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What does the word soapstone mean

Tell someone that your workplace is so Dickensian and your friends will probably understand that you mean the building is pretty dirty and run down, or somehow below an acceptable standard. This is because 19th-century English writer Charles Dickens often incorporated unhooked houses and workplaces into his novels. Still others argue that this term is used incorrectly. Based on Dickens' novels, labeling something Dickensian could mean anything from sentimental to having larger-than-life characters. There is not a single definition [source: Sherrill]. While the term Dickensian may be a partially correct use of the word, there are a surprising number of other historical works that many of us are definitely using incorrectly. Like nirvana. Many of us use it as a substitute for heaven or paradise, but the Buddhist word actually means freeing ourselves from the endless cycle of reincarnations – which often involve lives full of suffering – and reaching absolute bliss. It is reaching the highest state of enlightenment, which frees us from individual desires and pain. It might be a heavenly result, but it's not the same as heaven. What other words are you using incorrectly? Let's take a look. Content Do a quick online search for hedonism, and one of the first things you'll discover is a nudist resort in Jamaica. For those of us who live in the 21st century, hedonism means indulging in everything we like, especially of a sexual nature. In fact, synonyms of hedonism include debauchery, carnality, sensuality, and voluptuousness [source: Merriam-Webster]. But equating hedonism with debauchery is wrong. And, in fact, philosophers call this definition popular hedonism. The term hedonism comes from the Greek word for pleasure. In its most basic form, hedonism is the philosophy that the only two important things in life are pleasure and pain. Pleasure is inherently good and valuable, while pain is inherently bad and should be avoided. But pleasure can mean many different things. Pleasure can be intellectual; for example, reading a good book. It can be selfless, like helping your neighbor. Yes, pleasure can also be a sensation, including sexual encounters, but it can also be a rub of the foot. Some forms of hedonism also point out that short-term pleasure may not be appropriate if they do not translate into long-term pleasure on pain [source: Weijers]. Advertising Foodies often refer to themselves as epics, which means those who have discerning palates who love good food and drinks. The word epicurea comes from the name of the Greek philosopher Epicurus (341-271 BC.C. C.E.), which, presumes, it must have been the foodie himself [source: Sedley]. But while Epicurus is considered one of the most significant hedonistic thinkers in the world, today's use of the words epicurean and epicurean is rather misleading. Le Le hedonists, as you have just read, believed that things were good because they are pleasant, or bad because they are painful. Epicurus was considered a selfish hedonist, that is, someone who believes that what is good for you is what you like yourself. Not what your mother likes, or your best friend, or the smartest person in your class. Life — even if it should be based on moral virtue — is really worth it only if everyone enjoys their life in their own way. Selfish hedonists, interestingly, also believed in moderating all desires, whether for food, drinks, sexual pleasure or even politics. If a person abandons himself too freely to a particular pleasure, the thought goes, runs the risk of becoming a slave to that pleasure [source: Sedley]. So, ironically, today's epics are by no means people that Epicurus himself would have admired. Stoic advertising is sometimes at odds with Epicure. If your beloved groom tragically died young, leaving you with four children to grow up alone, you could very well be called stoic if you accepted your fate and moved on, rather than blushing about it. Because that's what it means to be stoic: to accept whatever happens to you without complaining and without showing emotions. It's just not fair. The original stoic was someone who followed the teachings of stoicism, a philosophical movement founded in Greece around 300 bc.C. Popular C.E. during the Roman Empire, stoicism was based on the concepts of meditation, awareness and self-satisfaction, and offered practitioners theoretical precepts and inspirational texts to reflect on. In essence, it was a bit like a religion, and has some striking similarities to Christianity [sources: Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Pigliucci]. Advertising So, how was the word linked to emotionless acceptance? Stoics spent a lot of time thinking about death and death, often seen as the ultimate proof of his own character. And they believed that emotions like fear, envy or passionate love came from false judgments, and so a real Stoic would be immune to them. A virtuous life (and Stoics believed virtue was necessary for happiness) was a passion-free life [sources: Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Pigliucci]. The Greeks are again behind a word whose meaning has been confused - cynical. Today, the term is used to describe a person who feels that everyone is motivated by selfish motives - someone who is always negative and suspicious of what others say and do. But the original cynics were people who belonged to an ancient sect of Greek philosophers. Cynics fought for virtue, and felt that the only way to achieve it was through self-control, asceticism and Pleasure was not seen as something good. A famous cynic was Synopsis Diogenes. Diogenes went far beyond most other cynics, rejecting much of the day's comforts and and conventions in an attempt to lead the desired virtuous life. For example, he walked barefoot through the snow in an attempt to acclimatize his body in the cold. Apparently he also felt his duty to protest against his fellow citizens if he found them doing something pleasant, or indulging in any kind of luxury [source: American Heritage Dictionary]. Advertising Although Cynic was used correctly when it first appeared in English in the 1500s, it quickly turned into cynical (with a small c). Perhaps Diogenes' character influenced the switch. One story says that people teased him at a banquet by throwing bones at him like he was a dog. Diogenes responded by urinating on the bones [source: American Heritage Dictionary]. If you were trying to get information in a government office and were sent from department to department without a good explanation, you could describe the situation as Kafkaesque. Are you right? Franz Kafka was a famous 20th-century writer from Prague, in what is now the Czech Republic. His novels, most of which were published posthumously, were full of characters facing a kind of almighty power that they had to fight against - a power so strong that it could easily break humans. In Metamorphosis, for example, a man wakes up like a large insect. In The Trial, Kafka's most successful work, the protagonist Joseph K. must defend himself in court against an unnamed crime he would commit [sources: Edwards, Biography]. In the 1960s, with Eastern Europe crushed under strict communist governments, the Kafkaesque term suddenly came into use, and then improperly. People started getting him off to describe pretty harmless situations, like running out the door to catch a bus, then finding out that bus drivers were hitting that day. But Kafkaesque is a much more daunting and overwhelming descriptor for the soul. Advertisement in an article published in the New York Times, author Frederick R. Karl, who wrote an exhaustive biography of Kafka, explained it this way: What is Kafkaesque when you enter a surreal world where all your control schemes, all your plans, the whole way you've configured your behavior, start falling apart - when you find yourself against a force that doesn't lend itself to the way you perceive the world. You don't give up, you don't lie down and you die. What you do is you fight this with all your equipment, whatever you have. But of course you don't have a chance. Perhaps, Kafkaesque is the right word, after all, for the ordeal of his government office. At one point, you probably heard a conversation like this: I'm exhausted from helping the canteen today. Yes that kind of work will bring you a lot of good karma. Or maybe seeing the guy who cut you off in traffic end up just a mile later, and he thought, Karma just got you. Karma, we is basically getting what we deserve, whether it's something positive, because we've done something good, or something negative, because of our bad behavior. But that's not really what karma is, or how it works. Karma is a Hindu and Buddhist concept that teaches all your actions, through a wave of later incarnations, will affect your destiny. In essence, karma is pay justice; you are punished or rewarded in a future life according to your actions in this. The concept of karma cannot be understood, and is not valid, outside reincarnation. Because karma takes place for a long time, in the course of life. It's not something that's being called up right now [sources: American Heritage Dictionary, Goldberg]. Publicity Britain's Prince Charles has been called a Luddite for speaking out against GM crops. So did novelist Jonathan Franzen, after panato e-book and Twitter. Long used to describe someone who despises today's technological advances for those of the past, especially when it comes to jobs, the description is totally inaccurate. The Luddites were a group of experienced weavers from Nottinghamshire, England, who became a bit warn under the collar when companies began replacing them with automated looms in the early 19th century, during the British Industrial Revolution. Reuniting, the weavers were called Luddtes after General Ludd or King Ludd, a legendary figure from sherwood forest believed to be named after Ned Ludd, a weaver who is said to have destroyed two sock frames a few decades earlier [source: de Castella]. With the unions banned, the Luddites fought against the corporations in the only way possible, in revolt. The workers attacked the frames, burned the mills and even shielded themselves with the British Army. A total of 25 Luddites were hanged and a further 63 were shipped to Australia. The Luddites were not anti-technology, they were pro-protection-their-jobs-and-wages. It was not only in the 1970s that the term was used to refer to technophobes; now, this new definition seems to remain here [source: de Castella]. Advertising You nimrod! This disparaging remark is used to tell someone that you think they're stupid or one. Maybe both. But Nimrod was mentioned in the Bible, which does not paint him as a boy who was a few bricks short of a full load. Nimrod was the great-grandson of none other than Noah, and grandson of Ham. A powerful warrior and hunter, he founded Babylon, the first great empire after the devastating flood. A rebel and a leader, Nimrod is also credited with building the Tower of Babel, an immense structure topped by a temple. The purpose of the tower was for its followers to reach to destroy it. According to the Bible and other ancient texts, God foiled the plan by creating more languages so that people could not understand each other and began to disperse [sources: Babylon Mystery]. Publicity Then, how did Nimrod's name mean someone slow? There's no definitive answer, but many people claim it was thanks to Bugs Bunny's looney tunes fame in the 1940s. Bugs allegedly teased the disfavored hunter Elmer Fudd by sarcastically calling him Nimrod, the skilled hunter of the time. The name brings a slight thrill. Orwellian is used to refer to a situation similar to that described by author George Orwell in his 1984 novel. The book depicted a future totalitarian state with thought control, government surveillance, and the practice of giving something bad a name that makes it look good. The Oxford English Dictionary first noticed Orwellian's use in 1950, just a year after its publication in 1984 [source: Peters]. Since then, the term has come in handy for all kinds of situations, generally in a negative way. Consider, for example, the Clear Skies Act of 2003, which was criticized by environmentalists for actually making it easier for power plants to pollute the air (the law never passed) [source: Curtius and Hamburger]. Or how about the discovery that the U.S. National Security Agency was secretly collecting private citizen phone records in 2013? The problem is that George Orwell has written more than one novel. He was a writer who wrote other books and a socialist thinker. He was also, say many, a good guy. Orwellian should simply mean someone who admires the works and ideas of George Orwell. The Oxford English Dictionary says that this is a definition [sources: Nunberg, Peters]. Unfortunately, however, not the main one. Interestingly, both people on the left and right used the phrase Orwellian to describe policies with which they disagree. Sorry, George. Advertising Those hypocresis Pharisees! At least that's the number of people who believe they're depicted in the Bible, which is why the term Pharisee today is used to mean someone who is hypocritical and hypocritical. But this is not an accurate definition. The Pharisees - the name means separate or separatist - were an ancient Jewish sect that believed in strict adherence to Jewish traditions and religious practices. They interpreted the scriptures literally. While some of their contemporaries raised an eyebrow for their zeal for Jewish law, they were respected by many because they were ordinary citizens who wanted to help people of all classes study the law of Moses. (Their rivals, the Sadducees, were mainly aristocrats and priests.) Even the Pharisees did not bow to the hated Roman authorities [sources: Johnson, American Heritage Dictionary]. But were they presumptuous? In Luke's biblical book, the Pharisees were with Jesus for healing a man with a paralyzed hand on Saturdays. Yet he looked another way, the Pharisees were following their true beliefs, and felt stem tight to the law was what God desired. In addition, the Biblical portrait of the Pharisees is more nuanced than it may seem at first glance. A powerful warrior and hunter, he founded Babylon, the first great empire after the devastating flood. A rebel and a leader, Nimrod is also the legal commentary on the Torah written by the Pharisees, also condemned hypocrisy [source: Abrahams]. The Pharisees were the only Jewish sect that survived the fall of Jerusalem in 70 bc.C. and thus formed the basis of modern Judaism. President-elect Joe Biden pretty much made Malarky a familiar word, so we thought we'd do some research on his origin story. As a writer, I'm proud of my vocabulary. But I'm not too proud to admit that I was surprised by the true definitions of some of these words. Related articles The Free DictionaryInternet Encyclopedia of PhilosophyBBC: Religions Abrami, Leo. 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