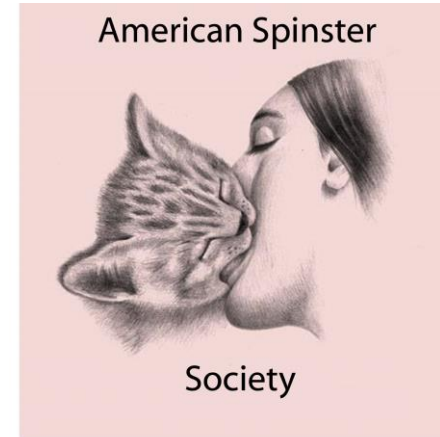


personal english

W₄ O₁ R₁ D₂

Word #31 Spinster



'Spinster' is a **semi-obsolete term** used to refer to an **unmarried woman** who was older than what was, in earlier times, perceived as the prime age range during which women should marry. It could also indicate that a woman was considered unlikely to ever marry. The term originally denoted a woman whose occupation was **spinning wool**. A synonymous but more negatively connoted term is '**old maid**'. The closest equivalent for males is 'bachelor', which, however, doesn't generally carry the same connotations in reference to perceived undesirability on the marriage market. Before the Industrial Age, 'spinster' denoted girls and women who spun wool; by extension, the word came to denote any unmarried woman in legal documents from the 1600s to the early 1900s. The Oxford American Dictionary tags 'spinster' as **derogatory** and 'a good example of the way in which a word acquires strong connotations to the extent that it can no longer be used in a neutral sense.'