

Lesson 1

Word List

Study the definitions of the words below; then do the exercises for the lesson.

asperity

ə sper' ə tē

n. 1. Sharpness or harshness of manner.

There was a noticeable **asperity** in her voice as she scolded the children for teasing Andrea.

2. Roughness of surface; unevenness.

Running my fingers over the new countertop, I detected a certain **asperity**.

bane

bān

n. A person or thing that destroys or causes harm.

Jonathan's little brother was the **bane** of our slumber party.

baneful *adj.* Causing destruction or ruin.

Hitler's **baneful** rule ended with his death in 1945.

buffoon

bə foon'

n. A person who often makes attempts to be funny; a clown; a fool.

Although he acted like a **buffoon** at parties, Matt was usually rather serious.

doleful

dōl' fəl

adj. Mournful or full of sorrow; causing grief.

The **doleful** look on her face told me she had not gotten the grant to go to the summer program.

extrovert

eks' trə vɜrt

n. A person whose attention is focused on others and on what is going on around her or him, rather than on her or his own feelings.

Ray is an **extrovert** now, but he was rather shy as a young child.

extroverted *adj.*

Because she is so **extroverted**, she loves to perform in front of a large crowd.

garish

gār' ish

adj. Excessively bright and flashy; tastelessly glaring.

I told Henry that his tie was too **garish** to wear to a job interview.

hierarchy

hī' ər ər kē

n. A group or system in which positions of power are ranked, usually from lowest to highest.

In the state government **hierarchy**, the governor is at the top.

imbue

im byoo'

v. To fill completely with a feeling or idea; to inspire.

The really great athletes are **imbued** with a desire to excel.

instigate

in' stə gāt

v. To stir up or urge on; to provoke.

Because Joy was jealous of Dara's friendship with Kim, she **instigated** an argument between them.

penchant

pen' chənt

n. A strong attraction or leaning.

Susan and Carl shared a **penchant** for crossword puzzles and made a ritual of doing them together every Sunday morning.

rambunctious

ram bunjk' shəs

adj. Behaving in a wild and unruly manner.

When the puppies get too **rambunctious** in their play, the trainer separates them.

repertoire

rep' ər twār

n. The list of pieces an actor, musician, etc., is ready to perform; the skills or accomplishments of a person or group.

The band knew most of the requests, but several songs were not part of its **repertoire**.

rudiment
rəʊˈdɪmənt

n. (usually plural) 1. A basic principle or skill.
This book teaches the **rudiments** of cooking, but it will not make you a master chef.
2. An undeveloped or beginning stage.
The **rudiments** of the club's plan to raise money seemed promising until we discussed them more, at which point we realized how unrealistic they were.

undermine
ʌnˈdərˌmɪn

v. 1. To weaken or ruin by degrees.
His smoking habit seriously **undermined** his health.
2. To attack by indirect, secret, or underhanded means.
During World War II, the French underground sought to **undermine** the Nazi occupation.

unremitting
ʌnˈrɛˌmɪtʃɪŋ

adj. Not stopping or slowing down; constant.
The **unremitting** sounds of the city kept me awake in my hotel room all night.

1A Understanding Meanings

Read the sentences below. If a sentence correctly uses the word in bold, write *C* on the line below it. If a sentence is incorrect, rewrite it so that the vocabulary word in bold is used correctly.

1. A **doleful** tale is one that expresses sadness or gloom.

2. A **penchant** is a fondness for something.

3. One's **repertoire** is one's range of skills or accomplishments.

4. An **unremitting** effort is one made in a halfhearted manner.

5. **Asperity** is abrasive behavior.

6. A **rambunctious** crowd is one that is excessively exuberant.

7. **Rudiments** are basic skills.

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8. A **buffoon** is a person who tries to amuse people with tricks and silliness.

9. A **hierarchy** is a group that is organized according to status.

10. To **undermine** a plan is to work subtly to make sure that it isn't executed.

11. An **extrovert** is an effort that goes beyond what is expected.

12. To be **imbued** with a quality is to have it in abundance.

13. To **instigate** something is to examine it closely.

14. A **garish** display is one that is showy to the point of gaudiness.

15. A **baneful** policy is one that is full of hate.

1B Using Words

If the word (or a form of the word) in bold fits in a sentence in the group below it, write the word in the blank. If the word does not fit, leave the space empty.

1. **garish**

- (a) Walter gave me a _____ look when I mistook his wife for his daughter.
- (b) The school gym was covered with _____ decorations for the dance.
- (c) The multicolored sequined dress was a little too _____ for my taste.

2. penchant

- (a) Trina's _____ for long words sometimes makes her sound pretentious.
- (b) Isolation from the company of others had made him increasingly _____.
- (c) A _____ for stretching the truth gave Jamie a reputation for being unreliable.

3. buffoon

- (a) With his ill-fitting suit and mismatched socks, he looked like a _____.
- (b) The salesperson tried to _____ us into paying twice what the watch was worth.
- (c) Whenever Angela tried to _____ her brother, he got annoyed and walked away.

4. bane

- (a) Our neighbors caused us so much _____ we were forced to move.
- (b) Mosquitoes are the _____ of people camping in the northern woods this season.
- (c) The _____ effects of DDT led to the banning of this toxic pesticide in the United States.

5. repertoire

- (a) The magician's _____ included making rabbits disappear into thin air.
- (b) The 1929 model was the prize object in the antique car collector's _____.
- (c) Kevin demonstrated for us his incredible _____ of bird calls.

6. undermine

- (a) Your constant criticism will seriously _____ his confidence in his ability.
- (b) Reports of mismanagement _____ the public's confidence in the agency.
- (c) Interfering with her practice sessions will _____ her chances of winning the cello competition.

7. instigate

- (a) A mutiny doesn't start by itself; someone has to _____ it.
- (b) The amateur detective vowed to _____ the dreadful crime.
- (c) The college will _____ its new admissions policy immediately.

8. imbue

- (a) The stump was so deeply _____ in the ground that we couldn't remove it.
- (b) All their children were _____ with a deep love of learning.
- (c) She _____ in her followers a deep loyalty to her beliefs.

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1C Word Study

Each group of four words below contains two words that are either synonyms or antonyms. Circle these two words; then circle the *S* if they are synonyms, the *A* if they are antonyms.

1. baneful	ecstatic	doleful	questionable	S	A
2. fill	instigate	recall	imbue	S	A
3. hierarchy	penchant	aversion	description	S	A
4. roughness	instigation	clarity	asperity	S	A
5. docile	garish	rambunctious	clever	S	A
6. garish	unremitting	thoughtful	plain	S	A
7. provoke	undermine	instigate	overlook	S	A
8. undermine	support	begin	barter	S	A
9. constant	silent	baneful	unremitting	S	A
10. blessing	hierarchy	bane	buffoon	S	A

1D Images of Words

Circle the letter of each sentence that suggests the numbered bold vocabulary word. In each group, you may circle more than one letter or none at all.

1. **extroverted**

- (a) No matter what I say, you seem to take pleasure in disagreeing with me.
- (b) I notice that Sandy spends more and more time alone in her room.
- (c) Ever since he was a child, James has liked to take part in all group activities.

2. **asperity**

- (a) "Don't you dare contradict me," she said to her son.
- (b) The engine knocks loudly because it needs a tune-up.
- (c) Wearing coarse wool next to sensitive skin can cause a rash.

3. **unremitting**

- (a) My grandparents worked for twelve months on the house and never took a day off.
- (b) The Eagles kept up the pressure on the Colts for the entire game.
- (c) After thirty days, the drought showed no signs of ending any time soon.

4. rambunctious

- (a) Lucy was disappointed with the ending to the novel.
- (b) The garden had been sadly neglected and was overgrown with weeds.
- (c) Joan's orange coat clashed horribly with her pink pants.

5. hierarchy

- (a) The Arc de Triomphe, a central landmark in Paris, was completed in 1835.
- (b) The captain let me see the major, who then allowed me to see the colonel.
- (c) In chess, a queen is a more powerful piece than either a rook or a knight.

6. doleful

- (a) The headline read, "Earthquake Fatalities Exceed 2,000."
- (b) The song was about the Great Famine that devastated Ireland.
- (c) I could tell by their expressions that the rescue mission had failed.

7. instigate

- (a) The server suggested that we try the goulash, which she said was delicious.
- (b) The starter fired the pistol, and the 400-meter relay got underway.
- (c) "Something is not right here, and I intend to get to the bottom of it," said Hector.

8. rudiments

- (a) For his first basketball lesson, I taught Jon how to dribble the ball.
- (b) My grandmother commented on my impolite behavior.
- (c) Coach Ginsberg was surprised by how quickly I learned the basic moves.

9. undermine

- (a) Another big storm could collapse that wall.
- (b) Maura's hiking boots were so worn-out that they couldn't be repaired.
- (c) Termites had weakened the beams on which the floor rested.

10. repertoire

- (a) Abbot and Costello exchanged impromptu quips that had the audience in fits of laughter.
- (b) The band plans to add two new songs to its Friday night performance.
- (c) Bonnie plays six instruments and is proficient on all of them.

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1E Passage

Read the passage below; then complete the exercise that follows it.

Clown College

When Irvin Feld purchased Ringling Brothers Barnum & Bailey Circus in 1967, he was concerned that the number of clowns in his circus was dwindling. The circus had only about a dozen clowns and the average age of the group was about sixty. After seeing some clowns perform, Feld remarked with **asperity**, "They can fall down, but can they get up?"

Feld found a solution to his problem in 1968 when he started a school that would train a new generation of clowns. It ran for thirty years and at its peak was receiving thousands of applications from those **imbued** with a desire to make people laugh. During their audition, applicants might be asked to walk like a lizard or to pretend they're on a planet with too much gravity and then on one with too little. Only about thirty were accepted each year, usually the most **extroverted**. Shyness had to be overcome or it would **undermine** their chances of success. The college's director once said what he looked for in a clown was "a heart as big as Alaska and [a willingness] to give it away on a daily basis."

After admission, eight weeks of **unrelenting** hard work faced the successful applicants. For fourteen hours a day, six days a week, students learned the **rudiments** of clowning. Classes were typically taught by veteran clowns, many of whom were big-name circus performers at the top of the circus **hierarchy**. Their day began with warm-ups at 8:00 a.m., followed by an hour-long makeup class. From 9:30 a.m. until dinnertime, students practiced the physical aspects of clowning: tumbling, taking pratfalls, walking on stilts, riding unicycles, and juggling. At the same time, they worked on developing their own **repertoire** of tricks and stunts. They also had to decide which of the two basic types of clown they aspired to be.

The **auguste** (pronounced *oh-GOOST*) wears **garish** clothing several sizes too big for him or her. The makeup is greatly exaggerated, and the costume often features a bright red fake nose and curly orange wig. The **bane** of the other clowns, the **auguste** specializes in **rambunctious** behavior and delights in **instigating** mischief in the circus ring and acting like a **buffoon**. Hampered by a pair of enormous shoes, the **auguste** is often seen being chased around the ring by an authority figure like a police officer or the ringmaster.

Students with a **penchant** for mime are often drawn to the other basic type, known as the whiteface clown. Makeup for the whiteface is applied sparingly around the eyes and mouth, over a white base. The shoes are a normal size and the costume is loose-fitting. The hair is completely hidden under a skullcap, over which the whiteface wears a neat, cone-shaped hat. Much of circus comedy is based on interactions between the **auguste** and the whiteface clowns. The whiteface is often a victim of the **auguste's** antics and therefore usually has a **doleful** expression.

In 1995 Clown College moved from Florida to Wisconsin, and two years later, as a result of cost-cutting measures, it closed its doors permanently. During its thirty years it graduated about fifteen hundred clowns. Class reunions are held every year when about three hundred present and former clowns get together to swap stories of circus life. With no more clowns being graduated, many of them tell of receiving calls from the circus, inviting them to return. But the work is hard, the pay is low, and the turnover is high. Not many are tempted by such offers. All agree, however, that their experience with the circus was an exciting time of their lives. They had lived a childhood dream: they ran away to join the circus.

Answer each of the following questions in the form of a sentence. If a question does not contain a vocabulary word from this lesson's word list, use one in your answer. Use each word only once.

1. How did Feld express his opinion of the state of the clowns in his circus in 1967?

2. What kind of person is likely to apply to Clown College?

3. Why would shyness **undermine** an audition to Clown College?

4. Is Clown College all fun and games?

5. What do students learn at Clown College?

6. Why might one conclude that students at Clown College get a good education in clowning?

7. What kind of student might be interested in becoming a whiteface clown?

8. How does the auguste's makeup and hair differ from those of the whiteface clown?

9. How would you characterize the auguste?

10. Why is the auguste the **bane** of the other clowns?

FUN & FASCINATING FACTS

The Latin *dolere* means “to feel pain.” This word is the root of several English words that refer to suffering. A life of *dolor* is one filled with sorrow. To wear a **doleful** expression is to look unhappy. *Indolent* once meant “free of pain” but changed its meaning over time and now means “lazy” or “avoiding exertion.”

Extrovert and its antonym *introvert* are formed from the Latin verb *vertere*, “to turn,” combined with the prefixes *extra-*, “outward,” and *intro-*, “within,” respectively. Extroverts are people who turn their attention to what is going on outside themselves; introverts are people who turn their attention inward, focusing on their own feelings and thoughts.

Repertoire and *repertory* can be used interchangeably in some instances. One can speak of a

singer's *repertoire* of songs or of a singer's *repertory* of songs. However, in this case, *repertoire* is the preferred term. *Repertory* is also the term for a type of theatrical practice in which several different plays are put on in rotation over the course of a season. Many actors learn their skills in repertory. A repertory company may put on a tragedy one night and a comedy the next, with the same actors performing in both plays.