

1. EJACULATE

Used to mean: To utter suddenly and passionately, to exclaim

The unintended double entendres in this sentence of *Jane Eyre* could make anyone snicker: "The sleepers were all aroused: ejaculations, terrified murmurs sounded in every room; door after door unclosed; one looked out and another looked out; the gallery filled." Still, the old-school and modern definitions are pretty synonymous.

2. MYRIAD

Used to mean: 10,000

Before people were debating whether "myriad" is a noun or adjective (it's both), Greek mathematicians gave it the numeral M and were extremely specific about what it meant. Think a myriad is a lot to count? Try the myriad myriad (MM) or 100 million, the largest number in ancient Greece.

3. BUXOM

Used to mean: Meek, obedient

Hmmm... Not how we'd describe Beyoncé.

4. DAPPER

Used to mean: Heavy-set

Not how we'd describe George Clooney, either.

5. HEARTBURN

Used to mean: Jealousy or hatred

"Heartburn" hasn't ever actually involved the heart. It once referred to feelings that come from the mind. Now it describes an issue with your stomach or esophagus.

6. BROTHEL

Used to mean: A low-life

In Middle English, "brothel" described the kind of person who'd cheat, steal, and ... possibly frequent a bordello.

7. INMATE

Used to mean: A tenant or housemate

Try posting an "Inmate Wanted" ad on Craigslist today and see what happens.

8. BALDERDASH

Used to mean: A frothy liquid

We swear this isn't a board game bluff.

9. CHARISMA

Used to mean: A divinely conferred gift or power

In the past, people with charisma could really work a room, restoring sight to the blind and other such miracles. Today, believers in Charismatic Christianity still believe in signs, prophecy, and divine healing. The root of it all: the Greek word *kharis*, for "god-given favor."

10. BULLY

Used to mean: Superb, wonderful

When Theodore Roosevelt referred to the presidency as a bully pulpit, he wasn't talking about name-calling, harassment, or beating anyone with a big stick. He was praising the social change he might shape in office. Bully for him!

11. MATRIX

Used to mean: The womb

Morpheus was right. We've all lived in the Matrix.

12. DEFECATE

Used to mean: To purify something

From the Latin *defæcatus*, which translates to "cleansed from dregs," this definition still makes sense. Still, you'd probably decline if someone offered you a glass of defecated water.

13. DIAPER

Used to mean: A white fabric with small diamond-shaped figures

There was nothing embarrassing about adult diapers back in the day. The Greek root *diaspros* meant "pure white."

14. ARTIFICIAL

Used to mean: Full of artistic and technical skill

Think about it: It takes a lot of skill to reproduce a flower in silk or realistic-feeling latex.

15. AWFUL

Used to mean: Commanding awe

Here's an awfully good example from *Moby Dick*:
"There is, one knows not what sweet mystery about this sea, whose gently awful stirrings seems to speak of some hidden soul beneath..."