



Key Vocabulary: I am Legend by Richard Matheson

Vocabulary Word	Definition	Context
Abstract	Existing in thought or as an idea but not having a physical or concrete existence	"In his dreams, Robert Neville continued to weave his abstract tapestries of fantasy"
Abysmal	Extremely bad	"The loneliness was abysmal, the isolation almost unendurable"
Ambiguity	The quality of being open to more than one interpretation; inexactness	"He wished that he could understand the cryptic ambiguities of the creatures"
Amorphous	Without a clearly defined shape or form	"It moved slowly and awkwardly, an amorphous figure distinct only in its menacing lack of distinction"
Anthropomorphic	Having human characteristics or qualities	"The creatures in the book are often anthropomorphic, with distinct human-like qualities"
Apathy	Lack of interest, enthusiasm, or concern	"There was a numbness in him, an apathy dictated by his body chemistry"
Arcane	Understood by few; mysterious or secret	"His knowledge of medicine was arcane, but it had saved his life more than once"
Belligerent	Hostile and aggressive	"The vampires are belligerent, always seeking to destroy any remaining human survivors"
Blasphemy	The act or offense of speaking sacrilegiously about God or sacred things; profane talk	"The vampire's demonic nature makes him a source of blasphemy and evil"
Brood	A family of young animals, especially birds, produced at one hatching or birth; think deeply about something that makes one unhappy	"The vampire's brood of infected creatures roam the streets at night, seeking to kill or infect any remaining humans"
Cynical	Believing that people are motivated by self-interest; distrustful of human sincerity or integrity	"His experiences had left him cynical and distrustful of others"
Desolate	Deserted of people and in a state of bleak and dismal emptiness	"The city was desolate, the once-bustling streets now eerily empty and quiet"
Enigmatic	Difficult to interpret or understand; mysterious	"The vampire's enigmatic nature makes it difficult to know what they want or how to defeat them"
Ephemeral	Lasting for a very short time	"The moments of happiness in his life seemed ephemeral, fleeting like a dream"



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Esoteric	Intended for or likely to be understood by only a small number of people with a specialized knowledge or interest	"The book's references to obscure works of literature make it seem esoteric to some readers"
Inevitable	Certain to happen; unavoidable	"The inevitable end of the world had come, and Robert Neville was one of the few survivors"
Lament	A passionate expression of grief or sorrow; mourn	"He could hear the lament of the vampires outside his house, a mournful sound that chilled him to the bone"
Melancholy	A feeling of pensive sadness, typically with no obvious cause	"His thoughts often turned to melancholy, memories of his wife and daughter now long gone"
Morose	Sullen and ill-tempered	"The constant danger and isolation had made him morose and irritable"
Nihilistic	Rejecting all religious and moral principles in the belief that life is meaningless	"The vampires in the book are nihilistic, believing that the end of the world has no meaning or purpose"
Ominous	giving the impression that something bad or unpleasant is going to happen; threatening	"There was something quietly ominous about the room."
Pathology	the science of the causes and effects of diseases, especially the branch of medicine that deals with the laboratory examination of samples of body tissue for diagnostic or forensic purposes	"The pathology of the disease was still largely unknown."
Perfunctory	(of an action or gesture) carried out with a minimum of effort or reflection	"He gave a perfunctory nod and turned away."
Pervasive	(especially of an unwelcome influence or physical effect) spreading widely throughout an area or a group of people	"The pervasive smell of smoke made it hard to breathe."
Pragmatist	a person who is guided more by practical considerations than by ideals or theory	"The new CEO was a pragmatic leader who made decisions based on what would be most effective for the company."
Preponderance	the quality or fact of being greater in number, quantity, or importance	"There was a preponderance of evidence suggesting that the suspect was guilty."
Prescient	having or showing knowledge of events before they take place; prophetic	"Her prescient warning about the stock market crash saved many investors from losing their savings."



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Profane	(of language) blasphemous or obscene	"His profane language was offensive to many people."
Prohibition	the action of forbidding something, especially by law	"The prohibition of alcohol in the United States led to the rise of organized crime."
Pseudonym	a fictitious name, especially one used by an author	"The famous author wrote under a pseudonym to maintain her privacy."
Pungent	having a sharply strong taste or smell	"The pungent smell of garlic filled the kitchen."
Quarantine	a state, period, or place of isolation in which people or animals that have arrived from elsewhere or been exposed to infectious or contagious disease are placed	"The passengers on the plane were placed in quarantine for two weeks due to a suspected outbreak of a highly contagious virus."
Quell	put an end to (a rebellion or other disorder), typically by the use of force	"The riot police were able to quell the violent protests."
Quizzical	indicating mild or amused puzzlement	"He gave her a quizzical look when she told him the story."
Rancorous	characterized by bitterness or resentment	"Their rancorous relationship had been strained for years."
Recalcitrant	having an obstinately uncooperative attitude toward authority or discipline	"The recalcitrant student refused to do his homework."
Recluse	a person who lives a solitary life and tends to avoid other people	"The famous author was known to be a recluse who rarely left his house."
Redress	remedy or set right (an undesirable or unfair situation)	"The government promised to redress the grievances of the oppressed minority."
Relinquish	voluntarily cease to keep or claim; give up	"He reluctantly relinquished his hold on the steering wheel."
Remorse	deep regret or guilt for a wrong committed	"He felt a deep sense of remorse for his actions."
Resilient	(of a person or animal) able to withstand or recover quickly from difficult conditions	"The resilient hiker was able to finish the grueling trek despite numerous setbacks."
Respite	a short period of rest or relief from something difficult or unpleasant	"It was a welcome respite from the constant barrage of noise."



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Sagacity	acuteness of mental discernment and soundness of judgment	"His sagacity was well-known and respected among his peers."
Scourge	a person or thing that causes great trouble or suffering	"The disease was a scourge that ravaged the city."
Scrutinise	to examine closely and carefully	"The detective began to scrutinise the crime scene for any clues."
Squalor	a state of being extremely dirty and unpleasant, especially as a result of poverty or neglect	"The homeless lived in squalor and poor conditions on the streets."
Stagnant	not flowing or running, and often having an unpleasant smell as a result	"The water in the pond had become stagnant and was no longer fit for swimming."
Subjugate	to bring under control or conquer	"The conquerors sought to subjugate the native people and assert their dominance."
Supplicate	to make a humble plea to someone in power or authority	"The citizens supplicated to the king for mercy and aid."
Surmise	to guess or infer something without sufficient evidence	"I can only surmise what his motives were for leaving the company."
Surmount	to overcome or rise above something difficult or challenging	"She was determined to surmount all obstacles in her way to achieving her dream."
Surreptitious	done or acting in a secret, stealthy way	"The spy made surreptitious movements as he tried to avoid detection."
Sycophant	a person who flatters and fawns over someone in order to gain advantage	"The sycophant was always trying to curry favour with the boss by offering excessive praise."
Temerity	excessive confidence or boldness; audacity	"He had the temerity to speak out of turn in front of his superiors."
Trivial	of little value or importance	"The argument was trivial and did not warrant further discussion."
Turbulent	characterized by conflict, disorder, or confusion; not stable or calm	"The turbulent waves tossed the boat back and forth, making the passengers seasick."
Ubiquitous	present, appearing, or found everywhere	"Cell phones have become ubiquitous in modern society."



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Unanimous	in complete agreement or sharing the same opinion	"The board members were unanimous in their decision to approve the new policy."
Unscrupulous	having no moral principles or ethical values	"The unscrupulous businessman was willing to do anything to get ahead, even if it meant cheating and lying."
Venerable	commanding respect because of great age or impressive dignity	"The venerable professor had been teaching at the university for over 50 years."
Vex	to irritate or annoy someone, especially with trivial matters	"The constant noise from the construction site vexed the nearby residents."
Vindictive	having or showing a strong or unreasoning desire for revenge	"He was known for his vindictive behaviour and tendency to hold grudges."
Wistful	having or showing a feeling of vague or regretful longing	"She had a wistful expression on her face as she looked at the old photograph."
Zealot	a person who is fanatical and uncompromising in pursuit of religious, political, or other ideals	"The zealot was willing to do anything to advance his cause, even if it meant resorting to violence."

Historical and political context of the book

"I Am Legend" was first published in 1954, during the height of the Cold War. This was a period of intense political tension between the United States and the Soviet Union, and many Americans feared the possibility of nuclear war.

The book also reflects the anxieties of its time about the role of science and technology in society. The 1950s was a period of rapid scientific advancement, and many people were worried about the potential consequences of new discoveries and innovations. In "I Am Legend," the protagonist's attempt to use science to cure the vampire plague has unintended consequences and ultimately leads to his downfall.

Additionally, "I Am Legend" can be seen as a commentary on race relations in the United States. The vampires in the book are described as having dark skin, and there are several references to racial tensions throughout the story. Some critics have suggested that the book can be read as an allegory for the civil rights movement, which was gaining momentum in the 1950s.



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Overall, "I Am Legend" reflects the fears and anxieties of its time, particularly around the threat of nuclear war, the role of science and technology, and race relations in the United States.