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**algorisme** < Old French < Medieval Latin *algorismus*, after Muhammad ibn-Musa al-KHWARIZMI. — **al-go-ris'mic** (-rīz'mik) *adj.*  
**al-go-rithm** (āl'gō-rīth'm) *n.* A finite set of unambiguous instructions that, given some set of initial conditions, can be performed in a prescribed sequence to achieve a certain goal and that has a recognizable set of end conditions. [Variant (probably influenced by ARITHMETIC) of ALGORITHM.] — **al-go-rith'mic** (-rīth'mik) *adj.* — **al-go-rith'mi-cal-ly** *adv.*

➔ **WORD HISTORY** Because of its popularity over the last century, one might figure *algorithm* for a new coinage. The source of *algorithm*, however, is not Silicon Valley but Khwarizm, a region near the Aral Sea in south-central Asia and the birthplace of the ninth-century mathematician Muhammad ibn-Musa al-Khwarizmi (780?-850?). Al-Khwarizmi, "the Khwarizmi," who later lived in Baghdad, wrote a treatise on what is called *algorism*, or the use of Arabic numerals for mathematical computation. Despite the name by which the Arabic numerals are known in Europe, these symbols, as well as the methods for using them, were actually developed in ancient India. Europeans learned to use the numerals, however, through treatises written in Arabic by mathematicians working in the Muslim world. *Algorism*, the English word for computation with Arabic numerals, is derived from Al-Khwarizmi's name. The word *algorithm* originated as a variant spelling of *algorism*, probably under the influence of the word *arithmetic* or its Greek source *arithmos*, "number." With the development of sophisticated mechanical computing devices in the 20th century, *algorithm* was adopted as a convenient word for a recursive mathematical procedure, the computer's stock-in-trade. In its new life as a computer term, *algorithm*, no longer a variant of *algorism*, nevertheless reminds us of the debt that modern technology owes to the scientists and scholars of ancient and medieval times.

**al-gor-mor-tis** (āl'gōr mōr'tis) *n.* The cooling of the body that follows death. [Latin *algor*, coolness + Latin *mortis*, genitive of *mors*, death.]

**Al-gren** (āl'grin), **Nelson** 1909-1981. American writer noted for his novels about the pride and longings of impoverished people, including *The Man with the Golden Arm* (1949).

**Al-ham-bra** (āl-hām'brā, āl-ām'brā) A citadel and palace on a hill overlooking Granada, Spain. Built by Moorish kings in the 12th and 13th centuries, the Alhambra is the finest example of Moorish architecture in Spain.

**Al-haz-en** (āl-hāz'en) See Ibn al-Haytham.

**A-li** (ā-lē) Full name Ali ibn Abi Talib. 600?-661. Muslim caliph (656-661) whose reign was marked by the division of Islam into Sunni and Shiite sects. This schism intensified after his assassination by members of a third Muslim sect.

**Ali, Muhammad** Originally Cassius Marcellus Clay (klā). Born 1942. American prizefighter who won the world heavyweight title in 1964, but was stripped of his title and banned from competing (1967-1970) as a result of his refusal to be inducted into the army during the Vietnam War. He later regained the title two more times (1974, 1978).

**Al-li-ak-mon** (āl-yāk'mōn, ā'lē-āk'-) A river, about 320 km (200 mi) long, of northern Greece. It is the longest river in the country.

**a-li-as** (ā'lē-ās, āl'yās) *n.* 1. An assumed name; *The swindler worked under various aliases.* 2. **Computers** An alternate name or address, especially an e-mail address that forwards incoming e-mail to another address. 3. **Electronics** A false signal in telecommunication links from beats between signal frequency and sampling frequency. ♦ *adv.* Also known as; otherwise: *Johnson, alias Johns.* [Latin *aliās*, otherwise, at another time < feminine accusative pl. of *alius*, other; see **al-** in App. I.]

**a-li-as-ing** (ā'lē-ā-sīng, āl'yā-) *n.* 1. Visible or audible distortion introduced into digital information, such as images or audio signals, caused when a continuous line or transition is not smoothly captured or represented because of the low resolution or sampling rate of a digital medium. 2. The appearance of jagged distortions in curves and diagonal lines in computer graphics.

**A-li Ba-ba** (ā'lē bā'bā, āl'ē) *n.* A poor woodcutter in the Arabian Nights who gains entrance to the treasure cave of the 40 thieves by saying the magic words "Open, Sesame!"

**al-i-bi** (āl'ā-bī') *n., pl. -bis* 1. **Law** a. A form of defense whereby a defendant attempts to prove that he or she was elsewhere when the crime in question was committed. b. The fact of having been elsewhere when a crime in question was committed. 2. An explanation offered to avoid blame or justify action; an excuse. ♦ *v.* **-bied, -bi-ing, -bis** — *intr.* To make an excuse for oneself. — *tr.* To make an excuse for (another). [Latin, elsewhere < *alius*, other (on the model of *ibi*, there); see **al-** in App. I.]

**al-i-ble** (āl'ā-bəl) *adj.* Having nutrients; nourishing. [Latin *alibilis* < *alere*, to nourish; see **al-** in App. I.]

**Al-i-can-te** (āl'i-kān'tē, ā'lē-kān'tē) A city of southeast Spain on the Mediterranean Sea south of Valencia. It is a port and tourist center.

**Al-ice-in-Won-der-land** (āl'is-in-wūn'dar-lānd') *adj.* Illusory; unreal: "One wonders if historians . . . are caught up in an Alice-in-Wonderland world of their own making" (Zara Steiner). [Short for *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, fantasy novel by Lewis Carroll.]

**Al-ice Springs** (āl'is) A town of central Australia south-southeast of Darwin. The largest community in the large, sparsely populated central region of the continent, Alice Springs developed around a telegraph station that was established in 1871.

**al-i-cy-lic** (āl'i-sīk'lik, -sī'klīk) *adj.* Of or relating to organic compounds having both aliphatic and cyclic characteristics or structures. [ALI(PHATIC) + CYCLIC.]

**al-i-dade** (āl'i-dād') also **al-i-dad** (-dād') *n.* 1. An indicator or a sighting apparatus on a plane table, used in angular measurement. 2. A

topographic surveying and mapping instrument used for determining directions, consisting of a telescope and attached parts. [French < Medieval Latin *alidada*, sighting rod < Arabic *al-'idāda*, the revolving radius of a circle: *al-*, the + *'idāda*, revolving radius (alternate form of *'adud*, humerus < *'ādāda*, to lop, cut (trees); see **ṣd** in App. II.)]

**a-li-en** (ā'lē-ən, āl'yən) *adj.* 1. Owing political allegiance to another country or government; foreign: *alien radicals.* 2. Belonging to, characteristic of, or constituting another and very different place, society, or person; strange. See Synonyms at **foreign**. 3. Dissimilar, inconsistent, or opposed, as in nature: *emotions alien to her temperament.* ♦ *n.* **Law** 1. An unnaturalized foreign resident of a country. Also called *noncitizen*. 2. A person from another and very different family, people, or place. 3. A person who is not included in a group; an outsider. 4. A creature from outer space: *science fiction about an invasion of aliens.* 5. **Ecology** An organism, especially a plant or animal, that occurs in or is naturalized in a region to which it is not native. ♦ *tr.v.* **-ened, -en-ing, -ens** **Law** To transfer (property) to another; alienate. [Middle English < Old French < Latin *aliēnus* < *alius*, other; see **al-** in App. I.]

**al-i-en-a-ble** (āl'yā-nā-bəl, ā'lē-ā-) *adj.* Transferrable to the ownership of another. — **al'i-en-a-bil'i-ty** *n.*

**al-i-en-age** (āl'yō-nāj, ā'lē-ō-) *n.* The official status of an alien. Also called *alienism*.

**al-i-en-ate** (āl'yā-nāt', ā'lē-ō-) *tr.v.* **-at-ed, -at-ing, -ates** 1. To cause to become unfriendly or hostile; estrange: *alienate a friend; alienate potential supporters by taking extreme positions.* 2. To cause to become withdrawn or unresponsive; isolate or dissociate emotionally: *The numbing labor tended to alienate workers.* 3. To cause to be transferred; turn away: "He succeeded . . . in alienating the affections of my only ward" (Oscar Wilde). 4. **Law** To transfer (property or a right) to the ownership of another, especially by an act of the owner rather than by inheritance. [Latin *aliēnāre*, *aliēnāt-* < Latin *aliēnus*, alien; see ALIEN.] — **al'i-en-a'tor** *n.*

**al-i-en-a-tion** (āl'yā-nā'shən, ā'lē-ō-) *n.* 1. The act of alienating or the condition of being alienated; estrangement: *Alcoholism often leads to the alienation of family and friends.* 2. Emotional isolation or dissociation. 3. **Law** The act of transferring property or title to another.

**alienation of affection** *n.* **Law** An action brought against a third party who has caused one of the spouses of a marriage to lose affection for the other.

**al-i-en-ee** (āl'yō-nēf, ā'lē-ō-) *n.* One to whom or to which ownership of property is transferred.

**al-i-en-ism** (āl'yō-nīz'm, ā'lē-ō-) *n.* See **alienage**.

**al-i-en-ist** (āl'yō-nīst, ā'lē-ō-) *n.* A physician who evaluates the competence of defendants to stand trial. [Obsolete French *aliéniste*, psychiatrist: obsolete French *aliéné*, mentally ill (< past participle of *aliēner*, to estrange, make hostile, deprive of reason < Old French < Latin *aliēnāre*, to deprive of reason; see ALIENATE) + French *-iste, -ist* (< Old French; see **-ist**.)]

**al-i-en-or** (āl'yō-nōr', ā'lē-ō-) *n.* One that transfers ownership of property to another.

**al-i-es-ter-ase** (āl'ē-ēs'tə-rās', -rās') *n.* An enzyme contributing to ester-link hydrolysis, particularly in aliphatic esters. [ALI(PHATIC) + ESTERASE.]

**al-i-form** (āl'ā-fōrm', āl'ā-) *adj.* **Biology** Shaped like a wing; alar. [Latin *ala*, wing + **-FORM**.]

**a-light<sup>1</sup>** (ā-līt') *intr.v.* **a-light-ed** or **a-lit** (ā-līt'), **a-light-ing, a-lights** 1. To come down and settle, as after flight: "A swarm of black birds flew across the road and alighted in a pecan tree" (Ernest J. Gaines). 2. To get down, as from a vehicle; dismount: *The queen alighted from the carriage.* 3. To come by chance: *alight on a happy solution.* [Middle English *alighen* < Old English *alīhtan*: *ā-*, intensive pref. + *līhtan*, to relieve of a burden (< *līht*, light; see **LIGHT**²).]

**a-light<sup>2</sup>** (ā-līt') *adj.* 1. Burning; lighted: *The discarded match was still alight.* 2. Illuminated: *The sky was alight with millions of stars.* [Middle English, past participle of *alighen*, to set on fire < Old English *alīhtan*, to illuminate: *ā-*, intensive pref. + *līhtan*, to shine (< *lēoht*, a light; see **LIGHT**¹).] — **a-light'** *adv.*

**a-lign** (ā-līn) *v.* **a-ligned, a-lign-ing, a-ligns** — *tr.* 1. To arrange in a line or so as to be parallel: *align the tops of a row of pictures; aligned the car with the curb.* 2. To adjust (parts of a mechanism, for example) to produce a proper relationship or orientation: *aligning the wheels of a truck.* 3. To ally (oneself, for example) with one side of an argument or cause: *aligned themselves with the free traders.* — *intr.* 1. To adhere to a prescribed course of action. 2. To move or be adjusted into proper relationship or orientation. [French *aligner* < Old French *al-*, to (< Latin *ad-*; see **AD-**) + *ligne*, line (< Latin *linea*; see **LINE**¹).] — **a-lign'er** *n.*

**a-lign-ment** (ā-līn'mənt) *n.* 1. Arrangement or position in a straight line or in parallel lines. 2a. The process of adjusting parts so that they are in proper relative position: *A set of gears needs periodic alignment.* b. The condition of having parts so adjusted: *Binocular lenses that are out of alignment will yield a double image.* 3. A ground plan: *Blueprints for the building included an alignment and a profile.* 4. The act of aligning or the condition of being aligned. 5. An arrangement or alliance of groups: *a new alignment of factions in the party.* 6. **Sports** a. An arrangement or positioning of players: *a defensive alignment.* b. The grouping or positioning of teams, as in a conference or league.

**al-i'i** (ā-lē'ē) *n., pl. ali'i* A member of the hereditary ruling class of traditional Hawaiian society. [Hawaiian *ali'i* < Proto-Polynesian \**ariki*.]

**a-li-ke** (ā-līk') *adj.* Having close resemblance; similar: *Friends are generally alike in background and tastes.* ♦ *adv.* In the same manner or to the same degree: *They dress and walk alike.* [Middle English *alich* (influenced by Old Norse *alīkr*), blend of *ilich* (< Old English *gelic*) and *anlich* (< Old English *onlic*); see **lik-** in App. I.] — **a-li-ke'ness** *n.*



Muhammad Ali  
photographed in 2005



**der-ri-ère** also **der-ri-ere** (dĕr'ē-âr') *n.* The buttocks; the rear. [French, behind < Old French *deriere*, in back of < Vulgar Latin \**dĕ retrō* : Latin *dĕ*, from, of; see *DE-* + Latin *retrō*, back; see *RETRO-*.]

**der-ring-do** (dĕr'ing-dōō') *n.* Daring or reckless action. [Misinterpretation of earlier *derryngē do*, daring to do, misprint of Late Middle English *dorryng do* < Middle English *durring don* : *durring*, present participle of *durren*, to dare (< Old English *durrān*; see *DARE*) + *don*, to do; see *DO*.]

**der-rin-ger** (dĕr'in-jĕr') *n.* A short-barreled pistol that has a large bore and is small enough to be carried in a pocket. [After Henry *Deringer* (1786–1868), American gunsmith.]

**Der-ry** (dĕr'ē) or **Lon-don-der-ry** (lŭn'dən-dĕr'ē, lŭn'dən-dĕr'ē) *n.* A city of northwest Northern Ireland northwest of Belfast. Built on the site of an abbey founded by Saint Columba in 546, it is a port and manufacturing center.

**der-vish** (dĕr'vish) *n.* 1. A member of any of various Muslim ascetic orders, some of which perform whirling dances and vigorous chanting as acts of ecstatic devotion. 2. One that possesses abundant, often frenzied energy: "[She] is a *dervish of unfocused energy, an accident about to happen*" (Jane Gross). [Turkish *derviş*, mendicant < Persian *darvēs* < Middle Persian *driyōs*, needy one, one who lives in holy mendicancy < Old Iranian *drigu-*; akin to Sanskrit *adhriguḥ* (a divine epithet of unknown but favorable meaning): perhaps *a-*, not + \**dhrigu-*, poor.]

**Der-zha-vin** (dĕr-zhā'vin, dyĕr-), **Gavrīil Romanovich** 1743–1816. Russian lyric poet who served as poet laureate and minister of justice.

**DES** *abbr.* 1. data encryption standard 2. diethylstilbestrol

**de-sa-cral-ize** (dĕ-sā'krā-liz', -sāk'rā-) *tr.v.* -ized, -iz-ing, -iz-es To divest of sacred or religious significance.

**de-sal-i-nate** (dĕ-sāl'ē-nāt') *tr.v.* -nated, -nat-ing, -nates To desalinate. —**de-sal'i-na'tion** *n.* —**de-sal'i-na'tor** *n.*

**de-sal-i-nize** (dĕ-sāl'ē-niz') *tr.v.* -nized, -niz-ing, -niz-es To remove salts and other chemicals from (seawater or soil, for example). —**de-sal'i-ni-za'tion** (-ni-zā'shən) *n.*

**de-salt** (dĕ-sōlt') *tr.v.* -salt-ed, -salt-ing, -salts To desalinate.

**des-cant** (dĕs'kānt') *n.* 1. also **dis-cant** (dis'k-) *Music a.* An ornamental melody or counterpoint sung or played above a theme. **b.** The highest part sung in part music. 2. A discussion or discourse on a theme. ❖ *intr.v.* (dĕs'kānt', dĕ-skānt') -cant-ed, -cant-ing, -cants 1. To comment at length; discourse: "He used to *descant critically on the dishes which had been at table*" (James Boswell). 2. also **dis-cant** (dis'kānt', dĕ-skānt') *Music a.* To sing or play a descant. **b. To sing melodiously. [Middle English < Anglo-Norman *descaunt* < Medieval Latin *descantus*, a refrain: Latin *dis-*, *dis-* + Latin *cantus*, song (< past participle of *canere*, to sing; see *KAN-* in App. I).] —**des'cant'er** *n.***

**Des-cartes** (dā-kärt'), **René** 1596–1650. French mathematician, philosopher, and scientist who is considered the father of analytic geometry and the founder of modern rationalism. His main works, *Meditations on First Philosophy* (1641) and *Principles of Philosophy* (1644), include the famous dictum "I think, therefore I am."

**de-scend** (di-sĕnd') *v.* -scend-ed, -scend-ing, -scends —*intr.* 1. To move from a higher to a lower place; come or go down. 2. To slope, extend, or incline downward: "A rough path descended like a steep stair into the plain" (J.R.R. Tolkien). 3a. To be related by genetic descent from an individual or individuals in a previous generation: He descends from Norwegian immigrants. **b. To come down from a source; derive: a tradition descending from colonial days. **c.** To pass by inheritance: The house has descended through four generations. 4. To lower oneself; stoop: "She, the conqueror, had descended to the level of the conquered" (James Bryce). 5. To proceed or progress downward, as in rank, pitch, or scale: titles listed in descending order of importance. 6. To arrive or attack in a sudden or overwhelming manner: summer tourists descending on the seashore village. —*tr.* 1. To move from a higher to lower part of; go down: I descended the staircase into the basement. 2. To extend or proceed downward along: a road that descended the mountain in sharp curves. —**idiom:** **be descended from** To be related to (an ancestor) by genetic descent from an individual or individuals in a previous generation: She claims to be descended from European royalty. [Middle English *descenden* < Old French *descendre* < Latin *descendere*: *dĕ-*, *dĕ-* + *scandere*, to climb; see *skand-* in App. I.] —**de-scend'i-ble**, **de-scend'a-ble** *adj.***

**de-scen-dant** (dĭ-sĕn'dənt) *n.* 1. One whose descent can be traced to a particular individual or group: a descendant of Queen Victoria; descendants of a prize-winning horse. 2. Something derived from a prototype or earlier form: Bicycles are descendants of the velocipede. 3. In astrology, the point of the ecliptic or the sign of the zodiac that sets in the west at the time of a person's birth or other event. ❖ *adj.* Variant of **descendent**:

**de-scen-dent** also **de-scen-dant** (dĭ-sĕn'dənt) *adj.* 1. Moving downward; descending. 2. Proceeding by descent from an ancestor.

**de-scend-er** (dĭ-sĕn'dĕr) *n.* 1. One that descends. 2. *Printing a.* The part of the lowercase letters, such as *g*, *p*, and *q*, that extends below the other lowercase letters. **b.** A letter with such a part.

**de-scend-ing aorta** (dĭ-sĕn'ding) *n.* The part of the aorta that extends from the aortic arch into the thorax and abdomen.

**de-scent** (dĭ-sĕnt') *n.* 1. The act or an instance of descending: the slow descent of the scuba divers. 2a. A way down: fashioned a descent with an ice ax. **b.** A downward incline or passage; a slope: watched the stones roll down the descent. 3. Hereditary derivation; lineage: a person of African descent. 4. The fact or process of being derived or developing from a source: a paper tracing the descent of the novel from old picaresque tales. 5. Law Transmission of property, especially real estate, to a hereditary heir by an intestate owner. 6. A lowering or decline, as in status or level: Her career went into a rapid descent after the charges of misconduct. 7. A sudden visit or attack; an onslaught: the descent of the marauders on

the settlement. [Middle English < Old French, descent < feminine past participle of *descendre*, to descend; see *DESCEND*.]

**Des-chutes River** (dā-shōōt', dā-shōōts') *n.* A river rising in the Cascade Range of west-central Oregon and flowing about 400 km (250 mi) generally north to the Columbia River near The Dalles.

**de-scram-ble** (dĕ-skram'bəl) *tr.v.* -bled, -bling, -bles To unscramble (a coded message or signal, for example).

**de-scram-bler** (dĕ-skram'blĕr) *n.* An electronic device that decodes a scrambled transmission into a signal that is intelligible to the recipient.

**de-scribe** (dĭ-skrib') *tr.v.* -scribed, -scrib-ing, -scribes 1. To give an account of in speech or writing: describe a sea voyage. 2. To convey an idea or impression of; characterize: She described her childhood as a time of wonder and discovery. 3. To represent pictorially; depict: Goya's etchings describe the horrors of war in grotesque detail. 4. To trace the form or outline of: describe a circle with a compass. [Middle English *describen* < Latin *dēscribere*, to write down: *dĕ-*, *dĕ-* + *scribere*, to write; see *skribh-* in App. I.] —**de-scrib'a-ble** *adj.* —**de-scrib'er** *n.*

➤ **SYNONYMS** describe, narrate, recite, recount, relate, report These verbs mean to tell the facts, details, or particulars of something in speech or in writing: described the accident; narrated their travel experiences; an explorer reciting her adventures; a mercenary recounting his exploits; related the day's events; reported what she had seen.

**de-scrip-tion** (dĭ-skrip'shən) *n.* 1. The act, process, or technique of describing. 2. A statement or an account describing something: published a description of the journey; gave a vivid description of the game. 3. A pictorial representation: Monet's ethereal descriptions of haystacks and water lilies. 4. A kind or sort: cars of every size and description. [Middle English *descriptioun* < Anglo-Norman < Latin *descriptiō*, *descriptiō* < *descriptus*, past participle of *dēscribere*, to write down; see *DESCRIBE*.]

**de-scrip-tive** (dĭ-skrip'tiv) *adj.* 1. Involving or characterized by description; serving to describe. 2. Concerned with classification or description: a descriptive science. 3. *Grammar a.* Expressing an attribute of the modified noun, as green in green grass. Used of an adjective or adjectival clause. **b. Nonrestrictive. 4. *Linguistics* Of or relating to the study or the description of a language or a specific stage of a language, with emphasis on constructing a grammar without regard to historical development, comparison with other languages, or advocated norms for correct or proper usage. —**de-scrip'tive-ly** *adv.* —**de-scrip'tive-ness** *n.***

**descriptive clause** *n.* A nonrestrictive clause.

**de-scrip-tiv-ism** (dĭ-skrip'tiv-iz'm) *n.* The practice or application of descriptive linguistics, especially in the analysis of grammar. —**de-scrip'tiv-ist** *adj.* & *n.*

**de-scrip-tor** (dĭ-skrip'tĕr) *n.* *Computers* A word, phrase, or alphanumeric character used to identify an item in an information storage and retrieval system. [Late Latin *dēscriptor*, describer < Latin *dēscribere*, *dēscrip-*, to describe; see *DESCRIBE*.]

**de-scrip-tor** (dĭ-skrip'tĕr) *tr.v.* -scribed, -scry-ing, -scries 1. To catch sight of (something difficult to discern). See **Synonyms** at **see**<sup>1</sup>. 2. To discover by careful observation or scrutiny; detect: described a message of hope in her words. [Middle English *descrien* < Old French *descrier*, to call, cry out; see *DECRY*.] —**de-scri'er** *n.*

**des-e-crate** (dĕs'ē-krāt') *tr.v.* -crat-ed, -crat-ing, -crates To violate the sacredness of; profane. [*DE-* + (*CON*)*SECRETARE*.] —**des'e-crat'er**, **des'e-cra'tor** *n.* —**des'e-cra'tion** *n.*

**de-seg-re-gate** (dĕ-sĕg'rĕ-gāt') *v.* -gat-ed, -gat-ing, -gates —*tr.* 1. To abolish or eliminate segregation in. 2. To open (a school or workplace, for example) to members of all races or ethnic groups, especially by force of law. —*intr.* To become open to members of all races or ethnic groups. —**de-seg're-ga'tion** *n.* —**de-seg're-ga'tion-ist** *n.*

**de-sen-si-tize** (dĕ-sĕn'si-tiz') *tr.v.* -tized, -tiz-ing, -tiz-es 1. To render insensitive or less sensitive. 2. *Immunology* To make (an individual) nonreactive or insensitive to an antigen. 3. To make emotionally insensitive or unresponsive, as by long exposure or repeated shocks: "This movie in effect may resensitize people who thought they were desensitized to violence" (Steven Spielberg). 4. To make (a photographic film or substance) less sensitive to light. —**de-sen'si-ti-za'tion** (-tĭ-zā'shən) *n.* —**de-sen'si-tiz'er** *n.*

**Des-er-et** (dĕz'ĕ-rĕt') An area proposed by the Mormons in 1849 as an independent state or a state of the Union. Deseret would have included much of the southwest United States, with a capital at Salt Lake City. Congress refused to recognize the provisional state and created the Utah Territory in 1850.

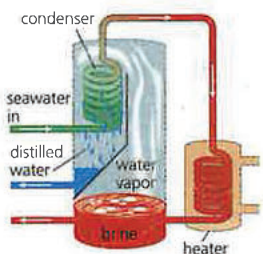
**des-ert**<sup>1</sup> (dĕz'ĕrt) *n.* 1. A barren or desolate area, especially: **a.** A dry, often sandy region of little rainfall, extreme temperatures, and sparse vegetation. **b.** A region of permanent cold that is largely or entirely devoid of life. **c.** An apparently lifeless area of water. 2. An empty or forsaken place; a wasteland: a cultural desert. 3. *Archaic* A wild, uncultivated, and uninhabited region. ❖ *adj.* 1. Of, relating to, characteristic of, or inhabiting a desert: desert fauna. 2. Barren and uninhabited; desolate: a desert island. [Middle English < Old French < Late Latin *dēsertum* < neuter past participle of *dēsĕrere*, to desert; see *DESERT*<sup>3</sup>.]

**des-ert**<sup>2</sup> (dĭ-zĕrt') *n.* 1. often **DESERTS** Something that is deserved or merited, especially a punishment: They got their just deserts when the scheme was finally uncovered. 2. The state or fact of deserving reward or punishment. [Middle English < Old French *déserte* < feminine past participle of *dēsĕrvir*, to deserve; see *DESERVE*.]

➤ **WORD HISTORY** When Shakespeare says in Sonnet 72, "Unless you would devise some virtuous lie, / To do more for me than mine own desert," he is using the word *desert* in the sense of "worthiness; merit," a



dervish



desalinate

schematic diagram of a flash-distillation process to desalinate seawater



René Descartes

after a c. 1649 portrait by Frans Hals (1580?–1666)