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stupid, *adj.* and *n.*

Pronunciation: Brit. /'stju:pid/, /'stfu:pid/,

U.S. /'st(j)upəd/

Frequency (in current use):

Etymology: < Latin *stupidus*, < *stupēre* to be stunned or benumbed. Compare French *stupide* (Rabelais), Spanish *estupido*, Portuguese *estupido*, Italian *stupido*.

A. *adj.*

1.

a. Having one's faculties deadened or dulled; in a state of stupor, stupefied, stunned; esp. *hyperbolically*, stunned with surprise, grief, etc. *Obs. exc. arch. (poet.)*

Very common in Dryden.

- a1616 SHAKESPEARE *Winter's Tale* (1623) IV. iv. 398 Is not your Father growne incapeable Of reasonable affayres? Is he not stupid With Age, and altring Rheumes? Can he speake? heare? Know man, from man?
- 1656 T. BLOUNT *Glossographia* Stupid, dismaid, abashed, astonied, amazed, senceless.
- 1675 H. NEVILLE tr. Machiavelli *Prince* xix, in tr. Machiavelli *Wks.* 225 These remained..stupid, and astonished.
- 1697 DRYDEN tr. Virgil *Æneis* VII, in tr. Virgil *Wks.* 433 Men, Boys, and Women stupid with Surprise, Where e're she passes, fix their wond'ring Eyes.
- 1726 W. BROOME in Pope et al. tr. Homer *Odyssey* IV. XVIII. 114 Down drop'd he stupid from the stunning wound.
- 1737 in H. T. Waghorn *Cricket Scores* (1899) 19 The latter..receiving..so smart a blow by the ball that he was knocked down and lay stupid for a long time.
- 1859 TENNYSON *Enid* in *Idylls of King* 85 And Enid could not say one tender word, She felt so blunt and stupid at the heart.

†**b.** Belonging to or characterized by stupor or insensibility. *Obs.*

- 1607 G. CHAPMAN *Bussy D'Ambois* v. 64 Reuiue those stupid thoughts, and sit not thus, Gathering the horrors of your seruants slaughter..Into an idle fancie.
- 1697 DRYDEN tr. Virgil *Georgics* III, in tr. Virgil *Wks.* 119 His Eyes are settled in a stupid peace.
- 1712 POPE tr. Ovid *Sapho to Phaon* in tr. Ovid *Epist.* (ed. 8) 13 No Sigh to rise, no Tear had pow'r to flow; Fix'd in a stupid Lethargy of Woe.
- 1818 KEATS *Endymion* I. 35 My sweet dream Fell into nothing—into stupid sleep.

†**c.** Of a part of the body: Paralysed. *Obs.*

1638 A. READ *Treat. 1st Pt. Chirurg.* xi. 82 Touch the stupid parts [of a paralytic person] with quick nettles.

d. *Pathol. ? Obs.*

1822 J. M. GOOD *Study Med.* III. 476 *Cephalæa Gravans.* Stupid head-ache. Pain obtuse; with a sense of heaviness extending over the whole head.

†**e.** Emotionally or morally dull or insensible; apathetic, indifferent.

Const. *to* [compare French *stupide* à] .

1605 BACON *Of Advancem. Learning* II. sig. Zz1^v As for pleasure, wee haue likewise determined, that the minde oughte not to bee reduced to stupide, but to retayne pleasure.

1641 J. JACKSON *True Evangelical Temper* II. 148 The Stoicks..patience..was..onely a stupid senselesnesse, and wretched carelesnesse.

1653 H. MORE *Antidote against Atheisme* II. vi. §5 He is as stupid to these things [the beauties of nature] as the basest of Beasts.

1713 R. STEELE in *Guardian* 2 Apr. 1/2 It was a Cause of great Sorrow and Melancholy to me..to see a Crowd in the Habits of the Gentry of England stupid to the noblest Sentiments we have.

1758 S. HAYWARD *Seventeen Serm.* xvii. 530 Oh stupid creatures that are not raised with the descriptions of his person!

a1770 J. JORTIN *Serm.* (1787) II. x. 199 Vice begets the dread of punishment, unless it be constantly attended with unbelief, and with a stupid carelesness about futurity.

†**2.** As the characteristic of inanimate things: Destitute of sensation, consciousness, thought, or feeling. *Obs.*

1626 BACON *Sylua Syluarum* §98 Tangible Parts in Bodies are Stupide things; And the Spirits doe (in effect) all.

1642 H. MORE *Ψυχωδία Platonica* sig. L5 Yet if the Earth stand stupid and unmov'd, This needs must come to passe.

1660 R. BOYLE *New Exper. Physico-mechanicall* xxxiii. 251 And as for the Care of the Publique Good of the Universe ascrib'd to dead and stupid Bodies; wee shall only demand, why [etc.].

a1664 K. PHILIPS *In Mem. F. P.* in *Poems* (1667) 40 14 Alas! in vain, in vain on thee I rave; There is no pity in the stupid Grave.

a1694 J. TILLOTSON *Serm.* (1743) IX. 4110 The stone is stupid, and is not in the least conscious of any of those impressions, does not perceive what is done to it.

a1718 M. PRIOR *2nd Hymn Callimachus* 141 Euphrates..copious runs, but Muddy; And carries forward with his stupid Force Polluting Dirt.

1722 W. WOLLASTON *Relig. of Nature* v. 74 Matter is incapable of acting, passive only, and stupid.

1744 G. BERKELEY *Siris* §190 Were it not for this [fire], the whole wou'd be one great stupid inanimate mass. But this active element is supposed to be every where.

3.

a. Wanting in or slow of mental perception; lacking ordinary activity of mind; slow-witted, dull.

?1541 R. COPLAND *Galen's Fourth Bk. Therapeutyke* sig. Biiij^v, in *Guy de Chauliac's Questyonary Cyrurgyens* For the fyrste speake ouer lyghtly and to imprudently,..and the other are all togyther stupydes, sturdy, & lytygious.

1616 J. BULLOKAR *Eng. Expositor* Stupid, blockish, without wit: dull.

1649 MILTON *Tenure of Kings* 8 No man who knows ought, can be so stupid to deny that all men naturally were borne free.

1667 MILTON *Paradise Lost* XII. 116 O that men..should be so stupid grown, While yet the Patriark liv'd, who scap'd the Flood, As to forsake the living God.

1692 tr. C. de Saint-Évremond *Misc. Ess.* 290 But I esteem the Faith of a stupid Peasant, more than all the Lessons of Socrates.

1712 J. ADDISON *Spectator* No. 291. ¶8 A Man, who cannot write with Wit on a proper Subject, is dull and stupid.

1778 F. BURNEY *Evelina* III. xi. 106 'Why is Miss Anville so grave?' 'Not grave, my Lord,' said I, 'only stupid.'

a1822 SHELLEY *Peter Bell* III VII, in *Poet. Wks.* (?1840) 245/1 His lordship stands and racks his Stupid brains.

1829 J. HOGG *Shepherd's Cal.* in *Wks.* (1865) 368/2 'What a stupid idiot I was!' exclaimed Wat.

1838 E. BULWER-LYTTON *Alice* I. II. iii. 142 How stupid in Caroline not to show it to you.

1842 S. LOVER *Handy Andy* xliii She felt the pique which every pretty woman experiences who fancies her favours disregarded, and thought Andy the stupidest lout she ever came across.

1855 MACAULAY *Hist. Eng.* III. xv. 560 Anne, who, when in good humour, was meekly stupid, and, when in bad humour, was sulkily stupid.

1865 T. CARLYLE *Hist. Friedrich II of Prussia* VI. XXI. viii. 651 He knew how to listen..which no stupid man was ever capable of.

1871 B. JOWETT tr. Plato *Dialogues* I. 27 I remain as stupid as ever; for still I fail to comprehend.

1879 G. C. HARLAN *Eyesight* viii. 108 Children with astigmatism often appear stupid.

absol.

1692 R. L'ESTRANGE *Fables* xviii. 19 But Good Council is cast away, upon the Arrogant, the Self-conceited, or the stupid.

b. Of attributes, actions, ideas, etc.: Characterized by or indicating stupidity or dullness of comprehension.

1621 T. W. tr. S. Goulart *Wise Vieillard* 131 Christians willingly lay downe their neckes vnder the light

- yoke..not with a stupid, or hastie mad braine-sicke, or fond toying ioy.
- 1686 S. PATRICK *Disc. Prayer* II. xviii. 217 Let us not..persist in such a stupid error.
- 1687 A. LOVELL tr. J. de Thévenot *Trav. into Levant* I. 145 I went to that Burying-place on the Holy Friday of the Greeks..that I might see what Ground they had for this stupid Belief.
- 1711 R. STEELE *Spectator* No. 2. ¶3 It is a stupid and barbarous Way to extend Dominion by Arms.
- a1770 J. JORTIN *Serm.* (1771) IV. ix. 184 Great reason have we to be thankful that we are not educated in such stupid and inhuman principles.
- a1822 SHELLEY *Peter Bell III* VI, in *Poet. Wks.* (?1840) 245/1 'Twould make George Colman melancholy, To have heard him, like a male Molly, Chaunting those stupid staves.
- 1871 C. GIBBON *For Lack of Gold* ii This cursed frenzy makes me say and think the stupidest things.
- 1891 E. PEACOCK *Narcissa Brendon* I. 122 Our stupid passion for snugness.

†c. Of the lower animals: Irrational. Also of an individual animal, its propensities, etc.: Lacking intelligence or animation, senseless, dull.
Obs.

- a1680 S. BUTLER *Genuine Remains* (1759) I. 203 And trains him up with Rudiments more false, Than Nature does her stupid Animals.
- 1774 O. GOLDSMITH *Hist. Earth* IV. 328 [The badger] is a solitary stupid animal.
- 1815 J. F. STEPHENS *Shaw's Gen. Zool.* IX. I. 19 The birds of this genus [*Bucco*]..are a solitary stupid race.
- 1867 W. MORRIS *Life & Death of Jason* VIII. 64 A monstrous cage, Of iron bars, shut in the stupid rage Of those two beasts.

4. Void of interest, tiresome, boring, dull.

- 1778 F. BURNEY *Evelina* II. ii. 35 Of all the stupid places ever I see, that Howard Grove is the worst! there's never no getting nothing one wants.
- 1832 E. BULWER-LYTON *Eugene Aram* I. i. iii. 58 'I am sorry, dear Ellinor, my awkwardness should occasion you so stupid an evening,' answered Madeline.
- 1845 G. E. JEWsbury *Let. to J. W. Carlyle* (1892) 161 I..was getting quite fat till within the last few days, when I caught cold on the stupid Rhine.
- 1854 G. J. WHYTE-MELVILLE *Gen. Bounce* xviii For the first time in her experience of a London season, Blanche begins to think it a 'stupid ball.'
- 1862 M. E. BRADDON *Lady Audley's Secret* I. ii. 37 We were quartered at a stupid sea-port town.
- 1884 M. CREIGHTON *Let.* 22 May in L. Creighton *Life & Lett.* (1904) I. 269 If my letter is very stupid, forgive me.
- 1901 W. R. H. TROWBRIDGE *Lett. Mother to Elizabeth* xviii. 89 We went once to the Empire, but it was awfully stupid, and I never want to go again.

5. Obstinate, stubborn. *north. dial.*

- 1788 W. MARSHALL *Provincialisms E. Yorks.* in *Rural Econ. Yorks.* II. 357 *Stupid*, obstinate (the common epithet).
- 1829 J. T. BROCKETT *Gloss. North Country Words* (new ed.) *Stupid*, obstinate, though possessing good talents.
- 1866 E. LYNN LINTON *Lizzie Lorton* xii 'So Miss Lizzie, my dear, divn't be *stupid*'—she meant obstinate—but let yersel be guided by them as knaws best.'
- 1877 F. ROSS et al. *Gloss. Words Holderness* *Stupid*, obstinate. 'As *stupid* as a mule.'
- 1893 J. K. SNOWDEN *Tales Yorks. Wolds* 170 Kit Harpur were main *stupid* ower it.

B. n.

A stupid person. *colloq.*

- 1712 R. STEELE *Spectator* No. 468. ¶6 Thou art no longer to drudge in raising the Mirth of *Stupids*..for thy Maintenance.
- 1819 *Metropolis* (ed. 2) I. 222 His loudest applauders were..*stupids*, like Sir G. W. who scarcely could speak a word of French.
- 1880 L. PARR *Adam & Eve* II. 17 Ain't there no place else for us to go to, eh, *stupid*?
- 1885 'MRS. ALEXANDER' *Valerie's Fate* v You do not know what a thoughtless, heartless *stupid* I have been.

SPECIAL USES**S1. Comb.****a.**

stupid-looking *adj.*

- 1815 J. CAMPBELL *Trav. S. Afr.* 502 How such a *stupid looking* animal [as the turtle] finds out this speck of land [Ascension island]..is truly wonderful.

b. adverbial with another adj.

stupid-honest *adj. nonce-wd.*

- 1877 TENNYSON *Harold* III. i Be thou not *stupid-honest*, brother Gurth!

stupid-sure *adj. nonce-wd.*

- 1877 TENNYSON *Harold* IV. iii The people *stupid-sure* Sleep like their swine.

S2.

stupid-head *n.* a blockhead.

1838 DICKENS *Oliver Twist* II. xxx. 197 Think it's the same boy, stupid-head?

DRAFT ADDITIONS 1993

Hence used as a term of disparagement or abuse.

1920 E. O'NEILL *Beyond Horizon* II. i. 89 You think you're so much better than other folks, with your college education, where you never learned a thing, and always reading your stupid books instead of working.

1951 J. D. SALINGER *Catcher in Rye* i. 8 Anyway, it was December and all, and it was cold as a witch's teat, especially on top of that stupid hill.

1977 M. FRENCH *Women's Room* II. viii. 87 I sit and watch the stupid boob tube.

1986 *Auckland Metro* Feb. 66/2 They..sit and sniff from their stupid bags of glue.

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