

illuminate

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To *illuminate* is to light up — with physical light or with an idea. A spotlight might *illuminate* an actor on stage, and a good chemistry teacher might *illuminate* students with a lesson on the atomic structure of hydrogen.

Originally, the verb *illuminate* referred to decorating handwritten manuscripts with bright lettering or pictures. Monks illuminated manuscripts with colors like gold, silver, bright red, and blue. Nowadays you can illuminate anything in the dark — either literally or figuratively. If you are afraid of the dark, illuminate your bedroom. In the dark when it comes to organic chemistry? Get an illuminating tutor.

Definitions of illuminate

- verb** make lighter or brighter
synonyms: [illuminate](#), [illumine](#), [light](#), [light up](#)
[see more](#)
- verb** make free from confusion or ambiguity; make clear
synonyms: [clear](#), [clear up](#), [crystalise](#), [crystalize](#), [crystallise](#), [crystallize](#), [elucidate](#), [enlighten](#), [shed light on](#), [sort out](#), [straighten out](#)
[see more](#)
- verb** add embellishments and paintings to (medieval manuscripts)
[see more](#)

Think you know **illuminate**? Test your word knowledge now:

illuminate means to:

- light up
- rub down
- root out
- drag through the mud

ASSESSMENT: 100 POINTS

Usage Examples

All sources

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He flicked it on, and a wan yellow glow **illuminated** the barn.

Bone Gap

The room is cold, dark, barely **illuminated** with a faint green glow.

The Adoration of Jenna Fox

It was an **illuminating** insight: a scientist could understand the present and the future by examining the "battered relics" of the past.

The Gene

He glanced up when a pair of headlights **illuminated** the parking lot.

Made You Up

Word Family



EDITOR'S CHOICE

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