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Elizabeth J. Jewell
Frank Abate

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Erin McKean

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small fragrant flowers and is native chiefly to Australasia. • Genus *Pittosporum*, family Pittosporaceae. ▶ modern Latin, from Greek *pitta* 'pitch' (because of the resinous pulp around the seeds) + *sporos* 'seed.'

Pitt-Rivers /'rɪvəz/, Augustus Henry Lane Fox (1827–1900), English archaeologist and anthropologist. He developed a new scientific approach to archaeology. His collection of weapons and artifacts from different cultures formed the basis of the ethnological museum in Oxford that bears his name.

Pittsburg /'plɪtsbɜːrɡ/ an industrial port city in central California, on Suisun Bay, northeast of Oakland; pop. 47,564.

Pittsburgh /'plɪtsbɜːrɡ/ an industrial city in south-western Pennsylvania, where the Allegheny and Monongahela rivers join to form the Ohio River; pop. 334,563.

Pittsfield /'plɪtsfiːld/ an industrial city in western Massachusetts, on the Housatonic River, the commercial center of the Berkshire Hills; pop. 48,622.

Pituitary gland or **pituitary body** the major endocrine gland. A pea-sized body attached to the base of the brain, the pituitary is important in controlling growth and development and the functioning of the other endocrine glands. Also called *hypophysis*.

▶ *adj.* of or relating to this gland. ▶ early 17th cent.: from Latin *pituitarius* 'secreting phlegm,' from *pituita* 'phlegm.'

Pit viper ▶ *n.* a venomous snake of a group distinguished by visible sensory pits on the head that can detect heat emitted by their prey. They are found in both America and Asia. ▶ Subfamily Crotalinae, family Viperidae: numerous genera and species, including the rattlesnakes.

Pity /'pɪti/ ▶ *n.* (pl. *pities*) 1 the feeling of sorrow and compassion caused by the suffering and misfortunes of others: *her voice was full of pity.* 2 [in sing.] a cause for regret or disappointment: *what a pity we can't be friends.*

▶ *v.* (pities, pited) [trans.] feel sorrow for the misfortunes of: *Clare didn't know whether to envy or pity them* [as *adj.*] (pitying) he gave her a pitying look. ▶ Middle English (also in the sense 'clemency; mildness'): from Old French *pité* 'compassion,' from Latin *pietas* 'piety'; compare with *piety*. —*pity-ingly* *adv.*

▶ **PHRASES** □ for pity's sake *informal* used to express impatience or make an urgent appeal. □ more's the pity *informal* used to express regret about a fact that has just been stated. □ take (or have) pity show compassion: *they took pity on him and gave him food.*

Pity-ri-a-sis /'pɪtɪ'riːsɪs/ ▶ *n.* [with *adj.*] *Medicine* a skin disease characterized by the shedding of fine flaky scales. ▶ late 17th cent.: modern Latin, from Greek *piturias* 'scurf,' from *pituron* 'bran.' + *-asis*.

Piu /'pyu/ ▶ *adj.* *Music* (esp. as a direction) more. ▶ *piu mos-so* /'pyu mɒsə/ ▶ *adv.* & *adj.* *Music* (esp. as a direction) more quickly. ▶ Italian.

Plus XII /'plʌs/ (1876–1958), pope 1939–58; born Eugenio Pacelli. He upheld the neutrality of the Roman Catholic Church during World War II and was criticized after the war for failing to condemn Nazi atrocities.

Pivot /'pɪvət/ ▶ *n.* the central point, pin, or shaft on which a mechanism turns or oscillates. [usu. in sing.] a person or thing that plays a central part in an activity or organization: *the pivot of community life was the chapel.* ▶ the person or people about whom a body of troops wheels. [also *pivotman*] a player in a central position in a team sport. ▶ *Basketball* a movement in which the player holding the ball may move in any direction with one foot, while keeping the other (the pivot foot) in contact with the floor.

▶ *v.* (pivoted, pivoting) [intrans.] turn on or as if on a pivot: *the sail pivots around the axis of a virtually static mast* | *he swung around, pivoting on his heel.* ▶ (pivot on) *figurative* depend on: *your escape pivots on my disappearing with you.* ▶ [trans.] provide (a mechanism) with a pivot; fix (a mechanism) on a pivot: [as *adj.*] (pivoted) a pivoted bracket. ▶ late Middle English: from French, probably from the root of dialect *pue* 'tooth of a comb' and Spanish *pu(y)a* 'point.' The verb dates from the mid 19th cent. —*pivota-bility* /'pɪvətə'bɪlɪti/ ▶ *n.* —*pivota-ble* *adj.*

Pivotal /'pɪvətl/ ▶ *adj.* of crucial importance in relation to the development or success of something else: *the alliance that played a pivotal role in the revolution.* ▶ fixed on or as if on a pivot: *a sliding or pivotal motion.*

Pix /'pɪks/ ▶ *plural* *n.* informal pictures, esp. photographs. ▶ 1930s: pluralized abbreviation.

Pix ▶ *n.* variant spelling of *pyx*.

Pix-el /'pɪksəl/ ▶ *n.* *Electronics* a minute area of illumination on a display screen, one of many from which an image is composed. ▶ 1960s: abbreviation of *picture element* (compare with *pixel*).

Pix-el-ate /'pɪksələt/ (also *pix-el-ate* or *pix-il-ate*) ▶ *v.* [trans.] divide (an image) into pixels, typically for display or storage in a digital format. ▶ (be *pix-elated*) (of an image on a computer screen or other display) be enlarged so far that the viewer sees the individual pixels that form the image, the enlargement having reached the point at which no further detail can be resolved. ▶ display an image of (someone or something) on television as a small number of large pixels, typically in order to disguise someone's identity. —*pix-el-a-tion* /'pɪksə'læʃən/ ▶ *n.*

Pix-le /'pɪksəl/ (also *pix-y*) ▶ *n.* (pl. *pix-les*) a supernatural being in folklore and children's stories, typically portrayed as small and humanlike in form, with pointed ears and a pointed hat, and mischievous in character. ▶ mid 17th cent.: of unknown origin. —*pix-le-ish* *adj.*

Pix-le dust ▶ *n.* in Sir James Barrie's *Peter Pan*, magic dust taken or shaken from a pixie or fairy, enabling humans to fly. ▶ unusually great success, felicity, or luck: *the folks who live there still seem to believe that they've been sprinkled with pixie dust.*

Pix-late /'pɪkslət/ ▶ *v.* variant spelling of *PIXELATE*. **Pix-il-ated** /'pɪksəl'leɪd/ (Brit. also *pix-il-lated*) ▶ *adj.* crazy; confused. ▶ mid 19th cent.: variant of *pixieled*, literally 'led astray by pixies,' figuratively 'confused,' or from *PIXIE*, on the pattern of words such as *elated* and *emulated*.

Pix-il-a-tion /'pɪksəl'leɪʃən/ (Brit. also *pix-il-la-tion*) ▶ *n.* 1 a technique used in film whereby the movements of real people are made to appear like artificial animations. 2 the state of being crazy or confused. 3 variant spelling of *PIXELATION* (see *PIXELATE*).

Pizarro /'piːzəroː/; *pé'sá-ro* /'piːsə-ro/ (c.1478–1541), Spanish conquistador. He defeated the Inca empire and in 1533 set up a puppet monarchy at Cuzco. He built his own capital at Lima 1535, where he was assassinated.

Plazz ▶ *abbr.* *Music* pizzicato.

Pizza /'piːzə/ ▶ *n.* a dish of Italian origin consisting of a flat, round base of dough baked with a topping of tomato sauce and cheese, typically with added meat or vegetables. ▶ Italian, literally 'pie.'

Pizza box ▶ *n.* a computer casing that is not very tall and has a square cross section.

Pizzazz /'piːzəz/ (also *pl-zazz*) ▶ *n.* *Informal* an attractive combination of vitality and glamour: *a new way to add graphic pizzazz to your desktop-publishing project.* ▶ said to have been invented by Diana Vreeland, fashion editor of *Harper's Bazaar* in the 1930s.

Pizz-e-ria /'piːzə'reɪə/ ▶ *n.* a place where pizzas are made or sold; a pizza restaurant. ▶ Italian.

Pizz-zi-ca-to /'piːtsɪ'kɑːto/ ▶ *Music* ▶ *adv.* (often as a direction) plucking the strings of a violin or other stringed instrument with one's finger.

▶ *adj.* performed in this way.

▶ *n.* (pl. *-tos* or *-ti* /-tē/) this technique of playing. ▶ a note or passage played in this way. ▶ Italian, literally 'pinched, twirled,' past participle of *pizzicare*, based on *pizza* 'point, edge.'

Pizz-le /'pɪzəl/ ▶ *n.* the penis of an animal, esp. a bull. ▶ late 15th cent.: from Low German *pēsel* or Flemish *pezel* (diminutives of Middle Low German *pēse* and Middle Dutch *pēze*).

PK ▶ *abbr.* ▶ *psychokinesis*.

pK ▶ *n.* *Chemistry* a figure expressing the acidity or alkalinity of a solution of a weak electrolyte in a similar way to pH, equal to $-\log_{10} K$ where *K* is the dissociation (or ionization) constant of the electrolyte. ▶ from *p* as in pH and *K* representing a constant.

pk ▶ *abbr.* ▶ (also *Pk*) park. ▶ peak. ▶ peck(s).

pkg. ▶ *abbr.* (pl. *pkgs.*) package.

pkt. ▶ *abbr.* ▶ packet. ▶ pocket.

PKU ▶ *abbr.* phenylketonuria.

pkwy ▶ *abbr.* parkway.

pk ▶ *abbr.* parkway.

PL ▶ *abbr.* ▶ *Computing* programming language. ▶ *Military* patrol leader.

pl. ▶ *abbr.* ▶ (also *Pl.*) place: 3 Palmerston Pl., Edinburgh. ▶ plate (referring to illustrations in a book). ▶ *chiefly Military* platoon. ▶ *Grammar* plural.

PL/1 ▶ *n.* *Computing* a high-level programming language used in science, engineering, business, and data processing. ▶ from *P*(rogramming) *L*(anguage) 1.

PLA ▶ *abbr.* ▶ *People's Liberation Army*. ▶ (in the UK) Port of London Authority.

plac-a-ble /'plækəbəl/ ▶ *adj.* *archaic* easily calmed; gentle and forgiving. ▶ late Middle English (in the sense 'pleasing, agreeable'): from Old French, or from Latin *placabilis*, from *placare* 'appease.' —*plac-a-bility* /'plækə'bɪlɪti/ ▶ *n.* —*plac-a-bly* /'əbəl/ ▶ *adv.*

plac-ard /'plakɑːd; -ərd/ ▶ *n.* a poster or sign for public display, either fixed to a wall or carried during a demonstration.

▶ *v.* [trans.] cover with placards: *they were placarding the town with posters.* ▶ late 15th cent. (denoting a warrant or license): from Old French *placard*, from *plaquer* 'to plaster, lay flat,' from Middle Dutch *placken*. The current sense of the verb dates from the early 19th cent.

plac-cate /'plækət/ ▶ *v.* [trans.] make (someone) less angry or hostile: *they attempted to placate the students with promises.* See note at *PACIFY*. ▶ late 17th cent.: from Latin *placat-* 'appeased,' from the verb *placare*. —*plac-cat-er* ▶ *n.* —*plac-cat-ing-ly* /'ple'kætɪŋ-ɪli/ ▶ *adv.* —*plac-ca-tion* /'plækə'keɪʃən/ ▶ *n.* —*plac-ca-to-ry* /-kə'tɔːri/ ▶ *adj.*

place /plās/ ▶ *n.* 1 a particular position or point in space: *there were still some remote places in the world* | *the monastery was a peaceful place.* ▶ used to refer to an area already identified (giving an impression of informality): *we head to a disco—the place is pandemonium.* ▶ a particular point on a larger surface or in a larger object or area: *he lashed out and cut the policeman's hand in three places.* ▶ a building or area used for a specified purpose or activity: *the town has many excellent eating places.* ▶ *Informal* a person's home: *what about dinner at my place?* ▶ a point in a book or other text reached by a reader at a particular time: *I must have lost my place in the script.* 2 a portion of space occupied by someone: *he was watching from his place across the room.* ▶ a portion of space available or designated for someone: *they hurried to their places at the table.* ▶ a vacancy or available position: *she won a place to study German at the university.* ▶ the regular or proper position of something: *lay each slab in place.* ▶ [often with *negative*] somewhere where it is appropriate or prudent for someone to be or for something to occur: *that street at that time was no place for a lady.* ▶ a chance to be accepted or to be of use: *the policy left no place for individual initiative.* ▶ a person's rank or status: *occupation structures a person's place in society.* ▶ [usu. with *negative*] a right or privilege resulting from someone's role or position: *I'm sure she has a story to tell, but it's not my place to ask.* ▶ the role played by or importance attached to someone or something in a particular context: *the place of computers in improving office efficiency varies between companies.* 3 a position in a sequence, in particular: ▶ a position in a contest: *his score was good enough to leave him in ninth place.* ▶ the second position, esp. in a horse race. ▶ *Brit.* any of the first three or sometimes four positions in a race (used esp. of the second, third, or fourth positions). ▶ the degree of priority given to something: *accurate reportage takes second place to lurid detail.* ▶ the position of a figure in a series indicated in decimal or similar notation, esp. one after the decimal point: *calculate the ratios to one decimal place.* 4 [in *place names*] a square or a short street: *our new restaurant is in Hilliard Place.* ▶ a country house with its grounds.

▶ *v.* [trans.] 1 [trans.] put in a particular position: *a newspaper had been placed beside my plate.* ▶ cause to be in a particular situation: *enemy officers were placed under arrest* | *you are not placing yourself under any obligation.* ▶ used to express the attitude someone has toward someone or something: *I am not able to place any trust in you.* ▶ (be placed) used to indicate the degree of advantage or convenience enjoyed by someone or something as a result of their position or circumstances: [with *infinite*] *the company is well placed to seize the opportunity.* 2 [trans.] find a home or employment for: *the children were placed with foster parents* | *the agency had placed 3,000 people in full-time jobs.* ▶ dispose of (something, esp. shares) by selling to a customer. ▶ arrange for the recognition and implementation of (an order, bet, etc.): *they placed a contract for three boats.* ▶ order or obtain a connection for (a telephone call) through an operator. 3 [trans.] identify or classify as being of a specified type or as holding a specified position in a sequence or hierarchy: *a survey placed the company 13th for achievement.* ▶ [trans.] [usu. with *negative*] remember where one has seen or how one comes to recognize (someone)

Pronunciation Key ə ago; ɒ over; 'ə or, ə up; 'ər or, ər fur; a hat; ā rate; ā car; CH chew; ē let; ē see; ē (ə) air; ī fit; ī by; (ē) ear; Ō sing; Ō go; Ō for; Ō boy; Ō good; Ō goo; ou out; SH she; TH thin; TH then; (h)w why; ZH vision

or something): she eventually said she couldn't place him.
 ■ (be placed) *Brit.* achieve a specified position in a race: he was placed eleventh in the long individual race.
 ■ [*intrans.*] be among the first three in a race (or the first three or four in the UK). ▶Middle English: from Old French, from an alteration of Latin *placita* 'open space,' from Greek *platela* (*hodos*) 'broad (way),' —*place-less* *adj.*

▶**PHRASES** □ give place to be succeeded or replaced by. □ go places *informal* visit places; travel. ■ be increasingly successful. □ In place 1 working or ready to work; established. 2 not traveling any distance: running in place. □ In place of instead of. □ keep someone in his (or her) place keep someone from becoming presumptuous. □ out of place not in the proper position; disarranged. ■ in a setting where one is or feels inappropriate or incongruous. □ place in the sun a position of favor or advantage. □ put oneself in someone's place consider a situation from someone's point of view. □ put someone in his (or her) place deflate or humiliate someone regarded as being presumptuous. □ take place occur. □ take one's place take up the physical position or status in society that is correct or due for one. □ take the place of replace.

place-bo /plə'seɪbō/ ▶ *n.* (*pl.* -bos) a harmless pill, medicine, or procedure prescribed more for the psychological benefit to the patient than for any physiological effect: his Aunt Beatrice had been kept alive on sympathy and placebos for thirty years | [*as adj.*] placebo drugs. ■ a substance that has no therapeutic effect, used as a control in testing new drugs. ■ *figurative* a measure designed merely to calm or please someone. ▶late 18th cent.: from Latin, literally 'I shall please,' from *placere* 'to please.'

place-bo effect ▶ *n.* a beneficial effect, produced by a placebo drug or treatment, that cannot be attributed to the properties of the placebo itself, and must therefore be due to the patient's belief in that treatment.

place card ▶ *n.* a card bearing a person's name and used to mark their place at a dining or meeting table.

place-holder /'plās,hōldər/ ▶ *n.* 1 *Mathematics* a significant zero in the decimal representation of a number. ■ a symbol or piece of text used in a mathematical expression or in an instruction in a computer program to denote a missing quantity or operator. 2 *Linguistics* an element of a sentence that is required by syntactic constraints but carries little or no semantic information, for example the word *it* as a subject in *It is a pity that she left*, where the true subject is *that she left*.

place-kick /'plās,kɪk/ ▶ *n.* a kick made with the ball held on the ground or on a tee.

▶ *v.* [*intrans.*] [often as *n.*] (placekicking) take such a kick: our placekicking struggled at times last season. —*place-kick-er* *n.*

place mat (also *place-mat*) ▶ *n.* a small mat beneath a place setting at a dining table.

place-ment /'plāsmənt/ ▶ *n.* the action of putting someone or something in a particular place or the fact of being placed: the proper placement of microphones. ■ the action of finding a home, job, or school for someone: a baby put up for adoption may wait up to three years or more for placement | a placement in a special school. ■ *Football* another term for *placekick*. ■ *Football* the act of holding the ball for a placekick.

place name ▶ *n.* the name of a geographical location, such as a town, lake, or range of hills.

plac-en-ta /plə'sente/ ▶ *n.* (*pl.* -tæ /-ti/ or -tas) 1 a flattened circular organ in the uterus of pregnant eutherian mammals, nourishing and maintaining the fetus through the umbilical cord.

The placenta consists of vascular tissue in which oxygen and nutrients can pass from the mother's blood into that of the fetus, and waste products can pass in the reverse direction. The placenta is expelled from the uterus at the birth of the fetus, when it is often called the afterbirth. Marsupials and monotremes do not develop placentas.

2 *Botany* (in flowers) part of the ovary wall to which the ovules are attached. ▶late 17th cent.: from Latin, from Greek *plakous*, *plakount-* 'flat cake,' based on *plax*, *plak-* 'flat plate.'

plac-en-tal /plə'sentl/ ▶ *adj.* of or relating to a placenta. ■ *Zoology* relating to or denoting mammals that possess a placenta; eutherian.

▶ *n.* *Zoology* a placental mammal. See *EUTHERIA*.
plac-en-ta prae-vi-a /plə'sente 'prævɪə/ (*Brit.* *plac-en-ta*

prae-vi-a) ▶ *n.* *Medicine* a condition in which the placenta partially or wholly blocks the neck of the uterus, thus interfering with normal delivery of a baby. ▶early 19th cent.: from *PLACENTA* and Latin *prae-vi-a* 'going before.'

plac-en-ta-tion /'plāsən'tāshən/ ▶ *n.* *Anatomy & Zoology* the formation or arrangement of a placenta or placentae in a woman's or female animal's uterus. ■ *Botany* the arrangement of the placenta or placentae in the ovary of a flower.

plac-er-i /'plāsər/ ▶ *n.* [often as *adj.*] a deposit of sand or gravel in the bed of a river or lake, containing particles of valuable minerals: placer gold deposits. ▶early 19th cent.: from Latin American Spanish, literally 'deposit, shoal'; related to *placel* 'sandbank,' from *plaza* 'a place.'

plac-er-er ▶ *n.* 1 [with *adj.*] a person or animal gaining a specified position in a competition or race: last year's fifth placer had a good run. 2 a person who positions, sets, or arranges something: he was a shrewd placer of the ball.

place set-ting ▶ *n.* a complete set of dishes and cutlery provided for one person at a meal.

plac-et /'plāsɪt/ ▶ *n.* an affirmative vote, indicated by an utterance of 'placet.' ▶Latin, literally 'it pleases.'

place val-ue ▶ *n.* the numerical value that a digit has by virtue of its position in a number.

plac-id /'plāsɪd/ ▶ *adj.* (of a person or animal) not easily upset or excited: this horse has a placid nature. ■ (esp. of a place or stretch of water) calm and peaceful, with little movement or activity: the placid waters of a small lake. See note at *CALM*. ▶early 17th cent.: from French *placide*, from Latin *placidus*, from *placere* 'to please.' —*plac-id-i-ty* /plə'sɪdɪti/ *n.* —*plac-id-ly* *adv.*

Plac-id-yl /'plāsɪdl/ ▶ *n.* trademark a short-acting sedative and hypnotic drug used to treat insomnia.

plack-et /'plakɪt/ ▶ *n.* an opening or slit in a garment, covering fastenings or giving access to a pocket, or the flap of fabric under such an opening. ▶early 17th cent.: variant of *PLACARD* in an obsolete sense 'garment worn under an open coat or gown.'

plac-o-derm /'plakə,derm/ ▶ *n.* an extinct fish of the Devonian period, having the front part of the body encased in broad flat bony plates. • Class *Placodermi*: several orders. ▶mid 19th cent.: from Greek *plax*, *plak-* 'flat plate' + *derma* 'skin.'

plac-o-dont /'plakə,dənt/ ▶ *n.* an extinct marine shellfish-eating reptile of the Triassic period, having short flat grinding palatal teeth and sometimes a turtlelike shell. • Suborder *Placodontia*, superorder *Sauropsitygia*: several families and genera, including *Placodus*. ▶late 19th cent.: from Greek *plax*, *plak-* 'flat plate' + *odont-* 'tooth.'

plac-oid /'plakɔɪd/ ▶ *adj.* *Zoology* (of fish scales) tooth-like, being made of dentin with a pointed backward projection of enamel, as in sharks and rays. Compare with *CTENOID* and *GANOID*. ▶mid 19th cent.: from Greek *plax*, *plak-* 'flat plate' + *-oid*.

Plac-o-zo-a /'plakə'zōə/ ▶ *Zoology* a minor phylum that contains a single minute marine invertebrate (*Trichoplax adhaerens*), which has a flattened body with two cell layers and is the simplest known metazoan. ▶modern Latin (*plural*), from Greek *plakos* 'flat' + *zōla* 'animals.'

plac-fond /plə'fənd/ ▶ *n.* an ornately decorated ceiling. ■ a painting or decoration on a ceiling. ▶French, from *plat* 'flat' + *fond* 'bottom, base.'

plac-gal /'plāgəl/ ▶ *adj.* *Music* (of a church mode) containing notes between the dominant and the note an octave higher, having the final in the middle. Compare with *AUTHENTIC*. ▶late 16th cent.: from medieval Latin *plagalus*, from *plaga* 'plagal mode,' from Latin *plagi-us*, from medieval Greek *plagios* (*hēkios*) 'plagal (mode),' from Greek *plagos* 'side.'

plage /plāʒ-/ ▶ *n.* 1 dated a beach by the sea, esp. at a fashionable resort. 2 *Astronomy* an unusually bright region on the sun. ▶late 19th cent.: from French.

plac-gla-rism /'plāʒə,rɪzəm/ ▶ *n.* the practice of taking someone else's work or ideas and passing them off as one's own. ▶early 17th cent.: from Latin *plagiarius* 'kidnapper' (from *plagium* 'a kidnapping,' from Greek *plagion*) + *-ism*. —*plac-gla-rist* *n.* —*plac-gla-ris-tic* /'plāʒə'rɪstɪk/ *adj.*

plac-gla-rize /'plāʒə,rɪz/ ▶ *v.* [*trans.*] take (the work or an idea of someone else) and pass it off as one's own. ■ copy from (someone) in such a way. —*plac-gla-riz-er* *n.*

plagio- ▶ *comb. form* oblique: *plagioclase*. ▶from Greek *plagios* 'slanting,' from *plagos* 'side.'

plac-gl-o-clase /'plāʒə,k্লাs/ (also *plagioclase*

feldspar) ▶ *n.* a form of feldspar consisting of aluminosilicates of sodium and/or calcium, common in igneous rocks and typically white. ▶mid 19th cent.: from *PLAGIO-* + Greek *klasis* 'cleavage' (because originally characterized as having two cleavages at an oblique angle).

plague /plāʒ/ ▶ *n.* a contagious bacterial disease characterized by fever and delirium, typically with the formation of buboes (see *BUBONIC PLAGUE*) and sometimes infection of the lungs (*pneumonic plague*): an outbreak of plague | they died of the plague. ■ a contagious disease that spreads rapidly and kills many people. ■ an unusually large number of insects or animals infesting a place and causing damage: a plague of fleas. ■ [*in sing.*] a thing causing trouble or irritation: staff theft is usually the plague of restaurants. ■ a widespread affliction regarded as divine punishment: the plagues of Egypt. ■ [*in sing.*] *archaic* used as a curse or an expression of despair or disgust: a plague on all their houses! [*in recent use* echoing Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* (m. i. 94).]

▶ *v.* (plagues, plagued, plaguing) [*trans.*] cause continual trouble or distress to: the problems that plagued the company | he has been plagued by ill health. ■ pester or harass (someone) continually: he was plaguing her with questions. ▶late Middle English: Latin *plaga* 'stroke, wound,' probably from Greek (*Doric dialect*) *plaga*, from a base meaning 'strike.'

plag-u-y /'plāʒə/ (also *plag-uey*) ▶ *adj.* [*attrib.*] *informal* troublesome; annoying.

plac-e /plās/ ▶ *n.* (same) a North Atlantic flatfish that is a commercially important food fish. • Two species in the family *Pleuronectidae*: the European *Pleuronectes platessa*, often found in very shallow water, and the American *Hippoglossoides platessoides*, found in deeper waters. ▶Middle English: from Old French *plat*, from late Latin *platessa*, from Greek *platus* 'broad.'

plaid /plad/ ▶ *n.* checkered or tartan twilled cloth, typically made of wool. ■ any cloth with a tartan pattern. ■ a long piece of plaid worn over the shoulder as part of Scottish Highland dress. ▶early 16th cent.: from Scottish Gaelic *plaid* 'blanket,' of unknown ultimate origin. —*plaid-ed* *adj.*

plain /plān/ ▶ *adj.* 1 not decorated or elaborate; simple or ordinary in character: good plain food | everyone dined at a plain wooden table. ■ without a pattern; in only one color: a plain fabric. ■ bearing no indication as to source, contents, or affiliation: donations can be put in a plain envelope. ■ (of a person) having no pretensions; not remarkable or special: a plain, honest man with no nonsense about him. ■ [*attrib.*] (of a person) without a special title or status: for years he was just plain Bill. 2 easy to perceive or understand; clear: the advantages were plain to see | it was plain that something was very wrong. ■ [*attrib.*] (of written or spoken usage) clearly expressed, without the use of technical or abstruse terms: written in plain English. ■ not using concealment or deception: frank he recalled her plain speaking. 3 (of a person) not beautiful or attractive: the dark-haired, rather plain woman. 4 [*attrib.*] sheer; simple (used for emphasis): the main problem is just plain exhaustion. 5 (of a knitting stitch) made using a knit rather than a purl stitch.

▶ *adv.* [*as submodifier*] *informal* clearly; unequivocally (used for emphasis): perhaps the youth was just plain stupid.

▶ *n.* a large area of flat land with few trees. Compare with *PRAIRIE*. ■ (the Plains) another term for *GREAT PLAINS*. ▶Middle English: from Old French *plain*, from Latin *planus*, from a base meaning 'flat.' —*plain-ness* *n.*

▶**PHRASES** □ as plain as the nose on one's face *informal* very obvious. □ plain and simple *informal* used to emphasize the statement preceding or following: she was a genius, plain and simple. □ plain as day *informal* very clearly.

plain² ▶ *v.* [*intrans.*] *archaic* mourn; lament. ■ complain. ■ emit a mournful or plaintive sound. ▶Middle English: from Old French *plaindre*, from Latin *plangere* 'to lament.'

plain-chant /'plān,ʃənt/ ▶ *n.* another term for *PLAIN-SONG*.

plain clothes ▶ *plural* *n.* ordinary clothes rather than uniform, esp. when worn as a disguise by police officers: a detective in plain clothes.

▶ *adj.* [*attrib.*] (plainclothes) (esp. of a police officer) wearing such clothes: plainclothes troopers.

plain dealing ▶ *n.* honest and straightforward behavior toward others.

Plain-field /'plān,fɛld/ an industrial city in northeastern New Jersey: pop. 46,567.