

Lesson 3

Word List

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

anonymous

ə nān' ə məs

adj. Of an unknown source or unrevealed name.

It is frustrating to be unable to thank the person who gave this **anonymous** donation to our library fund.

anthology

an thāl' ə jē

n. A collection of various writings, such as songs, stories, or poems.

This **anthology** of science-fiction stories includes some by Ray Bradbury, Julian May, and Ursula Le Guin.

conjecture

kən jek' chər

n. A conclusion based on guesswork or insufficient evidence.

Dad's **conjecture** that the derelict building would be a problem proved to be correct when it caught on fire.

v. To form an opinion while lacking sufficient evidence.

The fire chief **conjectured** that oily rags may have been the cause of the fire.

disposition

dis pə zish' ən

n. 1. A person's usual mood; temperament.

People enjoy Alice's company because of her sunny **disposition**.

2. A regular tendency or inclination.

Roberto's **disposition** to argue about everything can sometimes get him into trouble.

encompass

en kum' pəs

v. 1. To enclose or encircle.

Except for one narrow pass, mountains **encompass** the village of Neudorf on all sides.

2. To include.

This year's report on available housing **encompasses** the results of seventy-five surveys.

extricate

eks' tri kāt

v. To free from a difficult or tangled situation.

Extricating our bags from the bus's crowded storage area was much simpler than we thought it would be.

generation

jen ə r ā' shən

n. 1. One step in the line of descent of a family.

Four **generations** were represented at Norma's family reunion last summer.

2. All the people born and living about the same time.

My father's **generation** lived through the Civil Rights Movement and the Vietnam War.

3. The average span of time between the birth of parents and their children.

Within one **generation** this town became a city.

guile

gīl

n. Cunning or deceit in dealing with others; trickery.

The Grimm brothers vividly described the wolf's **guile** toward Little Red Riding Hood.

imperative

im per' ə tiv

adj. 1. Urgent; pressing.

The lawyer made us understand why it is **imperative** that we find the missing papers before tomorrow.

2. Having the power or authority to command.

Because of the **imperative** tone of the letter, Ida began immediately to search for the facts she needed for a reply.

instill or instil

in stil'

v. To introduce gradually in order to establish securely.

Juanita's love of animals was **instilled** during the summer vacations spent at her uncle's farm as a child.

modify
mäd' ə fi

v. 1. To make less extreme or severe.
Congress may **modify** some portions of the welfare reform law they just approved.
2. To make changes in.
The teenagers **modified** their language when they tutored young children after school.
3. In grammar, to limit or restrict in meaning.
Most of us know that in the phrase "the black chair," the adjective "black" **modifies** the noun "chair."

pivot
piv' ət

n. 1. A small bar or rod on which something else turns.
The gate swung shut easily on its well-oiled **pivot**.
2. A person or thing on which others depend.
The quarterback is the **pivot** of a team's offense.
v. To turn on or as if on a pivot.
A weathervane **pivots** when the wind changes direction.
pivotal *adj.* Vitally important; significant.
The first human landing on Mars will be a **pivotal** event in the history of space exploration.

prevalent
prev' ə lənt

adj. Commonly occurring; widely accepted or practiced.
Both chicken pox and the flu were **prevalent** in the Edison Middle School last winter.

recur
rē kər

v. 1. To come up again or to happen again.
Throughout Mozart's *The Magic Flute*, certain musical themes **recur** each time a particular character appears on stage.
2. To come to mind again.
The events on the night of the robbery **recurred** to Hank several times in the following weeks.
recurrence *n.* The act of recurring.
Engineers hope that the new dam will prevent a **recurrence** of flooding.

spontaneous
spän tā' nē əs

adj. 1. Voluntary and unplanned.
The crowd burst into a **spontaneous** chant of "Go! Go! Go!" as the first two runners neared the finish line.
2. Occurring or produced without human labor.
The **spontaneous** growth on the forest floor provided a habitat for a great number of creatures.
spontaneity *n.* (spän tə nā' ə tē) The quality or condition of occurring in an unplanned way.
With an unexpected **spontaneity**, Isabelle rose to embrace her friend.

anonymous
anthology
conjecture
disposition
encompass
extricate
generation
guile
imperative
instill or instil
modify
pivot
prevalent
recur
spontaneous

3A Finding Meanings

Choose two phrases to form a sentence that correctly uses a word from Word List 3. Write each sentence in the space provided.

1. (a) be commonly accepted.
(b) To be pivotal is to

- (c) To be prevalent is to
(d) occur without a known cause.

2. (a) Guile is
(b) Conjecture is

- (c) a failure to take proper precautions.
(d) cunning or deceit in dealing with others.

- 3. (a) To modify something is to
(b) set it free.
- (c) To extricate something is to
(d) restore it to its proper place.

- 4. (a) A recurrence is
(b) An anthology is
- (c) a handwritten document.
(d) a collection of writings.

- 5. (a) An anonymous donation
(b) A spontaneous donation
- (c) is one made without previous thought.
(d) is one made with conditions attached.

- 6. (a) To instill something is to
(b) bring it to an end.
- (c) To modify something is to
(d) make changes to it.

- 7. (a) A recurring event is one
(b) A pivotal event is one
- (c) that is of great importance.
(d) that cannot be repeated.

- 8. (a) To encompass something is to
(b) prevent it from occurring.
- (c) To instill something is to
(d) enclose or encircle it.

- 9. (a) a carefully planned event.
(b) a single step in a family's descendants.
- (c) A conjecture is
(d) A generation is

- 10. (a) An anonymous statement
(b) is one expressing authority.
- (c) An imperative statement
(d) is one that is handwritten.

3B Just the Right Word

Improve each of the following sentences by crossing out the bold phrase and replacing it with a word (or a form of the word) from Word List 3.

1. Hercule Poirot refused to make a **judgment based on insufficient evidence** when asked about the time of the robbery.
2. As soon as Paul Revere knew how the British soldiers were approaching Boston, it was **extremely urgent** that he ride to Lexington with the information.

3. The author of the concise sixteenth-century poem "O Western Wind" is **someone whose name is not known**.
4. While you are at the library, will you look for this **collection of writings** of Bolivian authors?
5. Looking at the color and composition of the children's drawings, I was struck by their **unplanned and natural manner**.
6. At the Air Force Academy, the instructors try to **introduce gradually** a strong sense of duty in the minds of all cadets.
7. After having surgery to remove the tumor, my father received chemotherapy so that the cancer would not **happen again**.
8. Rafael has a **regular tendency** to do things in a careful, thorough manner.
9. This **group of people born at about the same time** was given the name "baby boomers."
10. The gigantic telescope was attached to a huge pin that allowed the machine to **turn freely in a circle**.

3C Applying Meanings

Circle the letter of each correct answer to the questions below. Questions may have more than one correct answer.

anonymous
anthology
conjecture
disposition
encompass
extricate
generation
guile
imperative
instill or instil
modify
pivot
prevalent
recur
spontaneous

1. Which of the following is expressed in an **imperative** manner?

(a) "Go to your room!"	(c) "Please turn down the volume."
(b) "Are you ready?"	(d) "Don't do that!"
2. Which of the following could have a **recurrence**?

(a) a toothache	(c) a nightmare
(b) an illness	(d) a child's first birthday
3. Which of the following could be **modified**?

(a) an adjective	(c) a plan
(b) a building	(d) time
4. Which of the following is a **generation**?

(a) a period of about twenty years	(c) the life span of a plant
(b) all the people born around 1990	(d) the members of your family

5. Which of the following might be included in an **anthology**?
 - (a) a play
 - (b) a poem
 - (c) a short story
 - (d) a three-volume biography

6. Which of the following could be **instilled**?
 - (a) manners
 - (b) punishment
 - (c) values
 - (d) ideas

7. Which of the following could be **spontaneous**?
 - (a) a nosebleed
 - (b) laughter
 - (c) a decision
 - (d) an inventory

8. Which of the following could describe a person's **disposition**?
 - (a) grouchy
 - (b) pleasant
 - (c) tall
 - (d) handsome

3D 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. instill	pivot	turn	recur	S	A
2. anonymous	imperative	unknown	avid	S	A
3. encompass	exclude	conjecture	praise	S	A
4. imperative	exact	urgent	cursory	S	A
5. prevalent	cheap	resilient	rare	S	A
6. spontaneous	pivotal	important	wealthy	S	A
7. guess	corroborate	rebuff	conjecture	S	A
8. modify	recover	recur	change	S	A
9. disposition	guile	innocence	endeavor	S	A
10. remove	extricate	encompass	rebuff	S	A

3E Passage

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

Telling Tales

The invention of writing, more than 5,000 years ago, was a **pivotal** event in human history; indeed, without it there could be no recorded history. But even before writing began, stories existed, often in the form of folk tales. This much older spoken tradition probably goes back to the very beginnings of language itself. Folk tales did not need to be written in order to be preserved because they were passed on by word of mouth from one **generation** to the next. Most were **anonymous** and the work of many different people. As the tale was told and retold, it changed, each teller **modifying** it to fit a particular audience.

One famous collection of folk tales, first recorded around the fourteenth century, is *The Arabian Nights*, also called *One Thousand and One Nights*. The title comes from the efforts of the storyteller, Scheherazade, to keep her husband, the king of what is now India and Indochina, from killing her. She stopped each night's story at a suspenseful point so that her husband would allow her to live one more night to tell its ending. Scholars think that many of these tales may have originated in Syria and Egypt, while others could have come from India, but their actual origin remains a matter of **conjecture**.

Not until the early nineteenth century was a serious attempt made to give European folk tales a permanent written form. In Germany, two brothers, Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, collected hundreds of folk tales from all parts of the country and published them in an **anthology**, now well known as *Grimm's Fairy Tales*. In its pages Rapunzel, Hansel and Gretel, Cinderella, and Little Red Riding Hood make their first appearance in print.

While one purpose of folk tales may have been to entertain, that was not their only function. The reason they have survived for so long and are so **prevalent** in all human societies is that they educate their audiences. They seek to **instill** values that the society may consider **imperative** for its survival, such as a sense of right and wrong or the need for self-reliance. In addition to providing models for appropriate behavior, they give explanations, often derived from folklore, of the origin and meaning of the natural world.

Scholars have been struck by how frequently the same situations **recur** in folk tales from many different places; over three hundred versions of the Cinderella story, for example, have been identified. Perhaps the same stories appeared **spontaneously** in many distant societies, or perhaps they were spread by travelers and adapted to fit the needs of their listeners. In addition to the same stories, the same themes are also found again and again. One of the commonest is the use of **guile** as a weapon of the helpless against the powerful. There are no better examples of this than the *Uncle Remus* stories of Joel Chandler Harris, based on African-American folk tales of the American South.

One of the funniest of the *Uncle Remus* stories tells of Brer Rabbit, who falls into the clutches of Brer Fox. He begs his captor not to throw him into the brier patch, saying he would rather be hanged, drowned, or even skinned alive. Brer Fox, being of a mean **disposition**, promptly does what his victim has begged him not to do. Brer Rabbit, of course, **extricates** himself with ease from the brier patch, mocking Brer Fox as he scampers away by calling out that he was "bred and born in a brier patch."

Folk tales, coming from every part of the globe, **encompass** the whole of human experience. From their early beginnings, long before the dawn of history, until the fairly recent past, they had no competition from other forms of entertainment. Today, worldwide television and radio, movies, and the mass marketing of books compete for children's attention. Is there a danger that in the future folk tales **will** survive only in scholarly collections? Probably not as long as children, snuggled in their beds, experience the magic that begins with the spoken words, "Once upon a time."

anonymous
anthology
conjecture
disposition
encompass
extricate
generation
guile
imperative
instill or instil
modify
pivot
prevalent
recur
spontaneous

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. Questions and answers will then contain all fifteen words (or forms of the words).

1. Why was it **imperative** that Scheherazade keep the king entertained?

2. What is the meaning of **generation** as it is used in the passage?

3. Why are the Grimm brothers **pivotal** figures in the history of folktales?

4. How would you describe the temperament of Scheherazade's husband?

5. Who first made up the stories of Cinderella and Little Red Riding Hood?

6. Why would it be inaccurate to say that Scheherazade's stories were **spontaneous**?

7. In which parts of the world do folk tales commonly occur?

8. What purpose do folk tales have besides being entertaining?

9. Why do you think folk tales using the theme of **guile** are so common?

10. Why did Brer Rabbit ask to be thrown into the brier patch?

11. Why do you think the same themes **recur** in folk tales from different countries?

12. What is *The Arabian Nights*?

13. What is the meaning of **encompass** as it is used in the passage?

14. In what way might a written folk tale differ from a spoken one?

15. What **conjecture** is made in the passage about the age of folk tales?

FUN & FASCINATING FACTS

A person who collects the best writings of different authors or poets and arranges them into an **anthology** could be compared to a person who gathers a variety of flowers and arranges them into a bouquet. If this comparison seems a little far-fetched, consider the origin of the word *anthology*. It comes from two Greek words, *anthos*, “flower,” and *legein*, “to gather.”

In addition to the definitions given in the word list, **imperative** has a grammatical meaning. It is the name for the mood of a verb used in giving orders or commands. In the sentence, “Stop him from crossing the street!”, the verb *stop* is in the imperative mood.

William Shakespeare (1564–1616) is rightly regarded as one of the world’s great writers; yet it would seem that he couldn’t spell his own name! Samples of his signature that have survived show his name spelled in several different ways. Such variation, however, was common then with the spelling of many words, not just names. Not until the eighteenth century when dictionaries came into use was a single spelling for each word accepted as correct. A few words, however, escaped being standardized in this way; **instill** (which can also be spelled *instil*) is one of them. When a dictionary gives two different spellings of a word, the one given first is preferred.