

Lesson 9

Word List

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

abet
ə bet'

v. To encourage or assist in some activity, especially a questionable one.
Randy **abetted** his friend in stealing pumpkins by helping him to lug them home.

agile
aj' əl

adj. 1. Able to move quickly and easily; nimble.
Alexandra's **agile** steps followed Wilfredo's as the band played a tango.
2. Able to think quickly.
In the final round of the chess tournament, Gary Kasparov's **agile** mind enabled him to think five moves ahead.
agility n. (ə jil' ə tē) Quickness of mind or body.
Our karate instructor carefully developed our **agility** through repeated practice of the basic movements.

allot
ə lət'

v. To assign or distribute as a portion or share.
Ms. Kaplan usually **allotted** fifteen minutes at the beginning of each French class for conversation practice.

balmy
bām' ē

adj. Soothing, mild.
Instead of the **balmy** Florida weather she had expected, Cynthia experienced cold, rainy days for most of her vacation.

congregate
kən' grə gāt

v. To come together in a group, assemble.
After the war ended in Europe, thousands of people **congregated** in refugee camps, waiting for help.

divert
də vɜrt'

v. 1. To turn aside.
By sandbagging the shore, we can **divert** some of the flood waters.
2. To entertain or amuse.
A juggler **diverted** the audience during the scene changes.
diversion n. 1. The act of turning from a course or concern.
A flat tire on our trip to Ohio in the middle of a snowstorm was a **diversion** we had not anticipated.
2. Something that amuses or entertains.
Collecting shells of so many colors and sizes was a **diversion** our whole family enjoyed on our visit to Puerto Rico.

humdrum
hum' drum

adj. Lacking excitement; boring or monotonous.
Bagging groceries is a **humdrum** job, but the flexible hours allow me to finish school.

influx
in' fluks

n. A flowing or pouring in; arrival in massive numbers.
Hotel owners hope that this winter's coastal oil spill will not affect the **influx** of summer tourists.

intricate
in' tri kət

adj. Complicated; having many related details or parts.
Susan's paper for art history described the **intricate** arrangement of colors in the old textile.

memento

mə men' tō

n. Something kept as a reminder of a past event; a souvenir.Madelaine kept the sand dollar as a **memento** of her day at the New Jersey shore.**query**

kwir' ē

n. A question.Naomi's job with the airline was to answer all **queries** about delayed planes.*v.* To ask or ask about.Doctor Feldman **queried** Bruce about his childhood diseases.**sporadic**

spə rad' ik

adj. Happening occasionally; not regularly.Last summer, between **sporadic** acting jobs, we worked as waiters or cabdrivers.**staple**

stā' pəl

n. 1. A basic food that is used frequently and in large amounts.Rice and beans are **staples** in many Caribbean households.

2. A U-shaped fastener with sharp ends.

Remove the **staples** before you put those papers through the copy machine.*v.* To attach with staples.After the students finished writing their reports, they **stapled** the pages together.*adj.* Most important, principal.Wheat and corn are **staple** crops of Canada.**tumult**

tūm' ult

n. Noisy excitement; an uproar or disturbance.Entering the house through the chimney, the squirrel caused a **tumult** until my sister finally caught it and released it in the backyard.**tumultuous** *adj.* Marked by uproar or excitement, turbulent.A **tumultuous** crowd waited at the airport to greet the triumphant Mexican soccer team.**unseemly**

un sēm' lē

adj. Not suitable; inappropriate or improper.Sharon and Richard began an **unseemly** argument at the wedding dinner of their daughter.

9A Finding Meanings

Choose two phrases to form a sentence that correctly uses a word from Word List 9. Write each sentence in the space provided.

1. (a) to distribute them. (c) To divert funds is
(b) to account fully for them. (d) To allot funds is

2. (a) A staple is (c) A memento is
(b) a basic food. (d) a short note.

3. (a) Tumult is (c) quickness of mind or body.
(b) Agility is (d) a feeling of unreasonable panic.

4. (a) An influx is something
(b) A memento is something
(c) kept as a reminder of a past event.
(d) that is inappropriate and out of place.

5. (a) A humdrum task
(b) An intricate task
(c) is one that is quickly completed.
(d) is one that lacks interest or excitement.

6. (a) question closely.
(b) To congregate is to
(c) entertain or amuse.
(d) To divert is to

7. (a) A query is
(b) An influx is
(c) movement into a place.
(d) a turning point.

8. (a) An unseemly proposal is one
(b) that is very detailed.
(c) that is concisely written.
(d) An intricate proposal is one

9. (a) be suspicious of that person.
(b) give support to that person.
(c) To abet someone is to
(d) To query someone is to

10. (a) is one filled with noisy excitement.
(b) is one that is boring.
(c) A balmy day
(d) A tumultuous day

abet
agile
allot
balmy
congregate
divert
humdrum
influx
intricate
memento
query
sporadic
staple
tumult
unseemly

9B 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 9.

- Rain was **coming down from time to time** all through the day we had chosen for painting the house.
- Beautiful beaches and impressive rain forests have helped make tourism a **very important** industry in Hawaii.
- Barbara's attention was **turned away** from the violinist's solo by the commotion going on two rows behind her.

4. Anyone who wishes to be a gymnast must learn to be **able to move quickly and easily**.
5. The campers were **assigned as their portion** one dish of ice cream at the evening square dance.
6. Mom made us spit out our gum before the memorial service because chewing it, she said, would be most **unsuitable for such an occasion**.
7. A **warm and gentle** breeze from the ocean helped keep us cool on a sweltering August afternoon.
8. The immigration officer **asked a number of questions of** Jonas about U.S. history and government during his citizenship interview.
9. The announcement of the verdict caused **great excitement and confusion** in the press room.
10. Last year scientists predicted the **continuous pouring in** of killer bees from South to North America, but it never took place.

9C 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 be considered a **diversion**?
(a) doing homework (c) watching television
(b) getting stuck in traffic (d) playing softball
2. Which of the following could be **intricate**?
(a) a drawing (c) the plot of a movie
(b) a plan (d) a grimace
3. Which of the following are **staples**?
(a) beans (c) ice cubes
(b) rice (d) cookies
4. Which of the following needs to be **agile**?
(a) an Olympic skater (c) an artist's model
(b) a downhill skier (d) a hockey goalie
5. Which of the following is a **query**?
(a) "Feeling better?" (c) "Let's go."
(b) "What's the matter?" (d) "How do you open this?"

6. Which of the following can **congregate**?

- (a) people (c) plants
(b) animals (d) birds

7. Which of the following could be **humdrum**?

- (a) a job (c) a calamity
(b) a movie (d) a mutiny

8. Which of the following might be **tumultuous**?

- (a) a sleeping infant (c) a parade
(b) an election (d) a fireplace

9D Word Study

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

intricate/complicated

- The wallpaper has a(n) _____ pattern of intertwined branches and birds.
- The math equations were more _____ than the freshmen expected.
- 18,074,030 is an extremely _____ number.

sporadic/occasional

- The _____ weather patterns make it difficult for forecasters to make predictions.
- Even though Malcolm is trying to cut down on caffeine, he enjoys a(n) _____ cup of tea.
- Emily's visits were _____ and then stopped altogether.

fitful/irregular

- The doctor was concerned about the patient's _____ heartbeat.
- After a(n) _____ sleep, Leonard could barely drag himself out of bed.
- The waves grew increasingly _____ as the hurricane neared the coast.

replica/copy

- A _____ of twelve inches would be a foot.
- The bank needs a _____ of your signature for its records.
- The *Mayflower* docked in Plymouth, Massachusetts, is a _____ of the Pilgrims' ship.

abet
agile
allot
balmy
congregate
divert
humdrum
influx
intricate
memento
query
sporadic
staple
tumult
unseemly

assimilate/absorb

13. A sponge can _____ six times its weight in water.
14. Katy seemed unable to _____ the meaning of the word "no."
15. The brain has to _____ sensory information from many different sources.

9E Passage

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

The Children of the Bounty

Many people dream of living on a remote tropical island where there are no cars and no crime. For the people of Pitcairn Island, this dream is their reality. Until 1789, Pitcairn was uninhabited. In that year, Fletcher Christian, together with eight other mutineers from the *Bounty* and eighteen Tahitians, arrived at and settled on this tiny island in the South Pacific. By the late 1800s the island's population had grown to over two hundred. Today, the number has dwindled to fewer than fifty. However, the island's governing council is not greatly concerned about the declining population. It receives thousands of **queries** from people all over the world who would like to live there. Nevertheless, it rarely issues the official entry document called "Licence to Land" because Pitcairners have no wish to be swamped by an **influx** of new residents.

Life on Pitcairn is easygoing. The inhabitants enjoy **balmy** weather all year round and the island has plenty of water. Sweet potatoes, melons, bananas, and coffee are among the crops grown in its fertile soil. The older inhabitants spend most of their time fishing, growing vegetables, and making wooden carvings and woven baskets.

Because life changes little from day to day, visits from ships passing by on their way from the Panama Canal to New Zealand are eagerly awaited. The island's steep cliffs and lack of harbors make it impossible for ships to come to land, so they must anchor about a mile offshore. Islanders **congregate** at the town landing in Adamstown, the island's only town, when a ship arrives to watch the launching of the forty-foot longboat that goes out to meet it to replenish supplies and to sell **mementos**. During rough weather, when the boat is pitching wildly, those on board have a formidable task getting from the longboat to the deck of the ship by rope ladder. Only the most **agile** attempt it.

The crews on these passing ships are eager to buy the carvings and baskets made by the islanders. An **intricately** carved replica of the *Bounty*, a popular item, can sell for several hundred dollars or more, depending on the skill of the carver. The ships' visits are **sporadic**, with weeks or even months going by without one. For this reason, the Pitcairners take advantage of these visits to trade fish, fruits, and vegetables for canned goods and **staples**, such as flour and sugar, that they cannot provide for themselves. Everything obtained from passing ships is **allotted** equally among the island's families. In this way, no one lacks the necessities.

This tropical paradise, however, is not for everyone. Young people often feel frustrated by the lack of opportunity. Many of them wish to exchange what they regard as the **humdrum** existence on the island for what they believe will be more exciting lives in the outside world. Not only do they find limitations in jobs unappealing, but they also complain that life on Pitcairn offers few **diversions**. Dancing is forbidden and there is no television. Any display of affection, such as holding hands in public, is regarded as **unseemly** by the island's ruling council, which has passed laws banning such behavior. While many young people leave, some return later, unable to cope with the **tumult** of the modern world.

Pitcairn, a volcanic speck of rock less than two square miles in area and inhabited by only nine families, has a fascination for the outside world out of all proportion to its size. It has been the subject of no fewer than 2,500 books and articles. One reason, of course, is obvious—its dramatic past, a past that began on an April morning in 1789 when Captain Bligh was rudely awakened to discover that Fletcher Christian, **abetted** by mutinous crew members, had seized control of the *Bounty*.

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 are there no heating bills on Pitcairn?

2. Why hasn't there been an **influx** of tourists to Pitcairn?

3. What is the meaning of **staples** as it is used in the passage?

4. Why do you suppose the ships' visits are **sporadic**?

5. Name two activities that Pitcairn teenagers might find **humdrum**.

6. In what ways might teenagers from Pitcairn Island find life in a U.S. city **tumultuous**?

7. According to the passage, what is the content of a lot of the mail sent to Pitcairn?

8. How do the islanders make sure no one lacks necessary food?

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

10. Why is it inaccurate to say that few Pitcairners are interested in a ship's arrival?

11. Why is showing affection in public banned by Pitcairn's governing council?

12. Why is a carving of the *Bounty* considered a suitable **memento** of Pitcairn?

13. What do you think determines the price of an **intricately** carved model of the *Bounty*?

14. How many of those who originally sailed to Pitcairn with Christian had helped him with the mutiny?

15. Why would it be inaccurate to say that any of the islanders could be sent out on the longboat to board the ship?

FUN & FASCINATING FACTS

We usually use the adjective **balmy** to refer to conditions of climate or weather (a *balmy* day; a *balmy* breeze). But *balmy* has a secondary, slang meaning of, "odd or peculiar in behavior." An alternative spelling for this meaning is *barmy*, which has an interesting origin. *Barm* is the yeasty foam that rises to the top of certain alcoholic beverages as they are being brewed. A connection was made between this activity and odd or peculiar behavior. A person acting strangely was described as *barmy*. Confusion then occurred between two quite separate and distinct words. The result is that a person acting oddly

can be described as *balmy* or *barmy*. A gentle breeze, however, can only be *balmy*, not *barmy*.

The Latin verb *fluere* means "to flow" and forms the root of **influx**, "a flowing or pouring in." Other words formed from this root include: *fluid*, "any substance that flows"; *fluent*, "able to write or speak in a flowing, easy way"; *fluctuate*, "to move back and forth or up and down in a wavelike or flowing manner"; *flux*, "a flowing movement," also "a state of constant change"; and *confluence*, "a flowing together, as of two streams or rivers."