



Key Vocabulary: Rebecca by Daphne du Maurier

Vocabulary Word	Definition	Context
Countenance	A person's face or facial expression	"She looked at me with a strange countenance ."
Decorum	Behavior that is in keeping with good taste and propriety	"Mrs. Danvers was always so dignified, so correct in her decorum ."
Demure	Reserved, modest, and shy	"She was very pretty, with small features and a demure manner."
Disquieting	Causing feelings of anxiety or unease	"There was something very disquieting about the house, something that made me feel uneasy."
Fastidious	Very attentive to detail and accuracy, meticulous	"Maxim was always so fastidious about his clothes and appearance."
Imbue	Inspire or permeate with a feeling or quality	"The house was imbued with a sense of gloom and sadness."
Impertinent	Not showing proper respect, rude	"I thought her question was rather impertinent and inappropriate."
Inscrutable	Impossible to understand or interpret, enigmatic	"Maxim's face was inscrutable , giving nothing away."
Intrepid	Fearless, adventurous, bold	"She was an intrepid traveler, always seeking out new experiences."
Languid	Slow and relaxed, lacking vigor or energy	"The atmosphere was very languid , as if nothing ever changed."
Mellifluous	Sweet or musical, pleasant to hear	"Her voice was so mellifluous , like honey pouring over rocks."
Misanthrope	A person who dislikes humankind and avoids human society	"He was a misanthrope , preferring the company of books to people."
Oblivious	Not aware of or concerned about what is happening around one	"She seemed oblivious to the fact that everyone was staring at her."
Perspicacious	Having a ready insight into and understanding of things	"He was a perspicacious man, always able to see through the facade."
Staid	Sedate, respectable, and unadventurous	"The party was rather staid and dull, with nothing exciting happening."
Unctuous	Excessively flattering or ingratiating; oily	"I found his manner to be rather unctuous , insincere and oily."

Historical and political context of the book

"Rebecca" was first published in 1938, a time of great political and social upheaval in Europe. Here is an overview of some of the key historical and political events that were happening at the time:



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- Rise of Nazi Germany: In the 1930s, Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party rose to power in Germany, bringing with them a fascist ideology that emphasized nationalism, militarism, and anti-Semitism.
- Spanish Civil War: From 1936 to 1939, Spain was engulfed in a civil war between the democratically elected government and a right-wing military uprising led by General Francisco Franco. The conflict attracted volunteers from all over the world and became a symbol of the struggle between fascism and democracy.
- Great Depression: The global economic crisis that began in 1929 continued throughout the 1930s, causing widespread poverty, unemployment, and political unrest.
- British politics: In 1938, the UK was ruled by a Conservative government led by Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain. Chamberlain is best known for his policy of appeasement towards Nazi Germany, which many saw as a failed attempt to avoid war.

In the context of these events, "Rebecca" can be seen as a reflection of the anxieties and tensions of the time. The novel explores themes of power, control, and repression, and can be read as a commentary on the repressive social norms and gender roles of the time. The character of Rebecca, who is never seen but whose presence looms large over the narrative, can be seen as a symbol of the destructive power of authoritarianism and fascism. Ultimately, "Rebecca" is a haunting and timeless exploration of human psychology and the mysteries of the human heart, set against the backdrop of a turbulent and uncertain era.