god who was Keeper of Wind

**Apollo** – a physically perfect male; the God of music and light; known for his physical beauty

**Argus-eyed**—omniscient, all-seeing; from Argus, the 100-eyed monster that Hera had guarding Io

**Athena/Minerva** – goddess of wisdom, the city, and arts; patron goddess of the city of Athens

**Atlantean** – strong like Atlas –who carried the globe (world) on his shoulders

**Aurora** – early morning or sunrise; from the Roman personification of Dawn or Eos

**Bacchanal** – n; wild, drunken party or rowdy celebration; from god of wine Bacchus

**Bacchanalian** – adj.; pertaining to a wild, drunken party or celebration from god of wine, Bacchus (Roman), Dionysus (Greek)

**Calliope** – series of whistles --circus organ; from the Muse of eloquence or beautiful voice

**Cassandra** – a person who continually predicts misfortune but often is not believed; from (Greek legends) a daughter of Priam cursed by Apollo for not returning his love; he left her with the gift of prophecy but made it so no one would believe her

**Centaur** – a monster that had the head, arms, and chest of a man, and the body and legs of a horse

**Chimera** – a horrible creature of the imagination, an absurd or impossible idea; wild fancy; a monster with a lion's head, a goat's body, and a serpent's tail, supposed to breathe out fire



**Cupidity** – eager "desire" to possess something; greed or avarice; Roman god of love (Greek name is Eros)

**Erotic** – of or having to do with sexual passion or love; Greek god of love, Eros

**Furor** – (Latin- furere to rage) wild enthusiasm or excitement, rage; fury, "run like fury"; any one of the three Furies

**Gorgon** – a very ugly or terrible person, especially a repulsive woman; Medusa, any one or three sisters have snakes for hair and faces so horrible that anyone who looked at them turned to stone

**Halcyon** – clam, peaceful, tranquil --Archaic bird supposed to breed in a nest on the sea and calm the water, identified with the kingfisher (Latin < Greek halkyon)

**Harpy** – a predatory person or nagging woman; from harpy, a foul creature that was part woman, part bird

**Hector** – to bully; from Hector, the son of Priam (king of Troy), and the bravest Trojan warrior. Killed Achilles' friend Patroclus.

**Helen (of Troy)** – Hellenistic; of or relating to Greece, or a Specialist of language or culture in Greece; symbol of a beautiful woman; from Helen of Troy, the daughter of Leda and Zeus—the cause of the Trojan War.

**Herculean** – very strong or of extraordinary power; from Hercules, Hera's glory, the son of Zeus. He performed the 12 labors imposed by Hera.

**Hydra-Headed** – having many centers or branches, hard to bring under control; something bad you cannot eradicate; from Hydra, the 9-headed serpent that was sacred to Hera. Hercules killed him in one of the 12 labors.

**Iridescent** – a play of colors producing rainbow effects; from Iris, goddess of the rainbow

**Jovial** – good humored; from the word Jove, used to express surprise or agreement (Jupiter)

**Juno-esque** – marked by stately beauty; comes from the word Juno, the wife of Jupiter, the Goddess of light, birth, women, and marriage

**Lethargy** – n., abnormal drowsiness or inertia; from the word Lethe, a river in Hades that caused drinkers to forget their past

**Martial** – suited for war or a warrior; from Mars, the Roman God of War

**Medea**—sorceress or enchantress; from Medea who helped Jason and the Argonauts capture the Golden Fleece; known for her revenge against Jason when he spurned her for the princess of Corinth

**Mentor** – a trusted counselor or guide; from Mentor, a friend of Odysseus' son, who was entrusted with his education

**Mercurial** -- adj., suddenly cranky or changeable; Roman Mythology, of or relating to the god Mercury

**Mercury/Hermes** – a carrier of tidings, a newsboy, a messenger; messenger of the gods, conductor of souls to the lower world, and god of eloquence; the fabled inventor, wore winged hat and sandals

**Mnemonics** – a device used to aid memory; the personification of memory, Mnemosyne., who gave birth to the nine Muses, who supposedly gave good memory in story telling.

**Morphine** – a bitter white, crystalline alkaloid used to relieve pain and induce sleep; Morpheus was a god that could easily change form or shape

**Muse** – some creature of inspiration ; the daughters of Mnemosyne and Zeus, divine singers that presided over thought in all its forms

**Narcissism** – being in love with our own self-image; named for Narcissus, a handsome young man who despised love. Echo, a nymph who was in love with him, was rejected and decreed, "Let he who loves not others, love himself." Hearing this, he fell in love with his image, while gazing in a pond, and drowned himself trying to capture it.

**Nemesis** - just punishment, one who inflicts due punishment; goddess who punishes crime; but more often she is the power charged with curbing all excess, such as excessive good fortune or arrogant pride.

**Neptune** - the sea personified; the Roman god associated with Poseidon, god of the water and oceans.

**Niobe** - mournful woman; from Niobe, whose children were slain by Apollo and Artemis because of her

bragging; the gods pitied her and turned her into a rock that was always wet from weeping

**Odyssey** - a long journey; named for Odysseus, the character in The Odyssey, by Homer. Odysseus makes his long journey back from the Trojan War, encountering several obstacles along the way.

**Olympian** - majestic in manner, superior to mundane affairs; any participant in the ancient or modern Olympic games; named after 12 gods that were supposed to reside on Mt. Olympus.

**Paean** - a song of joy; a ritual epithet of Apollo the healer. In Homeric poems, an independent god of healing named Paean or Paeon, who took care of Hades when the latter was wounded.

**Pandora's Box** - Something that opens the door for bad occurrences, opened by someone known for curiosity; named for Pandora who was the first mortal, sent by Zeus, to punish man for Prometheus' theft of fire. For her curiosity in opening the box, Zeus gave her all human ills in the world leaving only hope at the bottom. (Rossetti's *Pandora's Box*).



**Parnassus** - Mountain was sacred to arts and literature; any center of poetic or artistic activity; poetry or poets collectively, a common title for selection of poetry; named after the hero of Mt. Parnassus, the son of Poseidon and a Nymph. He founded the oracle of Python, which was later occupied by Apollo.

**Pegasus** - Poetic inspiration; named after a winged horse which sprang from the blood of Medusa at her death; a stamp of his hoof caused Hippocrene, the fountain of the Muses, to issue poetic inspiration from Mount Helicon.

**Phoenix** - a symbol of immortality or rebirth; named after the Egyptian Mythology phoenix, a long bird which lived in the Arabian desert and then consumed itself in fire, rising renewed from the flame to start another long life.

**Plutocracy** - a government by the wealthy; named after Pluton, the "Rich Man," a ritual title of Hades. He was originally the god of the fields because the ground was the source of all wealth, ores and jewels.

**Promethean** - life-bringing, creative, or courageously original; named after a Titan who brought man the use of fire, which he had stolen from heaven for their benefit.

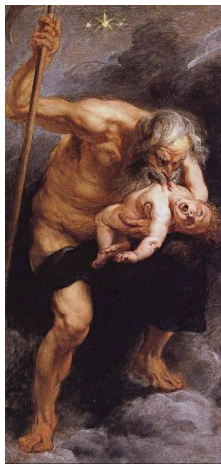
**Protean** - taking many forms, versatile; named after Proteus, a god of the sea, charged with tending the flocks of the sea creatures belonging to Poseidon. He had the ability to change himself into whatever form he desired, using this power particularly when he wanted to elude those asking him questions.

**Psyche** - the human soul, self, the mind; named after Psyche, a maiden who, after undergoing many hardships due to Aphrodite's jealousy, reunited with Cupid and was made immortal by Jupiter; she personifies the soul joined to the heart of love.

**Pygmalion** - someone (usually a male) who tries to fashion someone into the person he desires; from a myth adapted into a play by George Bernard Shaw; a woman-hating sculptor who makes a female figure of ivory who Aphrodite brings to life for him.

**Pyrrhic victory** - adj.; a too costly victory; from Pyrrhus, a Greek king who defeated the Romans in 279 BC, but suffered extremely heavy losses in the fight

**Saturnalia** - a period of unrestrained revelry; named after the ancient Roman festival of Saturn, with general feasting in revelry in honor of the winter solstice.



**Saturnine** - sluggish, gloomy, morose, inactive in winter months; named after the god Saturn, often associated with the god of the Underworld. (Left; Rubens' *Saturn*)

**Sibyl** - a witch or sorceress; a priestess who made known the oracles of Apollo and possessed the gift of prophecy.

**Sisyphean** - greedy and avaricious; from the shrewd and greedy king of Corinth, Sisyphus, who was doomed forever in Hades to roll uphill a heavy stone, which always rolled down again.

**Stentorian** - having a loud voice; after Stentor, a character in the *Iliad* who could shout as loudly as 50 men. He engaged in a shouting match against Hermes and was put to death after losing.

**Stygian** - dark and gloomy; named after the river Styx, a river in the Underworld. The water is poisonous for

human and cattle and said to break iron, metal and pottery, though it is said a horse's hoof is unharmed by it.

**Tantalize**- from King Tantalus, who reigned on Mt. Sipylus and was condemned to reside in a beautiful river with sumptuous fruits just out of reach and the water undrinkable, always tempting him as punishment for excessive pride (he boiled his son and fed the broth to trick the gods).

**Terpsichorean** - pertaining to dance; for Terpsichore, one of the nine muses, sometimes said to be the mother of the sirens and the protector of dance.

**Titanic** - large, grand, enormous; after Tityus, a giant, the son of Zeus and Elara. His body covers over two acres. Or after the Titans, the offspring of Chronus and Rhea, who went to war against Zeus and the other Olympian gods.

**Volcanoes** - originated from Vulcan, the Roman god of fire, whose forge is said to be under mountains

**Vulcanize** - to treat rubber with sulfur to increase strength and elasticity ; from the Roman God of Fire and Metallurgy, Vulcan/Hephaestus

**Zeus** - a powerful man; king of the gods, ruler of Mt. Olympus, vengeful hurler of thunderbolts

## II. ALLUSIONS FROM LITERATURE

**Babbitt** - a self-satisfied person concerned chiefly with business and middle-class ideals like material success; a member of the American working class whose unthinking attachment to its business and social ideals is such to make him a model of narrow-mindedness and self-satisfaction ; after George F. Babbitt, the main character in the novel *Babbitt* by Sinclair Lewis

**Brobdignagian** - gigantic, enormous, on a large scale, enlarged ; after Brobdignag, the land of giants visited by Gulliver in *Gulliver's Travels*, by Jonathan Swift

**Bumble** - to speak or behave clumsily or faltering, to make a humming or droning sound; Middle English bomblem; a clumsy religious figure (a beadle) in a work of literature

**Cinderella** - one who gains affluence or recognition after obscurity and neglect, a person or thing whose beauty or worth remains unrecognized; after the fairy-tale heroine who escapes from a life of drudgery through the intervention of a fairy godmother and marries a handsome prince

**Don Juan** - a libertine, profligate, a man obsessed with seducing women ; after Don Juan, the legendary 14th century Spanish nobleman and libertine

**Don Quixote** – someone overly idealistic to the point of having impossible dreams; from the crazed and impoverished Spanish noble who sets out to revive the glory of knighthood, romanticized in the musical *The Man of La Mancha* based on the story by Cervantes

**Panglossian** - blindly or misleadingly optimistic; after Dr. Pangloss in *Candide* by Voltaire, a pedantic old tutor

**Falstaffian** - full of wit and bawdy humor; after Falstaff, a fat, sensual, boastful, and mendacious knight who was the companion of Henry, Prince of Wales

**Frankenstein** - Anything that threatens or destroys its creator; from the young scientist in Mary Shelley's novel of this name, who creates a monster that eventually destroys him

**Friday** - A faithful and willing attendant, ready to turn his hand to anything; from the young savage found by Robinson Crusoe on a Friday, and kept as his servant and companion on the desert island

**Galahad** - A pure and noble man with limited ambition; in the legends of King Arthur, the purest and most virtuous knight of the Round Table, the only knight to find the Holy Grail

**Jekyll and Hyde** – A capricious person with two sides to his/her personality; from a character in the famous novel *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* who had more than one personality, a split personality (one good and one evil)

**Lilliputian** – descriptive of a very small person or of something diminutive, trivial or petty; after the Lilliputians, tiny people in *Gulliver's Travels* by Jonathan Swift

**Little Lord Fauntleroy** - refers either to a certain type of children's clothing or to a beautiful, but pampered and effeminate small boy; from a work by Frances H. Burnett, the main character, seven-year-old Cedric Errol, was a striking figure, dressed in black velvet with a lace collar and yellow curls

**Lothario** - used to describe a man whose chief interest is seducing a woman; from the play *The Fair Penitent* by Nicholas Rowe, the main character and the seducer

**Malapropism** - The usually unintentional humorous misuse or distortion of a word or phrase, especially the

use of a word sounding somewhat like the one intended, but ludicrously wrong in context - Example: polo bears. Mrs. Malaprop was a character noted for her misuse of words in R. B. Sheridan's comedy *The Rivals*

**Milquetoast** - a timid, weak, or unassertive person; from Casper Milquetoast, who was a comic strip character created by H.T. Webster

**Pickwickian** - humorous, sometimes derogatory; from Samuel Pickwick, a character in Charles Dickens' *Pickwickian Papers* (Right: Frederick Barnard's Pickwick).



**Pollyanna** - a person characterized by impermissible optimism and a tendency to find good in everything, a foolishly or blindly optimistic person; from Eleanor Porter's heroine, Pollyanna Whittier, in the book *Pollyanna*

**Pooh-bah** - a pompous, ostentatious official, especially one who, holding many offices, fulfills none of them, a person who holds high office ; after Pooh-Bah Lord-High-Everything-Else, character in *The Mikado*, a musical by Gilbert and Sullivan

**Quixotic** - having foolish and impractical ideas of honor, or schemes for the general good; after Don Quixote, a half-crazy reformer and knight of the supposed distressed, in a novel by the same name

**Robot** - a machine that looks like a human being and performs various acts of a human being, a similar but functional machine whose lack of capacity for human emotions is often emphasized by an efficient, insensitive person who functions automatically, a mechanism guided by controls from Karel Capek's Rossum's *Universal Robots* (1920), taken from the Czech "robota," meaning drudgery

**Rodomontade** - bluster and boasting, to boast (rodomontading or rodomontaded); from Rodomont, a brave, but braggart knight in Bojardo's *Orlando Innamorato*; King of Sarza or Algiers, son of Ulteus, and commander of both horse and foot in the Saracen Army

**Scrooge** - a bitter and/or greedy person; from Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*, an elderly stingy miser who is given a reality check by 3 visiting ghosts



**Simon Legree** - a harsh, cruel, or demanding person in authority, such as an employer or officer that acts in this manner ; from *Uncle Tom's Cabin* by Harriet Beecher Ward, the brutal slave overseer

**Svengali** - a person with an irresistible hypnotic power ; from a person in a novel written in 1894 by George Mauriers; a musician who hypnotizes and gains control over the heroine

**Tartuffe** - hypocrite or someone who is hypocritical; central character in a comedy by Moliere produced in 1667; Moliere was famous for his hypocritical piety

**Uncle Tom** - someone thought to have the timid service attitude like that of a slave to his owner; from the humble, pious, long-suffering Negro slave in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* by abolitionist writer Stowe

**Uriah Heep** - a fawning toadie, an obsequious person; from a character in Charles Dickens' *David Copperfield* (1849-50);

**Walter Mitty** – a commonplace non-adventuresome person who seeks escape from reality through Daydreaming, a henpecked husband or dreamer; after a daydreaming henpecked “hero” in a story by James Thurber

**Yahoo** - a boorish, crass, or stupid person; from a member of a race of brutes in Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* who have the form and all the vices of humans

### III. BIBLICAL ALLUSIONS

**Absolom** – a son who brings heartache to his father; from the third son of David, King of Israel. Exiled for three years before he was allowed to return to the court or see his royal father, Absolom plotted to cause a rebellion against his father to overtake the kingdom because he heard Solomon was to succeed David. When Absolom was killed in battle, King David grieved for his son in spite of his treachery against him



**Alpha and Omega** - The beginning and the end, from a quote in Revelations in the New Testament

**Cain**- a brother who kills a brother; from the story of Adam and Eve's son Cain, who killed his brother Abel out of jealousy

**Daniel** – one known for wisdom and accurate judgment; from a wise leader in the Old Testament who was able to read the handwriting on the wall

**David and Bathsheba** – represents a big sin; from King David's affair with Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah. After they had an affair and she became pregnant, David had her husband Uriah put on the front lines of battle so he would die. The "Bathsheba Affair" formed a critical turning point in King David's life. Prior to this, he had prospered greatly, but afterward, his personal fortunes were greatly diminished. Nathan the prophet confronted David after he took Bathsheba for his wife and trapped him into admitting his own guilt.

**Eye of the Needle** - A very difficult task; from famous narrow gateway called “the needle.” In the NT, Jesus said it was easier for a camel to go through the eye of the needle than for a rich man to enter heaven.

**Filthy Lucre** - Money or profits; from a story in the NT of Jesus casting moneylenders out of the Temple

**Goliath** – a large person; from the giant from the Philistine city of Gath, slain by David, when he was a shepherd boy

**Good Samaritan** – someone who helps another person, perhaps someone of a different race or background; from a NT parable about a Samaritan, a traditional enemy of the Hebrews, who stopped to help a Jewish man who had been beaten and left for dead at the side of the road.

**Handwriting on the wall** – what the future holds; from the OT story of Daniel, who was able to accurately predict some mysterious writing that appeared on a wall (translated, it predicted the imminent death of the king)

**Ishmael** – one who is cast out as being unworthy; the son of Abraham and his handmaiden Hagar, he was cast out into the desert when his wife Sarah had their son Isaac; therefore said to be the ancestor of the nomadic desert tribes of Arabs

**Jacob** - grandson of Abraham, son of Isaac and Rebekah, brother of Esau, and the traditional ancestor of Israelites. His name was changed to Israel, and his 12 sons became the 12 Tribes of Israel.

**Job**- who suffers a great deal but remains faithful; from an OT character whose faith in God was tested by Satan; though he lost his family and belongings, he remained patient and faithful

**Job's comforters** – “friends” who try to help by bringing blame; ironically, Job's "comforters" didn't comfort at all but were the source of more affliction.

**Jonah** – one who brings bad luck; an OT prophet who ran from God and sailed to sea. When a storm arose, he admitted that he was the cause, and the sailors threw him overboard, where he was swallowed by a large fish.

**Judas** – (n) a traitor or a treacherous kiss (a Judas kiss); one of the 12 Apostles, notorious for betraying Jesus. His surname in Latin means "murderer" or "assassin." Judas disclosed Jesus' whereabouts to the chief priests and elders for thirty pieces of silver

**King Ahab and Jezebel** – an evil king of Israel and his treacherous evil wife, synonymous today with evil. Through her marriage to Ahab, Jezebel introduced the worship of Baal, an idol, to Israel, inciting mutual enmity with the prophets. She instigated the murder Naboth for the possession of a vineyard. Today Jezebel means a brazen or forward woman

**Manna** – a sustaining life-giving source or food; from the sweetish bread-like food that fell from heaven for the Israelites as they crossed the Sinai Desert to the Promised Land with Moses

**Original Sin/The Fall** – the idea that all men are innately sinful as a result of Adam and Eve's fall from the state of innocence. When they ate of the forbidden fruit, they were cast out of the Biblical Garden of Eden; a post-biblical expression for the doctrine of Adam's transgression and mankind's consequential inheritance of a sinful nature because he ate the forbidden fruit from the Tree of Knowledge.

**Pearl of Great Price** – something so precious that one would devote everything to or give up everything for it. In one of Jesus' parables, the kingdom of heaven is compared to a pearl of great price, or value, found by a merchant

**Philistine** – a person indifferent or hostile to the arts and refinement; from Sea-going people from Crete who became enemies of the Israelites and fought over their lands

**Prodigal Son** – a wasteful son who disappoints his father; from the NT parable of a man with two sons. When he split his estate between the two, the younger son gathered his fortune and left home to live the wild life, while the older son stayed home to work in the fields. When the younger son spent all of the money, he came crawling back to his father, who accepted him,

pardoning his error by saying he was “lost but was found.”

**Ruth and Naomi** – paragons of love between in-laws; faithful friends. From the OT story of Ruth, who, when her husband died in battle, left her own land to travel with his mother back to her people.

**Samson and Delilah** - Treacherous love story. Samson, an Israelite hero and legendary warrior with extraordinary physical strength, fell in love with Delilah, a Philistine. When Delilah learned that Samson's hair was the source of his strength, she betrayed him by accepting a Philistine bribe to cut off his hair while he slept. Today the name Delilah is associated with a voluptuous, treacherous woman.

**Scapegoat** - (n) one that is made an object of blame for others; the goat was symbolically burdened with the sins of Jewish people and thrown over a precipice outside of Jerusalem to rid the nation of iniquities.

**Sepulcher** – tomb in the OT

**Sodom and Gomorrah** – any place associated with wickedness or sin; from the evil cities of the OT that were destroyed by fire

**Solomon** – an extremely wise person; from the son of King David, the Israelite king who wrote Proverbs, and was known for wisdom

**Twelve Tribes of Israel** - according to the Old Testament, the Hebrew people took possession of the Promised Land of Canaan after the death of Moses and named the tribes after the sons and grandson of Jacob (whose name was changed to Israel): Reuben, Simeon, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, Gad, Asher, Dan, Naphtali, Joseph, Manasseh, and Ephraim.

## V. HISTORICAL ALLUSIONS

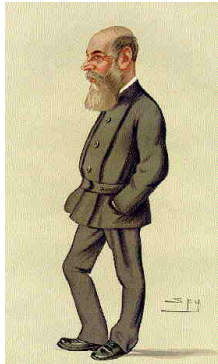
**Attila** - barbarian, rough leader; King of the Huns from 433-453 and the most successful of the barbarian invaders of the Roman Empire (Right: Disney version)



**Berserk** - destructively or frenetically violent, mental or emotional upset; a warrior clothed in bear skin who worked himself into a frenzy before battle

**Bloomer** – undergarments for dance or active wear; underwear formally worn by females that was composed of loose trousers gathered at the ankles; invented by Amelia Jenks Bloomer (1818-94), and American social reformer

**Bowlerize** - to censor, expurgate prudishly, to modify, as by shortening or simplifying or by skewing content; after Thomas Bowdler (1754-1825), who expurgated Shakespeare



**Boycott** - to act together in abstaining from using, buying, or dealing with as an expression of protest or disfavor or as a means of coercion, the act or an instance of boycotting; after Charles C. Boycott (1832-97), of Ireland. Boycott, a former British soldier, refused to charge lower rents and ejected his tenants. Boycott and his family found themselves without servants, farmlands, service in stores, or mail delivery. Boycott's name was quickly adapted as the term for this treatment.

**Canopy** - an overhanging protection or shelter, to cover or hover above; Middle English word *canape* taken from Latin *Canapeum* or *Conopeum*, meaning "net curtains"

**Casanova** - a man who is amorously and gallantly attentive to women; a promiscuous man.; Giovanni Jacopo Casanova De Seingalt (1725-98), an Italian adventurer who established a legendary reputation as a lover

**Chauvinist** - one who has a militant devotion to and glorification of one's country, fanatical patriotism, prejudiced belief in the superiority of one's own gender, group, or kind; after Nicolas Chauvin a legendary French soldier devoted to Napoleon

**Derrick** - a machine for hoisting and moving heavy objects, consisting of a movable boom equipped with cables and pulleys and connected to the base of an upright stationary beam, a tall framework over a drilled hole, esp. an oil well, used to support boring equipment; named after a London hangman Derick (1600)

**Donnybrook** - any riotous occasion; taken from the Donnybrook Fair, held in Dublin County, Ireland until 1855, which was famous for rioting and dissipation

**Dungaree** – a style of casual work pants; from a coarse cotton fabric of East Indian origin; from the Hindu word *dungri*

**El Dorado** - a place of reputed wealth; from the legendary city in South America, sought by early Spanish explorers

**Hackney** - to make something banal or trite by frequent use, a horse for ordinary riding or driving, a horse kept for hire, let out, employed, or done for hire; from Hackney, the most common breed of heavy harness horses in the US.

**Horatio Alger** – one who believes that a person can make it on his own merits; from (1832-99) American writer of inspirational adventure books.

**Laconic** - using or marked by the use of few words, brief; *Lakonikos*, from the reputation of the Spartans for brevity of speech

**Limerick** - a humorous or nonsense verse of five lines; from Limerick, a county in Republic of Ireland where the form is said to have originated

**Machiavellian** - of or relating to Machiavelli or Machiavellianism, characterized by expedience, deceit and cunning; after Niccolò Machiavelli (1469-1537), a philosopher known for his treatises and political expediency; wrote *The Prince* (1513)

**Marathon** - a long distance race; source of the Victory of the Greeks over Persians in 490 B.C.

**McCarthyism** - modern witch hunt, the practice of publicizing accusations of political disloyalty or subversions with insufficient regard to evidence, the use of unfair investigatory or accusatory methods, in order to suppress opposition; after Joseph McCarthy (1908-57), an American politician who as a US senator from WWI publicly accused many citizens of subversion

**Meander** - to wander aimlessly; originating from Meander, a river in Turkey noted for its winding course

**Mesmerize** - to induce the state of being hypnotized; F.A. Mesmer, an Austrian physician who used hypnotism and developed a theory called "animal magnetism"

**Nostradamus** - fortune teller; (1503-66) French physician and astrologer who wrote a book of rhymed prophecies

**Sardonic** - bitterly ironical, sarcastic, sneering; from a Sardinian plant said to bring on fits of laughter

**Shanghai** - to cheat or steal, to make drugs, liquor, etc. to bring or get by trickery or force; a seaport in East

China, from Shanghai because sailor for voyages there were often secured by illicit means

**Spartan** - frugal and bare, simple, disciplined and stern and brave; having to do with Sparta, an important City in Greece. The Spartans were known for simplicity of life, severity, courage, and brevity of speech.

**Stonewall** - hinder or obstruct by evasive, delaying tactics; in cricket: trying to go completely defensive, blocking every ball without trying to score; relating to Stonewall Jackson (Thomas J. Jackson) Confederate General from the remark during the Battle of Bull Run: "Look as Jackson's men; they stand like a stone wall."

**Swiftian** - satirical; from Jonathan Swift's famous satire on politics *Gulliver's Travels*

**Sybaritic** - luxurious, voluptuous, a person who cares very much for luxury and pleasure; an inhabitant of Sybars, a town founded by the Greeks in ancient Italy, which was known for its luxury

**Thespian** - having to do with the theater or acting; relating to Thespians, so called from Thespiis, a Attic poet of the 6th century B.C., reputed to the father of Greek tragedy

**Uncle Sam** - government of people of the United States; derived from the United States of America - Uncle Sam, a businessman with initials on shipping boxes in 1800's

**Utopia** - an imaginary and perfect society; British 1610, source Thomas Moore's novel *Utopia*

**Wagnerian** - style of music: loud, dramatic, radical; having to do with Wagner, his music, or his musical styles or theories

**Waterloo** - A decisive or final defeat or setback; Belgian 1816, source of Napoleon's last defeat

