

"amethyst, n.". OED Online. December 2014. Oxford University Press. <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/6366?redirected-From=amethyst&> (accessed March 02, 2015).

amethyst, *n.*

**Pronunciation:** /'æmɪθɪst/

**Forms:** ME *ametist*, ME *ametistus*, *amatistus*, ME–15 *amatyst(e)*, ME *ametiste*, ME–16 *amatist*, 15 *amitist*, *amates*, 15–16 *amatites*, 15–17 *amethyst*, 16 *amæthist*, *hematist*, 16– *amethyst*, (ME *amaffised*).

**Etymology:** < Old French *ametiste*, *amatiste*, < Latin *amethyst-us*, < Greek ἀμέθυστ -ος, prop. adj. 'not drunken' (< ἄ priv. + \*μέθυστος, verbal adjective < μεθύσκ-ειν to intoxicate, < μέθυ wine: see *MEAD n.*), applied subst. to this stone (as also to a herb), from a notion that it was a preventive of intoxication. In end of 16th cent. the word began to be refashioned after the Latin, though the earlier *amatist* was still usual in early part of 17th.

**1. a.** A precious stone of a clear purple or bluish violet colour, of different degrees of intensity, consisting of quartz or rock-crystal coloured by manganese, or, according to Heintz, by a compound of iron and soda.

- c1290 *Cokaygne* in *Early Eng. Poems & Lives Saints* (1862) 158 *Ametist* and *crisolite*.  
a1398 J. TREVISA tr. Bartholomaeus Anglicus *De Proprietatibus Rerum* (BL Add. 27944) (1975) II. xvi. ix. 834 *Amatistus* is purple rede in colour, ymedlid wiþ colour of violette.  
c1400 ( ?c1380) *Pearl* (Nero) l. 1015 Þe amatyst purple with ynde blente.  
c1400 ( ?c1380) *Cleanness* (Nero) l. 1470 Amaraunþ & amaffised stones.  
1477 T. NORTON *Ordinall of Alchimy* in Ashm. 1652 v. 65 The Amatist followeth the Ruby in dignity.  
1535 W. STEWART tr. H. Boethius *Bk. Cron. Scotl.* II. 569 Rubeis reid..amates that courtlie war and cleir.  
a1586 SIR P. SIDNEY *Arcadia* (1590) II. xi. sig. V8<sup>v</sup>, The bloody shaftes of C-pids warre, With amatists they headed are.  
1596 T. LODGE *Margarite of Amer.* sig. H<sup>v</sup>, The amethyst staieth drunkennesse.  
1611 *Bible (A.V.)* Rev. xxi. 20 The twelfth an Amethyst [ Wyclif, *ametistus*; Tindale, *Genev.* *amatist*; *Rhem.* *amethyste*].  
1612 M. DRAYTON *Poly-olbion* l. xv. 241 The rich Ruby, Pearle, and Amatist.  
1638 T. HERBERT *Some Yeares Trav.* (rev. ed.) 108 Calcedons, Hematists, Pearl.  
1727 J. THOMSON *Summer* 19 The Purple-streaming *Amethyst* is thine.  
1874 H. M. WESTROPP *Man. Precious Stones* 41 The finest amethysts are brought from India, Persia, Ceylon, Brazil, and Siberia.

**b. oriental amethyst** *n.* a rare violet or amethyst-coloured variety of Corundum or Sapphire.

- 1753 E. CHAMBERS *Cycl.* Suppl. Suppl. s.v., Oriental Amethysts are found in Calecut and Bisnagar.  
1874 H. M. WESTROPP *Man. Precious Stones* 16 The violet variety of corundum is termed the oriental amethyst. It may be distinguished from the ordinary amethyst by its superior brilliancy.

**2. fig.**

- 1818 KEATS *Endymion* l. 38 Western cloudiness, that takes The semblance of gold rocks..palaces And towers of amethyst.  
c1875 H. W. LONGFELLOW *Palingen.* l. The rolling meadows of amethyst.

**3. Heraldry.** The colour of the amethyst, purple violet.

- 1572 J. BOSSEWELL *Wks. Armorie* 105 He beareth on a wreathe 'Topaze' and 'Saphiere' an Alcian, volant, of the 'Amatist' mixte with 'Pearle.'  
1725 R. BRADLEY *Chomel's Dict. Econ.* Amethyst, a Term in Heraldry, signifying the Purple Colour in the Coat of a Nobleman.

**4. attrib.** quasi-adj.; = AMETHYSTINE *adj.* 2.

- 1601 P. HOLLAND tr. Pliny *Hist. World* (1634) IX. xxxviii. 259 Rich Amethyst or purple violet colour.

1791 W. HAMILTON tr. C.-L. Berthollet [Art of Dyeing](#) I. Introd. 11 The amethyst purple had the colour of the stone so called.

1879 E. CLERKE in [Cornhill Mag.](#) June 724 The savage sculpture of their stony ribs accentuated by amethyst shadow.