

COLLEGE EDITION

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AMERICAN LANGUAGE

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**cult** (kult), *n.* [*< Fr. & L.; Fr. culte; L. cultus, care, cultivation < colere, to till, cultivate; akin to ON. hvel, AS. hweol; cf. WHEEL*], 1. a system of religious worship or ritual. 2. devoted attachment to, or extravagant admiration for, a person, principle, etc., especially when regarded as a fad: as, the *cult* of nudism. 3. a group of followers; sect.

# THE AMERICAN HERITAGE OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE



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**[** **cult** (kŭlt) *n.* 1. A system or community of religious worship and ritual, especially one focusing upon a single deity or spirit. 2. a. Obsessive devotion or veneration for a person, principle, or ideal. b. The object of such devotion. 3. An exclusive group of persons sharing an esoteric interest. [French *culte*, from Latin *cultus*, cultivation, a laboring, worship, from the past participle of *colere*, to CULTIVATE.] —*cul'tic adj.* —*cul'tism' n.* —*cul'tist n.*

# Webster's Third New International Dictionary

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#### PREVIOUS EDITIONS

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**cult** \ˈkʌlt\ n -s [F & L; F *culte*, fr. L *cultus* care, cultivation, culture, adoration, fr. *cultus*, past part. of *colere* to till, cultivate, dwell, inhabit, worship — more at WHEEL] **1** : religious practice : **WORSHIP** **2** : a system of beliefs and ritual connected with the worship of a deity, a spirit, or a group of deities or spirits (the ~ of Apollo) (the earth ~) **3 a** : the rites, ceremonies, and practices of a religion : the formal aspect of religious experience (dissent occurs in all three fields of expression of religious experience, in doctrine, in ~, and organization — Joachim Wach) **b** *Roman Catholicism* : reverence and ceremonial veneration paid to God or to the Virgin Mary or to the saints or to objects that symbolize or otherwise represent them (as the crucifix or a statue) — called also *cultus*; compare *DULIA*, *HYPERDULIA*, *LATRIA* **4** : a religion regarded as unorthodox or spurious (the exuberant growth of fantastic ~s); *also* : a minority religious group holding beliefs regarded as unorthodox or spurious : **SECT** (provided a haven for persecuted ~s) **5** : a system for the cure of disease based on the dogma, tenets, or principles set forth by its promulgator to the exclusion of scientific experience or demonstration **6 a** : great or excessive devotion or dedication to some person, idea, or thing (the ~ of success); *esp* : such devotion regarded as a literary or intellectual fad or fetish (the ~ of art-for-art's sake) **b** : the object of such devotion (square dancing has developed into something of a ~ — R.L. Taylor) **c** (1) : a body of persons characterized by such devotion (America's growing ~ of home fixer uppers — *Wall Street Jour.*) (2) : a usu. small or narrow circle of persons united by devotion or allegiance to some artistic or intellectual program, tendency, or figure (as one of limited popular appeal) (the exclusive ~ of those that profess to admire his esoteric verse) **SYN** see **RELIGION**

SECOND COLLEGE EDITION

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**cult** (kult): *n.* [*< L. cultus, care, cultivation, orig. pp. of colere, to till < IE. base \*kwel-, to turn, dwell, care for: cf. WHEEL, COLLAR*] 1. a system of religious worship or ritual 2. *a)* devoted attachment to, or extravagant admiration for, a person, principle, etc., esp. when regarded as a fad [*the cult of nudism*] *b)* the object of such attachment 3. a group of followers; sect —*cult'ic adj.* —*cult'ism n.* —*cult'ist n.*

Second College Edition

The  
**American Heritage  
Dictionary**

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[ **cult** (kült) *n.* 1. A system or community of religious worship and ritual. 2. **a.** A religion or religious sect generally considered to be extremist or bogus. **b.** Followers of such a religion or sect. 3. **a.** Obsessive devotion or veneration for a person, principle, or ideal, esp. when regarded as a fad. **b.** The object of such devotion. 4. An exclusive group of persons sharing an esoteric interest. —*modifier: a cult figure.* [Fr. *culte* < Lat. *cultus*, worship < p.part. of *colere*, to cultivate.] —**cul'tic** (kūl'tīk) *adj.* —**cul'tish** *adj.* —**cult'ism** *n.* —**cult'ist** *n.*