

# Historical Swear Words and Their Semantic Shift

This chart illustrates how certain English swear words have evolved over time, losing much of their original power to offend. Many of these terms were once considered shocking or blasphemous, often tied to religious oaths or curses. Today, they are largely viewed as archaic, quaint, or even humorous:

Word	Original Meaning / Source	Peak Offensiveness	Modern Status
Zounds	Short for 'God's wounds' (blasphemous oath)	16th–17th centuries	Archaic, harmless
Gadzooks	'God's hooks' (nails of crucifixion)	17th century	Quaint, humorous
Egad	Euphemism for 'Oh God'	17th–18th centuries	Mild exclamation
Damn	Religious curse (condemnation to hell)	16th–19th centuries	Very mild, casual
Blast	Invoked divine punishment	17th–18th centuries	Harmless, playful
By Jove	Swearing by Jupiter (pagan deity)	17th–18th centuries	Literary, quaint
Bloody	Possibly blasphemous or aristocratic taboo	18th–19th centuries	Mild in UK, neutral elsewhere
Darnation	Euphemism for 'damnation'	18th century	Obsolete, harmless
Thunderation	Euphemistic oath invoking thunder	18th–19th centuries	Archaic, quaint
Pox	Curse wishing disease (syphilis)	16th–17th centuries	Historical curiosity