

The
**American
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of the English Language

FOURTH EDITION



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Merrill (mĕr'ēl), **James** 1926–1995. American works include *Divine Comedies* (1976), which won a Pulitzer Prize.

Merrimack River (mĕr'ə-māk') A river rising in south-central New Hampshire and flowing about 177 km (110 mi) south into north-east Massachusetts then northeast to the Atlantic Ocean. It was long used as a source of power for textile mills.

merri·ment (mĕr'i-mənt) *n.* High-spirited fun and enjoyment; hilarity.

Merritt Island (mĕr'īt) A city of east-central Florida on **Merritt Island** between the mainland and Cape Canaveral. Population: 32,886.

merry (mĕr'ē) *adj.* **-rier, -riest** **1.** Full of high-spirited gaiety; jolly. **2.** Marked by or offering fun and gaiety; festive: *a merry evening*. **3.** Archaic Delightful, entertaining. **4.** Brisk: *a merry pace*. [Middle English *merri*, from Old English *mirige*, pleasant. See **mregh-u-** in Appendix I.] —**mer'ri·ly** *adv.* —**mer'ri·ness** *n.*

merry-an-drew (mĕr'ē-ān'drō) *n.* A clown; a buffoon. [MERRY + the name *Andrew*.]

merry-bells (mĕr'ē-bĕlz') *pl.n.* (used with a *sing.* or *pl. verb*) See **bellwort**.

merry-go-round (mĕr'ē-gō-round') *n.* **1.** A revolving circular platform fitted with seats, often in the form of animals, ridden for amusement. **2.** A piece of playground equipment consisting of a small circular platform that revolves when pushed or pedaled. **3.** A busy round; a whirl: *a merry-go-round of parties*.

merry-mak·ing (mĕr'ē-mā'king) *n.* **1.** Participation in festive activities. **2a.** A festivity; a revelry. **b.** Festive activities. —**mer'ry·mak·er** *n.*

merry-thought (mĕr'ē-thōt') *n.* Chiefly British A wishbone.

merry widow *n.* A short strapless corset with half cups for the breasts and long garters. [Originally a trademark.]

Mersey (mĕr'zē) A river of northwest England flowing about 113 km (70 mi) generally westward to the Irish Sea at Liverpool. Its large estuary is navigable for oceangoing vessels.

Mersin (mĕr-sĕn') A city of southern Turkey on the Mediterranean Sea west-southwest of Adana. It is a rail terminus and major port. Population: 523,000.

Merthio·late (mĕr-thī'ə-lāt') A trademark used for thimerosal.

Merton (mĕr'tn), **Robert King** Born 1910. American sociologist who proposed that deviant behavior results when a society offers no acceptable means of achieving acceptable goals.

Merton, Thomas 1915–1968. American Trappist monk and writer of works on contemporary spiritual and secular life, including *The Seven Story Mountain* (1948) and *No Man Is an Island* (1955).

mes- *pref.* Variant of **meso-**.

me·sa (mā'sə) *n.* A broad, flat-topped elevation with one or more clifflike sides, common in the southwest United States. [Spanish, *table*, *mesa*, from Old Spanish, *table*, from Latin *mēnsa*.]

Mesa (mā'sə) A city of south-central Arizona east of Phoenix. It is a winter resort. Population: 288,091.

Me·sa·bi Range (mə-sā'bĕ) A series of low hills in northeast Minnesota. Extensive iron ore deposits were discovered here in 1887.

mē·sal·li·ance (mā-zāl'ē-əns, mā'zā-lyāns') *n.* A marriage with a person of inferior social position. [French: *més-*, bad (from Old French *mes-*; see **MIS-**) + *alliance*, alliance (from Old French *alliance*; see **ALLIANCE**).]

mes·arch (mĕz'ārk', mĕs', mĕz'ārk', -sārk') *adj.* Ecology Originating in a moderately moist habitat. Used of a sere. [MES(O)- + Greek *arkhē*, beginning.]

mes·cal (mĕs-kāl') also **mez·cal** (mĕz-kāl') *n.* **1.** See **peyote** (sense 1). **2a.** A Mexican liquor distilled from the fermented juice of certain species of agave. **b.** A food prepared by cooking the fleshy leaf base and trunk of certain agaves. **3.** See **maguery** (sense 1). [American Spanish, from Nahuatl *mexcalli*, mescal liquor: *metl*, maguery plant + perhaps *ixca*, *xca*, to bake.]

mescal button *n.* The fresh or dried buttonlike tubercles of peyote, chewed as a drug by certain Native American peoples. Also called *peyote*.

Mes·ca·le·ro (mĕs'kə-lār'ō) *n., pl. Mescalero* or **-ros** **1.** An Apache tribe formerly inhabiting southern New Mexico, western Texas, and north-central Mexico, with a present-day population in southern New Mexico. **2.** A member of this tribe.

mes·ca·line (mĕs'kə-lĕn', -lĭn) *n.* An alkaloid drug, C₁₁H₁₇NO₃, obtained from mescal buttons, which produces hallucinations. Also called *peyote*.

mes·en·ter·on·ic (mĕz-ĕn'tĕr-ŏn'ĭk, mĕs-) *n.* See **midgut** (sense 1). —**mes'en'ter-on'ic** *adj.*

mes·en·ter·y (mĕz'ĕn-tĕr'ē, mĕs'-) *n., pl. -ies* Any of several folds of the peritoneum that connect the intestines to the dorsal abdominal wall, especially such a fold that envelops the jejunum and ileum. [Middle English *mesenterie*, from Medieval Latin *mesenterium*, from Greek *mesenterion*: *meso-*, meso- + *enterion*, diminutive of *enteron*, entrails; see **en** in Appendix I.] —**mes'en'ter'ic** *adj.*

mesh (mĕsh) *n.* **1a.** Any of the open spaces in a net or network; an interstice. **b.** The cords, threads, or wires surrounding these spaces. Often used in the plural. **2.** An openwork fabric or structure; a net or network: *a screen made of wire mesh*. **3.** Something that snares or entraps. Often used in the plural: *Arabia had become entangled in the meshes of . . . politics* (W. Montgomery Watt). **4a.** The engagement of gear teeth. **b.** The state of being so engaged: *gear teeth in mesh*. ♦ *v.* **meshed, meshing, meshes** —*tr.* **1.** To catch in or as if in a net; ensnare. **2.** To cause (gear teeth) to become engaged. **3.** To cause to work closely together; coordinate. —*intr.* **1.** To become entangled. **2.** To become engaged or interlocked: *gears that are not meshing properly*. **3a.** To fit together effectively; be coordinated. **b.** To accord with another or each other; harmonize. [Middle English *mesch*, probably from Middle Dutch *maesche*.] —**mesh'y** *adj.*

Me·shach (mĕ'shāch) In the Bible, a young man who with Abednego and Shadrach emerged unharmed from the fiery furnace of Babylon.

Me·shed (mĕ-shĕd') See **Mashhad**.

me·shu·ga also **me·shug·ga** (mə-shōōg'ə) *adj.* Slang Crazy; senseless. [Yiddish *meshuge*, from Hebrew *mashuggā'*, participle of *šuggā'*, to be mad. See **šg'** in Appendix II.]

me·shu·gaas or **mish·e·gaas** or **mish·e·goss** (mĭsh'ə-gās') *n.* Slang Crazy or senseless activity or behavior; craziness. [Yiddish *meshegas*, from Hebrew *mashuggā'*. See **MESHUGA**.]

me·shug·ge·neh (mə-shōōg'ĕ-nĕ) or **me·shug·ge·ner** (-nĕr) *adj.* Crazy; senseless. ♦ *n.* One who is crazy. [Yiddish *meshugener*, *meshugene*, masculine and feminine sing. of *meshuge*. See **MESHUGA**.]

mesh·work (mĕsh'wŭrk') *n.* Meshed material; network.

me·si·al (mĕz'ē-əl, -zhəl) *adj.* **1.** Of, in, near, or toward the middle. **2.** Dentistry Situated toward the middle of the front of the jaw along the curve of the dental arch. —**me'si·al·ly** *adv.*

mes·ic (mĕz'ĭk, mĕs', mĕz'ĭk, -sĭk) *adj.* Ecology Of, characterized by, or adapted to a moderately moist habitat.

me·sit·yl·ene (mə-sīt'ĭ-ĕn') *n.* A hydrocarbon, C₆H₃(CH₃)₃, occurring in petroleum and coal tar or synthesized from acetone and used as a solvent. [MESITYL (OXIDE) + -ENE.]

me·si·tyl oxide (mĕs'ĭ-tĭl) *n.* An oily liquid, (CH₃)₂C:CHCOCH₃, obtained from acetones and used as a solvent and in lacquers, paints, and varnishes. [Greek *mesitēs*, mediator (from its use as an intermediate in organic synthesis) (from *mesos*, middle; see **MESO-**) + -YL.]

Mes·mer (mĕz'mĕr, mĕs'-), **Franz** or **Friedrich Anton** 1734–1815. Austrian physician who sought to treat disease through animal magnetism, an early therapeutic application of hypnotism.

mes·mer·ism (mĕz'mĕ-rĭz'əm, mĕs'-) *n.* **1.** A strong or spellbinding appeal; fascination. **2.** Hypnotic induction believed to involve animal magnetism. **3.** Hypnotism. [After Franz **MESMER**.] —**mes·mer'ic** (-mĕr'ĭk) *adj.* —**mes·mer'ic·al·ly** *adv.* —**mes'mer·ist** *n.*

Word History When the members of an audience sit mesmerized by a speaker, their reactions do not take the form of dancing, sleeping, or falling into convulsions. But if Franz Anton Mesmer were addressing the audience, such behavior could be expected. Mesmer, a visionary 18th-century physician, believed cures could be effected by having patients do things such as sit with their feet in a fountain of magnetized water while holding cables attached to magnetized trees. Mesmer then came to believe that magnetic powers resided in himself, and during highly fashionable curative sessions in Paris he caused his patients to have reactions ranging from sleeping or dancing to convulsions. These reactions were actually brought about by hypnotic powers that Mesmer was unaware he possessed. One of his pupils, named Puységur, then used the term *mesmerism* (first recorded in English in 1802) for Mesmer's practices. The related word *mesmerize* (first recorded in English in 1829), having shed its reference to the hypnotic doctor, lives on in the sense "to enthrall."

mes·mer·ize (mĕz'mĕ-rĭz', mĕs'-) *tr.v. -ized, -iz·ing, -izes* **1.** To spellbind; enthrall: *"He could mesmerize an audience by the sheer force*



mesa
Arizona desert landscape

ă pat	oi boy
ā pay	ou out
âr care	ōō took
â father	ōō boot
ĕ pet	ū cut
ē be	ûr urge
ĭ pit	th thin
ī pie	th this
îr pier	hw which
ô pot	zh vision
ō toe	ə about, item
ô paw	♦ regionalism

Stress marks: / (primary);
' (secondary), as in
dictionary (dĭk'shə-nĕr'ē)