

# Lesson 14

## Word List

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

### congenial

kən jēn' yəl

*adj.* 1. Getting along well with others; affable.

The people in the small Italian town were very **congenial** when the tourist asked many questions.

2. Suited to one's needs or tastes; agreeable.

We found a **congenial** little cabin right on the beach.

### decipher

dē sī' fər

*v.* 1. To convert from a code or secret writing into ordinary language; to decode.

You **decipher** the code by replacing numbers with the corresponding letters.

2. To interpret the meaning of something puzzling; to solve.

The writing in these old letters is so faded that it is almost impossible to **decipher** the words.

### dissect

di sekt'

*v.* 1. To cut into in order to study.

Students taking the biology course **dissect** a dead frog in order to learn about the internal organs.

2. To study closely; to analyze.

After Coach Willard and the team members had watched the video of last week's game, they **dissected** the plays that had gone wrong.

### enigma

ə nig' mə

*n.* Anything that is puzzling, mysterious, or hard to figure out.

Even after many studies, the purpose of the huge, complex designs formed in the dirt of the Peruvian desert remains an **enigma**.

**enigmatic** *adj.* (en ig mat' ik) Puzzling; mysterious.

After I heard Lucia's **enigmatic** phone message, I called her immediately to find out what was going on.

### ineffectual

in ə fek' chōō əl

*adj.* Not bringing about the desired result, futile.

My attempt to grow tomato plants from seed has been **ineffectual**, with most withering before they had sprouted leaves.

### infallible

in fal' ə bəl

*adj.* 1. Incapable of making an error; never wrong.

Peterson's book is an **infallible** guide to the birds of the salt marshes.

2. Unlikely to fail or go wrong.

Rubbing a nettle sting with dock leaves is an **infallible** remedy.

### irrepressible

ir rē pres' ə bəl

*adj.* Incapable of being controlled or held back.

Charlie's **irrepressible** sense of humor helps to make history class fun.

### luminous

loo' mə nəs

*adj.* 1. Giving off light.

Do you have a watch with a **luminous** face that you can bring on our camping trip?

2. Clear; easy to understand.

Jennie's history teacher praised her **luminous** prose in her research paper on the mill girls of Lowell.

### millennium

mi len' ē əm

*n.* A period of one thousand years.

A **millennium** is ten times as long as the one-hundred year period of a century.

**mire**  
mīr

*n.* An area of wet, swampy ground; deep mud.

Last night's heavy rains have turned the field into a **mire**, delaying the planting of seed for several days.

*v.* To get stuck as if in a mire; unable to make progress.

The organizers of the road race became **mired** in a bewildering set of rules and regulations.

**pestilence**  
pes' tə ləns

*n.* A rapidly spreading and usually fatal disease.

The **pestilence** that swept through Europe in the 1300s killed three-quarters of the population.

**stagnate**  
stag' nāt

*v.* To fail to develop, change, or move.

Students' minds may **stagnate** if they are not challenged.

**stagnant** *adj.* (stag' nənt) Not moving, changing, or developing.

As we approached the edge of the lake, we found **stagnant**, muddy water instead of the cold clear ripples we had expected.

**sublime**  
sə blīm'

*adj.* Great or noble in expression, thought, or manner; splendid.

Standing on the rim of the Grand Canyon at dawn, we had a **sublime** panorama of the canyon walls changing color in the morning light.

**vie**  
vī

*v.* To compete for, as in a contest.

By January, the top eight schools in the state **vied** for the championship.

**voluminous**  
və lōōm' ə nəs

*adj.* Having great bulk or volume; ample.

The museum will exhibit a select group of bowls and jugs from its **voluminous** collection of Pueblo pottery.

## 14A Finding Meanings

Choose two phrases to form a sentence that correctly uses a word from Word List 14. Write each sentence in the space provided.

congenial

decipher

dissect

enigma

ineffectual

infallible

irrepressible

luminous

millennium

mire

pestilence

stagnate

sublime

vie

voluminous

1. (a) is to prefer one's own company. (c) To be congenial  
(b) is to be unable to control one's self. (d) To be irrepressible

2. (a) a swamp. (c) A mire is  
(b) a serious disagreement. (d) A pestilence is

3. (a) A sublime poem (c) is one that is unintentionally humorous.  
(b) An enigmatic poem (d) is one that uplifts and ennobles.

4. (a) give up too easily. (c) fail to change or develop.  
(b) To stagnate is to (d) To vie is to

5. (a) A congenial person is one  
(b) who gets along easily with others.
- (c) An enigmatic person is one  
(d) who works tirelessly.
- 
6. (a) To decipher something  
(b) To dissect something
- (c) is to make out what it says.  
(d) is to put it back together.
- 
7. (a) one that is extremely lengthy.  
(b) one that has illustrations.
- (c) A voluminous account is  
(d) A luminous account is
- 
8. (a) A millennium is  
(b) a fatal, rapidly spreading disease.
- (c) A pestilence is  
(d) a mass movement of people.
- 
9. (a) one that is difficult to understand.  
(b) one that always works.
- (c) An infallible remedy is  
(d) An ineffectual remedy is
- 
10. (a) to cut into it in order to study it.  
(b) to obtain it by underhanded means.
- (c) To vie for something is  
(d) To dissect something is

## 14B 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 14.

- Even though we boarded up the windows before the hurricane to protect them, our efforts were **not successful**.
- The four students on our science team will **answer questions to compete** with other student teams from all over the country.
- What role Ms. Layton had in the store fire remains an **unclear puzzle that no one has been able to figure out** to this day.
- Claribel's enthusiasm for skydiving was **too strong for her to keep quiet about**.
- The **rapidly spreading and usually fatal disease** affected rich and poor alike.
- When Aunt Anne developed asthma, she moved to Arizona where she found the dry climate very **suitable to her medical requirements**.

7. The year 2001 marked the beginning of the third **period of one thousand years**.
8. Grandmother's eyes were **bright and seemed to glow with light** as she talked of her son, my father.
9. George felt **unable to proceed in any way while he was involved** in credit-card debt.
10. The notes to this edition of Shakespeare's plays are **extensive and take up many pages**.

## 14C 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 can be **luminous**?
- (a) the moon (c) a painting  
(b) a poem (d) a calamity
2. Which of the following can be **infallible**?
- (a) a guide (c) a rock  
(b) an injury (d) a remedy
3. Which of the following could be **stagnant**?
- (a) water (c) an organization  
(b) air (d) a society
4. Which of the following can be **deciphered**?
- (a) a message (c) a tool  
(b) a word (d) a quarrel
5. For which of the following might people **vie**?
- (a) a prize (c) a reward  
(b) an advantage (d) a job
6. Which of the following can be **sublime**?
- (a) a poem (c) a painting  
(b) a laugh (d) a crime

congenial

decipher

dissect

enigma

ineffectual

infallible

irrepressible

luminous

millennium

mire

pestilence

stagnate

sublime

vie

voluminous

7. Which of the following can be **dissected**?

- (a) a body (c) a report  
(b) a problem (d) a kidney

8. Which of the following can be **irrepressible**?

- (a) joy (c) laughter  
(b) a recluse (d) a flood

## 14D Word Study

Change each of the nouns below into an adjective by changing, adding, or dropping the suffix. Write the word in the space provided. Both forms of all of the words in this exercise are from this or an earlier lesson.

1. malevolence \_\_\_\_\_
2. innovation \_\_\_\_\_
3. prestige \_\_\_\_\_
4. agility \_\_\_\_\_
5. affluence \_\_\_\_\_
6. atrocity \_\_\_\_\_
7. inanity \_\_\_\_\_
8. tumult \_\_\_\_\_
9. ardor \_\_\_\_\_
10. renown \_\_\_\_\_
11. reticence \_\_\_\_\_
12. enigma \_\_\_\_\_

## 14E Passage

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

### Leonardo da Vinci: Renaissance Man

The word *renaissance* means “rebirth” and is applied to the reawakening of interest in learning and the arts that began in Italy in the fifteenth century. This brought to an end the **millennium** known as the Middle Ages, during which learning and the arts **stagnated**. It is impossible to set precise dates for the Renaissance, but it began to flower around 1450, and Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1517) is considered by many to be its supreme genius.

Leonardo was born in the small village of Vinci, near Florence, and as a youth studied painting and drawing in the workshop of the distinguished teacher Andrea del Verrocchio. His **congenial** disposition soon made him a popular member of Florence’s artistic circles, while his extraordinary artistic ability, coupled with an **irrepressible** curiosity about the workings of nature, gave promise of his future greatness. His mind teemed with fresh ideas about music, science, and mathematics, a condition that exemplified the new spirit of the age. Leonardo would learn, not from the ancient writings of classical Greece and Rome, long regarded as **infallible** guides to everything from the movements of the heavens to the workings of the human body, but from the world he saw about him.

In his thirtieth year, Leonardo moved to Milan to serve as a military engineer at the court of Ludovico Sforza. Shortly after his arrival, the city was devastated by the **pestilence** known variously as the Plague or the Black Death. The traditional view was that such events were sent by God to punish the wicked. In contrast, Leonardo’s idea was to clean up the slums in hopes of preventing this tragedy from happening again. He filled his **voluminous** notebooks with designs for many projects, including the layout of towns, the building of churches, and improvements in weapons of war. He even drew up plans for submarines and helicopters. He wrote his notes in a left-handed “mirror script” that can only be **deciphered** by holding them to a mirror and reading their reflection.

Leonardo lived during a turbulent period when political power rested with individual city-states that **vied** with each other for supremacy. In 1499, the French, allied to the city-state of Venice and backed by Pope Alexander VI, invaded Milan, ending Sforza’s rule and causing Leonardo to flee the city. Two years before his departure, he had completed his painting of the *Last Supper* on a wall of a Milan convent. Most painters at that time applied the paint onto the plaster before it had dried, a technique known as fresco, which gave a **luminous** quality to the finished work. In contrast, Leonardo painted the *Last Supper* on dry plaster, using paints he had created. Although the painting began to deteriorate slightly even during Leonardo’s lifetime, its dramatic composition and **sublime** spiritual quality have inspired awe in its viewers.

The second great work of art for which Leonardo is renowned is the portrait of a young woman whose **enigmatic** smile has intrigued people for centuries. This painting became known as the *Mona Lisa*. Leonardo painted it in 1503, following his return to Florence. Also dating from this period is a series of precise anatomical drawings made by Leonardo. At that time, knowledge of the workings of the human body was nonexistent. Doctors relied on centuries-old texts to treat disease, making medical treatment largely **ineffectual**. Leonardo obtained corpses from a Florence hospital and **dissected** over thirty of these in order to observe and make a record of their structure.

In 1513, Leonardo moved to Rome to work, but he often became so **mired** in thinking through and recording the ideas running through his mind that he did not complete very many projects. Francis I, the enlightened young king of France, invited Leonardo to his country where he remained the king’s guest for the last two and a half years of his life. Out of gratitude, Leonardo gave the *Mona Lisa* to the young king. It has remained in France ever since, where it yearly attracts people from all over the world to view it in Paris’s Louvre museum.

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 wasn't Milan a **congenial** place for Leonardo to be in 1499?  

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2. What evidence do we have of Leonardo's wide-ranging interests?  

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3. How does the passage indicate that we still do not know the reason for the *Mona Lisa's* smile?  

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4. What did da Vinci achieve in his painting of the *Last Supper*?  

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5. What effect does the fresco technique give to a mural?  

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6. Give approximate dates of the **millennium** known as the Middle Ages.  

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7. How did scholars **decipher** Leonardo's writings?  

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8. How do we know that Sforza's defense of Milan was **ineffectual**?  

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9. What is the meaning of **stagnated** as it is used in the passage?  

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10. Why was so little known about the human body during Leonardo's time?  

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11. Why did the ideas of the Greeks and Romans go unquestioned by most people?

12. Name one human quality that helped bring about the Renaissance.

13. How does the passage show that Francis I was not **mired** in the past?

14. What did people believe was the cause of the Black Death?

15. How would you describe the relationship between Milan and Venice?

### FUN & FASCINATING FACTS

The Greek word for “fable” is *ainos*, and since the meaning of a fable has to be figured out, the verb *ainissesthai* came to mean “to speak in a puzzling way.” From the Greek verb came the Latin *aenigma*, “a puzzling speech or riddle.” Finally, the word passed into English as **enigma**, “anything that is puzzling or hard to figure out; a mystery.”

**Millennium** comes from the Latin words *mille*, “thousand,” and *annus*, “year.” The plural form is *millennia* or *millenniums*. The Latin *centum*, “one hundred,” gives us *century*, “a period of one hundred years,” and *decem*, “ten,” gives us *decade*, “a period of ten years.”

*Millennium* has a specialized meaning from the Book of Revelation, the last book of the Bible. Reference is made there to the anticipated reign of Christ on earth for a period of one thousand years. Christians refer to this period as “the millennium,” and *millennium* has acquired in this way a secondary meaning, “a hoped for period of joy, peace, prosperity, and justice.”

The Latin for “swamp” is *stagnum* and gives us the verb **stagnate**. The water in a swamp does not flow; it *stagnates*. The adjective form is *stagnant*. The water in a swamp is *stagnant*.