

"sardonyx, n.". *OED Online*. D-cember 2014. Oxford University Press. <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/171029?redirected-From=sardonyx&> (accessed M-rch 02, 2015).

sardonyx, *n.*

**Pronunciation:** /'sɑːdəniks/

**Forms:** α. sardonyse, (sardony), ME–16 sardonix, (15 *Sc.* sardonice), 16– sardonyx, (16 *pl.* sardonyches); β. ME sardenyk, 15sardonique, 16 sardonic(k).

**Etymology:** < Latin *sardonyx* (plural *sardonyches*), < Greek *σαρδόνυξ* (plural *σαρδόνυχες*), apparently < *σάρδιος* [SARDIUS n.](#), [SARD n.<sup>1</sup>](#) + *ὄνυξ* [ONYX n. and adj.](#) The β forms are < the late Latin *sardonychus* (late Greek *σαρδόνυχος*); as this occurs only in apposition to *lapis* stone, it may perhaps be an adjective.

**a.** A variety of onyx or stratified chalcedony having white layers alternating with one or more strata of sard.

a1382 *Bible (Wycliffite, E.V.)* (Douce 369(1)) (1850) Job xxviii. 16 It shal not be comparisound..to the most precious sardenyk ston or safyr.

1382 *Bible (Wycliffite, E.V.)* Rev. xxi. 20 The fyuethe [foundement], sardonix [a1425 *L.V.* sardony].

c1400 ( ?c1380) *Pearl* l. 1006 Þe sardonyse þe fyfþe ston.

c1520 M. NISBET *New Test. in Scots* (1905) III. Rev. xxi. 20 The fijft, sardonice.

1562 G. LEIGH *Accedens of Armory* 21 b. The precious stone to this colour [Sanguine] annexed, is the Sardonix.

1585 T. WASHINGTON tr. N. de Nicolay *Naugations Turkie* iv. xi. 123 b, In this place are also found the Sardonique stones.

1586 J. FERNE *Blazon of Gentry* l. 144 The Sardonix, consisting as it were of two rich gemmes, the Sardix, and the Onix; it is blacke in the bottome, red in the midst, and white aboue.

1601 P. HOLLAND tr. Pliny *Hist. World* II. 615 The Sardonyx..was taken for the pretious stone which seemed to be a Cornalline vpon white,..and both together transparent..they verily doe name all..that are not cleare and shew not through them, Blind Sardonyches.

1670 S. WILSON *Lassels's Voy. Italy* (new ed.) II. 388 A little Vase of the rootes of Emmeraud. An other of Sardonick. A great cup of Agate.

a1684 J. EVELYN *Diary* anno 1653 (1955) III. 79 Q: Elizabeths head an Intaglia in a rare Sardonyx, cut by a famous Italian.

1762 H. WALPOLE *Vertue's Anecd. Painting* I. iv. 101 Hillyard..cut the images of Henry VIII. and his children on a sardonyx.

1860 C. W. KING *Antique Gems* 8 The Sardonyx is defined by Pliny as 'candor in sarda', that is to say, a white opaque layer superimposed upon a red transparent stratum of..Sard; and no better description can be given of a perfect gem of this species.

1867 A. BILLING *Sci. Gems* 11 Should one of the layers [of onyx] be sard, which is of various shades of orange, brown, or brownish red, it is called sardonyx.

1875 B. JOWETT tr. Plato *Dialogues* (ed. 2) I. 491 Our highly-valued emeralds and sardonyxes.

**b. attrib.**

a1691 R. BOYLE in T. Birch *Life R. Boyle* in R. Boyle *Wks.* (1772) I. p. clix, I give and bequeath to my eldest brother, Richard..a sardonyx seal ring.

1867 A. BILLING *Sci. Gems* 68 Variegated brown sardonyx-agates which look somewhat like tortoise~shell.

1901 *Q. Rev.* Oct. 432 The large sardonyx cameos of the Augustan age.