

Lesson 1

Word Knowledge

Discovering Meanings

Find the meaning of the italicized words in the context.

1. The boys found a frog in the *hollow* of the log.
 - a) area inside
 - b) branch
 - c) bark of a tree
2. The landscape painting was too *grand* for her humble little living room.
 - a) silly-looking
 - b) expressive
 - c) big and impressive
3. The *caliph* led the people in prayer on the holy day.
 - a) Middle Eastern prince
 - b) English pastor
 - c) religious man
4. Water was very *precious* in that desert country.
 - a) valuable
 - b) enjoyable
 - c) welcome
5. The woman's ring had a red *gem*.
 - a) diamond
 - b) ornament
 - c) valuable stone; jewel
6. The birthday card had a silly *verse* inside.
 - a) picture
 - b) lines written in rhythm and rhyme
 - c) scribble

7. The European diplomat spoke in such a *lofty* tone of voice when he talked about peace.
- a) deep
 - b) high or important-sounding
 - c) interesting
8. We looked for *shelter* from the storm.
- a) a safe, protected place
 - b) castle
 - c) a simple house
9. When the woman heard her daughter say her wedding vows, she *wept* for joy.
- a) cried
 - b) laughed
 - c) smiled
10. Nate and Ben *amused* the class with their stories.
- a) disrupted
 - b) entertained
 - c) made fun of
11. Susan Doyle was a *melancholy* old spinster who always wore black.
- a) odd
 - b) cute
 - c) very sad or gloomy
12. There was a certain feeling of *melancholy* about the house.
- a) sadness
 - b) surprise
 - c) sunshine

ANSWERS

1) a 2) c 3) a 4) a 5) c 6) b 7) b 8) a 9) a 10) b 11) c 12) a

Learning about Words: Humors

Did you know that words, like countries, have a history? They do. Studying the history of words, called *etymology*, can be very exciting and rewarding. It can teach us how people in the past lived and thought.

Take, for example, the word *melancholy*, which means sad and gloomy. Many years ago doctors taught that there were fluids in our bodies that made us either happy or sad, angry or calm. Four of these fluids, called *humors*, were phlegm, blood, yellow bile and black bile. The Latin word for *black bile* is *melancholy*. These old doctors taught that black bile caused people to be gloomy.

The Latin words *sanguine* (meaning blood), *phlegmatic* (meaning the fluid in our throat), and *cholera* (meaning yellow bile) are now used as English words to describe people's moods or personality. A sanguine person is cheerful; a phlegmatic person is tired or lazy; and a choleric person is easily angered. In the past people thought these words described medical or physical conditions. Today, however, the words mostly describe personality types.

Vocabulary Exercise

Suggested Word

Write down the vocabulary word in the blanks below from the word bank that is suggested by the sentences. One of the words is used twice.

WORD BANK

grand, caliph, precious, gem, verse, lofty, shelter, weep, amuse,
melancholy, hollow

1. _____ The woman wore a bright, glittering ring.
2. _____ This old story from the Middle East is about a Muslim prince.
3. _____ "What a *wonderful* dinner that was!" the young lady exclaimed.
4. _____ Although our house was not small, it looked tiny next to our neighbor's mansion.
5. _____ The old man spoke in such a high and important way.
6. _____ Ellie and Julie enjoyed reading the birthday card's funny little poem.

7. _____ When the young woman heard about her uncle's death, she cried bitterly.
8. _____ The dark, cold, rainy weather made the old woman rather sad.
9. _____ Our parents hired a man to entertain the children.
10. _____ When we saw lightning flash across the night sky, we ran to a safe place.

Spelling Words

hundred, fierce, obey, speech, speak, whether, learn, praise, ceiling, describe, beginning

Reading Questions

King Canute on the Seashore

by James Baldwin

Circle the correct answer to each of the following questions.

1. Which of the following is NOT true of Canute?
 - a) He was a Danish king.
 - b) He ruled over England.
 - c) He ruled after King Alfred the Great.
 - d) He was greatly admired by his court.
 - e) He thought of himself as an all-powerful king.
2. Which of the following adjectives BEST describes the great men and officers of Canute's court as they are described in the story?
 - a) stubborn
 - b) flattering
 - c) disrespectful
 - d) not in agreement
 - e) sensible
3. Did Canute really think he could command the sea?
 - a) yes

- b) no
- 4. Why did Canute's men think he was mad?
 - a) Canute was letting himself get wet by the rising tide.
 - b) Canute was not wearing his crown.
 - c) Canute was commanding the sea.
 - d) Canute believed he was not really powerful.
 - e) Canute believed he was all-powerful.
- 5. What exactly did Canute show to his men at the shore?
 - a) that the sea could not be commanded
 - b) that God rules over all things
 - c) that were immoral for flattering him
 - d) that he was an ordinary man
 - e) that he was indeed not mad

The Lowest Place

by Christina Rossetti

Circle the correct answer to each of the following questions.

- 1. The first line of this poem is stated in the form of a ____.
 - a) proud statement
 - b) humble request
 - c) denial
 - d) question
 - e) complaint
- 2. What is NOT true of this poem?
 - a) The first half of lines 1 and 5 of the poem are the same.
 - b) In line 1 of the poem, the words that get a stress are *give*, *lowest*, *place*, *not*, and *dare*.
 - c) In line 2 of the poem, the words that get a stress are *ask*, *lowest*, *place*, *Thou*, and *died*.
 - d) The first four lines of the poem are opposite in meaning to the last four lines.
 - e) The poem is in a form of a prayer.

3. Which of the following BEST tells what the poet is trying to say?
 - a) Humble people are successful in this world.
 - b) If you want to be humble, you must not act important.
 - c) Pride comes before a fall.
 - d) A person with a humble heart will see God in death and in life.
 - e) Pride is ugly.
4. What is the “lowest place” talked about in the poem?
 - a) a place on earth
 - b) a place in heaven
 - c) a place of humbleness
 - d) a place where the speaker can love and hope
 - e) a place where the speaker can be well again and live
5. Why does the speaker of the poem not “dare” to ask for the lowest place?
 - a) The lowest place is where the speaker can see God, and this is a favored place.
 - b) The lowest place involves humility, something the speaker is not willing to have.
 - c) The speaker is too proud to sit in the lowest place.
 - d) The speaker is frightened to sit in the lowest place.
 - e) The lowest place is a place where one cannot see God.

A Lesson in Humility

by James Baldwin

Circle the correct answer to each of the following questions.

1. Which of the following are NOT in the room where the feast is held?
 - a) poets and musicians
 - b) wise men
 - c) gold and precious gems
 - d) many people fighting
 - e) beautiful plants and flowers
2. Which of the following BEST tells what the caliph wants when he calls on the poet to recite his verse.
 - a) silly verse

- b) pleasant poetry
 - c) clever arguments
 - d) amusing fables
 - e) sad stories
3. The first words of the poet are ____.
- a) criticism of the feast
 - b) against the caliph
 - c) praising the poet himself
 - d) what the caliph and others expect to hear
 - e) verse that is strange and confusing
4. Why does the caliph say “Good beginning” to the poet?
- a) The caliph wants to flatter the poet.
 - b) The poet is telling him the truth about his life.
 - c) The caliph expects the poet to end badly.
 - d) The caliph does not understand poetry.
 - e) The poet is performing what the caliph has asked.
5. Why does the poet bow his head in the end?
- a) He has not been skillful in his verse.
 - b) He is sad about what he has to say next.
 - c) He knows that the caliph is not pleased by what he at first said.
 - d) He is getting tired of praising the prince.
 - e) He is praying.
6. Which of the following is NOT correct about the poet’s last line of verse before the caliph weeps?
- a) It shows that the feast is not so grand or important as the caliph wished.
 - b) It fills the caliph with deep emotion.
 - c) It expresses what the caliph apparently does not see or does not want to see.
 - d) It goes against what the caliph originally expected.
 - e) It shows disrespect for the caliph.
7. What does the poet mean when he says that the caliph’s delights are a *shadow*?
- a) They are dark and depressing.

- b) They are not scary.
 - c) They will be proved very short and so they are really nothing much at all.
 - d) The delights are held in shadowy rooms.
 - e) The caliph has a darkened mind.
8. Why does the caliph weep?
- a) He is crying for joy.
 - b) He is angry with the poet.
 - c) He is angry with the officer.
 - d) The poet has spoken something sad but true.
 - e) The poet's verse is very poor.
9. Why does one of the officers tell the poet to stop?
- a) The officer does not think that the poet is good.
 - b) The officer sees that the poet is going to say bad things about the caliph.
 - c) The officer does not like to see people cry.
 - d) The poet is not doing what the officer thinks is his duty to do.
 - e) The officer does not believe what the poet is saying.
10. Which is NOT true of the word *blindness* as it is used in the last sentence of the story?
- a) The caliph does not mean exactly what he is saying; he is being figurative, not literal.
 - b) It refers to how the caliph sees the delights of his palace.
 - c) The poet has been at fault for this "blindness."
 - d) It does not refer to seeing with the eyes but to understanding with the mind.
 - e) The poet is trying to bring truth to the caliph by making him "see."

Literary Words

Figures of Speech and Apostrophe

It may have seemed very strange to read about a Danish king talking to the sea. In the story, however, Canute is making the point that it is ridiculous to expect the "ears" of the sea to be attentive to an earthly

king's voice. Only God can control nature. Although we do not address the sea, a tree, a bird, death, life, liberty, nature, etc. in real life, poets and other writers can address them in a figure of speech. A figure of speech is language that means something other than what it says. An opposite word to figurative is *literal*. When someone uses literal language, he means exactly what he says. An *apostrophe* is one kind of figure of speech in which a speaker is talking to something that cannot talk back. When the Apostle Paul says, for example, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" (1 Corinthians 15:55) The Apostle Paul is not talking to death and the grave really, but making a statement about death.

Climax and Anticlimax

The word *climax* is an easy word to remember because it is like *climbing* a ladder. A sentence with a climax leads up to something high and big. One famous climax found in the Bible is a passage written by the Apostle Peter. Peter urges Christians to add virtue to their faith, to add knowledge to virtue, to add temperance to knowledge, and so on, ending with love. There are seven rungs to Peter's "ladder," or climax.

Christina Rossetti, however, does not have a climax in her poem, but an *anticlimax*. Look at the second and third lines of Christina Rossetti's poem "The Lowest Place." She writes, *not that I dare ask for that lowest place*. We expect the poet to dare for something big, as the word *dare* is used for great, mighty, high, difficult, honorable and wonderful things. But there is an anticlimax here in the poet's prayer. This ladder does not go up, but rather down. The poet cannot dare ask for the *lowest* place.

We can explain the anticlimax in Christina Rossetti's poem this way. The lowest place, in fact, is something *high*. How so? It is the place that Jesus took when he died on the cross for people's sin. The cross was his shame but also his glory. His shame because it involved suffering; his glory because it won salvation for his people. The poet does not dare take the lowest place because to do so would be to take Christ's position. However, the speaker in the poem is thankful that by Jesus' lowering himself, we can, by his grace, be by his side.

Poetry, Prose and Verse

When you read a novel or an essay, you are reading *prose*. Prose is usually thought of as “regular” kind of writing, while poetry is a “special” kind of writing. Prose usually does not rhyme or have a regular rhythm, as poetry often does. It also uses more direct language, and because of that, prose is more often easier to read than poetry.

In the story that you just read, a poet amuses the the caliph with his *verse*. The word *verse* is often used to mean *poetry*, but it is actually quite different from poetry. Like poetry, verse rhymes and often has rhythm. But like prose, verse is more direct and clear in its expression; it does not *suggest* things so that the reader has to guess the meaning.

Vice and Virtue

Humility: the Lowest Place

Christina Rossetti’s poem “The Lowest Place” reminds us of a passage in the Gospel of Luke (Luke 14:10–11), in which Jesus tells a parable about a wedding feast. When we are invited to a wedding, Jesus says, we should not take the place of honor, as we may be later asked to take a lower place. Instead we should sit in the lowest place—a place that shows that we don’t think ourselves so important. The host who has invited us will then tell us to go from our low place to a place of higher honor. There we will be shown respect in front of all the other guests at the wedding. Jesus ends the story by saying that those who put themselves higher will be lowered, and those who lower themselves will be made higher. The parable tells us of the importance of humility in getting to know God and having a personal relationship with him.

Consider the fact that the lowest place is the *best* place. The lowest place, the *best* place? It is ironic but true. Being humble makes us closer to God because we can better listen to him speak to our hearts.

► This week put the virtue of humility into practice by putting yourself last, whether it is serving yourself at the dinner table, going through a doorway, waiting in a line, or talking in a group. Taking a humble place in the world is hard. Benjamin Franklin admits that he could not boast success in being truly humble, but he saw the value of *putting it into practice*.

Composition

Writing Assignment 1

Canute (905?–1035) was the first king in the Danish dynasty that ruled in England shortly before the Norman Invasion. You have just read one interesting story about Canute, but there is, as you can guess, a lot more to know about this Danish conqueror who ruled England, Norway and Denmark. Research Canute in an encyclopedia or other reference work and write a biography in your own words on the most important and interesting facts that you learn about him. The short biography should be about twelve sentences. Write a bibliography after the biography, following the format given below in order: author or editor (last name first); title of the work (italicized or underlined); place of publication; publisher; date. You should not forget any of the punctuation.

EXAMPLE

Bridgewater, William and Seymour Kurtz. *The Columbia Encyclopedia*.
New York: Columbia University Press, 1963.

Writing Assignment 2

Whether they are made up or real, stories are useful to make a point—a lesson that we have learned or an observation that we have made about life. To make a point, real-life personal experiences are often more effective and interesting than stories that we have heard or those that we have made up. If we are willing to tell them, our experiences can be very instructive, too—both to ourselves and to others. When we write our experience down in order to make a point, the composition is called a *personal narrative*.

Depending on how you tell it, your story can either interest or bore a reader. Often student writers end up talking *about* what happened, rather than *telling* what happened. They do not give an account of their experience from beginning to end, but rather make comments about it without connecting ideas or giving a time line. However, by telling an experience in *chronological* order—in the order that the events happened—a writer is sure to engage the reader more effectively.

Details are also very important in making a narrative interesting. The difficulty is deciding which details to include and which to leave out. Including every detail of an experience in a composition, no matter how short it was, would be impossible. We could describe the minute crannies of a place, every word, gesture, and expression in a conversation, or every line, color, or wrinkle in a person's face. The possibilities are endless. So how can a writer choose among all of these details appropriately? The answer is that a writer must choose only *relevant* detail. Relevant detail includes all those things that will support the main idea of the narrative.

Write a ten- to fifteen-sentence paragraph with one of the following sentences as your main idea (your first sentence). Make sure that you tell your experience in chronological order and that you include interesting detail. The story should be a true experience.

- For some reason nighttime makes ordinary things seem scary.
- When I first met my current best friend, I knew I had met someone who was “one of a kind.”
- My brother (or sister) sometimes makes me laugh (or makes me angry, etc.).
- After a hot, lazy summer, the first cool breeze of autumn excites me.
- Animals are fun to have, but hard to take care of.
- Most car rides on family trips are lessons in patience, but the one I took recently was very different.
- Sometimes we can't understand what other people are going through until we have the same experience.
- Just recently I visited for the first time what I think is the most interesting place on earth.
- My younger brother (or sister) proves to me everyday that little children have their own way of looking at the world.