



101 Occasional Words

selected and misused by Peter Fyfe

"Even superheroes need good vocabularies!"

An Occasional Word...

Felicitations!

noun

happy greetings

He started his chrestomathy of occasional words, not with a prolegomenon, but with felicitations, in the hope that the words, whether obscure, jocular, archaic, or just neglected, would bring not only a much needed vocabulary expanding opportunity, but also a little happiness and joy into the lives of the differently eloquent.

Healthy vocabularies build healthy minds

An Occasional Word...

prolix

adjective

lengthy and tedious

He could hardly contain his excitement at the thought of another prolix conversation on the subject of his colleague's forthcoming renovations.

Healthy vocabularies build healthy minds

An Occasional Word...

quidnunc

noun

a person given to gossip

His proudest moment was the first time he was accused of being a quidnunc.

Healthy vocabularies build healthy minds

An Occasional Word...

obloquy

noun

the state of being ill spoken

He could endure many things but obloquy was not among them.

Healthy vocabularies build healthy minds

An Occasional Word...

symposium

noun

a drinking party

He told his mother he couldn't come to dinner because he had an important symposium to attend.

Healthy vocabularies build healthy minds

An Occasional Word...

onychophagia

noun

nail biting

He encouraging her, in the interest of better deportment, to eschew onychophagia.

Healthy vocabularies build healthy minds

An Occasional Word...

ataraxia

noun

calmness, tranquillity, imperturbability

He looked forward to his sabbatical and the opportunity to reside, day to day, in ataraxia.

Healthy vocabularies build healthy minds

An Occasional Word...

tergiversation

noun

making conflicting and evasive statements

The man's ongoing tergiversation was beginning to abrade his good humour.

Healthy vocabularies build healthy minds

An Occasional Word...

pogonotomy

noun

trimming one's beard

His elaborate facial shrubbery required a significant investment in pogonotomy.

Healthy vocabularies build healthy minds

An Occasional Word...

alliaceous

adjective

smelling of onions or garlic

Anyone not at least a little alliaceous doesn't know how to eat properly.

Healthy vocabularies build healthy minds

An Occasional Word...

temerarious

adjective

reckless and rash

He was getting too old for this temerarious behaviour.

Healthy vocabularies build healthy minds

An Occasional Word...

hierophant

noun

an interpreter of the esoteric

Sometimes his tendency to fancy himself as a hierophant could get a little wearing.

Healthy vocabularies build healthy minds

An Occasional Word...

ternate

adjective

arranged in threes

The barman set up his favourite: ternate gins.

Healthy vocabularies build healthy minds

An Occasional Word...

inchoate

adjective

just begun

He marvelled at the potential of his still inchoate vocabulary.

Healthy vocabularies build healthy minds

An Occasional Word...

asperity

noun

harshness of temper

He tended to display a certain asperity in the earlier hours of the day.

Healthy vocabularies build healthy minds

An Occasional Word...

haptic

adjective

of or pertaining to touch, tactile

He sensed at once her highly haptic nature.

Healthy vocabularies build healthy minds

An Occasional Word...

titivate

verb

put the finishing touches on

She paused before the mirror to titivate her hair, makeup, and décolletage.

Healthy vocabularies build healthy minds

An Occasional Word...

plumassier

noun

a person who trades or works in feathers

No truly great outfit is complete without a visit to one's plumassier.

Healthy vocabularies build healthy minds

An Occasional Word...

edentate

noun

having few or no teeth

Once again the bus was replete with the edentate.

Healthy vocabularies build healthy minds

An Occasional Word...

fustian

adjective

turgid speech or writing

He rejoiced ironically as we waded through another fustian memorandum from his peer.

Healthy vocabularies build healthy minds

An Occasional Word...

dysgraphia

noun

an inability to write coherently

Was he the only one immune to the plague of dysgraphia sweeping society?

Healthy vocabularies build healthy minds

An Occasional Word...

horripilation

noun

goose bumps

The sudden outbreak of horripilation alerted him to her arrival.

Healthy vocabularies build healthy minds

An Occasional Word...

demulcent

adj

soothing

He rubbed a little demulcent balm into his tired old face.

Healthy vocabularies build healthy minds

An Occasional Word...

chrestomathy

noun

passages used to help learn language

He could say without fear of contradiction that his work was unlikely to be used as chrestomathy.

Healthy vocabularies build healthy minds

An Occasional Word...

anosmia

noun

the loss of the sense of smell

Given his neighbour's unique personal hygiene regime, he longed to suffer from anosmia.

Healthy vocabularies build healthy minds

An Occasional Word...

strafe

noun

abuse

He always found he responded very positively to a barrage of strafe.

Healthy vocabularies build healthy minds

An Occasional Word...

ersatz

adjective

an inferior substitute

His nibbled politely at the meagre serving of ersatz wit before him and dreamt quietly of better times, better company, and better conversation.

Healthy vocabularies build healthy minds

An Occasional Word...

gallimaufry

noun

a jumble or medley

Was there any way to bring order to the gallimaufry that was his mind?

Healthy vocabularies build healthy minds

An Occasional Word...

sprezzatura

noun

the art of making the difficult appear effortless

He whipped off a few more quips with his customary sprezzatura.

Healthy vocabularies build healthy minds

An Occasional Word...

serpiginous

adjective

like a serpent, winding

After one last refreshing ale, he began the serpiginous journey home.

Healthy vocabularies build healthy minds

An Occasional Word...

timorous

adjective

easily alarmed

Conversation with him was no task for the timorous.

Healthy vocabularies build healthy minds

An Occasional Word...

behemoth

noun

an enormous thing

He sat down to consider the behemoth his once simple life had become and wondered if he'd been taking himself too seriously.

Healthy vocabularies build healthy minds

An Occasional Word...

bruxism

noun

the involuntary grinding of the teeth

He feared the ongoing frustration of his situation would cause his bruxism to become chronic.

Healthy vocabularies build healthy minds

An Occasional Word...

osculate

verb (jocular)

kiss

The happy couple paused only to osculate.

Healthy vocabularies build healthy minds

An Occasional Word...

oscitation

noun

yawning, inattention

His oration caused an outbreak of oscitation.

Healthy vocabularies build healthy minds

An Occasional Word...

splenetic

adjective

Ill tempered

Try as he might, he could not completely conceal his splenetic true self.

Healthy vocabularies build healthy minds

An Occasional Word...

occiput

noun

the back of the head

He needed a smack to the occiput.

Healthy vocabularies build healthy minds

An Occasional Word...

anodyne

adjective

soothing

He always tried to adopt an anodyne tone when engaging in rigorous debate.

Healthy vocabularies build healthy minds

An Occasional Word...

solidus

noun

forward slash character

Why use a slash when you can choose a solidus?

Healthy vocabularies build healthy minds

An Occasional Word...

otiose

noun

having no practical purpose

He managed to struggle along with his career in business, despite not having an otiose business degree.

Healthy vocabularies build healthy minds

An Occasional Word...

grimoire

noun

a book of magical knowledge

Sometimes he wondered whether he should be writing a procedure manual or a grimoire.

Healthy vocabularies build healthy minds

An Occasional Word...

avuncular

adjective

in the manner of an uncle

We knew his nephew had arrived by the avuncular aura he now bore.

Healthy vocabularies build healthy minds

An Occasional Word...

persiflage

noun

banter

He wondered if there was anything more enjoyable than a spot of persiflage.

Healthy vocabularies build healthy minds

An Occasional Word...

penurious

adjective

stingy or grudging

His penurious grasp on his wallet prevented his lashing out on a decent haircut.

Healthy vocabularies build healthy minds

An Occasional Word...

mendicant

noun

beggar

Penurious as he was, he declined the offer to fund the mendicant's next meal

.

Healthy vocabularies build healthy minds

An Occasional Word...

valetudinarian

adjective

unduly anxious about one's health

Her constant attempts to ply him with herbal remedies did little to assuage his tendency toward the valetudinarian.

Healthy vocabularies build healthy minds

An Occasional Word...

schadenfreude

noun

the enjoyment of the misfortune of others

She implored him to include regular doses of schadenfreude in his mental health regime.

Healthy vocabularies build healthy minds

An Occasional Word...

loquacious

adjective

talkative

There is the special camaraderie enjoyed by the loquacious to which the sullen will never be privy.

Healthy vocabularies build healthy minds

An Occasional Word...

subfusc

adjective

dull, dusky, gloomy

He knew in his heart he would never embrace the subfusc world that is mundane reality.

Healthy vocabularies build healthy minds

An Occasional Word...

capacious

adjective

able to hold much

Mindful of her love of spontaneous retail therapy, she was careful to always accessorise with a capacious handbag.

Healthy vocabularies build healthy minds

An Occasional Word...

hoyden

noun

boisterous girl

He found himself, once again, attracted to a hoyden with big feet.

Healthy vocabularies build healthy minds

An Occasional Word...

pulchritudinous

adjective

beautiful

He continues to derive pleasure from her pulchritudinous presence.

Healthy vocabularies build healthy minds

An Occasional Word...

anserine

adjective

like a goose

The meeting was characterised by his usual anserine behaviour.

Healthy vocabularies build healthy minds

An Occasional Word...

cacography

noun

bad handwriting

The excellence of his cacography indicated his suitability for a career in medicine.

Healthy vocabularies build healthy minds

An Occasional Word...

excrescence

noun

an ugly addition

He would be horrified to discover that his recent foray into facial hair growth was widely considered an excrescence.

Healthy vocabularies build healthy minds

An Occasional Word...

tinctorial

adjective

of or pertaining to colour

He revelled in the opportunity to reveal his tinctorial and cacophonous splendour.

Healthy vocabularies build healthy minds

An Occasional Word...

meretricious

adjective

showy but falsely attractive

He wondered if there was any mitigating irony in the meretricious splendour of his colleague's new wardrobe.

Healthy vocabularies build healthy minds

An Occasional Word...

prolegomenon

noun

a preface or introduction

He continued to ignore the indisputable fact that too many of his best jokes seemed to require a prolegomenon to ensure comprehension by the target audience.

Healthy vocabularies build healthy minds

An Occasional Word...

prandial

adjective

of dinner

If anyone calls, he's partaking of a prandial pause.

Healthy vocabularies build healthy minds

An Occasional Word...

fugacious

adjective

fleeting

Is there anything more fugacious than fame, especially for those unencumbered by talent, merit, or discernable character?

Healthy vocabularies build healthy minds

An Occasional Word...

emetic

adjective

causing vomiting

He arrived marinated in what could only be described as an emetic aftershave.

Healthy vocabularies build healthy minds

An Occasional Word...

fuliginous

adjective

sooty

There was a loud poof and in an instant the now fuliginous fellow realises the wisdom of not using flammable liquids to light the barbeque.

Healthy vocabularies build healthy minds

An Occasional Word...

larine

adjective

of or pertaining to gulls

The esurient workers surrounded the tray of leftover boardroom sandwiches in a distinctly larine manner.

Healthy vocabularies build healthy minds

An Occasional Word...

lunula

noun

*crescent shaped mark,
especially at the base of the fingernail*

He was so nervous about calling him he chewed a fingernail down to the lunula.

Healthy vocabularies build healthy minds

An Occasional Word...

picaresque

adj

dealing with the episodic adventures of rogues

He was concerned that the board minutes had taken a distinct turn toward the picaresque.

Healthy vocabularies build healthy minds

An Occasional Word...

impecunious

adj

having little or no money

He was your basic nightmare: tall, dark, handsome, and impecunious.

Healthy vocabularies build healthy minds

An Occasional Word...

Lucubration

noun

nocturnal study (literally “work by lamplight”)

How could he convince them that the cause of his morning languor was lucubration and not something more nefarious?

Healthy vocabularies build healthy minds

An Occasional Word...

borborygmus

noun

a rumbling of gas in the intestines

He put the caller on hold for the duration of the borborygmus.

Healthy vocabularies build healthy minds

An Occasional Word...

prink

verb

smarten oneself up

The first step in prinking oneself is to stop using vulgar words like “tjuzs”.

Healthy vocabularies build healthy minds

An Occasional Word...

coruscate

verb

sparkle

Darling,
wear what you like,
just be sure to coruscate!

Healthy vocabularies build healthy minds

An Occasional Word...

sesquipedalian

adjective

characterised by long words

He feared his sesquipedalian riposte would once again go unappreciated.

Healthy vocabularies build healthy minds

An Occasional Word...

esurient

adjective

hungry

He continued in his attempt to affect the lean, esurient look of a super model.

Healthy vocabularies build healthy minds

An Occasional Word...

ebullience

noun

in high spirits

Not even the slings and arrow of outrageous fortune seemed capable of calming his ebullience, such was his lack of a cross to bear.

Healthy vocabularies build healthy minds

An Occasional Word...

cachinnate

verb

to laugh loudly

Given what he was wearing, how could his colleagues do anything but cachinnate?

Healthy vocabularies build healthy minds

An Occasional Word...

rebarbative

adjective

repellent, unattractive

Is a polyester tie ever anything but rebarbative?

Healthy vocabularies build healthy minds

An Occasional Word...

inveigh

verb

to write with hostility

It required every ounce of his strength to resist the urge to inveigh against the ineffable injustice of it all.

Healthy vocabularies build healthy minds

An Occasional Word...

ineffable

adjective

too great to be uttered

The new project team writhed in agony as they began to attempt to grapple with the ineffable hugeness of the task before them.

Healthy vocabularies build healthy minds

An Occasional Word...

thalassotherapy

noun

therapeutic treatment using sea water

He saw the size of the swell and, on medical advice, took the day off to pursue a course of intensive thalassotherapy.

Healthy vocabularies build healthy minds

An Occasional Word...

soporific

adjective

tending to produce sleep

His companion's soporific conversation was in need of some metaphoric caffeine.

Healthy vocabularies build healthy minds

An Occasional Word...

brook

verb

to tolerate

My business cannot brook this dalliance.

Shakespeare, Comedy of Errors

But I do wonder his insolence can brook to be commanded.

Shakespeare, Coriolanus

Healthy vocabularies build healthy minds

An Occasional Word...

flagitious

adj

utterly villainous

Nefarious does not begin to describe such a flagitious fellow.

Healthy vocabularies build healthy minds

An Occasional Word...

ventricose

adj

having a protruding belly

Budgie smugglers have a tendency to not flatter the ventricose.

Healthy vocabularies build healthy minds

An Occasional Word...

paraph

noun

a flourish after a signature

If he were ever going to be taken seriously as a famous person, he would need to augment his autograph with a characteristic paraph.

Healthy vocabularies build healthy minds

An Occasional Word...

cacology

noun

bad choice of words

His correspondent's ineluctable cacology led him to seriously consider following Virginia into the Ouse.

Healthy vocabularies build healthy minds

An Occasional Word...

effulgent

adjective

radiant, shining brilliantly

Put on your sunnies,
here comes the effulgent one!

Healthy vocabularies build healthy minds

An Occasional Word...

vicinage

noun

neighbourhood, surrounding district

The saw who was moving in and declared, “There goes the vicinage”.

Healthy vocabularies build healthy minds

An Occasional Word...

aestivate

verb

to pass the summer

If he couldn't aestivate on the beach, at least he could do it somewhere air-conditioned.

Healthy vocabularies build healthy minds

An Occasional Word...

ineluctable

adj

that cannot be escaped from

The ineluctable turbidity of the prose was beginning to abrade his usual ebullience.

Healthy vocabularies build healthy minds

An Occasional Word...

anomic

adjective

lacking the usual social standards

Better anomic than anaemic.

Healthy vocabularies build healthy minds

An Occasional Word...

accidie

noun

sloth and laziness

He found himself once again dreaming of extended periods of therapeutic accidie.

Healthy vocabularies build healthy minds

An Occasional Word...

sudatory

adjective

promoting perspiration

He found even the mere thought of the looming deadlines was rather sudatory.

Healthy vocabularies build healthy minds

An Occasional Word...

atticism

noun

elegance of speech

A life replete with atticism
is no cause for criticism;
does not the joy of witticism
build bridges over ev'ry schism?

Healthy vocabularies build healthy minds

An Occasional Word...

accouchement

noun

childbirth

His plan was to be as far from the actual accouchement as possible, preferably in an establishment specialising in the conveyance of ameliorating liquors.

Healthy vocabularies build healthy minds

An Occasional Word...

pugilistic

adjective

like a boxer

Any hope of a gentle approach was countermanded by the pugilistic manner of the bellicose.

Healthy vocabularies build healthy minds

An Occasional Word...

effluent

adjective

flowing forth

He effluent eloquence showed no signs of abating.

Healthy vocabularies build healthy minds

An Occasional Word...

concinnity

noun

elegance of literary style

They feared his attempt to engender the policy and procedures with a modicum of concinnity would prove to be his undoing.

Healthy vocabularies build healthy minds

An Occasional Word...

egregious

adjective

outstandingly bad

What remained for him to determine was whether the film was completely without merit or merely egregious.

Healthy vocabularies build healthy minds

An Occasional Word...

thaumaturge

noun

a worker of miracles or wonders

The challenge of characterising the difference twixt a technical writer and a thaumaturge continues to confound our finest minds.

Healthy vocabularies build healthy minds

An Occasional Word...

psittacine

adjective

of or pertaining to parrots; parrot like

His psittacine method of learning things meant he could talk the talk but tended to limp rather painfully when attempting to walk the walk.

Healthy vocabularies build healthy minds

An Occasional Word...

hebdomadal

adjective

weekly, from the Latin for seven (hepta)

The hebdomadal symposium began, as was its custom, with a toast to sobriety.

Healthy vocabularies build healthy minds

An Occasional Word...

procrustean

adjective

seeking to enforce uniformity

He vowed to fight the procrustean perfidy of middle-class mediocrity until his dying breath.

Healthy vocabularies build healthy minds

An Occasional Word...

lachrymatory

adjective

causing tears

The last of the occasional words: he feared it would be a lachrymatory farewell.

Healthy vocabularies build healthy minds

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