Royal Fireworks Language Arts by Michael Clay Thompson

The Vocabulary of Literature

Second Edition

Compatible with The Vocabulary of Literature Student Book First Edition

Instructor Manual

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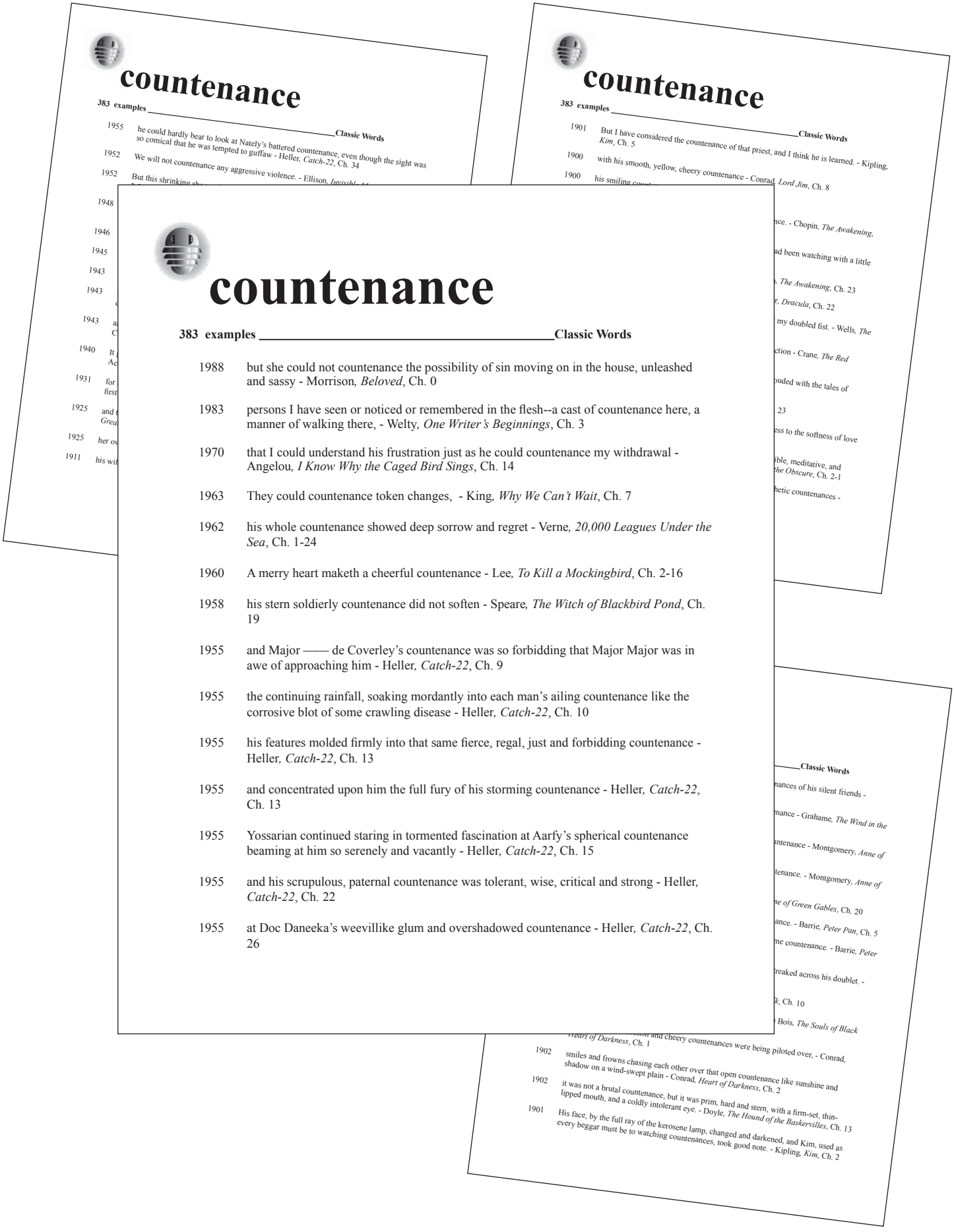

countenance

383 examples _____ **Classic Words**

1988 but she could not countenance the possibility of sin moving on in the house, unleashed and sassy - Morrison, *Beloved*, Ch. 0

1983 persons I have seen or noticed or remembered in the flesh--a cast of countenance here, a manner of walking there, - Welty, *One Writer's Beginnings*, Ch. 3

1970 that I could understand his frustration just as he could countenance my withdrawal - Angelou, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, Ch. 14

1963 They could countenance token changes, - King, *Why We Can't Wait*, Ch. 7

1962 his whole countenance showed deep sorrow and regret - Verne, *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*, Ch. 1-24

1960 A merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance - Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Ch. 2-16

1958 his stern soldierly countenance did not soften - Speare, *The Witch of Blackbird Pond*, Ch. 19

1955 and Major —— de Coverley's countenance was so forbidding that Major Major was in awe of approaching him - Heller, *Catch-22*, Ch. 9

1955 the continuing rainfall, soaking mordantly into each man's ailing countenance like the corrosive blot of some crawling disease - Heller, *Catch-22*, Ch. 10

1955 his features molded firmly into that same fierce, regal, just and forbidding countenance - Heller, *Catch-22*, Ch. 13

1955 and concentrated upon him the full fury of his storming countenance - Heller, *Catch-22*, Ch. 13

1955 Yossarian continued staring in tormented fascination at Aarfy's spherical countenance beaming at him so serenely and vacantly - Heller, *Catch-22*, Ch. 15

1955 and his scrupulous, paternal countenance was tolerant, wise, critical and strong - Heller, *Catch-22*, Ch. 22

1955 at Doc Daneeka's weevillike glum and overshadowed countenance - Heller, *Catch-22*, Ch. 26

Instructor Section

IMPLEMENTATION

The implementation strategy of this literary vocabulary program is dictated by the importance of the content itself. These are two hundred powerful words that must be known. They are a necessary component of an educated vocabulary. A strong reading experience is the essence of advanced education, and the goal for this vocabulary program is to prepare students to read the essential works of British and American literature by installing literary vocabulary ahead of time, just at the critical moment, so that as the students begin to read great literature, they already know the major literary words. They will not have to struggle with the vocabulary and try to enjoy the stories at the same time.

Enthusiasm is a necessary element, both for ourselves and for our students. Students rarely love any educational content more than their instructors do. Enthusiasm is the force that propels instructors into exciting lessons and propels students into a life of reading, long after they have left school. We want the students to love both words and literature, so any shallow method focused on a banal objective of "raising scores" without inculcating a love for the knowledge is to be avoided. We have to keep our eye on the ball: the vocabulary of literature. We cannot allow grading or assessment or points to displace the excitement of literary vocabulary from the students' minds. The program will do its part to raise scores, but that is a minor byproduct of raising reading and raising knowledge, and not the object of focus. If we keep the program exciting and grounded in meaning, that will do more for scores than any tedious points-based program. Advanced education is what we are about.

The words in this text were identified by my Classic Words research. During a period of thirty years, I compiled a database that examines the vocabulary of dozens of classic British and American novels, and the words in this text are those that the research has demonstrated to be central. I did not decide which words are most important; the research did. On page iv, you can see four sheets of examples of *countenance*, arranged by date of publication; the full printout, however, goes for twenty-eight pages—twenty-eight pages of examples of *countenance*. I could present a similar printout for any of the words in this book. So when I say that a word is a classic word, I am not guessing. I know that the word is in all of those books. The literary vocabulary chosen for this text is unique in quality; there is no such thing as a better list. These are the words that are replete in the literature.

Two Hundred: Ten Lessons of Twenty Words

This program provides ten vocabulary lessons, with each lesson contributing twenty words—ten new words and ten review words brought forward from *Caesar's English I* and *Caesar's English II*—for a total of two hundred great literary vocabulary words. These words should be launched early in the curriculum so that they can illuminate the reading of classic literature during the year.

It is in the nature of these words that they are more challenging to internalize than, for example, a Latin stem. We easily learn that *pre* means *before*, and it is almost automatic, but when we learn that a *rebuke* is a kind of criticism, the content is more elusive.

The Myth of THE Definition

The vocabulary challenge is dramatically intensified by the fact that the very idea of a definition—word *x* means exactly definition *y*—is to some extent arbitrary, incomplete, and misleading. Dictionaries are works of scholarly art, not scientific facts. Pick five great dictionaries and look up the same word, and you will find five different presentations. In fact, there is typically not one definition but a number of different meanings that require their own definitions. All of those definitions were written by definition writers, and the definitions in different dictionaries were written by different definition writers. We do confirm substantial agreement in the definitions, but the wordings and details will always be as individual as the scholars who write them.

Accordingly, in a book such as this one, to say that *languor is a weakness* is only shorthand, a way to *begin explaining*. Having said that, we then have to discuss the nuances of meaning that a word such as *languor* can contain. Instead of a simple learning object such as *x* means *y*, we have a learning object such as *x* means *y* but sometimes *z* and can also mean.... It is complicated.

So what does this mean—the fact that there is no one sacred, true, short, and right definition, or the fact that each word likely has various possible meanings, each one without a single true, universal, right definition?

It means time. It means that we have to relax. It means that we must slow down, talk about the words, pick favorite examples, and so forth. It means that we have to look at a word one way and then another, and to look at it and then look at it again, and again. We cannot skim or hurry. It is not a race; it is a picnic. Haste kills fun. We have to take the pleasant time to get used to a word. We have to let fun do its job.

Lesson Components

Each lesson has a collection of components, and you are encouraged to fit your instruction to the details of your teaching situation. You may be able to complete all of the activities in each lesson, but you also may need to be more selective and to choose which activities you and the students wish to do. The lessons are designed to be flexible.

Before we examine the lesson components individually, let us look at three properties that all of the lessons have in common. One is that each lesson focuses on a great writer. A second property is that many of the example sentences are actual quotations from famous books, allowing students to see how great writers have used the words we are learning. This will give students confidence and prevent them from thinking that these two hundred words are just a random, arbitrary list. There is nothing arbitrary about this list; these are the words that are most prominent in the literature. The third property of every lesson is a strong emphasis on the grammar of the vocabulary. Grammar is the key to usage. Every word is a part of speech, and vocabulary is grammar in action.

Nearly all of the lessons begin with a photograph of a writer, and on the next page is the list of twenty words featured in the lesson.

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Classic Words – Lesson I

Ten New Words

latter: the second
dejected: in low spirits
despondent: disheartened
rebuke: a sharp criticism
writhe: twist, squirm
aloof: unfriendly
dissipate: disperse
portent: an omen
phenomenon: an unusual occurrence
resolute: determined

Ten Review Words

Caesar's English I

countenance: facial expression
profound: deep
manifest: obvious
prodigious: huge
languor: weakness

Caesar's English II

placate: to appease
derision: ridicule
vivacious: full of life
procure: to acquire
retort: a quick, clever reply

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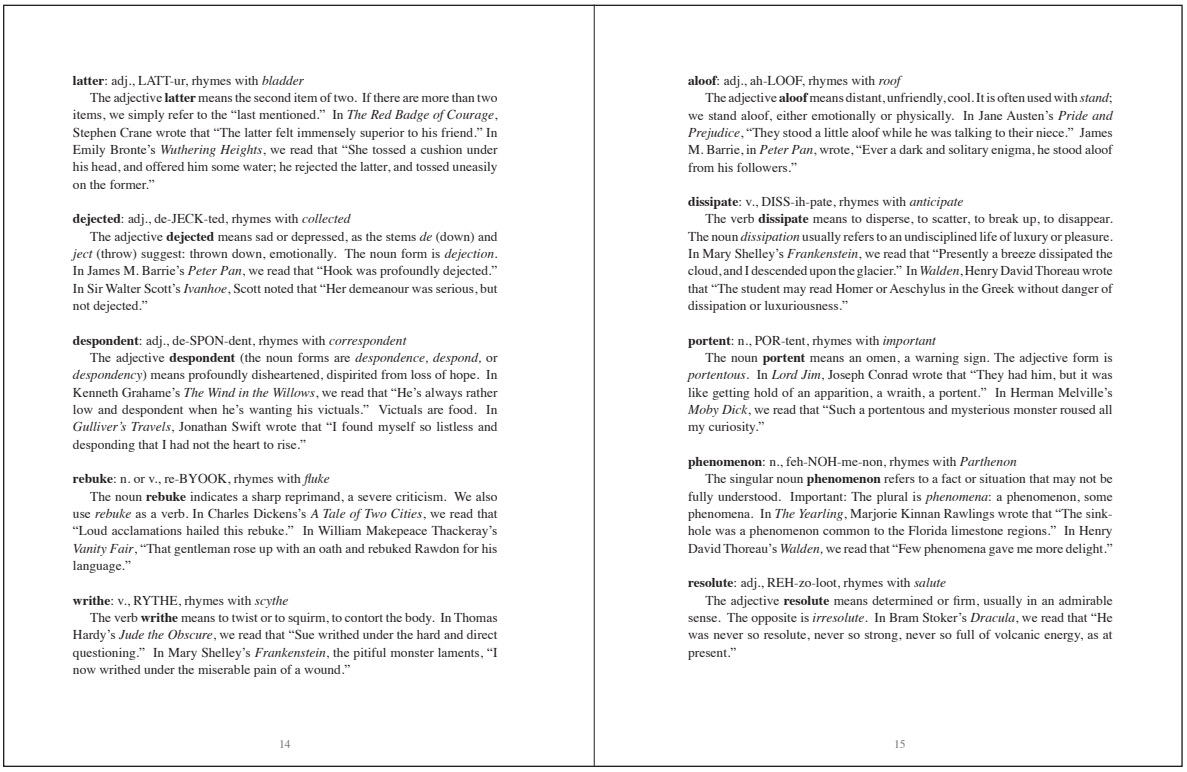
The list presents ten new words at the top and ten review words below, five brought forward from *Caesar's English I* and five from *Caesar's English II*. The definitions beside the words are the initial shorthand of meaning, and we will use those brief definitions for quizzes, but on the very next page we move into the greater complexity of real meaning that attends each of the words.



latter: adj., LATT-ur, rhymes with *bladder*
The adjective **latter** means the second item of two. If there are more than two items, we simply refer to the "last mentioned." In *The Red Badge of Courage*, Stephen Crane wrote that "The latter felt immensely superior to his friend." In Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights*, we read that "She tossed a cushion under his head, and offered him some water; he rejected the latter, and tossed uneasily on the former."

dejected: adj., de-JECK-ted, rhymes with *collected*
The adjective **dejected** means sad or depressed, as the stems *de* (down) and *ject* (throw) suggest: thrown down, emotionally. The noun form is *dejection*. In James M. Barrie's *Peter Pan*, we read that "Hook was profoundly dejected." In Sir Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe*, Scott noted that "Her demeanour was serious, but not dejected."

despondent: adj., de-SPON-dent, rhymes with *correspondent*
The adjective **despondent** (the noun forms are *despondence, despond,* or *despondency*) means profoundly disheartened, dispirited from loss of hope. In Kenneth Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows*, we read that "He's always rather low and despondent when he's wanting his victuals." Victuals are food. In *Gulliver's Travels*, Jonathan Swift wrote that "I found myself so listless and desponding that I had not the heart to rise."

rebuke: n. or v., re-BYOOK, rhymes with *fluke*
The noun **rebuke** indicates a sharp reprimand, a severe criticism. We also use *rebuke* as a verb. In Charles Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities*, we read that "Loud acclamations hailed this rebuke." In William Makepeace Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*, "That gentleman rose up with an oath and rebuked Rawdon for his language."

writhe: v., RYTHE, rhymes with *scythe*
The verb **writhe** means to twist or to squirm, to contort the body. In Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure*, we read that "Sue writhed under the hard and direct questioning." In Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, the pitiful monster laments, "I now writhed under the miserable pain of a wound."

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aloof: adj., ah-LOOF, rhymes with *roof*
The adjective **aloof** means distant, unfriendly, cool. It is often used with *stand*; we stand aloof, either emotionally or physically. In Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, "They stood a little aloof while he was talking to their niece." James M. Barrie, in *Peter Pan*, wrote, "Ever a dark and solitary enigma, he stood aloof from his followers."

dissipate: v., DISS-ih-pate, rhymes with *anticipate*
The verb **dissipate** means to disperse, to scatter, to break up, to disappear. The noun *dissipation* usually refers to an undisciplined life of luxury or pleasure. In Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, we read that "Presently a breeze dissipated the cloud, and I descended upon the glacier." In *Walden*, Henry David Thoreau wrote that "The student may read Homer or Aeschylus in the Greek without danger of dissipation or luxuriousness."

portent: n., POR-tent, rhymes with *important*
The noun **portent** means an omen, a warning sign. The adjective form is *portentous*. In *Lord Jim*, Joseph Conrad wrote that "They had him, but it was like getting hold of an apparition, a wraith, a portent." In Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*, we read that "Such a portentous and mysterious monster roused all my curiosity."

phenomenon: n., feh-NOH-me-non, rhymes with *Parthenon*
The singular noun **phenomenon** refers to a fact or situation that may not be fully understood. Important: The plural is *phenomena*: a phenomenon, some phenomena. In *The Yearling*, Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings wrote that "The sink-hole was a phenomenon common to the Florida limestone regions." In Henry David Thoreau's *Walden*, we read that "Few phenomena gave me more delight."

resolute: adj., REH-zo-loot, rhymes with *salute*
The adjective **resolute** means determined or firm, usually in an admirable sense. The opposite is *irresolute*. In Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, we read that "He was never so resolute, never so strong, never so full of volcanic energy, as at present."

15

In these two pages, you will find each of the ten new words examined in some detail. Let us zoom in on one example from Lesson I so that we can see what it contains.

despondent: adj., de-SPON-dent, rhymes with *correspondent*

The adjective **despondent** (the noun forms are *despondence, despond,* or *despondency*) means profoundly disheartened, dispirited from loss of hope. In Kenneth Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows*, we read that "He's always rather low and despondent when he's wanting his victuals." Victuals are food. In *Gulliver's Travels*, Jonathan Swift wrote that "I found myself so listless and desponding that I had not the heart to rise."

Each listing presents the word, the typical grammar usage, a pronunciation guide, and a rhyme, though sometimes the rhymes are only approximate. Following that is a short explanation of the meaning, which goes beyond the shorthand definition on the first page of the chapter. Sometimes other part of speech forms are presented; in the case of the adjective *despondent*, we also see the noun forms of *despondence*, *despond*, and *despondency*. Finally, we see examples of the word in sentences by famous authors; these have the merit not only of showing students wonderful examples but also of patiently immersing students in the names of the authors and the titles of the classics. These sentences give students motivating proof that the words really do matter. When the students finally read those books, they will have heard of them many times and will know that they are famous.

The ten new words get this special treatment, but the ten review words do not. I have already presented the review words in detail in the *Caesar's English* books, and students who did not read those books will have little disadvantage because there are myriad examples of review word sentences throughout this book.

What should you do with these pages? I would read over them together, one listing at a time. Read the definition, look at the alternative parts of speech, say the rhyme aloud, and examine the examples, deciding which one you like best. This will take some time. Good. Time teaches. When you finish the first five, talk about which of the five is most interesting, or new, or most likely to be useful, and so forth. Then do the same thing when you finish discussing the next five.

Following the pages of close-ups, each lesson contains a reading and then a poem. The purpose of the reading is to accustom students to the feeling of nonfiction, while also increasing their exposure to the words of the lesson. This reading is a bit unrealistic in that all of these great literary words are more common in fiction, but it is still worthwhile to soak in the facts and the tone of nonfiction, where contractions and first person are not appropriate. The most important part of this activity, then, is reading itself. Students should read the page to themselves, perhaps more than once, and then think about the question at the bottom before discussing it with you. We do not want the reading to be followed by a quiz or worksheet of any kind. The reading experience is half of the activity, and the discussion with you is the other half.

Introduction

Reading Is Personal

My hope for this book is that we will explore much of the vocabulary you need for a lifetime of reading. In the long term, the reading you do will determine the strength of your education.

I would like to talk about books in personal terms because reading is one of the most personal experiences in life. In most cases, you read by yourself, and the bulk of the reading you do is not assigned or graded. Usually, no one knows what you are reading or even that you are reading. It is your business. Even though you will love many of the great books you read as part of your school experience, your best reading is done outside of school or after you have graduated, and you choose your books yourself. School can help you get started and give you a good reading foundation, but school years are of short duration (though it does not seem so at the time), and you will only do a small fraction of your great reading during those years. Even during my school years in elementary school and beyond, I was already reading—both for fun and for information—far beyond anything assigned to me, and books were an important part of my personal life.

Books have been my road to adventure and to understanding things about the world and about myself that I would never have known without them. Books have allowed me to surround myself with writers of genius and extraordinary imagination, many of whom died centuries before I was born and whose words still take me to their centuries for long visits. Their books have nourished my spirit with amazing vocabulary that I never hear otherwise, and they have filled my mind with sentences that are perfect works of thought. They have challenged my assumptions, given me heroes to admire, and warned me of cruel villains. I have learned, through the safety of a book, the great wrongs that human beings can do to one another, and I have learned about people, fictional and historical, who care profoundly about others. These experiences have been personal.

I have stood on the soaked deck in a rising sea, the white foam flying from the waves and the wind whipping my face, and searched the western horizon for Treasure Island. I have hidden in a barrel in the rancid hold and heard the scoundrel pirates whisper my name in malicious hisses. I heard them plot my death. I have believed the devious lies of that sweet-tongued villain, Long John Silver. I thought quickly and showed them all.

I have been the horrid, sewed-up creation of Dr. Victor Frankenstein. My monster stitches sore and stinging, I have crept in the cold snow toward a cabin of people, a sweet family, and longed to be their friend, and trudged through the frozen drifts to gather firewood to keep them warm when they never knew my face. And if they had seen my face and my monstrous form wrapped in rags, they would have fled screaming into the night. They never knew what kind soul brought them the good firewood. I did it.

I have been a whiskery water rat, rowing my small boat down the willowy river to visit my friend, the blinky mole, and we have had such a breakfast by the fire in his cozy burrow. We have visited our eccentric friend, Toad of Toad Hall, and have seen him speed away in his motorcar, swerving uncontrollably and leaving billows of dust in the road behind him. Oblivious to everything but himself, he hardly knew we were there, so astonished was he at his own dreams of adventure. We stuck by him anyway.

I have stood in a polite drawing room with Miss Elizabeth Bennett and heard her make the most profound observations about the posturing and hypocrisy around her. I have winced at the sharp edge of her wit. I have seen her reject the hand of the richest man in the land out of loyalty to her sister. I have seen her expostulate with her father to exercise more control of her wild younger sister, only to have her wisdom rejected, tragically. Elizabeth never knew I was there.

I have designed and built a gleaming, whirring time machine, and I have ridden it through a swirl of light and glory far into the distant future, where the sun was enormous and red, like a dying throb, and the myriad species of the Earth were reduced to grotesque crabs scraping across the muddy shore of a lifeless sea, and farther down the gray shore some amorphous flappy thing gave me chills. I have been poked and prodded by hideous, ashen Morlocks, and I swung my flaming torch to keep them back. Even my best friends never believed me when I told them—nay, I *showed* them—what I had accomplished. Only I know what happened to me.

I have been a huge house dog, the beloved pet of my family, kidnapped and caged and chained and taken to the frozen North, where the wild winds howl and the rivers freeze and the whipped huskies drag the sleds across the barren wastes of snow. I have heard the snap of the whip and the yelps of the dogs. I have heard the long, long howls of my wild cousins, the merciless wolves, and have stared at the white moon and howled too, and howled again. I have become one with my howl, my call. I have fought with great, furious dogs, and have

dodged their snapping fangs, and have taught them the red lesson they deserved. They never challenged me again. In the lonely northland, I had one friend, John Thornton, but he is gone now, and it hurts me to think of him.

I have shipped aboard a reeking whaler, the *Pequod*, and set sail for the South Seas, and have traded jokes with my one true friend, the tattooed cannibal Queequeg—a taciturn, honest man—and have seen the eyes of mad Ahab, the crazed monomaniac whose only dream in life was the death of a hated whale, the white whale Moby Dick. I watched as that tormented whale turned and destroyed our ship and pulled everything under the sea, pulled even Ahab under the sea, and I alone survived. I tell the tale.

I have gone with young Jane Eyre as she took a job as a governess, only to come under the spell of her rich employer, the eccentric Mr. Rochester, and I have seen her stand her ground and speak her mind and assert her true individuality even in the face of the harshest consequences. I have seen her courage and wanted to have courage as strong as hers. I have seen her face deceit and betrayal and respond with loyalty and love.

I have been a spirited lad in rural England, raised by my strict sister and her gentle husband Joe. We were poor, and we had little education, and we scraped by. One day we heard that a murderous escaped convict was on the prowl in the moor near our house, and crossing the moor I encountered him, to my terror. Disheveled and muddy, he told me to get him wittles (victuals, food) and a file, which I did, in fear for my life. He was soon captured. Years afterward a strange man came to our house and told me that I had great expectations and that from an anonymous benefactor I would inherit a fortune and become a gentleman. Little did I know that my mysterious benefactor was the pitiful escaped convict, Magwitch, who had made a great fortune in the New World and who never forgot my kindness to him.

I have floated down the great river on a raft with my pal Jim, an escaped slave, and have learned that true friendship demands true freedom, and have been fast friends in the face of the worst hatreds of mean-souled society, and have drifted down the river in the great black star-night, and have seen the steamboat chugging along in the dark, and have watched the sparks of the chimneys rain down on the water. I will never forget that.

I have flown up into the sky to Neverland, somewhere beyond the third star on the right, where I would never grow up, and have known the lost boys, and have heard the ticking of the cranky crocodile, and have clashed swords with

that crooked Hook and his cruel pirate crew—those fools. They never were smart enough to defeat me. I have been the loyal ally of Tiger Lily, and have fought brave battles at her side, and then swapped sides and played the battles again, to be fair.

I have done all of these things and more. I am the one. Through books I have traveled the world. I have lived through the centuries. I have seen the past. In Nemo's *Nautilus*, I have descended to the silent deep. I have waltzed in great ballrooms, and I have scaled great mountain faces. I have snuck through the woods, trying to reach the fort alive. It was not easy.

In the long summer nights, I have opened a new book, and smelled the new paper and the ink, and have settled down with a cold drink of water, and begun the great story, carefully, without bending the pages back or breaking the spine of the book. I have read long into the night, as the words fell into my mind and the waves fell onto the shore outside my window, or as the palm fronds clickered outside my window screen, or as the taxis honked somewhere in the city. Sometimes in the distance I could hear a train, and I would look up from the South Pacific or the dark forest, but then I would look back down. I have enjoyed those night sounds, but they did not pull me out of the book. Eventually the sun would peek up over the sea or the city, or the ocean breeze would come in my window and blow the curtain, and a bird would exclaim, and I would realize that I should get some sleep, but I was careful to put a bookmark on my page so that I could go right back to that same moment in the story.

I did not want to miss a thing.

I have done all of these things through the creative spell of books. I have done them through the creative genius of writers such as Jane Austen, and Charles Dickens, and Jack London, and Charlotte Brontë, and I have immersed myself in nonfiction classics such as the great *Narrative* of Frederick Douglass and Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*.

Books, and the Alternative

Today, television and films compete for our attention, but there is nothing like a book. Books are not like films, which never stop to talk to you. Films push forward irrevocably at their own pell-mell pace that is visual rather than thoughtful. The film keeps moving, like a talker who will not let you get a word in edgewise. If you get distracted, the film moves on anyway. When you read a book, you have time to think. You can stop when you want to and read a part of

it again. The book stops with you. It is comfortable. You can go back to listen to a conversation more carefully. You can stay in your favorite parts and only leave when you are ready. It is up to you.

When you read a book, you can copy out your favorite passages onto cards and pin them to your wall.

Films are noisy, full of chatter and background music and sound effects. Films have gunshots and explosions and shouting and screaming and the screech of tires. Books are quiet and peaceful, and you can imagine the sounds they describe for yourself. Books do not have background music; instead, they have poetic effects woven into their words.

A film of a book might last ninety minutes, but the book that the film skims might last days, giving you time to know the characters deeply and become friends with them. The book shows you things about the characters that the film leaves out. Notice that most great books are long. They last for hundreds of pages. You become involved in the book, but unlike a film that will end within the hour, the fun of a book continues, and you wish it would never end. Long books teach you to hold your attention, which is one of life's best lessons.

Most films were made within the last one hundred years. Many great books are not only works of art but are also artifacts; they were written in the nineteenth century or the eighteenth century, and you can read them in their pure form, without a modernizing translation that robs them of their authenticity and substance. An eighteenth-century book was actually written by an eighteenth-century person. You might have to read two or three books from an earlier century to get the hang of it, but that too is part of the fun.

Books are the perfect place to learn words. In a film you do not quite hear a word that passes too fast. It is a transient blur. You are not sure what the character said, how it was pronounced, or how it was spelled, and in a split second it is gone forever. You cannot think about the word because immediately there are new words to hear, and your attention shifts to those. The film's words whirl by like horses on a merry-go-round. Nothing holds still. In a book you can see the words steady on the page, and look at how they are spelled, and think about how they are pronounced. You can pause to look up a word. You can do it your way.

In a book you can also see the punctuation, and notice the commas, and stop when the periods say so. Punctuation is inaudible. Films do not show punctuation.

In a film the best words of the book might be replaced by modern or simple words, but in the book you enjoy the full fun of the greatest storytelling vocabulary

of literature, and you get to know the words, and you see them again ten pages later, and fourteen pages after that. As you read, you absorb the best words of the century in which the book was written, and as I already have indicated, after you read a few books from that century, you fit in, and you are comfortable, and you can then read anything from that century and have such fun, as though you had lived in that time. Books preserve the life of their centuries for all time. If you want to know about a previous century, read a book about that century written during that century by a person who lived in that century.

Two different films of the same book will show two different visions, two different interpretations. The book is always the same. It is the author's exact, original story.

And the more books you read, the more you understand, and the more you enjoy, and the more stories you absorb to help you through the rough spots of life. You develop of a sense of what Odysseus would do, or what Elizabeth Bennet would say, or how Queequeg would come to your side. You find yourself influenced by one character, and similar to another, and memorizing the exact words of another. Bit by bit, the stories become part of you.

And one book leads to another. You read a book by Jack London, and you enjoy it so much that you want to read another written by him. I have sometimes read an author's complete works. As you read books by the same author, you get to know the author's style and point of view. You become familiar with Ernest Hemingway's succinct, concrete writing and his view of individuals trying to face life with courage. You come to understand Charles Dickens's sympathy for people who have little and for their dignity and importance, even as they are poor and humble. You learn Jane Austen's regard for women who stand their ground and who do not permit their equality to be dismissed.

There is a saying among book beginners that goes, "I've already read that." But true readers are rereaders. Real readers know that it takes a number of readings to absorb a book. Real readers love to reread their favorite books. Real readers do not think, "I've already read that." To have already read a great book is a necessary step in the even better reading that one now begins. You read, and before you know it, you are going to your shelf to find that book again, to read the book again because it is now one of your favorites, with your favorite characters saying your favorite things. I may have read Shakespeare's *Hamlet* fifty times, but I have not finished reading it. I am never finished. I never throw my books away or give them away. I always try to buy hardback books because

they are not disposable to me. I read them, and they become part of my life, and they take their place in my collection. They are like songs that we want to hear again whenever we wish.

Books: education means books. There is no substitute for books. More than anything else, it is the reading and rereading of books that educates us. Merely going to school, if the experience does not lead us into a world of books, does not ensure that we become educated. And the necessary experience with books is essentially personal; no school can possibly assign the amount of reading that true education demands. Schools help us begin, but schools only train us to read. School reading points the way. We use that brief foundation to launch ourselves into a life of reading.

We sometimes hear the phrase "the life of the mind." The main gate to the life of the mind is a stack of books. Through books, you have access to the great ideas in intellectual history, to the great movements of armies and civilizations, to the great discoveries of science, to the lives of the heroes, to the ideas of the philosophers, to the suffering of the martyrs, to the great characters and themes in literature. Books are the common language that unites thinking people the world over, and the more you read, the more you can enjoy both your own ideas and the ideas of others across the world and through the centuries.

In this book you will find a strong selection of classic words—the power words that I identified in my research as critical to an enjoyment of the classics of British and American literature. Each lesson presents ten new classic words, and each lesson also contains ten classic words brought forward from *Caesar's English I* and *Caesar's English II*, so students who studied those texts will find those words strengthened, and students who did not study those texts will learn them now. Each chapter contains famous examples and creative readings that will help you internalize the classic words. In all, this collection of words will pave your path into great English literature. Read with spirit, believe in the words, make it your intention to learn them permanently, and look forward to the wonderful literature that you will enjoy.


JACK
LONDON

Classic Words – Lesson I

Ten New Words

latter: the second

dejected: in low spirits

despondent: disheartened

rebuke: a sharp criticism

writhe: twist, squirm

aloof: unfriendly

dissipate: disperse

portent: an omen

phenomenon: an unusual occurrence

resolute: determined

Ten Review Words

Caesar's English I

countenance: facial expression

profound: deep

manifest: obvious

prodigious: huge

languor: weakness

Caesar's English II

placate: to appease

derision: ridicule

vivacious: full of life

procure: to acquire

retort: a quick, clever reply

latter: adj., LATT-ur, rhymes with *bladder*

The adjective **latter** means the second item of two. If there are more than two items, we simply refer to the "last mentioned." In *The Red Badge of Courage*, Stephen Crane wrote that "The latter felt immensely superior to his friend." In Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*, we read that "She tossed a cushion under his head, and offered him some water; he rejected the latter, and tossed uneasily on the former."

dejected: adj., de-JECK-ted, rhymes with *collected*

The adjective **dejected** means sad or depressed, as the stems *de* (down) and *ject* (throw) suggest: thrown down, emotionally. The noun form is *dejection*. In James M. Barrie's *Peter Pan*, we read that "Hook was profoundly dejected." In Sir Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe*, Scott noted that "Her demeanour was serious, but not dejected."

despondent: adj., de-SPON-dent, rhymes with *correspondent*

The adjective **despondent** (the noun forms are *despondence, despond,* or *despondency*) means profoundly disheartened, dispirited from loss of hope. In Kenneth Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows*, we read that "He's always rather low and despondent when he's wanting his victuals." Victuals are food. In *Gulliver's Travels*, Jonathan Swift wrote that "I found myself so listless and desponding that I had not the heart to rise."

rebuke: n. or v., re-BYOOK, rhymes with *fluke*

The noun **rebuke** indicates a sharp reprimand, a severe criticism. We also use *rebuke* as a verb. In Charles Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities*, we read that "Loud acclamations hailed this rebuke." In William Makepeace Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*, "That gentleman rose up with an oath and rebuked Rawdon for his language."

writhe: v., RYTHE, rhymes with *scythe*

The verb **writhe** means to twist or to squirm, to contort the body. In Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure*, we read that "Sue writhed under the hard and direct questioning." In Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, the pitiful monster laments, "I now writhed under the miserable pain of a wound."

aloof: adj., ah-LOOF, rhymes with *roof*

The adjective **aloof** means distant, unfriendly, cool. It is often used with *stand*; we stand aloof, either emotionally or physically. In Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, "They stood a little aloof while he was talking to their niece." James M. Barrie, in *Peter Pan*, wrote, "Ever a dark and solitary enigma, he stood aloof from his followers."

dissipate: v., DISS-ih-pate, rhymes with *anticipate*

The verb **dissipate** means to disperse, to scatter, to break up, to disappear. The noun *dissipation* usually refers to an undisciplined life of luxury or pleasure. In Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, we read that "Presently a breeze dissipated the cloud, and I descended upon the glacier." In *Walden*, Henry David Thoreau wrote that "The student may read Homer or Aeschylus in the Greek without danger of dissipation or luxuriousness."

portent: n., POR-tent, rhymes with *important*

The noun **portent** means an omen, a warning sign. The adjective form is *portentous*. In *Lord Jim*, Joseph Conrad wrote that "They had him, but it was like getting hold of an apparition, a wraith, a portent." In Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*, we read that "Such a portentous and mysterious monster roused all my curiosity."

phenomenon: n., feh-NOH-me-non, rhymes with *Parthenon*

The singular noun **phenomenon** refers to a fact or situation that may not be fully understood. Important: The plural is *phenomena*: a phenomenon, some phenomena. In *The Yearling*, Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings wrote that "The sink-hole was a phenomenon common to the Florida limestone regions." In Henry David Thoreau's *Walden,* we read that "Few phenomena gave me more delight."

resolute: adj., REH-zo-loot, rhymes with *salute*

The adjective **resolute** means determined or firm, usually in an admirable sense. The opposite is *irresolute*. In Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, we read that "He was never so resolute, never so strong, never so full of volcanic energy, as at present."

Jack London

The ability to read academic nonfiction is one of the most important elements of academic success. For practice, here is a short nonfiction essay that contains many of the classic words of this lesson.

A writer of rugged countenance and prodigious talent, Jack London was the author of *White Fang*, *The Call of the Wild*, *The Sea Wolf*, and other stories that have become classics of American literature.

Born in San Francisco in 1876, London knew from an early age that he wanted to be a writer, but he spent years struggling despondently from one low-paying job to another. He worked at a cannery, was an oyster-pirate, worked on the California Fish Patrol, was a sailor, and was even a hobo—in 1894 the dejected London was incarcerated for thirty days for vagrancy. Eventually he returned home, graduated from Oakland High School, and was admitted to the University of California at Berkeley, but he dropped out because he did not have enough money to pay his university bills. London was a great reader, and in his later years he procured a personal library of more than 15,000 books.

In 1897 London went to the Alaskan Klondike, resolutely chasing a dream of gold, but he suffered under the cruel conditions and developed scurvy. His experiences left him with a profound social conscience, and he began to weave his experiences into vivacious stories that depicted the struggle for existence amid the cruel phenomena of wild nature, where the weak and languorous are dominated by the strong. He wrote his first major novel, *The Call of the Wild*, which is set in the Yukon, in 1903. *The Call of the Wild* has never been out of print since it was first published, and it has now been translated into nearly fifty languages.

All authors experience sharp critical reviews, even derision, and London was no different. Some have questioned his manifest emphasis on violence, and others have rebuked him for ethnocentric prejudice. It is not unusual for writers to draw on other sources for ideas, but some critics feel that London went beyond normal influence and plagiarized other authors' work—a charge he rejected.

Since London's death in 1916 at the age of only forty, his fame as a novelist has not dissipated. His major titles are part of the canon of world literature, and they continue to be read and discussed.

Q: What interests you most about Jack London's life? What would you like to read more about?

Jack London

Michael Clay Thompson

Jack London stumbled down the dock.
Dejection hurt his heart. n.
An omen had appeared, a flock,
a portent, dark, a start n.

of some phenomenon. He looked n.
into the writhing wind, adj.
his canvas backpack crammed with books,
and dreamed of spinning

tales of cold, despondent worlds, adj.
of snow, prodigious storms, adj.
and brutes, rebukes, and whirling n.
mists with dissipating forms adj.

of circling wolves. A languor filled n.
his listless limbs. He stowed
his stuff aboard the ship. He'd build
these grimy details into code,

into his art of words, aloof, adj.
of Nature's fallen fools,
of ice and knives, and fang and tooth,
and countenances cruel. n.

He well perceived the portent's truth: n.
the resolute survive. n.
The weak succumb to fang and tooth,
the strong prevail—alive.

Classic Words Challenge

In each case below, one of the choices was the word used by the author. Your challenge is to guess which word the author used. This is not a test; it is a game because more than one word choice may work perfectly well. Use your sensitivity and intuition to guess which word the author used. You may need a dictionary.

1. From Stephen Crane's *The Red Badge of Courage*

   He was _____ and sullen, and threw shifting glances about him.
   a. aloof
   b. despondent
   c. resolute
   d. profound

2. From H.G. Wells's *The War of the Worlds*

   All day and all night we sat face to face, I weary but _____.
   a. aloof
   b. dejected
   c. despondent
   d. resolute

3. From Johann David Wyss's *The Swiss Family Robinson*

   We were attracted by a most curious _____.
   a. phenomenon
   b. rebuke
   c. portent
   d. countenance

4. From James M. Barrie's *Peter Pan*

   Ever a dark and solitary enigma, he stood _____ from his followers.
   a. dejected
   b. despondent
   c. aloof
   d. manifest

Classic Grammar • Parts of Speech

Every vocabulary word is a part of speech, and every sentence is made of vocabulary. To use vocabulary correctly, we must use it grammatically. Many words can be used in several ways. The word *run*, for example, can be a verb, as in *We run every day*; it also can be a noun: *We had a good run*.

In the sentences below, you will find our classic vocabulary words, but they may be present as a different part of speech. In other words, you may see a classic adjective we know but in its adverb form or noun form. Think flexibly. On the lines below sentences three through seven, identify the part of speech of each word. If you need to review the eight parts of speech, do that first.

1. He tramped **despondently** up and down the region. (Twain)

   pron. v. adv. prep. conj. prep. adj. n.

2. The **aloofness**...existed when we first met in Naples.... (James Watson)

   adj. n. v. conj. pron. adv. v. prep. n.

3. The lama took snuff from a **portentous** wooden snuff-gourd. (Kipling)

   adj. n. v. n. prep. adj. adj. adj. n.

4. Hook was profoundly **dejected**. (Barrie)

   n. v. adv. adj.

5. On they trudged and **writhed** and surged. (W.E.B. Du Bois)

   adv. pron. v. conj. v. conj. v.

6. There was no voice of **rebuke**. (Twain)

   adv. v. adj. n. prep. n.

7. My fear was instantly **dissipated**. (M. Shelley)

   adj. n. v. adv. v. (*was dissipated* is the passive voice verb)

Classic Word Muddles

In most of the sentences below, one of the classic words is misused, which means that it is a part of speech error. Remember, parts of speech are the instructions for correct vocabulary usage. Can you explain the vocabulary/grammar errors? Some of the sentences contain no errors.

1.	When Austen saw the **writhe**, she became more resolute.	not a n.
2.	His dejection increased, and he made a **countenance** face.	not an adj.
3.	The **rebuke** remark made Hawthorne stand aloof.	not an adj.
4.	The latter remark caused **portent** alarm.	not an adj.
5.	The disturbing portent left London **despondent**.	correct
6.	Thoreau thought about a prodigious **phenomena**.	phenomenon
7.	Crane's dejected countenance made his sadness **manifest**.	correct
8.	Dickinson's sleepy languor gave her a manifest **aloof**.	not a n.
9.	Frost chose the latter path, and his dejection **dissipated**.	correct
10.	The comment stung, and he made a **writhe** face.	not an adj.

Classic Centuries: *dejected*

Below are examples of how *dejected* has been used through the centuries. Which is your favorite?

1952 Bernard Malamud, *The Natural*
"The New York Yankees grew more dejected."

1904 James M. Barrie, *Peter Pan*
"He was roused from this dejection by Smee's eager voice."

1895 Stephen Crane, *The Red Badge of Courage*
"Their smudged countenances now expressed a profound dejection."

1816 Jane Austen, *Emma*
"His dejection was most evident."

1726 Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver's Travels*
"They all appeared with dejected looks, and in the meanest habit."

1667 John Milton, *Paradise Lost*
"Of sorrow and dejection and despair...."

1601 William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*
"Nor the dejected 'havior of the visage."

An Impression, Influenced by Jack London's *The Sea Wolf*

In the story below, some of the classic words are used well, but others are not. Sometimes it is the meaning that is wrong, and other times it is the grammar/ usage. Please circle the classic words that are not used correctly.

The scarred old captain clanked across the wooden deck of the schooner, muttering sharp rebukes at his crew. His usual cheerful dejection was gone, and he seemed to writhe in fury at his failure to find the pirates that had attacked his ship during the last voyage. He might have been negligent, or he might have been tricked; he preferred the latter explanation. But now he was in no mood for reflection. Aloof and glowering, he stomped past the nervous crew.

In fact, he was in no mood for hesitation; he was furious, energetic, and languorous, and he was resolute about catching the pirates. He would allow no retort. He knew that it might take a phenomenon event to reveal where they were hiding, and he knew that the answer might be hidden and manifest. The situation could be a profound.

He remembered the days of his youth, when he had been so hopeful and despondent, but those hopes had rapidly dissipated as a series of disturbing portents had proven true. Instead of realizing his dreams, he had suffered under years of prodigious, and he knew that now it was too late for him to recover. His only hope was to find the pirates and exact his revenge. Nothing could placate him.

Purple and gray clouds began to amass on the southern horizon, and he knew that a prodigious storm was gathering and dissipating. Flocks of birds were flying north high over the mast quickly, as though they were frightened. A swooping seagull dropped a snake from the sky, and it landed on the salty deck, writhing and hissing, and he knew that this was a portent of danger, a disturbing phenomena. Far at sea, you had to watch the weather closely. He barked out a command to set the course for north-northwest.

On a small island far to the west, the pirates could just see the captain's sails on the horizon like a white speck of foam on the crest of a wave, and they knew that he was sailing away from them, and they laughed in dejection.

Classic Words Character

Let us use some of the words that we are learning. Pretend that you are writing a novel, and write a short description of a character, using some of the words in this lesson. Here is an example:

> Madeline's countenance was disturbed. The rebuke from her mother had left her writhing with disappointment, and now she felt the sting of the derision in her mother's words. She knew that the pain of hurt feelings would eventually dissipate, and her mother might even come to her room and try to placate her resentment, but for now, all she wanted to do was sit in a corner and think of a sharp retort.

Classic Words Place

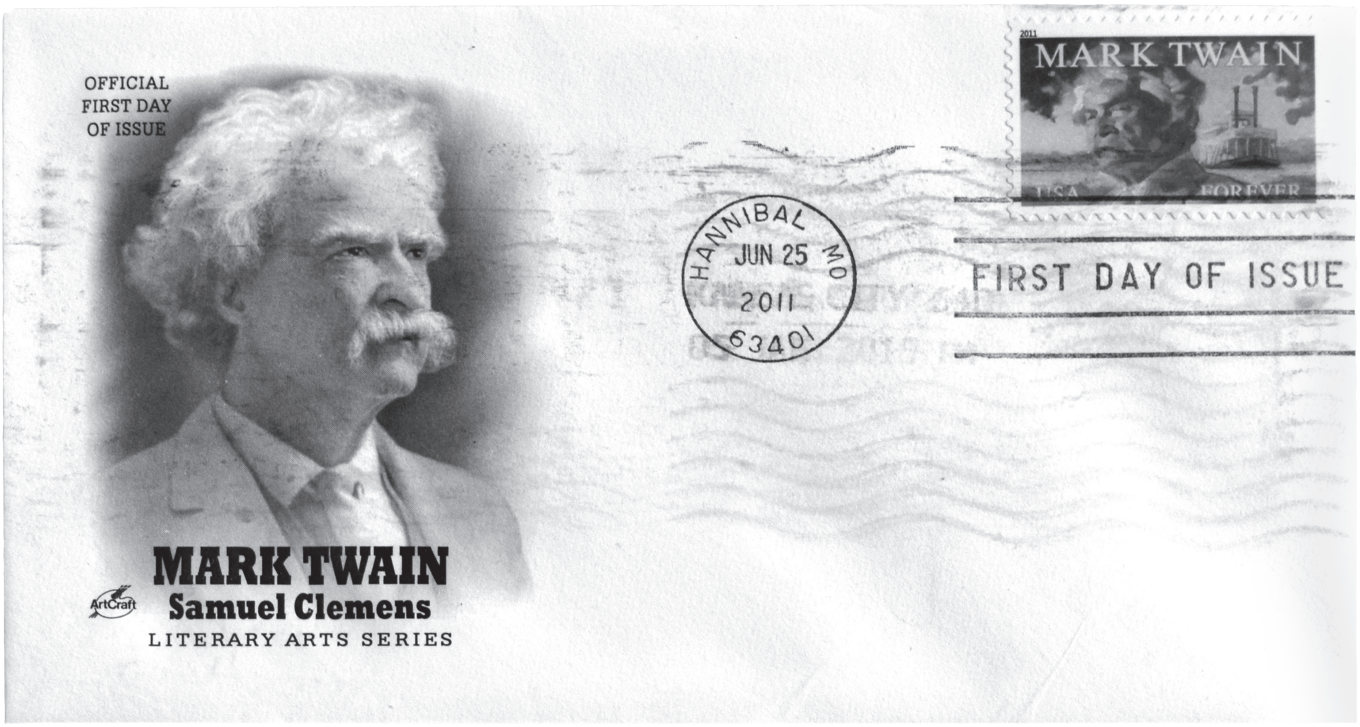
Now write a short description of a place, a landscape, or a scene, using some of the words in this lesson. Here is an example:

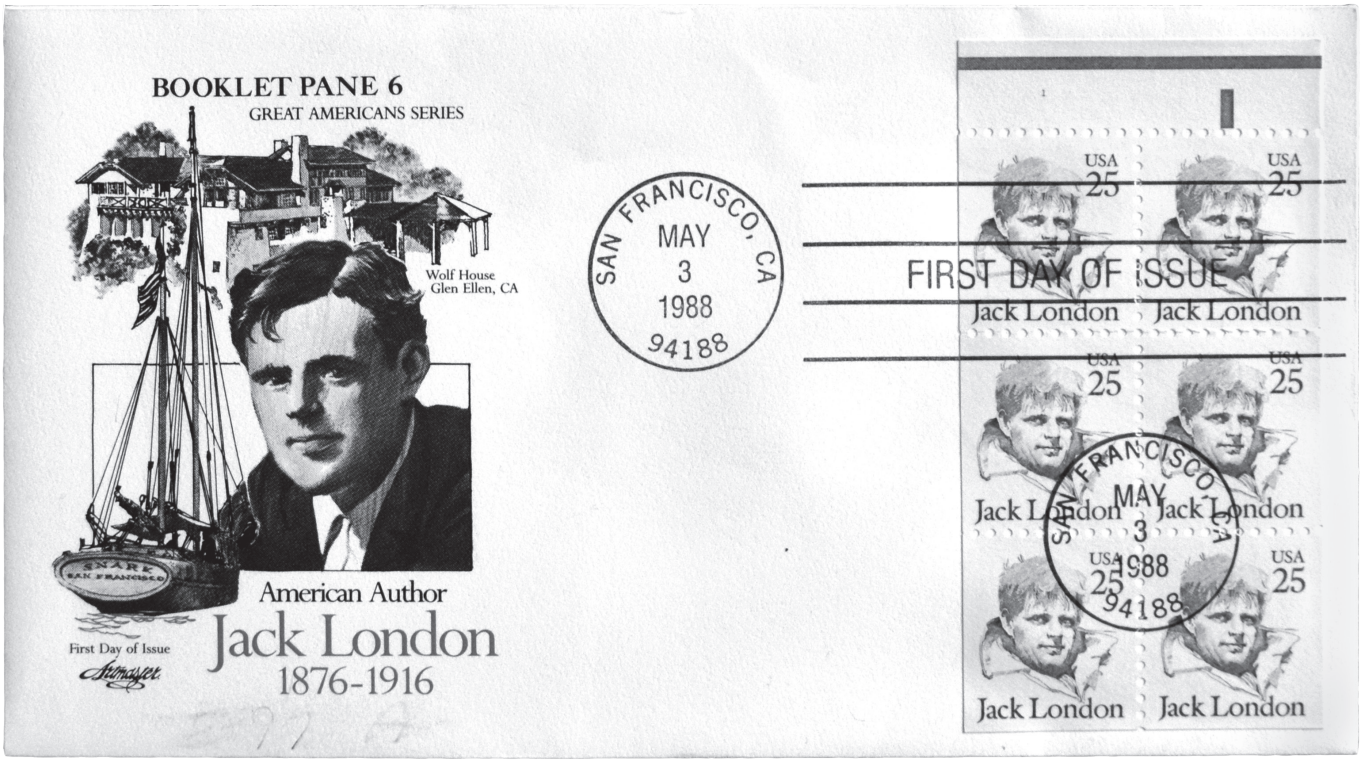
> During the storm, the birch trees had writhed in profound submission to the wind, and the dark clouds had frowned their derisive countenances down upon the valley. The storm was a massive phenomenon, somehow aloof from humanity and yet resolute in bringing life-giving water to the fields. Now, the first hint of vivacious sun began to break through the clouds, and the thunder began to dissipate, but only slowly.

Classic Words Invention

Finally, write a short description of something or someone that you imagine, using some of the words in this lesson. Here is an example:

> Freedom is a profound idea. Life without freedom is a kind of despondence, a prodigious suppression of creativity and individuality, but freedom is also a challenging phenomenon because with freedom we become responsible for rising above languor and accomplishing something meaningful in our lives.





THE UNITED STATES HONORS SOME OF ITS FAVORITE AUTHORS.