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de·ben·ture  (dĭ-bĕn chər)

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n.

1. A certificate or voucher acknowledging a debt.
2. An unsecured bond issued by a civil or governmental corporation or agency and backed only by the credit standing of the issuer.
3. A customhouse certificate providing for the payment of a drawback.

[Middle English *debentur*, from Latin *dēbentur*, they are due (probably the first word appearing on certificates of indebtedness), third person pl. passive of *dēbēre*, to owe; see **ghabh-** [in the Appendix of Indo-European roots](#).]

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