



'The Signalman' - Glossary

1. idle

Without a basis in reason or fact

*He looked up at me without replying, and I looked down at him without pressing him too soon with a repetition of my **idle** question.*

2. dint

Force or effort

*There, by **dint** of looking closely about me, I found a rough zigzag descending path notched out, which I followed.*

3. notch

Make a small cut into

*There, by dint of looking closely about me, I found a rough zigzag descending path **notched** out, which I followed.*

4. precipitate

Done with very great haste and without due deliberation

*The cutting was extremely deep, and unusually **precipitate**.*

5. sallow

Unhealthy looking

*I resumed my downward way, and stepping out upon the level of the railroad, and drawing nearer to him, saw that he was a dark **sallow** man, with a dark beard and rather heavy eyebrows.*



6. barbarous

Primitive in customs and culture

*On either side, a dripping-wet wall of jagged stone, excluding all view but a strip of sky; the perspective one way only a crooked prolongation of this great dungeon; the shorter perspective in the other direction terminating in a gloomy red light, and the gloomier entrance to a black tunnel, in whose massive architecture there was a **barbarous**, depressing, and forbidding air.*

7. rivet

Hold someone's attention

*This was a lonesome post to occupy, I said, and it had **riveted** my attention when I looked down from up yonder.*

8. daunt

Cause to lose courage

*To such purpose I spoke to him; but I am far from sure of the terms I used; for, besides that I am not happy in opening any conversation, there was something in the man that **daunted** me.*

9. peruse

Examine or consider with attention and in detail

*The monstrous thought came into my mind, as I **perused** the fixed eyes and the saturnine face, that this was a spirit, not a man.*



10. saturnine

Showing a brooding ill humor

*The monstrous thought came into my mind, as I perused the fixed eyes and the **saturnine** face, that this was a spirit, not a man.*

11. latent

Potentially existing but not presently evident or realized

*But in making the action, I detected in his eyes some **latent** fear of me.*

12. intently

With strained or eager attention

***Intently** watchful of me, he replied (but without sound), ‘Yes.’*

13. crude

Belonging to an early stage of technical development

*He had taught himself a language down here – if only to know it by sight, and to have formed his own **crude** ideas of its pronunciation, could be called learning it.*

14. incongruity

The quality of disagreeing

*On my trusting that he would excuse the remark that he had been well educated, and (I hoped I might say without offence) perhaps educated above that station, he observed that instances of slight **incongruity** in such wise would rarely be found wanting among large bodies of men; that he had heard it was so in workhouses, in the police force, even in that last desperate resource, the army; and that he knew it was so, more or less, in any great railway staff.*



15. vigilant

Carefully observant or attentive

*In the discharge of his duties, I observed him to be remarkably exact and **vigilant**, breaking off his discourse at a syllable, and remaining silent until what he had to do was done.*

16. discourse

Extended verbal expression in speech or writing

*In the discharge of his duties, I observed him to be remarkably exact and vigilant, breaking off his **discourse** at a syllable, and remaining silent until what he had to do was done.*

17. asunder

Widely separated especially in space

*On both of those occasions he came back to the fire with the inexplicable air upon him which I had remarked, without being able to define, when we were so far **asunder**.*

18. impart

Transmit, as knowledge or a skill

*'It is very difficult to **impart**, sir. It is very, very difficult to speak of. If ever you make me another visit, I will try to tell you.'*

19. convey

Transmit or serve as the medium for transmission

*'You have no feeling that they were **conveyed** to you in any supernatural way?'*



20. gesticulate

Show, express, or direct through movement

*I followed his action with my eyes, and it was the action of an arm **gesticulating**, with the utmost passion and vehemence, 'For God's sake, clear the way!'*

21. abhorrence

Hate coupled with disgust

*I ran out again faster than I had run in (for I had a mortal **abhorrence** of the place upon me), and I looked all-round the red light with my own red light, and I went up the iron ladder to the gallery atop of it, and I came down again, and ran back here.*

22. impress

Have a powerful and usually positive effect on

*It was not to be denied, I rejoined, that this was a remarkable coincidence, calculated deeply to **impress** his mind.*

23. specter

A ghostly appearing figure

*'This,' he said, again laying his hand upon my arm, and glancing over his shoulder with hollow eyes, 'was just a year ago. Six or seven months passed, and I had recovered from the surprise and shock, when one morning, as the day was breaking, I, standing at the door, looked towards the red light, and saw the **spectra** again.'*

24. lament

Express grief verbally

*The wind and the wires took up the story with a long **lamenting** wail.*



25. vehemence

Intensity or forcefulness of expression

*He repeated, if possible with increased passion and **vehemence**, that former gesticulation of 'For God's sake, clear the way!'*

26. derive

Come from

*The ghost's ring is a strange vibration in the bell that it **derives** from nothing else, and I have not asserted that the bell stirs to the eye. I don't wonder that you failed to hear it.*

27. earnestly

In a sincere and serious manner

*His eyes were prominent and strained, but not very much more so, perhaps, than my own had been when I had directed them **earnestly** towards the same spot.*

28. ruminate

Reflect deeply on a subject

*'What is its warning against?' he said, **ruminating**, with his eyes on the fire, and only by times turning them on me.*

29. calamity

An event resulting in great loss and misfortune

*Some dreadful **calamity** will happen.*



30. conscientious

Guided by or in accordance with a sense of right and wrong

*It was the mental torture of a **conscientious** man, oppressed beyond endurance by an unintelligible responsibility involving life.*

31. oppressed

Burdened psychologically or mentally

*It was the mental torture of a conscientious man, **oppressed** beyond endurance by an unintelligible responsibility involving life.*

32. extremity

A condition or state beyond the norm

*'When it first stood under the Danger-light,' he went on, putting his dark hair back from his head, and drawing his hands outward across and across his temples in an **extremity** of feverish distress, 'why not tell me where that accident was to happen – if it must happen?'*

33. avert

Prevent the occurrence of; prevent from happening

*Why not tell me how it could be **averted** – if it could have been **averted**?*

34. confound

Be confusing or perplexing to

*Therefore, setting aside all question of reality or unreality between us, I represented to him that whoever thoroughly discharged his duty must do well, and that at least it was his comfort that he understood his duty, though he did not understand these **confounding** Appearances.*



35. incidental

Following or accompanying as a consequence

*He became calm; the occupations **incidental** to his post as the night advanced began to make larger demands on his attention; and I left him at two in the morning.*

36. disclosure

The act of making something evident

*But what ran most in my thoughts was the consideration how ought I to act, having become the recipient of this **disclosure**?*

37. painstaking

Characterized by extreme care and great effort

*I had proved the man to be intelligent, vigilant, **painstaking**, and exact; but how long might he remain so, in his state of mind?*

38. apprise

Inform somebody of something

*A change in his time of duty would come round next night, he had **apprised** me, and he would be off an hour or two after sunrise, and on again soon after sunset.*

39. traverse

Journey across or pass over

*The sun was not yet quite down when I **traversed** the field path near the top of the deep cutting.*

40. heed

Careful attention

*'Coming round the curve in the tunnel, sir,' he said, 'I saw him at the end, like as if I saw him down a perspective-glass. There was no time to check speed, and I knew him to be very careful. As he didn't seem to take **heed** of the whistle, I shut it off when we were running down upon him, and called to him as loud as I could call.'*