

A

- abacus:** wooden device that helped Victorian children to count by sliding colored discs or beads along a column
- abbess:** nun in charge of a convent; female brothel keeper; a madame
- abode:** place where people live; period of living somewhere
- afford:** to provide, allow or supply something
- afterlife:** existence after death; eternal life
- alderman:** term for a half-Crown; senior local government official
- ale:** alcoholic drink made from hops and fermented malt, stronger and heavier than beer
- almshouse:** privately funded lodgings for the poor (often by the church), as opposed to the workhouse, which was publicly funded
- apoplexy:** a crippling cerebral stroke; sometimes fatal; a fit of anger
- apothecary:** pharmacist; one who prepares drugs and medicines and gives medical advice; lowest order of medical man
- apprentice:** someone who works under a skilled professional for a specific amount of time (usually seven years) in order to learn a trade. When one finished his apprenticeship, he became a journeyman and would get paid for work himself
- area:** servant's entrance in the front of many London town-houses; often below-ground
- area diving:** sneaking down area steps to steal from the lower rooms of houses
- automation:** someone who resembles a machine by going through motions repetitively, but without feeling or emotion
- B**
- bank notes:** paper currency; promissory notes of a bank to pay upon presentation of the note
- banns:** announcement or notice of a forthcoming marriage in a parish church, proclaimed on three consecutive Sundays
- bathing machine:** horse-drawn covered wagon used to haul people into the sea for them to enter the water in bathing clothes without being seen (men and woman swam separately)
- beak:** magistrate
- bearer up:** thief with a female accomplice who would distract the victim for the crime to be performed
- beating:** repeatedly hitting someone; scaring birds from bushes out into the open for shooting parties

234

Bedlam: nickname for the Hospital of St Mary of Bethlehem, a London psychiatric hospital; place or situation full of noise, frenzy and confusion

beg to: wish to

bird scaring: Victorian children were employed to scare birds away from eating farmer's crops by chasing them off or shouting

boarder: person paying rent for a bed, a room, and usually meals in a private home or boarding house

blackboard: wooden board painted black or a dark color on which the teacher would write on in white chalk

blackleg: someone who works during a strike, often criticised by those who obey the strike (also known as a 'scab')

blag: to steal something, often by smash-and-grab, to trick or con someone

bloodletting: reducing the volume of blood in the body by either opening a vein or by applying leeches as a way of restoring health, used from ancient times up to the nineteenth century

bludger: violent criminal who often uses a bludgeon or heavy, stout weapon

blue bottle: policeman

bob: cockney slang for a shilling or five-pence piece

body-snatching: the act of stealing corpses from graves, tombs or morgues, usually for dissection or scientific study

borough: town that had been given the right to self govern by royal charter; in Victorian London, Southwark was referred to as 'the borough'

Bow Street Runners: detective force in London who pre-dated the police, organized by novelist Henry Fielding and his brother John in 1750 up to 1829, when Robert Peel founded London's first police force

buck cabbie: dishonest cab driver

bug hunting: stealing from or cheating drunks, especially at night in drinking dens

bull: cockney slang for five shillings

C

cant: present, often a free meal; language or vocabulary spoken by thieves or groups of people perceived to be common

caper: criminal act; dangerous activity

cash carrier: pimp or whore's minder, who would literally hold the money earned by soliciting

chavy: child

census: official list of the British population, including address and details of age, gender, occupation, and birthplace, carried out every ten years since 1841

235

- cesspool:** hole or pit in the ground for receiving waste matter or sewage from houses
- charwoman:** cleaning woman
- chilblains:** red, itchy swelling to parts of face, fingers and toes caused by exposure to cold and damp
- chink:** money (from the noise coins make when they knock against each other)
- chiv/ shiv:** knife, razor or sharpened stick used as a weapon
- choker:** clergyman, referring to the clerical collar worn around the neck
- cholera:** disease of the small intestine, often fatal, marked by symptoms of thirst, cramps, vomiting and diarrhoea, caused by drinking water tainted with human waste. Victorians were hit with several cholera epidemics before sanitation conditions were improved
- choused:** to have been cheated
- christen:** to remove identifying marks from; to use for the first time; to make something like new again
- claustrophobia:** abnormal dread of being imprisoned or confined in a close or narrow space
- clay faking:** to pick someone's pocket
- coal scuttle:** metal pail for carrying and pouring coal
- commencement:** the beginning or start of something
- cop/copper:** policeman
- costermonger:** street peddler, usually selling fruits or vegetables
- cracksman:** safecracker, someone who cracks or breaks locks
- cravat:** scarf or band of fabric worn around the neck and tied in a bow
- crib:** building, house or lodging; location of a gaol
- crow:** lookout during criminal activities; doctor
- crusher:** policeman
- cudgel:** heavy stick used as a weapon
- curtesy:** quick, superficial and not very thorough
- D**
- daffy:** small measure, usually spirits; medicine for children, consisting of senna often mixed with gin
- daresay:** venture to say; think probable
- day boarder:** someone who spends the day at school but lives at home, as opposed to someone who boards at the school
- deadlurk:** empty premises
- deaner:** shilling

236

- despatch:** send something; to send someone to carry out a task
- device:** tuppence; an emblem or motto
- deuce hog:** two shillings
- devil:** the Devil, as depicted in Christianity and some other religions, stands as the enemy or opposite to God and tempts people to sin so that they go to Hell; the actual term 'Devil' comes from the Latin *diabolus*, meaning slanderous. Gothic characters are often tempted by agents of the Devil
- dewskitch:** giving someone a beating
- diligence:** public stagecoach; taking care or attention over something
- ding:** to throw something away; to take something that has been thrown away
- diphtheria:** infectious disease caused by germs in the throat, causing difficulty in breathing, fever and damage to the heart and nervous system
- dispatches:** loaded dice; to send someone to carry out a task
- dollyshop:** unlicensed, often cheap, loan or pawn shop
- don:** eminent, professional or clever person; leader or head of a group
- Doppelgänger:** literally translated from German as 'doublegoer'; the ghostly apparition of another, living person; double or alter ego
- down:** cause suspicion or doubt; to inform on a person, when used in the expression 'to put down on someone'
- do down:** to beat someone with fists, especially as a punishment
- double-knock:** applied to the door by a confident visitor, one who was known to the family and comfortable with the purpose of his visit (a single-knock signified a more timid caller, often of an inferior class)
- dowager:** widow with an inherited title or property from her deceased husband; distinguished, respected older woman
- dragsman:** someone who steals from carriages or coaches
- draught:** check or bill of exchange; a small quantity of liquid drunk in one mouthful
- dreadnought:** warm, thick, tightly woven woollen fabric
- dressing:** decorating something, such as a Christmas tree
- duckett:** street dealer or vendor's licence
- duffer:** someone who sells allegedly stolen or worthless goods, also known as a 'hawker'
- E**
- East India Company:** private trading company established by the British government to trade with India, a country it effectively governed until the Indians fought back against the British in 1857

237

ecod: mild curse, most likely derived from 'My God'
economy: cheapness; giving better value
employ: to hire someone to work for you; if you were in the employ of or employed by someone, you worked for them
entrapment: imprisoning someone; incarcerating or trapping someone, often in dark, strange or claustrophobic surroundings
epidemic: illness that spreads rapidly and extensively, affecting most of people who come in contact with it
E.O.: fairground gambling entertainment
escop/esclop: policeman
establishment: shop, place of business
exorcism: act of forcing the Devil, a demon or evil spirits from the body of someone who is possessed, done through religious prayer or rituals
expectations: chance of coming into an inheritance, property or money

F

fadge: slang term for farthing
fakement: sham or trick, often used when begging
fan: to feel surreptitiously under someone's clothing while they are wearing it, searching for objects to steal
farthing: monetary unit worth quarter of a penny; something almost worthless or of the lowest value
favney-dropping: trick where a criminal pretends to find a ring (which has no actual value) and sells it as an item of possible worth
fen: marsh or bog
finny: slang term for five pound note
flam: lie or deception
flash: to show off or try to impress; something special or expensive-looking
flash house: public house with criminals as clientele
flimp: snatch stealing or pick pocketing from a crowd
flue faker: chimney sweep, usually young boys
footman: servant in livery, usually in a mansion or palace; a servant who serves at table, tends the door or carriage, runs errands
forfeits: parlour games where each player needs to supply a correct answer and has a forfeit if the answer is not given
furlong: unit of measurement equal to 201 m (660 ft), the length of the traditional furrow or plough trench on a farm
furtherance: helping or advancing the progress of something
gaff: show or exhibition; cheap, smutty theatre; hoax or trick

G

gaiters: cloth or leather covering extending from the waist to the lower leg, usually buttoned up the side
gannon: misleading comment, meant to deceive
gannny: someone false, who is not to be trusted
gaol: jail
garret: job pocket in a waistcoat; room at the top of the house
gartering: public house
general post: mail that was sent from the London Post office to the rest of England
ghost: phantom or spirit of somebody who has died and who has possibly not gone on to the afterlife, which often inspires fear or terror
gibbet: post with a projecting beam for hanging executed criminals, often done publically as a warning to the public
gig: light, open, two-wheeled carriage drawn by a single horse
gill: unit of liquid equalling a quarter of a pint
glim: light or fire; a source of light; begging by saying you are homeless due to fire; venereal disease
glock: slow, half-witted person
gonoph: petty, small time criminal
gothic: style of architecture, music, art or fiction generally associated with strange, frightening occurrences and mysterious or supernatural plots, characters or locations
gout: disease mainly affecting men, causing inflammation and swelling of the hands and feet, arthritis and deformity; caused by excess uric acid production
governess: woman employed to teach and care for children, in a school or home
greatcoat: long, heavy overcoat worn outdoors, often with a short cape worn over the shoulders
grog: mixture of alcohol, often rum, and water, named after an English admiral who diluted sailors' rum
grotesque: misshapen or mutated character; something or someone unexpected, monstrous or bizarre
gruel: watery, unappetising porridge, popular with the owners of the workhouse or orphanage due to its cheapness
guinea: gold coin, monetary value of twenty-one shillings or one pound and one shilling
gulpy: someone gullible or easy to fool

H

- haberdasher:** someone who sells personal items, often accessories such as thread or ribbons
- hackney coach:** carriage for hire
- half inch:** steal, rhyming slang for pinch
- hammered for life:** married
- hansom cab:** two-wheeled, horse-drawn carriage where the driver sat on a high seat at the back, so that the passengers had a clear view of the road
- haunted:** to be visited by a ghost or supernatural being
- haybag:** derogatory term for a woman
- haymaking:** cutting and gathering hay to make haystacks
- Haymarket Hector:** pimp or whore's escort, especially those working in Haymarket and Leicester Square in London
- hob:** metal shelf or rack over a fireplace where the pans or kettle could be warmed
- hoisting:** shoplifting; to lift something up
- hopping:** picking hops, used for making beer
- humbug:** something insincere or nonsensical, meant to deceive or cheat people; used to express disbelief or disgust; a hoax or fraud
- hykey:** pride, arrogance

I

- incubus:** name for a male demon, thought to be a fallen angel, who forces himself sexually upon sleeping women, which often resulted in the birth of a demon or deformed, half-human child
- influenza/flu:** viral illness, causing aching joints, fever, headaches, sore throat, cough and sneezing, even followed by death in Victorian times
- inkwell:** holes or wells in classroom desks that were used to hold the ink for writing
- Inquisition:** organization founded by the Catholic Church charged with the eradication of heresy or acting against God, by which those found guilty were often put to death
- interred:** buried
- ironmonger:** someone who sells metal goods, tools and hardware
- irons:** guns, usually pistols or revolvers

J

- jack:** detective; term sometimes used to address a stranger
- jemmy:** housebreaker's tool used on locks; someone smart or superior

- joey:** slang term for fourpence piece
- jolly:** disturbance or brawl; to be cheerful or happy
- journeyman:** skilled worker who has finished an apprenticeship and is qualified to hire himself out to work
- Judy:** term for a woman, usually a prostitute
- jump:** ground floor window, or a burglary committed by entering through the window

K

- kecks:** slang term for trousers
- ken:** house; lodging or public house
- kidsman:** organizer of child thieves
- kith:** someone's friends, neighbours or relatives
- knapped:** pregnant
- knaves:** jacks in a deck of cards
- knee breeches:** trousers that reach the knee
- knock up:** to bang loudly on someone's door to wake them up
- know life, to:** to be familiar in criminal ways; to be street-wise

L

- lackin, lakin:** slang term for a wife
- ladybird:** slang term for a prostitute
- lag:** convict; someone sentenced to transportation or gaol
- larder:** cool food storage area
- laudannum:** solution of opium and alcohol used as pain relief or to aid sleep, highly addictive
- lavender, in:** to hide from the police; to pawn something for money; to be dead
- leg:** dishonest person, cheat
- liberal:** generous; tolerant or open-minded
- link boy:** boy who carries a torch to light a person's way through the dark streets
- lodger:** person paying rent to stay in a room (or bed) in somebody else's house
- logbook:** book in which a teacher would comment on pupils' attendance, behaviour, learning progress, etc.
- luggers:** ear rings
- lumber:** wood used for building or woodworking, often second-hand furniture; to pawn something; to go to gaol

lurker: criminal; beggar or someone who dresses as a beggar for money
lush: alcoholic drink; someone who drinks too much alcohol; luxurious

M

macer: cheat

mag: slang term for a ha'pence piece

magistrate: judge over trials of misdemeanours; civil officer who upholds the law

maid-of-all-work: usually a young girl, hired as the only servant in the house and required to do any job asked of her

mail coach: carrier of the mail and a limited number of passengers, replaced mid-nineteenth century by the railroad

malt: grain such as barley, that has been allowed to ferment, used for brewing beer and sometimes whiskey

mandrake: homosexual; type of plant

mark: the victim of a crime

market day: the regular day each week when country people would bring their livestock and goods to sell in town

market town: town that regularly held a market, usually the largest town of a farming area

masochism: psychosexual perversion where someone gains erotic pleasure by having pain, abuse or humiliation inflicted on them

materially reduced: having your circumstances and/or finances reduced or lessened

mist: cloud of water particles that condense in the atmosphere; often used in Gothic literature to obscure objects or to prelude something or someone terrifying

mead: fermented alcoholic drink made of water, honey, malt, yeast and sometimes spices

mecks: alcohol, usually wine or spirits

messes: plural of Mr, used when referring to more than one man
metamorphosis: change or complete transformation in physical form, shape or structure; thought to be caused by supernatural powers

Michaelmas: Christian festival celebrating the archangel Michael, celebrated on 29 September; one of the four quarters of the year

middle class: people who earn enough money to live comfortably, often in a skilled profession such as doctors and lawyers

mizzle: steal or disappear; fine rain

mobsman: conman or pickpocket, usually smartly dressed

mollisher: woman, often associated with a criminal

moniker/ moniker: signature; first name

mortality: death-rate; the number of deaths in a given time or given group
moucher, **moocher**: rural vagrant or beggar, someone who lives on the road

mourning clothes: black garments worn after a relative dies, the length of which depended on your relationship to the deceased

muffler: scarf

mug-hunter: street thief or pick pocket, from which the modern term 'mugger' comes

mutcher: pickpocket who usually steals from drunks

muck snipe: someone down on their luck

mutton: meat from a sheep, cheaper and less tender than lamb

N

nail: steal; to catch someone who is guilty of a crime

necromancy: black art of conversing with the spirits of the dead, usually done to predict or influence the future, also for making the dead perform tasks for you; witchcraft or sorcery

netthers: charges or rent for lodgings

netherskens: cheap, unsavoury lodging houses, flophouses

nib: point of a pen, often a fountain pen

nibbed: arrested

nickety: slow or simple-minded

nighmares: frightening or unsettling dream, often used in Gothic literature to heighten drama or fear; a malign spirit thought to haunt or suffocate people during sleep

nobbie: to inflict severe pain or bodily harm

nose: informant or spy; to try to find something out

nosegay: small bunch of flowers

notions: small personal items, such as a handkerchief or snuffbox

numerous: many in number; frequent

O

occult: relating to the supernatural, witchcraft or magic; something not capable of being understood by ordinary people, but known only by the initiated

occupation: job, means of earning a living

odour: smell

omnibus: single or double-decker bus which was pulled by horses, capable of carrying lots of people

opium: drug extracted from the dried juice and seeds of the opium poppy, which is highly addictive

outdoor relief: charity for the poor which did not require them to enter the workhouse, eliminated in 1834 by the New Poor Law to stop people playing the system

on the fly: while in motion, moving quickly; something done quickly or spontaneously

orthodox: following established rules of religion or society; proper way of behaving

out of wig: unrecognizable, in disguise

outsider: instrument used for opening a lock from the wrong side; stranger or interloper

P

paddingken: tramp's lodgings

page: boy or young man working as a servant or running errands

palsy: medical condition producing uncontrollable shaking of the muscles

pall: detect; become dull or fade; gloomy atmosphere or mood

palmer: shoplifter; someone who 'palms' items to steal them

parlour: living room, usually for guests

patterer: someone who earns a living by recitation or hawk's sales talk, convincing people to buy goods

peach: inform against someone or give information against someone, often leading to imprisonment

pea-coat: short, heavy double-breasted overcoat worn by seamen, usually dark blue or black

peelers: nickname for the new London police force, organized by Sir Robert Peel in 1829

penny-farthing bicycle: bicycle with a large front wheel, to which the pedals were attached, and a much smaller back wheel

phenomenon: fact or occurrence that is out of the ordinary or hard to believe, even though it can be seen

pertaining to: concerning or to do with

picnic: any informal social gathering for which each guest provided a share of the food; informal meal eaten outside

pidgeon: victim; also known as a plant

plg: policeman, usually a detective

pleurisy: inflammation of the lungs producing a fever, hacking cough, sharp chest pain and difficulty in breathing

poorhouse: place where poor, old or sick people lived, where anyone able was put to work, also known as the workhouse

portrait: likeness of an individual or group created through photography or in paintings

possession: being controlled by an evil, demonic or supernatural force

postboy: someone working at a post house or inn, who helps to change the horses on coaches on long journeys

post chaise: enclosed, four-wheeled, horse-drawn carriage, used to transport mail and passengers

postern: small back entrance or gate

posting: travelling in a coach or carriage, stopping along the way in post houses or inns to change horses

prater: idle, foolish talk; bogus preacher

proctor: court officer who manages the affairs of others, answering to an attorney or solicitor

prodigious: great in amount or size; a lot

proprietor: owner of a commercial or business enterprise

puckering: jabbering; speaking in an incomprehensible manner

punishers: men hired to give beatings or 'nobbings'

pursuit: the act of chasing after someone, usually to attack or catch them, often inspiring fear

push: slang term for money

Q

quadrille: card game for four players using forty cards; dance

quarter days: four days of the year when quarterly payments were made; Lady Day (25 March), Midsummer (24 June), Michaelmas (29 September), and Christmas (25 December)

quay: wharf or platform in a port or harbour where ships are loaded or unloaded

quick-time: white, corrosive alkaline substance consisting of calcium oxide, acquired by heating limestone

quid: slang term for pound

R

racket: illicit or dishonest occupation or activity

reader: pocketbook or wallet

- ream**: someone superior, real or genuine
- rag and bone shop**: shop that bought and sold rags that were made into paper, and bones used for manure
- repeater**: pocket watch that chimed on the hour or quarter past the hour, making it easier to tell the time in the dark
- resurrectionist**: body snatcher; someone who steals corpses from graves, usually to sell to medical students. Legally, only the bodies of criminals could be used, but demand for corpses was so high that resurrectionists dug up graves the of recently dead
- revenant**: dead person who has returned to terrorize or to avenge a score with someone living
- revenge**: act of avenging or repaying someone for a harm that the person has caused; to punish someone in retaliation for something done to them or to a loved one, carried out by humans or by spirits; a popular theme in Gothic literature
- ribald**: vulgar, lewd humour, often involving jokes about sex
- roller**: thief who robs drunks; prostitute who steals from her (usually drunk) customers
- Romanticism**: arts and literature of the Romantic movement, characterized by the passion, emotion and often danger of love and associated feelings
- rookery**: urban slum or ghetto; nesting place for rooks
- Rothschild, to come to the**: to brag that you are rich
- rozzers**: policemen
- ruin**: to go out of business; lose all your money or possessions
- ruffles**: slang term for handcuffs
- S**
- saddle**: loaf, cut of meat
- sadism**: perversion where one person gains sexual gratification by causing physical or mental pain on others, first coined to describe the writings of the Marquis de Sade; delight in torment or excessive cruelty
- salubrity**: health or well-being
- Salvation Army**: worldwide religious organization founded by William Booth in 1865; it provided aid to the poor, helped those in need and sought to bring people back to God
- saveloy**: highly seasoned, spicy, smoked pork sausage; sold as a snack ready to eat
- scaldrum dodge**: gaining sympathy, begging by means of fake or self-inflicted wounds

- scarlet fever**: infection usually suffered by children, causing a red rash and high fever; also called Scarlatina
- scram**: slang term for food
- screever**: forger; writer of fake documents
- scullery**: area for dish washing, preparing food and storing dishes
- sealing wax**: wax that is soft when heated, used to seal letters – red for business letters, black for mourning and other colours for general correspondence
- sedan chair**: covered chair to which two long poles were attached and on which a person was carried around by chairmen
- servant's lark**: public house used primarily by crooked or dismissed servants
- shake lark**: begging under false pretences, usually those of being a shipwrecked, out of work seaman
- sharp**: conman, card swindler
- shilling**: unit of money equal to five pence in today's money
- shirkster**: layabout, work-shy
- shofulman**: someone who makes or passes bad money
- slap-bang job**: public house frequented by thieves, where no credit is given
- slate**: used to teach children to write; they would write on black slates with white chalk, instead of the paper used today
- slum**: ghetto; false or faked document; to cheat someone or pass money you know to be bad or false
- smasher**: someone who passes bad or false money
- smoking bishop**: drink made at Christmas from heated red wine or port flavoured with oranges, sugar and spices, named because of its deep purple colour and traditionally heated with a red-hot poker
- snakesman**: small boy used for housebreaking, as they could enter a house through a small gap
- snoozer**: someone who steals from sleeping guests in hotels
- snowing**: stealing clothes that have been hung out on a washing line to dry
- somnambulism**: sleepwalking, a dissociated mental state that occurs during deep sleep, where, in Gothic literature, people would do things they would not normally do
- spike**: slang term for the workhouse
- sponging-house**: temporary prison for those who cannot pay their debts, prior to someone being sent to a prison such as Marshalsea in London
- srew**: skeleton key, for use in burglaries
- stricken**: affected by; suffering or struck by

sublime: to be awed, moved or transported by something, such as religion, beauty or emotions; used in Gothic literature as the thrill of being terrified, because fear inspires such strong emotions

subscription: collection of money paid over a period of time; fee to be paid; donation given to a charitable cause

succubus: female demon, counterpart of the incubus (*qv*)

supernatural: phenomena or events that seem unbelievable or cannot be explained by natural laws; occurrences relating to magic or the occult

superstition: deep-seated but often irrational belief in something, such as an action or ritual, thought to bring good or bad luck

sweep: chimney sweep, often small boys who could easily fit in chimneys; it became a crime in 1842 for an apprentice under the age of 16 or anyone else under the age of 21 to be forced up a chimney

sweetmeat: sweet treat, such as candy or candied fruit, often served at the end of a meal

swell: elegantly or stylishly dressed gentleman; expensive dress

T

tallow: hard, fatty substance from sheep or oxen, used to make candles or soap

taper: small, slim wax candle, narrower at the top than the bottom

taproom: bar room in a public house where working class people ate and drank, as opposed to the parlour, used by the middle classes

teetotaler: someone who completely abstains from alcohol, an activity which gained in popularity in the middle classes during Victorian times

tea leaf: rhyming slang for thief

thicker: slang for sovereign or pound

thick 'un: slang term for sovereign

thriving: to be profitable or successful; flourishing

toff: elegantly or stylish gentleman; someone rich or upper class

toffken: house in which well-to-do, upper-class people lived

toke: slang term for bread

tooling: experienced pickpocket

topped: to be hung

tradesman: man in a skilled trade, such as a carpenter or plumber; shopkeeper; someone who buys and sells goods

transportation: when exiled British criminals were sent to the colonies, usually Australia, as punishment

turnkey: jailor; keeper of keys

turnpike: toll road that people paid to travel on; the money from which was used to keep the road in good condition

twirls: keys, usually skeleton keys

typhoid: serious, often fatal, illness caused by drinking polluted water (contaminated by sewage)

U

uncanny: something or someone too strange, weird or eerie to be natural or human; supernatural under and over; fairground game, often used to swindle people

union workhouse: workhouse for the poor, which parishes were obligated to provide after the 1834 New Poor Law

unprovided for: left with no money or security

upper class: people from rich, moneyed families, such as landowners or aristocracy

V

vamp: to steal; pawn something; to seduce or manipulate someone

vampire: supernatural being of a malignant nature, believed to suck the blood of the living for sustenance; from European folklore

vapour: steam

vespers: evening church service; prayers

viands: tasty articles of foods

vie with: compete with someone; strive for superiority

vinner: wine maker or merchant

W

ward: child or youth under the care and control of a guardian

washhouse: building where clothes were washed, often shared

wassail: spiced ale or wine served at Christmas or other festive occasions

watch: men chosen to guard the streets at night, periodically calling out the time and ensuring that no crimes were being committed

weeping willow: rhyming slang for pillow

werewolf: someone who is human by day and turns into a wolf at night, living off humans, animals, or even corpses; from European folklore

whistle and flute: rhyming slang for suit

wholesome: healthy, clean-living; decent

whooping cough: infectious disease, often affecting children, that causes heavy coughing and makes it hard to breathe

witchcraft: spells and magic performed by a witch; in Gothic fiction the witch is usually depicted as an old, hag-like crone or a beautiful, seductive young woman

without: outside, usually referring to outside the house in which someone is

work capitol: to commit a crime punishable by death

working class: those in heavy manual labor, usually for low, hourly wages, such as farm laborers, factory workers and builders

workhouses: place where the sick, poor, old and those in debt went or were sent for food and shelter. The New Poor Law (1834) made the workhouse almost a prison for the poor, who had to work hard in miserable conditions, often fed on gruel only and separated from their families

whist: popular card game, now known as bridge

worrit: worry; worry-wort

Y

yack: slang term for a watch

yennap: slang term for a penny

yeoman: independent farmer who cultivated, and often owned, his own small area of land

Other Titles and Recommended Reads



A range of Gothic novels, horror fiction, crime, mystery, fantasy and science fiction: available and forthcoming from Flame Tree 451

