

The
AMERICAN
HERITAGE®

Dictionary



of the
English
Language



FIFTH
EDITION

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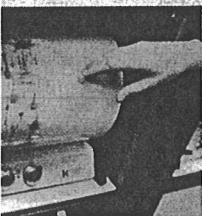
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seismograph
data relating to the 1994
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seign-eur (sân-yûr', sên-yoer') *n.* 1. A man of rank, especially a feudal lord in the ancien régime. 2. In Canada, a man who owned a large estate originally held by a feudal grant from the king of France. 3. Used as a form of address for such a man. [French < Old French seigneur < Vulgar Latin *senior; see SEIGNIOR.] —**seign-eur-i-al** *adj.*

seign-eur-y (sân'yô-rè) *n., pl. -ies* The power, rank, or estate of a seigneur.

seign-ior (sân-yôr', sân'yôr') *n.* 1. A man of rank, especially a feudal lord. 2. Used as a form of address for such a man. [Middle English seignour < Old French seigneur < Vulgar Latin *senior < Latin, older, comparative of senex, sen-, old; see sen- in App. I.] —**seign-ior-i-al** *adj.*

seign-ior-age (sân'yôr-ij) *n.* Revenue or a profit taken from the minting of coins, usually the difference between the value of the bullion used and the face value of the coin. [Middle English seigneurage < Old French < seigneur, seignior; see SEIGNIOR.]

seign-ior-y (sân'yô-rè) *n., pl. -ies* The power, rank, or estate of a feudal lord. Also called *signory*. [Middle English seignorie < Old French < seigneur, seignior; see SEIGNIOR.]

seine (sân) *n.* A large fishing net made to hang vertically in the water by weights at the lower edge and floats at the top. *v.* **seined, sein-ing, seines** —*intr.* To fish with such a net. —*tr.* To fish for or catch with such a net. [Middle English < Old English segne < Germanic *sagina < Latin sagēna < Greek sagēnē.] —**sein'er** *n.*

Seine (sân, sên) A river of northern France flowing about 770 km (480 mi) generally northwest to the **Bay of the Seine**, an inlet of the English Channel, near Le Havre. It has been an important commercial waterway since Roman times and has figured significantly in the histories of Paris, Rouen, and Le Havre.

seize (sêz) *v.* Variant of **seize** (sense 5).

sei-sin also **sei-zin** (sê'zin) *n.* 1. Legal possession of land, as a freehold estate. 2a. The act or an instance of taking legal possession of land. b. Property thus possessed. [Middle English seisine < Old French saisine < seisir, to seize; see SEIZE.]

seism (sî'zəm) *n.* See **earthquake**. [Greek seismos < seiein, to shake.]

seis-mic (sîz'mîk) *adj.* 1. Of, subject to, or caused by an earthquake or earth vibration. 2. Earthshaking: *an issue of seismic proportions and ramifications.* —**seis-mi-cal-ly** *adv.*

seis-mic-i-ty (sîz-mîs'i-tê) *n.* The frequency or magnitude of earthquake activity in a given area.

seis-mism (sîz'mîz'əm) *n.* The phenomena involved in earthquakes.

seismo- or **seism-** *pref.* Earthquake: *seismograph*. [Greek < seismos, seism; see SEISM.]

seis-mo-gram (sîz'mô-grām') *n.* The record of an earth tremor made by a seismograph.

seis-mo-graph (sîz'mô-gráf') *n.* An instrument for automatically detecting and recording the intensity, direction, and duration of a movement of the ground, especially of an earthquake. —**seis-mog-ra-pher** (sîz'môg'rô-fer) *n.* —**seis-mo-graph'ic** (-gráf'îk), **seis-mo-graph'i-cal** (-i-kəl) *adj.* —**seis-mog-ra-phy** *n.*

seis-mol-o-gy (sîz-môl'ô-jê) *n.* The geophysical science of earthquakes and the mechanical properties of the earth. —**seis-mo-log'ic** (-mô-lôj'îk), **seis-mo-log'i-cal** (-i-kəl) *adj.* —**seis-mo-log'i-cal-ly** *adv.* —**seis-mol'o-gist** *n.*

seis-mom-e-ter (sîz-môm'i-tər) *n.* A detecting device that receives seismic impulses. —**seis-mo-met'ric** (-mô-mêt'rik), **seis-mo-met'ri-cal** (-rî-kəl) *adj.*

seis-mom-e-try (sîz-môm'i-trê) *n.* The scientific study and recording of earthquakes.

seis-mo-scope (sîz'mô-skôp') *n.* An instrument that indicates the occurrence or time of occurrence of an earthquake. —**seis-mo-scop'ic** (-skôp'îk) *adj.*

sei-sor (sê'zər, -zôr') *n.* Variant of **seizor**.

sei-tan (sâ'tân') *n.* A chewy, protein-rich food made from wheat gluten and used as a meat substitute. [Coined by George Ohsawa (1893–1966), Japanese advocate of macrobiotics.]

sei whale (sâ) *n.* A baleen whale (*Balaenoptera borealis*) having a grayish body with a whitish underside, a curved dorsal fin, and grooves on the throat. [Partial translation of Norwegian seiwhal; see SEI.]

seize (sêz) *v.* **seized; seiz-ing, seiz-es** —*tr.* 1. To grasp suddenly and forcibly; take or grab: *seize a sword*. 2a. To take by force; capture or conquer: *The kidnappers seized the prince. The invaders seized the city.* b. To take quick and forcible possession of; confiscate: *The police seized a cache of illegal drugs*. 3a. To focus the attention or intellect on: *seize an idea and develop it to the fullest extent*. b. To make use of (an opportunity, for example). 4a. To have a sudden overwhelming effect on: *a heinous crime that seized the minds and emotions of the populace*. b. To overwhelm physically: *a person who was seized with a terminal disease*. 5. also **seize** (sêz) *Law* To cause (someone) to be in possession of something. 6. *Nautical* To bind (a rope) to another, or to a spar, with turns of small line. —*intr.* 1. To lay sudden or forcible hold of something. 2a. To cohere or fuse with another part as a result of high pressure or temperature and restrict or prevent further motion or flow. b. To come to a halt: *The talks seized up and were rescheduled*. 3. To exhibit signs of seizure activity, usually with convulsions. —**phrasal verb: seize on** To focus one's attention or intellect on: *seized on the notion of gender as a cultural construct*. [Middle English seisen < Old French seisir, to take possession, of Germanic origin.] —**seiz-a-ble** *adj.* —**seiz'er** *n.*

sei-zin (sê'zin) *n.* Variant of **seisin**.

seiz-ing (sê'zing) *n.* *Nautical* 1. A binding of multiple turns of thread or light line around a rope end to keep it from unlaying. 2. The lighter line so used.

sei-zor also **sei-sor** (sê'zər, -zôr') *n.* One who takes seisin.

sei-zure (sê'zhər) *n.* 1. The act or an instance of seizing or the condition of being seized. 2. A sudden attack, spasm, or convulsion, as in epilepsy or another disorder. —**sei-zure disorder** *n.* See **epilepsy**.

se-la-dang (sî-lă'dāng) *n.* See **gaur**. [Malay.]

se-lag-i-nel-la (sə-lă'jə-nē-lə') *n.* Any of numerous often creeping or prostrate vascular plants of the genus *Selaginella* that bear spores; have small scalelike leaves, and are closely related to the club mosses. Also called *spikemoss*. [New Latin *Selaginella*, genus name < Latin *selāgō*, *selāgin-* a plant resembling savin, probably a kind of club moss or selaginella.]

se-lah (sê'lə, sê'lə) *interj.* Used to conclude a verse in the Psalms. [Hebrew selā.]

sel-dom (sêl'dəm) *adv.* Not often; infrequently or rarely. See **Usage Note** at **rarely**. *adj.* Infrequent; rare: *one of my seldom visits to the area*. [Middle English < Old English seldum, alteration of seldan; see **sel-** in **dom-ness** *n.*]

se-lect (sî-lêkt') *v.* **-lect-ed, -lect-ing, -lects** —*tr.* To take as a choice from among several; pick out. —*intr.* To make a choice or selection. *adj.* 1. Singled out in preference; chosen: *a select few*. 2. Of special quality or value; choice: *select peaches*. 3. Of or relating to a lean grade of beef. 4. Careful or refined in making selections; discriminating. *n.* 1. One that is chosen in preference to others or because of special value. 2. (used with a pl. verb) Chosen or preferred items or people considered as a group. Often used with *the*. [Latin *seligere*, *selēct-*: *se-*, apart; see **s(w)e-** in App. I + *legere*, to choose; see **leg-** in App. I.] —**se-lect-a-ble** *adj.* —**se-lect'ness** *n.* —**se-lect'or** *n.*

se-lect-ee (sî-lêkt'ē) *n.* One who is selected, especially for military service.

se-lec-tion (sî-lêk'shən) *n.* 1. The act of selecting something: *looked at the pears and made a careful selection*. 2. One that is selected, such as a literary or musical text chosen for reading or performance: *For her last selection she sang an old favorite*. 3a. A carefully chosen or representative collection of people or things: *a book containing a selection of the author's best work*. b. A range of things from which one can make a choice: *a store with a wide selection of magazines*. See **Synonyms** at **choice**. 4. *Biology* A natural or artificial process that involves the survival and reproduction of some kinds of organisms instead of others (because they have traits that are better adapted to the environment or that are preferred by a breeder, for example) and results in changes in the traits of a population or species. —**se-lec-tion-al** (-shə-nəl) *adj.*

se-lec-tion-ist (sî-lêk'shə-nîst) *n.* One who believes that evolution occurs chiefly as a result of natural selection. —**se-lec-tion-ism** *n.* —**se-lec-tion-ist** *adj.*

se-lec-tive (sî-lêk'tiv) *adj.* 1. Of or characterized by selection; discriminating. 2. Empowered, or tending to select. 3. *Electronics* Able to reject frequencies other than the one selected or tuned. —**se-lec-tive-ly** *adv.* —**se-lec-tive-ness**, **se-lec-tiv'i-ty** *n.*

selective estrogen receptor modulator *n.* **Abbr.** SERM Any of a group of nonsteroidal drugs, such as raloxifene and tamoxifen, that bind to estrogen receptors and act in some cases as estrogen agonists and in others as estrogen antagonists.

selective serotonin reuptake inhibitor *n.* **Abbr.** SSRI Any of a class of antidepressant drugs that inhibit the reuptake of serotonin.

selective service *n.* A system for calling up people for compulsory military service.

se-lect-man (sî-lêkt'măn', -mən') *n.* One of a board of town officers chosen annually in New England communities to manage local affairs.

se-lect-wom-an (sî-lêkt'wôom'ən) *n.* A woman who is one of a board of town officers chosen annually in New England communities to manage local affairs.

se-leg-i-line (sə-lê'jə-lēn') *n.* A drug, C₁₃H₁₇N, that is an irreversible inhibitor of a specific type of monoamine oxidase, used in its hydrochloride form in conjunction with levodopa and carbidopa to treat patients with Parkinson's disease. [Probably *SELECTIVE* (from its being a selective monoamine oxidase inhibitor) + alteration of (*par*)*gyl-*, a closely related drug (ultimately < Latin *arg(ē)ntum*, silver; see **arg-** in App. I, from the fact that one of the constituents of pargiline was discovered in a precipitate containing silver + *-YL* + *-INE*.)]

selen- *pref.* Variant of **seleno-**.

se-le-nate (sê'lə-năt') *n.* A salt, ester, or anion of selenic acid. [SELEN(IC ACID) + *-ATE*.]

Se-le-ne (sə-lē'nē) *n.* *Greek Mythology* The goddess of the moon.

Se-len-ga (sê'lēng-gă') A river of northern Mongolia and southeast Russia flowing about 1,480 km (920 mi) east and north to Lake Baikal.

se-le-nic (sə-lē'nik, -lēn'îk) *adj.* Of, relating to, or containing selenium.

selenic acid *n.* A highly corrosive hygroscopic white solid acid with composition H₂SeO₄.

se-le-nif-er-ous (sê'lə-nîf'ər-əs) *adj.* Containing selenium: *seleniferous soil*.

se-le-nite (sê'lə-nî't, sî-lē'-) *n.* Gypsum in the form of colorless clear crystals. [Latin *selēnītēs* < Greek *selēnītēs* (*lithos*), moon (stone); selenite (so called because it was believed to wax and wane with the moon) < *selēnē*, moon; see SELENIUM.]

se-le-ni-um (sî-lē'nē-əm) *n.* **Symbol** Se A nonmetallic element, red in powder form, black in vitreous form, and metallic gray in stable crystalline form, resembling sulfur and found as an impurity in pyrites or obtained as a byproduct of electrolytic copper refining. It is widely used in rectifiers, as a semiconductor, and in xerography. Its photovoltaic and photoconductive actions make it useful in photocells, photographic exposure meters, and solar cells. Atomic number: 34; atomic weight 78.96;