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greedy, *adj.*

Pronunciation: Brit. /'ɡriːdi/, U.S. /'ɡrɪdi/

Forms: OE **grædig**, ME **gradi**, **grady**, ME–15 **gredi**, ME **gredi**₃, ME **gredie**, ME–16 **gredy**, 15 **greadye**, 15 **Sc. grydy**, 15–16 **gredie**, 15– **greedy**.

Frequency (in current use):

Etymology: Old English *grædig* = Old Saxon *grádag*, Old High German *grâtag*, Old Norse *gráðug-r* (Old Swedish *grådig*, Danish *graadig*), Gothic *grédags* < Old Germanic **grêðago-*, *-ugo-*, < **grêðu-z* (Gothic *grêðu-s* hunger, Old Norse *gráð-r* hunger, greed, Old English *græd* in dative plural *grædum* eagerly), cognate with Sanskrit *grdh* to be greedy.

1.

a. Having an intense desire or inordinate appetite for food or drink; ravenous, voracious, gluttonous. †In some of the earlier quots. the meaning is simply: Hungry. Const. *of* (Old English *gen.*); †also *after*, *on*, *upon*, (*for*) *to* have something (*obs.*).

971 *Blickl. Hom.* 211 Ða fynd..heora gripende wæron swa swa grædig wulf.

OE *Beowulf* 121 Wiht unhælo, grim ond grædig, gearo sona wæs, reoc ond reþe.

a1000 *ÆLFRIC Homilies* I. 216 Ðam grædigan fisce, þe gesihð þæt æs, and ne gesihð ðone angel ðe on ðam æse sticað.

c1175 *Lamb. Hom.* 123 Þenne bið he gredi þes eses and forswolezeð þene hoc forð mid þan ese.

c1200 *Vices & Virtues* (1888) 139 Sobrietas..makeð þanne mann maðfull ðe was to grady.

c1230 (þ?a1200) *Ancrene Riwele* (Corpus Cambr.) (1962) 167 Hwen gredi hundes stondeð biuore þe bord.

a1325 (þc1250) *Gen. & Exod.* (1968) l. 1494 Iacob wurð war he was gredi.

c1325 *Body & Soul* 43 in *Map's Poems* (Camden) 340 Thyne mete..That thou were gredi for to frete.

1393 *LANGLAND Piers Plowman* C. VII. 398 Two gredy sowes.

1585 *ABP. E. SANDYS Sermon*. iii. 53 The foxe is rauenuous, gredie on his pray.

1697 *DRYDEN* tr. Virgil *Georgics* II, in tr. Virgil *Wks.* 93 The falling Mast, For greedy Swine, provides a full repast.

1725 *POPE* tr. Homer *Odyssey* II. IX. 427 He said, and greedy grasp'd the heady bowl.

1733 *J. TULL Horse-hoing Husbandry* xiv. 86 Most sorts of Cattle are greedy of it.

1767 *T. HUTCHINSON Hist. Province Massachusetts-Bay, 1691–1750* i. 100 As greedy after their prey as a wolf.

1773 *Ann. Reg.* 1772 96/2 This snake is very greedy of milk.

a1839 *W. M. PRAED Poems* (1864) I. 180 Greedy hawk must gorge his prey.

fig.

- OE *Phoenix* 507 Weorþeð anra gehwylc forht on ferþþe, þonne fyr briceð læne londwelan, ligeal þigeð eorðan æhtegestreon, æpplede gold gifre forgripeð, grædig swelgeð londes frætwe.
- 1572 G. GASCOIGNE *Dan Bartholmew* Hund. Flowers 429 I seeke a greedy graue, To make an end of all these stormes and strife.
- 1610 G. FLETCHER *Christs Victorie* 9 Coozning the greedie sea, prisning their nimble prey.
- 1656 LD. ORRERY *Parthenissa* V. III. ii. 119 I..knew the Vessel was founder'd, had struck, or sprung some greedy Leak.
- 1717 POPE tr. Homer *Iliad* III. IX. 288 The first fat Off'rings, to th' Immortals due, Amidst the greedy Flames Patroclus threw.
- 1843 T. CARLYLE *Past & Present* II. xv. 158 The..noise of greedy Acheron.
- 1860 B. TAYLOR *Pine Forest Monterey in Poems* (1866) 321 Look from the greedy wave.

b. said of the stomach, etc.; also of the appetite. See also GREEDY-GUT(S)
n.

- 1526 W. BONDE *Pylgrimage of Perfection* III. sig. GGiii To stuffe and fyll the gredy gutte of thy bely with delicate metes.
- c1530 A. BARCLAY *Egloges* II. sig. Kij Theyr gredy gorgys ar rapt with the smell.
- 1599 H. BUTTES *Dyets Dry Dinner* sig. Aa4^v Yet soft and fayre: oregredy jawes Eate not their meale with decent pause.
- 1634 T. HERBERT *Relation Some Yeares Trauaile* 211 Her appetite strong and greedy.
- 1644 K. DIGBY *Two Treat.* I. xxxiv. 290 The stomacke when it is greedy of meate, draweth it selfe vp towards the throate.

c. said of chemical substances which absorb with avidity. ? *Obs.*

- 1758 A. REID tr. P. J. Macquer *Elements Theory & Pract. Chym.* I. 278 The Acid of the Phosphorus..is very greedy of moisture.
- 1791 W. NICHOLSON tr. J. A. C. Chaptal *Elements Chem.* III. IV. iii. 63 The oil is more drying or greedy of oxigene.
- 1800 tr. E. J. B. Bouillon-Lagrange *Man. Course Chem.* I. 194 When the air is very greedy of moisture.

2. Eager for gain, wealth, and the like; avaricious, covetous, rapacious.
Const. as in sense 1.

- a1000 *Solomon & Saturn* 344 Sum to lyt hafað godes grædig.
- c1175 *Lamb. Hom.* 105 God nele þet we beon gredie zitseras.
- a1200 *Moral Ode* 264 And weren to gredi of solure and of golde.
- c1200 *Trin. Coll. Hom.* 195 Þe deuel is gredi uppen woredl richeise and gredi him to winende.
- ?c1225 (†?a1200) *Ancrene Riwe* (Cleo. C.vi) (1972) 304 Ne beo nan þe gredure forto habbe mare.
- c1380 WYCLIF *Sel. Wks.* III. 347 Men seien þat preestis ben moost gredy purchasours in erþe.

- c1400 *Rom. Rose* 5696 An usurer..Shal never for richesse riche bee But..Scarce, and gredy in his entent.
- c1500 in T. Stapleton *Plumpton Corr.* (1839) 148 Praying that ye wille content unto this bringer, my Cousin Robart Hastings, iij mark & xxd. now dew unto him at this Martymasse last, which is right gredy therupon.
- 1648 T. GAGE *Eng.-Amer.* xxi. 202 A wolvis, greedy, and covetous heart.
- 1697 DRYDEN tr. Virgil *Georgics* I, in tr. Virgil *Wks.* 51 That Crop rewards the greedy Peasant's Pains.
- 1752 D. HUME *Polit. Disc.* ii. 33 Nor is a porter less greedy of money, which he spends on bacon and brandy, than a courtier, who purchases champagne and ortolans.
- 1841 W. SPALDING *Italy & Ital. Islands* III. 209 Unscrupulous and greedy power.
- 1844 C. THIRLWALL *Hist. Greece* VIII. 461 The..exactions of corrupt magistrates, and their greedy officers.

absol.

- c1400 *Rom. Rose* 5791 If these gredy..Loveden, and were loved ageyn..Such wikkidnesse ne shulde falle.

3. In wider sense: Eager, keen; †eagerly active, zealous (*obs.*); eagerly or keenly desirous *of* or †*to do* (something).

- a1300 *Cursor Mundi* 27597 O pride becums als wainglory, þat es to be o roos gredi.
- c1540 (†?a1400) *Destr. Troy* 1370 The Grekes were full gredy, grippit hom belyue, Prayen and pyken mony priuey chambur.
- 1553 H. LATIMER *Serm. Lincoln* (1562) vii. 118 b So all oure prelates byshops and curates..should be so paynful, so gredy in castyng their netts, that is to say, in preachyng Gods worde.
- a1569 COVERDALE *Fruitful Lessons* (1593) To Rdr. sig. A4^v O how euill doth it become a beleueer, to be irefull and greedie of vengeance.
- 1600 S. FORMAN *Autobiogr. & Diary* (1849) 11 He was soe gredy on his bocke.
- 1646 SIR T. BROWNE *Pseudodoxia Epidemica* I. viii. 34 A great enquirer of truth, but too greedy a receiver of it.
- 1736 tr. C. Rollin *Anc. Hist.* VIII. 241 The populace, who are ever greedy of novelty.
- 1785 W. COWPER *Task* III. 671 The rank society of Weeds, Noisome, and ever greedy to exhaust The impoverished earth.
- 1884 *Sat. Rev.* 12 July 38/1 The people of the United States are seldom greedy of legislation.

fig.

- c1374 CHAUCER *Troilus & Criseyde* III. 1709 (1758) The see, that gredy is to flowen.
- 1899 FINDLAY in *Expositor* Feb. 94 Dogmatic theology, greedy of proof-texts.

4. Of actions, qualities, emotions, and the like: Characterized by or manifesting intense or eager desire; keen, eager.

- c1385 CHAUCER *Legend Good Women* Prol. 105 My besy goost..To sene this flour so yonge..Constrayned me with so greedy desyre.
- 1568 T. HOWELL *Arbor of Amitie* f. 10 Most greedy gripes with plunging paines, doe pierce my ruthfull hart.
- 1590 SPENSER *Faerie Queene* I. VIII. sig. H^v He himselfe with greedie great desyre Into the Castle entred forcibly.
- 1590 SPENSER *Faerie Queene* I. VIII. sig. H4^v With griping talaunts armd to greedy fight.
- 1667 MILTON *Paradise Lost* IX. 257 With greedy hope to find His wish and best advantage.
- 1698 J. FRYER *New Acct. E.-India & Persia* 18 Had not my greedy Eye espied a House more eminently seated.
- 1702 *Clarendon's Hist. Rebellion* I. v. 532 [Which] begot a greedy hope, and expectation in him, that this Petition would have been..an Introduction to Peace.
- 1749 H. FIELDING *Tom Jones* III. VIII. xiv. 292 He and Partridge sat with greedy and impatient Ears.
- 1839 DICKENS *Nicholas Nickleby* xxii. 207 Smike listened with greedy interest.

†5. *transf.* Of spoil, prey: Greedily pursued. *Obs.*

- 1590 MARLOWE *Tamburlaine: 1st Pt.* sig. B4^v Being void of Martiall discipline, All running headlong after greedy spoiles.
- 1648 T. GAGE *Eng.-Amer.* xxi. 187 The monster..thinking to have made some of us his greedy prey.

6. *adv.* or quasi-*adv.*

- 1599 R. PERCYVALL & J. MINSHEU *Spanish Gram.* 83 To a greedi eating horse, a short halter.
- 1612 S. ROWLANDS *More Knaues Yet* 16 A desp'rate fellow fell to eate salt Beefe: Feeding so greedy that the rest admir'd.

SPECIAL USES

S1. Comb.

greedy-minded *adj.*

- ?1577 J. NORTHBROOKE *Spiritus est Vicarius Christi: Treat. Dicing* 26 A greedy mynded man..may be, and is a couetous man.
- 1614 S. HIERON *All the Serm.* 259 Greedy minded men, which seeke by all meanes to secret and keep close the treasure they haue found.

S2.

greedy glede *n. dial.* a kite; also the name of a children's game

(Jamieson).

- ‡a1513 W. DUNBAR *Flyting* in *Poems* (1998) I. 205 As greedy gleddis 3e gang With polkis to mylne, and beggis baith meill and schilling.
- a1568 *Wyf of Auchtermuchty* 51 By thair cumis the greedy gled, And likkit vp five [gaislingis].
- 1768 A. ROSS *Fortunate Shepherdess* 10 At greedy-glad, or warpling o' the green, She 'clipst them a'.
- 1831 J. RENNIE *Montagu's Ornithol. Dict.* (ed. 2) 282 *Kite*,... Provincial... Greedy Glead.
- 1885 C. SWAINSON *Provinc. Names Brit. Birds* 137 Greedy gled.

† **greedy worm** *n.* *Obs.* see quot. 1579; = *hungry worm n.* at HUNGRY
adj. Special uses 2.

- 1530 J. PALSGRAVE *Lesclarcissement* 227/1 Greedy worme that is in a dogges tong.
- 1579 T. LUPTON *Thousand Notable Things* II. 38 If the lyttle Nerue vnder a Whelps tongue (commonly called the greedy worme) be taken away, it keepes the same safe after from being madde.
- 1608 BP. J. HALL *Pharisaisme & Christianity* 85 O thou worldling, which hast the greedy-worm vnder thy tong with Esaies dogs, and neuer hast enough.

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