

OK
Lesson 18

Word List

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

acclaim

ə klām'

v. To praise strongly or applaud loudly.

Car magazines have **acclaimed** the Z202's performance.

n. Strong praise or loud applause; approval.

The musicians from China won the critic's **acclaim** last night at Symphony Hall.

bigot

big' ət

n. One who is not tolerant of those people who are different in some way; a prejudiced person.

Only a **bigot** would claim that one race is superior to another.

bigotry n. The intolerant attitude or behavior of such a person.

In one of their songs, the Beatles asked listeners to imagine a world free of **bigotry**.

covet

kuv' ət

v. To have a strong and envious desire for, especially for something belonging to another.

The cattle ranchers **coveted** the lush pastures where the shepherds grazed their flocks.

coveted adj. Greatly prized; highly desired.

Former President Jimmy Carter won the **coveted** Nobel Peace Prize in 2002.

deceased

dē sēst'

adj. Dead.

The man's thoughts often turned to his **deceased** wife.

n. (with *the*) One who has died recently.

The funeral director asked if I were a relative of the **deceased**.

formidable

fōr' mə də bəl

adj. 1. Causing fear or apprehension.

A team with a fourteen-game winning streak is a **formidable** opponent.

2. Difficult.

Crossing the Rocky Mountains was a **formidable** task for settlers heading west.

ghetto

get' ō

n. A section of a city occupied by a minority group of people, usually because of poverty or social pressure.

The Warsaw **ghetto** in Poland was the location of the largest uprising during World War II.

momentous

mō men' təs

adj. Very important.

The day of high school graduation is a **momentous** one for students.

oppress

ə pres

v. 1. To weigh down with worry.

Fears of job layoffs **oppressed** workers in the auto industry.

2. To keep down by severe and unjust use of force.

According to the Bible story, the Egyptian pharaoh **oppressed** the Israelite slaves until Moses led them to freedom.

oppression n. (ə presh' ən) The act or state of being oppressed.

The **oppression** of African Americans led to the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and '60s.

oppressive adj. Very harsh or burdensome.

This **oppressive** heat makes one very lethargic.

overwhelm
ō vər hwelm'

v. 1. To defeat utterly and completely.

Sioux and Cheyenne warriors **overwhelmed** General Custer's army at the Battle of Little Big Horn in 1876.

2. To deeply affect the mind or emotions of.

We were **overwhelmed** by the welcome we received.

3. To upset; to turn over.

A huge wave **overwhelmed** the small boat.

overwhelming *adj.* Great in strength or effect.

The union vote was an **overwhelming** 98 to 17 in favor of ending the strike.

perceive
pər sēv'

v. 1. To become aware of through the senses, especially the sense of sight.

I **perceived** a figure in the distance but could not make out who it was.

2. To take in information through the mind.

I **perceived** a subtle shift in their attitude.

perception *n.* (pər sep' shən) The act of perceiving or the thing perceived.

Because I am farsighted, my **perception** of close objects is slightly fuzzy.

premiere
prē mir'

n. The first performance of a play, film, etc.

The play, a big success in London, has its North American **premiere** this Saturday.

prospective
prə spek' tiv

adj. Expected or likely to happen or become.

The **prospective** bride wants to have a June wedding.

spurn
spɜrn

v. To refuse in a scornful way.

I **spurned** their offer of help because there were too many conditions attached to it.

staunch
stōnch

adj. Faithful; true; strong.

Mr. Fielding, a **staunch** supporter of Little League baseball, donated the uniforms for our team.

theme
thēm

n. 1. A dominant idea, as in art, literature, or music; a topic or subject of.

The **theme** of the story is the danger of excessive pride.

2. A short essay on a single subject.

I had to write a **theme** on ambition.

3. A series of musical notes on which variations are made; a melody that is associated with a film or television show.

The concert began with a medley of **themes** from popular television shows.

18A Finding Meanings

Choose two phrases to form a sentence that correctly uses a word from Word List 18. Write each sentence in the space provided.

1. (a) A momentous victory is
(b) A prospective victory is
- (c) one that stands out from all others.
(d) one that was gained unfairly.

2. (a) be impossible to defeat.
(b) To be oppressed is to
- (c) To be acclaimed is to
(d) receive high praise.

3. (a) to become aware of it.
(b) To spurn a position is
- (c) To covet a position is
(d) to want it very badly.

4. (a) The theme of a TV series is
(b) the melody associated with it.
- (c) its reception by the critics.
(d) The premiere of a movie is

5. (a) A ghetto is
(b) A bigot is
- (c) someone who is intolerant of those who are different.
(d) a remark that shows one is lacking in good manners.

6. (a) lose possession of it.
(b) To spurn something is to
- (c) To perceive something is to
(d) refuse it scornfully.

7. (a) one that is actively involved.
(b) A prospective partner is
- (c) A deceased partner is
(d) one that has died.

8. (a) To overwhelm a nation is to
(b) To oppress a nation is to
- (c) join forces with it.
(d) keep it down by force.

9. (a) A ghetto is
(b) A premiere is
- (c) a section of a city occupied by a minority group.
(d) a short essay on a single subject.

10. (a) To overwhelm a problem is to
(b) To perceive a problem is to
- (c) become aware of it.
(d) be defeated by it.

acclaim

bigot

covet

deceased

formidable

ghetto

momentous

oppress

overwhelm

perceive

premiere

prospective

spurn

staunch

theme

18B 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 18.

1. The problems we face are **very difficult and will not be solved easily**.
2. The collapse of Communism ended the seventy-year **weighing down by force** of the Russian people.
3. The **person who has just died** was one of my grandparents' oldest friends.
4. The governor was mentioned as a **person who might be nominated as a** member of the Supreme Court.
5. Justice Thurgood Marshall was a **strong and faithful** defender of civil rights for all Americans.
6. Alcohol distorts our **ability to obtain a clear picture** of what is happening around us.
7. I submitted a **short piece of writing** on the power of love to change people's lives.
8. Over the years, the United States has passed laws in an attempt to combat **intolerant attitudes directed against those who belong to different racial or ethnic groups**.
9. The movie's **first public performance** was attended by Hollywood's most glamorous stars.
10. I was **deeply affected emotionally** by my friends' generosity.

18C Applying Meanings

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

1. Which of the following might have a **premiere**?
 - (a) a new play
 - (b) a new movie
 - (c) a new building
 - (d) a new law
2. Which of the following might someone **covet**?
 - (a) a neighbor's new car
 - (b) good health
 - (c) a reprimand
 - (d) a friend's job

3. Which of the following can be **spurned**?
- (a) a suggestion (c) a privilege
(b) ill health (d) an invitation
4. Which of the following can have a **theme**?
- (a) a novel (c) a word
(b) a poem (d) a painting
5. Which of the following can be **perceived**?
- (a) the answer to a problem (c) a threat
(b) a ship on the horizon (d) loneliness
6. Which of the following might **overwhelm** a person?
- (a) a grievous loss (c) a ruthless enemy
(b) an arduous task (d) a trifling matter
7. Which of the following can be **formidable**?
- (a) opposition (c) a journey
(b) a kitten (d) a color
8. Which of the following can be **acclaimed**?
- (a) lost property (c) a result
(b) a victory (d) a book

acclaim
bigot
covet
deceased
formidable
ghetto
momentous
oppress
overwhelm
perceive
premiere
prospective
spurn
staunch
theme

18D Word Study

Sometimes words have such similar spellings or meanings that it is easy to confuse them. Read the pairs of sentences below. Then choose the word that best fits each sentence.

lethal/mortal

1. A baseball bat used improperly can be a _____ weapon.
2. The wound Hamilton received in the duel was _____.

loath/loathe

3. The cat was _____ to leave her comfy spot by the fire.
4. "I _____ these New England winters," said Sally.

menial/manual

5. _____ workers get more exercise than office workers.
6. Many have to do _____ work at their first job.

complement/compliment

7. The plum sauce is a nice _____ to the roast duck.
8. I gave a _____ to the chef for such a fine dish.

pander/ponder

9. The candidate said he would not _____ to the public.
10. While you _____ what to do next, your opponent acts.

principle/principal

11. Bananas are the _____ export of Central America.
12. The _____ of "one person, one vote" must be upheld.

horde/hoard

13. Aunt May likes to _____ her money and rarely spends a dollar.
14. A _____ of celebrating soccer fans rushed onto the field.

wary/weary

15. We were too _____ to eat and wished only to sleep.
16. Be _____ of advertisements that promise to make you rich.

momentous/momentary

17. January 1, 1863 was a _____ day in U.S. history.
18. Roller coasters provide _____ excitement.

vocation/vacation

19. We took our _____ in Mexico this year.
20. Poetry was Robert Frost's hobby and his _____.

18E Passage

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

An American Classic

When Lorraine Hansberry's play *A Raisin in the Sun* opened in New York on March 11, 1959, it was a **momentous** day in the history of the American theater. It was the first play written by an African American woman to appear on Broadway, and it opened up the American theater to African Americans as nothing had before. Not only that, *A Raisin in the Sun* broadened people's **perceptions** of the African American experience in society as a whole.

Even though the reviews were **overwhelmingly** favorable, not even its **staunchest** supporters could have predicted the impact the play would have on the American theater. It went on to win the **coveted** New York Drama Critics Circle award for Best Play of the Year against **formidable** opposition that included works by two of America's greatest playwrights, Tennessee Williams and Eugene O'Neill.

A Raisin in the Sun is about African Americans confronting **oppression** in their daily lives. It was a **theme** that Hansberry was painfully familiar with in her own life. In 1938, her parents bought a house in an all-white neighborhood. The **bigotry** of their new neighbors resulted in a legal battle over property rights. When a lower court ordered the Hansberrys to move out, they fought the case all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court. They won, but the family suffered terribly in the process. Prejudice quickly escalated to violence. When Lorraine was eight years old, she was almost killed by a concrete slab thrown by an angry neighbor; it narrowly missed her head.

Hansberry's play tells the story of Lena Younger, who has received ten thousand dollars from her recently **deceased** husband's life insurance. Her dream is to move her family of five out of their cramped and rundown apartment in Chicago's South Side **ghetto**. She wants to use the money to buy a home in a white neighborhood, but doing so is not so simple.

Mrs. Younger is pressured by her son Walter to give him the money to improve his own financial state by investing in a liquor store. At the same time, her daughter Beneatha needs money to pursue her dream of attending medical school. After much thought, Mrs. Younger decides to try to keep the family together by making a down payment on a house with about one-third of the money. She gives the remaining sum to Walter under the condition that he set aside \$3,000 for his sister's tuition; the rest he may use as he wishes.

Before the family moves in, a **prospective** white neighbor contacts Mrs. Younger. He explains that he is speaking for the entire neighborhood and offers to buy back the house at a handsome profit for Mrs. Younger. Recognizing the offer as one motivated by blatant racism, she **spurns** it.

To make matters more complicated, the family soon learns that Walter's business partner has cheated him out of the remaining money, including the amount that was supposed to go toward Beneatha's education.

The play ends with Mrs. Younger holding firm against all pressures and finding the courage to face new ones. The family will move into the all-white neighborhood, with all its problems, dangers, and opportunities.

A Raisin in the Sun ran for 533 performances on Broadway, and touring companies took it all over America, offering opportunities for black actors on a scale never known before. African Americans turned out in huge numbers to see a major American play that addressed the plight of minorities attempting to improve their lives. In 1984, twenty-five years after its Broadway **premiere**, the play was performed at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C., and was shown on public television. By then it had won unanimous **acclaim** as an American classic.

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. In what year did *A Raisin in the Sun* open on Broadway?
2. What effect did *A Raisin in the Sun* have on people?
3. What is the meaning of **theme** as it is used in the passage?
4. Why was March 11, 1959, a **momentous** day in the history of the American theater?
5. What important award did the play win?
6. Why must winning the award have given Lorraine Hansberry special satisfaction?
7. Why might it have been difficult to get tickets to see the play?
8. What might **staunch** supporters of the play have done to help it succeed?
9. Why is the person making the offer to buy the house from Mrs. Younger described as a **prospective** neighbor?
10. How does the passage show that Mrs. Younger scorns the offer?

11. What sort of person is the neighbor who offers to buy back the house from Mrs. Younger?

12. How does Mrs. Younger deal with the **oppression** she encounters?

13. Why does Mr. Younger not appear in the play?

14. Why were many African Americans able to identify with the play's message?

15. What status had the play achieved by 1984?

FUN & FASCINATING FACTS

The verb **covet** should not be confused with the adjective **covert**, which means "hidden." (I stole a *covert* glance at the letter, trying to read the signature.)

The adjectives **deceased** and **dead** are synonyms, but note that *deceased* refers only to human beings. It is often used to soften the harshness of death. ("My *deceased* husband" falls more gently on the ear than "my *dead* husband.") *Dead* is the more general term and is applied to any living creature or figuratively to other things. (The bill is *dead* unless the president can find six more senators to support it.)

Don't confuse **premiere** with **premier**, an adjective meaning "first in position or importance." (The

premier cabinet positions are the Secretary of State, the Secretary of the Treasury, the Secretary of Defense, and the Attorney General.) *Premier* is also a noun and means "the chief officer in a parliamentary system." (Winston Churchill was the *premier* of Britain during the darkest days of World War Two.)

In addition to its adjective form, **staunch** has a verb form meaning "to stop the flow of." *Stanch* is a verb with the same meaning. (Pressure applied to a wound will *stanch* the flow of blood.)

Confusion arises because as verbs these two words can be used interchangeably; however, only *staunch* has an adjective form.