

Lesson 10

Word List

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

aquatic
ə kwat' ik

adj. 1. Growing or living in or on water.
Water lilies are **aquatic** plants.
2. Done in or upon water.
Water skiing is an **aquatic** sport.

assert
ə sɜrt'

v. To say firmly; to declare.
Charles **asserted** that the money entrusted to him was in a safe place.
assertion *n.* A firm statement or declaration.
No one challenged her **assertion** that Tuckerman's Ravine was too dangerous to ski.
assertive *adj.* Self-assured; bold and confident.
Because of his **assertive** manner, he was able to obtain an interview for the job.

avert
ə vɜrt'

v. 1. To turn away.
I **averted** my eyes from the scary scenes in the movie.
2. To keep from happening.
The driver **averted** an accident by hitting the brake.

bleak
blēk

adj. 1. Without much hope.
The company's future looked **bleak** when the new product failed to sell.
2. Cold and dreary; exposed to cold winds and bad weather.
Penguins seem to flourish in Antarctica's **bleak** climate.

blithe
blīth

adj. 1. Cheerful; carefree.
The children's **blithe** mood is captured beautifully in the Renoir painting.
2. Not showing proper care; heedless.
The driver showed a **blithe** indifference for the safety of others on the highway.
blithely *adv.* In a carefree manner.
I was reminded of her highly positive attitude when she walked **blithely** out the door.

docile
dəs' əl

adj. Well behaved; easy to handle.
Because it was my first attempt at riding, I was given the most **docile** horse in the stable.

dwindle
dwin' dəl

v. To keep on becoming less; to grow smaller in number or amount.
My hopes of winning the arm wrestling match **dwindled** when I saw the size of my opponent's muscles.

lethal
lē' thəl

adj. Causing, or capable of causing, death.
A rattlesnake's bite can be **lethal**.

monitor
mān' i tər

v. To watch closely and frequently; to observe and make note.
Some cities **monitor** the amount of pollution in the air.
n. A video screen used to display information.
The sales clerk checked the **monitor** to see if the book was still in stock.

mutilate
myōōt' l āt

v. To hurt or damage by cutting into, cutting off, or cutting out.
Steel traps are cruel because they **mutilate** the animals caught in them.

nimble
nim' bəl

adj. 1. Able to move quickly and easily.
Karen's **nimble** fingers plucked the harp strings with amazing speed.
2. Showing quickness of thinking; clever.
It takes a **nimble** mind to solve such a difficult problem.

plight
plīt

n. A difficult or dangerous condition or situation.
The **plight** of homeless people was the principal subject of tonight's evening news.

ponderous
pān' dər əs

adj. Heavy and slow moving.
The elephant made its way with **ponderous** steps through the clearing.

verge
vərj

n. An edge, border, or brink.
After being on the **verge** of extinction, the bald eagle made a remarkable comeback in the 1980s.
v. To come close to the edge or border of.
The story is not merely silly; it **verges** on the ridiculous.

vigilant
vij' ə lənt

adj. Watchful; ready for danger.
Health authorities remain **vigilant** for any signs of the epidemic's return.

10A Finding Meanings

Choose two phrases to form a sentence that correctly uses a word from Word List 10. Write each sentence in the space provided.

1. (a) be the cause of it. (c) To avert something is to
(b) To mutilate something is to (d) prevent it from happening.

2. (a) To monitor something is to (c) To assert something is to
(b) hide it from view. (d) declare it forcefully.

3. (a) To mutilate something is to (c) To verge on something is to
(b) cause it to happen. (d) hurt it by cutting into it.

4. (a) A blithe response is one (c) that shows quickness of mind.
(b) that is meant to intimidate. (d) A nimble response is one

5. (a) A vigilant creature is one (c) that is watchful.
(b) whose bite can cause death. (d) A docile creature is one

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|----------------------------------|---|
| 6. (a) A plight is | (c) a video screen that displays information. |
| (b) A monitor is | (d) a blatant denial of what is obviously true. |
| <hr/> | |
| 7. (a) can be changed as needed. | (c) A blithe response is one that |
| (b) suggests no future problems. | (d) A bleak response is one that |
| <hr/> | |
| 8. (a) a difficult situation. | (c) an amusing diversion. |
| (b) A verge is | (d) A plight is |
| <hr/> | |
| 9. (a) A fortune that verges | (c) A fortune that dwindles |
| (b) increases monthly. | (d) decreases in size. |

10B 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 10.

- Ramone **said in a very forceful way** that a ten-year-old is competent to babysit.
- You have to be **able to move quickly and easily** to get on the gymnastics team.
- Household chemicals such as bleach and other cleaning products can be **capable of causing death** if swallowed.
- This machine **keeps a check on** the patient's condition around the clock.
- The White Mountains can be very **cold and dreary with strong winds and bad weather** in winter.
- Some plants are **of a kind that flourish in water**, so they do not need soil in order to grow.
- Such negligence in maintaining the vehicle **comes close to bordering** on indifference to the passengers' safety.
- Although its loud bark can be intimidating, the dog is actually quite **easy to control**.
- Following the accident, the driver drove off **as though not caring**, seemingly unaware of the damage to his car.

10. Walruses are **heavy and slow moving** on land but graceful in the water.

11. I **turned away** my eyes from the light when it became too bright.

10C 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 are **aquatic** activities?

- (a) boating (c) golfing
(b) scuba diving (d) sunbathing

2. Which of the following is **ponderous**?

- (a) a mouse (c) a bulldozer
(b) a planet (d) a hippopotamus

3. Which of the following can be **nimble**?

- (a) a mind (c) a squirrel
(b) a tree (d) a dancer

4. Which of the following might be a **plight**?

- (a) being evicted (c) being a casualty
(b) inheriting money (d) facing a ruthless opponent

5. Which of the following might an **assertive** person say?

- (a) "Get in line." (c) "I was here first."
(b) "You don't belong here!" (d) "Oh no, you don't!"

6. Which of the following can be **bleak**?

- (a) a region (c) a statement
(b) a mountain (d) a delicacy

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

- (a) a snake bite (c) a garland
(b) a gunshot wound (d) a reprimand

8. Which of the following might a **docile** person do?

- (a) push to the front of the line (c) get irate with a sales clerk
(b) wait patiently until called (d) admonish a stranger

aquatic

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monitor

mutilate

nimble

plight

ponderous

verge

vigilant

10D Word Study

Write an antonym for each of these words. Choose from the list of words below.

kind	fierce	miserable	advance	lax
ponderous	annoy	hopeful	harmless	increase

- | | | | |
|-------------|-------|-------------|-------|
| 1. placate | _____ | 6. docile | _____ |
| 2. recede | _____ | 7. blithe | _____ |
| 3. lethal | _____ | 8. nimble | _____ |
| 4. ruthless | _____ | 9. vigilant | _____ |
| 5. dwindle | _____ | 10. bleak | _____ |

10E Passage

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

Danger: Manatees at Play

The subject of manatees takes us far back in the history of both natural science and imaginative storytelling. Manatees have been in existence for fifty million years. This sea animal was probably what sailors were seeing long ago when they reported visions of mermaids sunning themselves on rocks far in the distance.

Closer observation of the manatee shows it to be a **ponderous** mammal that measures from eight to twelve feet in length and weighs up to 3,000 pounds. Its tapered body, shaped somewhat like that of an overgrown seal or miniature whale, has two front legs and a broad flat tail, all three of which act as flippers.

Manatees live singly or in small groups and can eat 200 pounds of food a day, grazing contentedly on water hyacinths and other **aquatic** plants. A manatee sometimes may stand up straight in the water, often with strings of sea plants hanging like hair from its head.

In the United States, Florida's coastal waters are the manatee's principal habitat. Quite **docile** by nature, these sea creatures have no fear of humans; actually, they seem to love company. They allow swimmers to play alongside them, something that is discouraged by game wardens.

Florida authorities **monitor** the manatee population carefully. A recent aerial survey showed that more than 2,000 manatees inhabit the area's waters. Manatees were once hunted for their hides and their meat, but they have been protected by law from this practice for more than a century. Still, the alarming reality is that the manatee population has **dwindled** considerably in recent years. In fact, this lovable creature, which has survived all these years without threats from predators, may now be on the **verge** of extinction. The main reason for this is related to the enormous increase in the number of powerboats in Florida.

Feeding just below the surface, manatees are often unobserved by speeding boaters who may go **blithely** on their way, ignorant of the terrible injuries they have just inflicted. Being struck by a high speed propeller can be **lethal**; almost a third of all manatee deaths are boat-related, and the number is growing.

Wildlife wardens estimate that ninety percent of all adult manatees have been **mutilated** by the propellers of speeding boats. The reasons for this are not entirely clear—perhaps the manatees have poor hearing and are unaware of a boat's approach, or it may be that they are not **nimble** enough to get out of the way in time.

In recent years, people have become more aware of the **plight** of the manatee. Laws such as the Endangered Species Act and the Marine Mammal Protection Act prohibit harming manatees, but more needs to be done. People operating power boats in areas where manatees live need to be more **vigilant**. If they were, many collisions could be **averted**. And speed limits need to be strictly enforced, even though people whose livelihood depends on the boating industry **assert** that too much regulation would cause economic hardship. One thing is certain: if speedboats continue to operate as they have in the past, the ancient manatee's prospects of survival are **bleak**.

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. What behavior of manatees could have made sailors mistakenly **assert** that they had seen a mermaid?

2. What kind of plant is a water hyacinth?

3. Is the nature of the manatee similar to that of a predator?

4. Is the manatee population increasing or decreasing?

5. Have many manatees have been injured as a result of collisions with boats?

6. Can a manatee die as a result of being struck by the propeller of a boat?

7. Why do many boaters go **blithely** on their way after striking a manatee?

8. What could boat owners do to protect the manatee population?

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

10. How do we keep track of the manatee population?

11. Why would manatees be described as **ponderous**?

12. What is the meaning of **nimble** as it is used in the passage?

13. Why should we be concerned about the manatee?

14. What is the meaning of **bleak** as it is used in the passage?

15. Are people indifferent to the manatees' **plight**?

FUN & FASCINATING FACTS

The Latin word for *water* is *aqua* and forms the root of the adjective **aquatic**. Other words formed from this root include nouns such as *aquarium* and *aqueduct*, “a large pipe or channel for water.” You might guess that the word *aquiline* comes from the same Latin root. Actually, it comes from a different Latin word altogether, *aquila*, which means “eagle.” An *aquiline* nose is one that is curved like an eagle’s beak.

The ancient Greeks believed that the dead went to the underworld, where they bathed in the river Lethe, which caused them to forget their earthly lives. The Latin word *letum*, “death,” comes from the name of the river and forms the English adjective **lethal**, “capable of causing death” (a *lethal* injection; a *lethal* weapon).

The noun **plight** carries with it a reminder of love and marriage in centuries past. Once it was a

verb and meant “to promise; to pledge.” When persons got engaged to be married, they “plighted their troth.” This means they would dishonor themselves if they were not faithful and true to each other. *Troth* is a word that has disappeared entirely from the language. Once it meant “loyalty; faithfulness; honor.”

Several words come from the Latin *vigilare*, “to be watchful.” In addition to **vigilant**, there is *vigil*, a watch kept during normal hours of sleep (Parents keep a *vigil* by the bedside of a very sick child) and *vigilante*, a person who takes the law into her or his own hands, usually as part of a group.