

Lesson 11

Human Characteristics

All the words in this lesson are nouns that characterize people.

- automaton** N. a robot; an individual who acts in a mechanical fashion (Leslie worked endlessly and mindlessly like an *automaton*.)
- charlatan** N. someone who pretends to have skills or abilities (The doctor was really a *charlatan* with a phoney medical degree.)
- curmudgeon** N. a harsh, unpredictable, and ill-tempered person (My uncle was considered a *curmudgeon*, but he performed many kind deeds over the years.)
- cynic** N. a person who distrusts the sincerity of others (Disappointment and betrayal transformed him into a *cynic*.)
- demagogue** N. a leader who appeals to emotions and prejudices, not reason (A *demagogue* often gains power by turning one group against another.)
- gourmand** N. someone who eats and drinks excessively (Restaurants that serve all-you-can-eat specials appeal to the *gourmand*.)
- illiterate** N. a person who cannot read or write (An *illiterate* cannot read a job application form and, therefore, may not be hired.)
- ingrate** N. someone who is ungrateful (Only an *ingrate* would accept a gift while insulting the giver.)
- kleptomaniac** N. a person obsessed with stealing who may lack the financial need to steal (The *kleptomaniac* stole a pair of shoes even though she had a closet full of them.)
- neophyte** N. a beginner (The *neophyte* shows great promise and may one day be a virtuoso pianist.)
- patriarch** N. the oldest male member of a family or group (The family *patriarch* was given the place of honor at the table.)
- parasite** N. a person who lives at the expense of another (Even though she was poor, Emma refused to become a *parasite* by living off of her sister's money.)
- pauper** N. a poor person (A *pauper* as a child, Charles Dickens lived with the fear that he would be compelled to return to debtor's prison.)
- pyromaniac** N. a person with an irresistible impulse to start fires (The *pyromaniac* set the whole block of vacant warehouses ablaze.)
- ragamuffin** N. a poorly-clothed and dirty child (In the story, the *ragamuffin* was discovered to be a prince.)
- renegade** N. a person who rejects laws or conventional behavior; an outlaw (He became a *renegade* out of frustration with an ineffective legal system.)
- urchin** N. a mischievous child (Oliver Twist is a well-known *urchin*.)
- valet** N. a person who takes care of another's clothes or personal needs (Many restaurants have a *valet* who will park the cars of the guests.)
- waif** N. a homeless child (Shirley Temple was often cast as a *waif* in the movies.)
- zealot** N. a person filled with fanatical devotion (The *zealot* would not listen to any criticism about his religious leader.)