

Lesson 13

Word List

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

blandishment
blan' dish mēnt

n. (often plural) That which is intended to coax or persuade, such as flattery; an allurement. The agent promised, among other things, to make her a star, but the actress was impervious to his **blandishments**.

deprecate
dep' rə kāt

v. 1. To criticize or express disapproval of. Nutritionists **deprecate** the excessive use of saturated fats in the American diet.
2. To represent as of little value. Amy **deprecated** her own contribution to the soccer team's victory.

discomfit
dis kum' fit

v. To make uneasy by confusing or embarrassing a person. The reporter's questions about a bank account that showed a secret campaign fund **discomfited** the mayoral candidate.

meteoric
mēt' ē ōr' ik

adj. Coming into existence swiftly, suddenly, brightly, like a meteor. If Stacey envisaged a **meteoric** rise to fame after her first starring role on Broadway, she was naive.

overbearing
ō vər bār' in

adj. Acting in an arrogant, domineering way. The leading man's **overbearing** manner caused his popularity among the rest of the cast to wane quickly.

precocious
prē kō' shəs

adj. Showing exceptionally early development of abilities. The **precocious** child spoke three languages by the time she was seven.
precocity *n.* (pri kās' ət ē)
Alex's **precocity** in mathematics led to his enrolling in university math classes at the age of sixteen.

proffer
prəf' ə

v. To offer for acceptance or consideration. The Tai family **proffered** their spare room to an exchange student from China.
n. An offer. The senior class gladly accepted the **proffer** of the Aldrich Mansion as the site for its graduation party.

remonstrate
rē mən' strāt

v. To say in protest; to raise an objection. Ms. Newhouse **remonstrated** with Darryl for constantly teasing his classmate Eric.

rift
rift

n. 1. A split or crack. The **rift** in the rock was too wide for me to jump across.
2. A break in friendly relations. The **rift** between the brothers became manifest when they refused to talk to each other at the family dinner.

solicitous
sə lis' ə təs

adj. Showing interest and care; concerned. After her appendix was removed, Emily welcomed the **solicitous** calls and visits of her friends.

succinct
sək sɪŋkt'

adj. Expressed clearly and in few words; concise. For someone who is usually so voluble, Clark's answers to the principal's questions were remarkably **succinct**.

sylvan

sil' vən

adj. Having to do with trees or wooded areas.Our drama group chose the **sylvan** setting of Manor Park for our presentation of *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*.**trepidation**

trep ə dā' shən

n. Apprehension; dread.The thought that they might be blamed for the accident filled the children with **trepidation**.**untoward**

un tōrd'

adj. Not favorable; unlucky.Despite our fears, nothing **untoward** happened during our climb up Mount Fuji.**virtuoso**

vər chœ ō' sō

n. A person with great skill in some art, especially music.The late pianist Rudolf Serkin was not only a **virtuoso**, but also a performer much loved by audiences for his gentle manner.*adj.* Done with great skill and dash.The ten-year-old prodigy gave a **virtuoso** performance of the Brahms concerto.

13A Understanding Meanings

Read the sentences below. If a sentence correctly uses the word in bold, write *C* on the line below it. If a sentence is incorrect, rewrite it so that the vocabulary word in bold is used correctly.

1. An **overbearing** person is one who is taller or larger than others.

2. A **rift** is a falling out between two individuals or groups.

3. A **succinct** comment is soothing or comforting.

4. To **discomfit** someone is to make that person uncomfortable.

5. **Trepidation** is a feeling of fear of what might happen.

6. To **proffer** something is to sell it to someone.

7. **Blandishments** are threats not meant to be taken seriously.

8. An **untoward** event is one that has unfortunate consequences.

9. A **solicitous** person is one who meddles in other people's affairs.

10. A **meteoric** career is one that has developed quickly and successfully.

11. A **precocious** person is one who is very dearly loved.

12. Moonlight would be a dominant element in a **sylvan** painting.

13. A **virtuoso** is one who sings or plays unaccompanied.

14. To **deprecate** something is to make comments that diminish its value.

15. To **remonstrate** with someone is to join with that person in a protest.

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13B Using Words

If the word (or a form of the word) in bold fits in a sentence in the group below it, write the word in the blank. If the word does not fit, leave the space empty.

I. **overbearing**

(a) Headmaster Winn's _____ ways made him unpopular with his teaching staff.

(b) My problems were so _____ that I just couldn't handle them.

(c) We found Pam so _____ that we gave up trying to argue with her.

2. discomfit

- (a) I was _____ to discover that the notes for my talk were back at the hotel.
- (b) I expect new shoes to _____ my feet for the first few days that I wear them.
- (c) Cilla urged her hosts not to _____ themselves on her account.

3. rift

- (a) A hundred-mile _____ had opened in the ocean floor.
- (b) We each extended a hand, agreeing to heal the _____ between us.
- (c) The knife slipped and made a nasty _____ on the counter.

4. untoward

- (a) The ship at first approached us; then it turned around and sailed in an _____ direction.
- (b) Her _____ attitude indicates her lack of interest in going to the party.
- (c) We soon put aside the _____ incidents of our trip and remembered only the good times.

5. sylvan

- (a) Biltmore Farm lies at the end of a mile-long _____ drive.
- (b) Great boughs of evergreen contributed to the hall's _____ atmosphere.
- (c) The concrete and skyscrapers gave the city a _____ appearance.

6. blandishment

- (a) Clams, oysters, shrimp, and other tasty _____ were served at the supper.
- (b) The gifts were simply _____ intended to overcome her suspicions.
- (c) I refused to yield to his _____ and insisted on keeping my regular job.

7. deprecate

- (a) Please don't _____ the contributions of those who helped you.
- (b) The house will _____ in value if you fail to maintain it properly.
- (c) Mr. Snobbish continues to _____ all popular music written after 1950.

8. proffer

- (a) He _____ his hand to me in a gesture of friendship.
- (b) I _____ greatly from my speculation in the stock market.
- (c) Tsieng Hu rejected the position of ambassador when it was _____ by the president.

13C Word Study

The prefix *in-* can mean “not,” changing a word to its opposite. However, the letters *in* do not always indicate a prefix. In the spaces provided, write a brief definition of each of the words below. Write “yes” if the letters *in* indicate the prefix meaning “not” in each word.

1. incredible _____
2. infer _____
3. inexplicable _____
4. ingenious _____
5. intangible _____
6. incontrovertible _____
7. ingrate _____
8. induct _____
9. indolent _____
10. insuperable _____

13D Images of Words

Circle the letter of each sentence that suggests the numbered bold vocabulary word. In each group, you may circle more than one letter or none at all.

1. **trepidation**

- (a) Marcia felt her blood run cold when she saw the trap door slowly opening.
- (b) The stage manager had to push me onto the stage on opening night.
- (c) I insisted I could not cross the flimsy rope bridge ahead.

2. **remonstrate**

- (a) Watch how easily the Choppermatic shreds, slices, and dices vegetables.
- (b) “How often must I tell you not to wear my clothes!” said Claire angrily.
- (c) Robyn won the prize for selling the most raffle tickets.

3. **blandishments**

- (a) “The color of this dress suits you perfectly, madam, and it’s just your style,” said the sales associate.
- (b) We can’t watch the movie until we finish our homework.
- (c) Please, I ask you; give me just one more chance!

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4. virtuoso

- (a) This is a perfectly preserved specimen of a dinosaur's egg.
- (b) During his lifetime, Bach was a famous organist.
- (c) Ruggles led a blameless life and was loved by all who knew him.

5. succinct

- (a) When I asked what I could do to help, she said, "Give money."
- (b) The juice squirted out of the orange when I cut it open.
- (c) The spaghetti sauce needs just a little more oregano.

6. meteoric

- (a) This rock was formed from the molten lava of a volcano.
- (b) The car was doing at least eighty miles an hour when it passed us.
- (c) Elvis Presley went from unknown singer to international star in less than a year.

7. precocity

- (a) Mozart was an accomplished composer by the age of five.
- (b) Most children can talk by the age of two.
- (c) The Delahy sisters led active lives until well into their nineties.

8. solicitous

- (a) That'll teach you to be more careful in the future.
- (b) I hope you didn't hurt yourself.
- (c) I am voting for Bloggs, the environmental candidate.

9. deprecate

- (a) Please don't thank me; I did hardly anything to help.
- (b) You call that a cake! Wait until you taste my almond cream torte!
- (c) This car is worth less than it was last year.

10. untoward

- (a) The road ran straight as an arrow for about five miles.
- (b) As we approached the beach, the traffic got heavier.
- (c) The jacket fits perfectly, but the pants are a little tight around the waist.

13E Passage

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

The Gift of Music

The Boston Symphony Orchestra summer concerts, held in the **sylvan** setting of Tanglewood, in western Massachusetts, are world famous. An invitation to perform there as a soloist is a great honor for any musician. But if violinist Midori felt any **trepidation** when she took the stage at Tanglewood for the first time in 1986, she did not show it, even though she was to play Leonard Bernstein's *Serenade*, with the renowned composer himself conducting the orchestra.

Not long after Midori began playing, the E-string on her violin snapped, bringing the music to a complete stop, an experience that could **discomfit** even a seasoned musician. Midori's poise, however, was unshaken. She waited calmly until the concertmaster **proffered** his own violin, and she resumed playing. Then the unthinkable happened. Again the E-string snapped. Again the music was brought to a halt. This time the associate concertmaster came to the rescue. With a second borrowed violin, Midori began where she had left off, playing with unbroken concentration and concluding her performance without any further **untoward** occurrences. When it was over, the music critic of the *New York Times* wrote, "Audience, orchestra, and conductor joined in giving her a cheering, stomping, whistling ovation." Midori was fourteen at the time.

To achieve such acclaim at this early age was extraordinary, but Midori was no ordinary person. Her mother, Setsu Goto, who was a violinist and music teacher in Osaka, Japan, used to take Midori to orchestra rehearsals when she was an infant. Setsu Goto became aware of her daughter's musical **precocity** when she heard two-year-old Midori humming a Bach concerto that the orchestra had been rehearsing two days before. Goto gave her daughter a one-sixteenth-size violin for her third birthday and by the time Midori was eleven she was enrolled at the Julliard School of Music in New York, studying under Dorothy DeLay, one of the foremost violin teachers in the country.

Midori was lucky, too; she had a wise mother. Unfortunately, many parents of musical prodigies find it difficult to resist the **blandishments** of promoters who would exploit gifted children with promises of lucrative concert and recording contracts. Such parents can become so **overbearing** that they blame the child if a particular orchestra is slow to offer a return engagement, something that can happen for a variety of reasons unrelated to the child's ability. They may also become so **solicitous** of the child that asking their twelve-year-old who has just played in a great symphony hall to do something ordinary like take out the trash seems unthinkable. Setsu Goto strongly **deprecated** such attitudes; she allowed her daughter to have a relatively normal upbringing.

Although Midori is very close to her mother, she is also very independent and strong-willed. When she was fifteen, a **rift** developed between her and Dorothy DeLay that resulted in Midori's quitting Julliard. Her mother **remonstrated** with her to return, but Midori refused. Later, her **succinct** explanation for this potentially damaging move was: "I felt it was time that I left."

Although she possesses extraordinary natural talent, Midori has always practiced conscientiously. On her eighteenth birthday, she was rewarded with an invitation to play at Carnegie Hall. On that occasion she gave a **virtuoso** performance that established her as one of the world's great violinists. Despite her **meteoric** rise to fame, Midori has not become absorbed only in herself. When she was twenty-one, she set up Midori and Friends, a foundation that brings classical music to children in public schools and hospitals. And even with her busy schedule, she finds the time to give about forty foundation-related concerts a-year.

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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.

1. When did Midori's mother become aware of her daughter's **precocity**?
2. What **untoward** event occurred while Midori was at Tanglewood?
3. When did it become clear that Midori was a **virtuoso**?
4. Why can one infer that Tanglewood summer concerts are held outdoors?
5. Why might Midori's mother have felt **trepidation** for her daughter when she learned she had quit Julliard?
6. How did Midori show that she was not **discomfited** by the breaking strings?
7. Why did Midori leave Julliard?
8. What advice might Midori's mother **proffer** to parents of other prodigies?
9. Why is Midori unlikely to succumb to the **blandishments** of promoters?
10. How is it made clear that her mother **depreciated** Midori's decision to quit Julliard?

11. Why would it be inaccurate to say that Midori spent a lot of time discussing her reasons for quitting Julliard?

FUN & FASCINATING FACTS

Discomfit once meant “to defeat in battle” or “to vanquish.” This meaning weakened over time. The word’s modern meaning, “to make uneasy,” probably came about because of its similarity to *discomfort*, which means “to make less comfortable.” One can feel *discomfort*, for example, by wearing tight shoes, without being *discomfited*. However, if one is *discomfited*, for example, by being accused of something, one is bound to be *discomforted* also.

the root of **sylvan**, “relating to woods and trees” and also to *silviculture*, “the care and cultivation of forest trees.”

The Latin for *forest* is *silva*, derived from Silvanus, the Roman god of woods and trees. It forms