

Lesson 1

Word List

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

apocryphal
ə pāk' re fəl

adj. Of dubious authenticity or origin; spurious.
Although we hear numerous stories of Daniel Boone's exploits, many of them are **apocryphal**.

arcane
är kän'

adj. Understood by only a few; mysterious.
To most people, the science of quantum physics is an **arcane** subject that is beyond their grasp.

convene
kən vën'

v. 1. To summon or cause to assemble.
The president has **convened** a meeting of his economic advisors for this Thursday.
2. To gather or assemble; to meet formally.
Student Council members **convene** on the first Monday of the month.

expedient
ek spē' dē ənt

adj. 1. Useful for some purpose; convenient.
Telephoning was the most **expedient** method of alerting Sara to our change of plan.
2. Concerned primarily or exclusively with serving one's own interests.
Given a choice, Ray does what is **expedient** rather than what is right.
n. A means employed to bring about a certain result.
A hot bath is a useful **expedient** for ameliorating sore muscles.

exude
eg zōōd'

v. 1. To flow out slowly; to ooze or emit.
The pine branch **exuded** golden pitch after it was cut.
2. To give forth; to exhibit in abundance.
A good lawyer **exudes** confidence no matter how her case is going.

gesticulate
jes tik' yōō lāt

v. To motion energetically with the body or limbs.
The traffic cop **gesticulated** to the waiting cars to proceed.
gesticulation *n.*
We were puzzled by Will's frantic **gesticulations** until we noticed the bee buzzing around his head.

imperturbable
im pər tər' bə bəl

adj. Calm and assured.
Picking up the phone to call the plumber, my mother remained **imperturbable**.

increment
in' krə mənt

n. An increase, addition or gain, often by regular, consecutive amounts.
Even small **increments** to a savings account add up to a substantial sum over time.
incremental *adj.* (in krə mənt' l)
Incremental changes to the dosage of Sunil's medication were necessary to maintain its effectiveness.

levity
lev' ə tē

n. Excessive frivolity; a lack of seriousness; joking.
The atmosphere at the party was one of **levity** with much joking, laughter, and general silliness.

mortify
mōr' tə fī

v. To embarrass or humiliate.
Jason's fall to the ice just as he was ready to fire the puck past the goalie **mortified** him for days.

periphery
pə rīf' ə rē

n. The area around the edges; the outermost part.
Hesitant to enter the walled garden, Joy made her way instead along the **periphery**.
peripheral *adj.* Relating to, involving, or forming an outer edge or boundary.
Bill Bradley's extraordinary **peripheral** vision allowed him to see more of the basketball court than his opponents.

raconteur
rə kɑ̃n tər'

(A French word now part of our vocabulary.) *n.* One who tells stories with skill and wit.
Aunt Clara knew so many stories and was such a superb **raconteur** that she could entertain us for hours.

reiterate
rē it' ə rāt

v. To say or do over again; to repeat.
The signs posted at fifty-foot intervals **reiterate** the warning against hunting.

subterfuge
sʌb' tər fyooj

n. A deceptive scheme or strategy.
Friar Laurence's **subterfuge** to bring Romeo and Juliet together not only deceived their families, but also came to a terrible end.

vacillate
vas' ə lāt

v. 1. To move back and forth from lack of balance; waver.
The needle **vacillated** between 5 and 6 before registering 5.4 on the Richter scale.
2. To alternate indecisively between opinions or courses of action.
Karen's summer plans are still not set because she is **vacillating** between a cross-country bike ride and an internship with the science museum.

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. Persons who **convene** come together in a group.

2. An **imperturbable** person is one who gets upset easily.

3. **Peripheral** matters are those that are not central.

4. To **reiterate** a concern is to express it over and over again.

5. A **subterfuge** is a comment that is not intended to be heard.

apocryphal
arcane
convene
expedient
exude
gesticulate
imperturbable
increment
levity
mortify
periphery
raconteur
reiterate
subterfuge
vacillate

6. To **exude** confidence is to exhibit it in abundance.

7. **Incremental** changes are those made gradually.

8. A **raconteur** is a person who is skilled at deceiving others.

9. To **gesticulate** is to say or express something by making gestures.

10. An **expedient** is a means to accomplishing an end.

11. To **mortify** someone is to cause that person's death.

12. **Levity** is a state of perfect balance.

13. An **arcane** theory is one that not many people understand.

14. To **vacillate** is to keep changing one's mind.

15. An **apocryphal** event is one of earth-shaking significance.

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. exude

- (a) Moisture from the body is _____ through the pores of the skin.
 (b) As soon as Tom _____ the speed limit, he was stopped by the highway patrol.
 (c) The producer _____ such charm that it was hard to refuse his offer.

2. mortify

- (a) When I went to pay the check, I was _____ to discover that I had no money.
 (b) The _____ professor realized too late that she had given her students the wrong exam.
 (c) Fortunately, the dog was not _____ when the car struck it.

3. vacillate

- (a) Dr. Shin _____ the baby against a variety of diseases.
 (b) Ayesha _____ the drink until all the ingredients were combined.
 (c) My little sister _____ between a party at home and a trip to the ice-skating rink for her birthday.

4. raconteur

- (a) Abraham Lincoln was an excellent _____ with a fund of interesting stories.
 (b) Leslie forgot the punch line, so we never found out how the _____ ended.
 (c) A good _____ pays close attention to the response of the listeners.

5. gesticulate

- (a) Secretary Braun said she had _____ several ideas in her mind that might help us solve the problem.
 (b) The baby wriggled and laughed when we _____ her tummy.
 (c) He _____ so much when he talked that I paid more attention to his arms than to his story.

6. apocryphal

- (a) A nuclear war would be the most _____ event in human history.
 (b) I never know when she's being _____ and when she's telling the truth.
 (c) We dismissed these accounts of UFO contacts with humans as _____.

7. expedient

- (a) Guessing is the unprepared person's _____ for coping with tests.
 (b) In view of the heavy rains, it may be _____ to delay the spring planting.
 (c) Nations sometimes do what is politically _____ without regard to morality.

apocryphal
 arcane
 convene
 expedient
 exude
 gesticulate
 imperturbable
 increment
 levity
 mortify
 periphery
 raconteur
 reiterate
 subterfuge
 vacillate

8. **convene**

- (a) I _____ Robert's message to the members of his family.
- (b) The manager _____ so many meetings that little actual work got done.
- (c) All the teachers _____ after school to discuss whether to introduce Spanish in grade four.

1C Word Study

Choose from the two words provided and use each word only once when filling in the spaces. Once space should be left blank.

vacillate/waver

1. Juan will _____ for hours over whether to stay or go.
2. Charlotte's determination to take part in the event began to _____.
3. The boat began to _____, and seconds later it sank.

exudes/emits

4. A successful speaker _____ confidence on the platform.
5. The newest engine _____ very little carbon dioxide.
6. Ms. Ruiz _____ words of wisdom to whoever will listen.

arcane/mysterious

7. The walls were painted in bright _____ colors to create a cheerful effect.
8. We never found out what caused the _____ noise in the cellar.
9. The high priests possessed _____ knowledge denied to ordinary Romans.

apocryphal/spurious

10. The _____ signature on the document made the lease invalid.
11. Many of Uncle Sayed's stories are _____, but we enjoy hearing them.
12. Lindsay learned that the diamond in her ring is almost certainly _____.

expedient/convenient

13. I felt that the most _____ thing was to say nothing at all about the matter.
14. I notice that Susannah has grown increasingly _____ since she took up sports.
15. Using the Internet is a(n) _____ way to shop.

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. **imperturbable**

- (a) There was not enough breeze to fill the sails, so Carrie started the engine.
- (b) Robin studies, oblivious to her siblings playing loudly around her.
- (c) The little boy stuck out his tongue at me and then turned and ran.

2. **expedient**

- (a) When we heard that a blizzard was forecast, we decided to return home.
- (b) To guarantee that the package arrives tomorrow, you should use the express service.
- (c) The candidate reversed his position on gun control when he saw the latest polls.

3. **levity**

- (a) The new fighter jet soared to 20,000 feet in less than a minute.
- (b) I always enjoy reading the jokes in this magazine.
- (c) The banter and loud laughter emanating from the next table prevented us from enjoying our meal.

4. **reiterate**

- (a) When Pam got off the roller coaster, she wanted to get right back on again.
- (b) The sick child kept saying, "I want my mommy."
- (c) The phone rang repeatedly, but no one bothered to answer it.

5. **apocryphal**

- (a) George Washington, as a boy, did not chop down his father's cherry tree.
- (b) For three days in a row, the local weather forecast was wrong.
- (c) Mark Twain said that reports of his death had been "greatly exaggerated."

6. **incremental**

- (a) Last night's six inches of snow brings the month's total to 58 inches.
- (b) Men's jacket sizes are 36-inch, 38-inch, 40-inch, 42-inch, and 44-inch.
- (c) Her starting salary was \$34,000, but each year she received a \$1,000 raise until she was earning \$40,000 a year.

7. **vacillate**

- (a) The baby cried when the nurse gave her a measles shot.
- (b) Color variations make the bark of the sycamore tree distinctive.
- (c) The car skidded on the ice and went off the road into the guard rail.

apocryphal
arcane
convene
expedient
exude
gesticulate
imperturbable
increment
levity
mortify
periphery
raconteur
reiterate
subterfuge
vacillate

8. **arcane**

- (a) Karl Marx's theory of labor is understood by very few people.
- (b) Gary has trouble understanding simple addition and subtraction.
- (c) Few people outside of south-central Chile can speak Araucan.

9. **peripheral**

- (a) Since she worked only one day a week, Ms. Dawson had little to do with the project.
- (b) Pluto, the most distant planet in our solar system, is billions of miles from the sun.
- (c) The story that Davy Crockett killed a bear when he was only three is false.

10. **subterfuge**

- (a) The fountain is supplied with water from an underground pipe.
- (b) The Greeks are said to have penetrated Troy's defenses by hiding inside a wooden horse.
- (c) The man entered the house by posing as an inspector for the gas company.

1E Passage

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

Going, Going, Gone!

A man attending an auction absent-mindedly scratches his ear and, within a few minutes, is **mortified** to learn that with this casual movement he has bought a stuffed and mounted moose head complete with antlers. The story, though **apocryphal**, is a staple of auction folklore and expresses the fear that some people have of being drawn unwittingly into the bidding fray. The fear is unjustified. Bidding in public auctions is usually done by **gesticulating** in the auctioneer's direction while holding a numbered card aloft. The possibility of anyone making an unintended offer under these circumstances is slight.

In the **arcane** world of private, fine art auction houses, events are conducted with conspicuous restraint. Most people attending such auctions are known to the auctioneer and to each other because many are dealers who come to buy for their own business or for private clients. As the **imperturbable** auctioneer presides over the sale of an item whose price may eventually reach tens of millions of dollars, a person may bid by doing nothing more than catching the auctioneer's eye. In contrast, tugging an ear or looking up at the ceiling may be signals arranged beforehand with the auctioneer to indicate a desire to withdraw from the bidding.

The success of any auction, whether public or private, depends to a great degree on the skill of the person conducting the auction. A good auctioneer must be something of a **raconteur**, with a fund of amusing stories to tell and the wit to keep them brief. Often, by using a little **levity**, he or she can relax the crowd and help the bids flow more freely.

Various **subterfuges** are commonly employed to create interest and maintain alertness in the audience. The auctioneer may cry "Sold!" just as the bidding is getting underway. One lucky person gets a valuable item for a song, and the rest learn that if they **vacillate**, a bargain may slip away. Auctioneers have even been known to drop a (not very valuable) vase as an **expedient** to get the attention of a crowd that seems to be drifting into boredom.

Given the large number of auctions held in the United States each year, there is an increasing demand for people qualified to conduct them. This demand is met in large part by schools for auctioneers. The oldest and largest of these is the Missouri Auction School in Kansas City, founded in 1905. It **convenes** four times a year for intensive nine-day courses. These are attended by up to one thousand men and women of all ages and walks of life hoping to become professional auctioneers.

Doing their best to **exude** the kind of confidence auctioneers must demonstrate, students conduct mock auctions with the rest of the class acting as potential bidders. They learn to develop their **peripheral** vision so as not to miss bids from the side of the hall, and they get a chance to practice the uniquely American style of conducting auctions in a singsong chant. An uninterrupted flow of words is punctuated by **reiterated** reminders of the last bid, followed by the bid the auctioneer would like to get from the audience. His or her chant might go like this: ". . . *thirty* dollar bid an' now *forty*, now *forty* . . . *thirty* dollar bid and *willya* gimme *forty* . . . *thirty* dollar bid an' now *five* . . . *thirty-five* dollar bid and *willya* gimme *forty* . . ."

Why the chant? One practical reason is that it places less strain on the auctioneer's voice than saying the same words for long periods of time. In addition, the rhythmical pattern of speech often helps draw and maintain the attention of the audience. Finally, as one student of auctions has explained, "Chanting makes less obvious the sometimes long, quiet intervals between bids, thus obscuring the fact that the bidding is anything but lively."

Auctions are a popular form of entertainment in the United States. Whether the bidding increases in **increments** of five dollars or, as in important art auctions, in hundreds of thousands of dollars, they offer excitement, suspense, and, occasionally, high drama. Perhaps this explains why millions of Americans attend auctions each year.

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. Why might a very good **raconteur** make a poor auctioneer?

2. What possibilities for training exist for people who want to become auctioneers?

3. When do you think it would be most important for an auctioneer to be **imperturbable**?

4. How does the passage make clear that the moose head story may be untrue?

5. What is one skill both ball players and auctioneers need to cultivate?

6. How might a good auctioneer add **levity** to an auction?

apocryphal
arcane
convene
expedient
exude
gesticulate
imperturbable
increment
levity
mortify
periphery
raconteur
reiterate
subterfuge
vacillate

7. How do auctioneers make sure their audiences know the last bid that was taken?

8. According to the passage, what is one way the bidding in a private art auction differs from that in a public auction?

9. Describe what you would consider a **mortifying** experience for a bidder.

10. What do auctioneers often use to keep their audience's attention?

11. Why do you think the world of the fine art auction houses is described as **arcane**?

12. What are some **expedients** bidders in fine art auctions use to withdraw from the bidding?

FUN & FASCINATING FACTS

When the King James version of the Bible was published in 1611, the scholars preparing it worked from a Greek translation of the Old Testament made in the third century B.C. Fourteen books were excluded because they were not considered part of the original Jewish scriptures and were of doubtful authenticity. They are called the Apocrypha, from the Greek *apokryphos*, "hidden." The adjective **apocryphal** may refer to these fourteen books or mean "of doubtful authenticity."

Levity is lightness of manner or speech; the word derives from the Latin *levis*, "light in weight." Several

other words share this root. To *levitate* is to become so light that one rises up in defiance of gravity. To *alleviate* a person's woes is to lighten them. *Leavened* bread rises through the action of yeast.

Iterate means "to say again." The prefix *re-* means "again;" putting it before *iterate* to form **reiterate** seems repetitious. Actually, the two words are synonyms, but *reiterate*, perhaps because the prefix strengthens the meaning, is more commonly used; *iterate* has become obsolete.