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bleak ¹ (blēk)

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adj. **bleak·er, bleak·est**

1.
 - a. Gloomy and somber: "*Life in the Aran Islands has always been bleak and difficult*" (John Millington Synge).
 - b. Providing no encouragement; depressing: *a bleak prospect*.
2. Cold and cutting; raw: *bleak winds of the North Atlantic*.
3. Exposed to the elements; unsheltered and barren: *the bleak, treeless regions of the high Andes*.

[Middle English *bleik*, pale, from Old Norse *bleikr*, white; see **bhel-**¹ [in the Appendix of Indo-European roots](#).]

bleak **ly** *adv.*

bleak **ness** *n.*

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bleak ² (blēk)

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n. pl. **bleak** or **bleaks**

Any of various small European freshwater fishes of the genus *Alburnus*, having silvery scales.

[Middle English *bleke*, probably alteration (influenced by *bleke*, pale) of **blay*, from Old English *blāge*.]

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Thousands of entries in the dictionary include etymologies that trace their origins back to reconstructed proto-languages. You can obtain more information about these forms in our online appendices:

[Indo-European Roots](#)

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The Indo-European appendix covers nearly half of the Indo-European roots that have left their mark on English words. A more complete treatment of Indo-European roots and the English words derived from them is available in our [Dictionary of Indo-European Roots](#).

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