

Study the definitions of the words. Then do the exercises that follow.

aquatic
ə kwät' ik

adj. 1. Growing or living in or on water.
Water lilies are **aquatic** plants.

2. Done in or upon water.
Swimming is an **aquatic** sport.

assert
ə sɜrt'

v. To say firmly; to declare.
Charlie **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 hike.

assertive *adj.* Self-assured; bold and confident.
Because of his **assertive** manner, he was able to obtain an interview for the summer job.



.....

Assert your feelings about a vegetable, such as broccoli.

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.



.....

Tell your partner what you do to avert being late to school.

bleak
blēk

adj. 1. Without much hope.
The family's future looked **bleak** when both parents lost their jobs.

2. Cold and dreary; exposed to cold winds and bad weather.
Penguins seem to flourish in Antarctica's **bleak** climate.



.....

Discuss with your partner whether the chances for snow tomorrow are bleak or hopeful.

blithe
blīth

adj. 1. Cheerful; carefree.
The children's **blithe** mood is contagious.

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 knew she was happy when she walked **blithely** out the door.

9

Vocabulary Extension

principal

noun A head of a school.

noun The most important person in a company or organization.

adjective Most important.



Academic Context

Offering every student a quality education is the **principal** concern of every school.

A **principal** oversees the teachers and staff of a school.

Discussion & Writing Prompt

What do you think is the **principal** responsibility of a firefighter? What are a few things a firefighter does to carry out his or her **principal** responsibility?

2 min.

1. Turn and talk to your partner or group.

Use this space to take notes or draw your ideas.

3 min.

2. Write 2–4 sentences.

Be ready to share what you have written.

docile
däs' 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 continue 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
män' 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 librarian checked the **monitor** to see if the book was checked out.



Chat with your partner about how often you monitor the clock during school.

mutilate
myōōt' i āt

v. To hurt or damage by cutting into, cutting off, or cutting out.

Bakari had to **mutilate** the old book to use it as a base for his diorama.

nimble
nim' bəl

adj. 1. Able to move quickly and easily.

Trinity'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.



Talk with your partner about what can be done to ease the plight of stray dogs.

ponderous
pän' dər əs

adj. Heavy and slow moving.

The elephant made its way with **ponderous** steps through the water.

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.



Share with your partner what you do when you are on the verge of losing your temper.

vigilant
vij' ə lənt



adj. Watchful; ready for danger.

Health authorities remain **vigilant** for any signs of the epidemic's return.

.....
Talk to your partner about things you should be vigilant for as you walk home from school.

10A

Using Words in Context

Read the following sentences. If the word in bold is used correctly, write C on the line. If the word is used incorrectly, write I on the line.

- (a) The grass **verge** by the roadside was a good spot for a picnic. ____

(b) After the two companies **verged**, they became even better. ____

(c) The story he told **verged** on being funny without meaning to. ____

(d) The train **verged** along the track and reached its destination ahead of time. ____
- (a) An **assertive** person like Asif does not take no for an answer. ____

(b) Galileo **asserted** that the earth was not the center of the universe. ____

(c) I challenge your **assertion** that the party will be canceled because of the weather. ____

(d) I joined the **assertion** because I love reading and talking about books. ____
- (a) "Don't worry about it," Shondra said **blithely** when I mentioned the money. ____

(b) The movie takes a **blithe** look at life in the Roaring Twenties. ____

(c) Chien-Shiung showed a **blithe** disregard for her failing grades. ____

(d) He **blithely** practiced the high jump every day after school for hours at a time. ____
- (a) After the fifth day of heavy snow, the number of students who walked to school had **dwindled** to just a few. ____

(b) Carl was **dwindled** out of bed by his blaring alarm. ____

(c) The dirt road had **dwindled** to an uneven and overgrown path. ____

(d) Food was **dwindling** rapidly and needed to be replaced. ____
- (a) Jericho's **nimble** mind was always coming up with something funny to say. ____

(b) Grandma's **nimble** fingers went to work repairing the shirt. ____

(c) Her **nimble** feet stumbled all the time. ____

(d) Our fingers were so **nimble** from the cold that they lost all feeling. ____

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vigilant

6. (a) My favorite **aquatic** sport is diving. ____
(b) Seals and other **aquatic** animals bask in the sun. ____
(c) The spaceship travelled at light speed across deep **aquatic** space. ____
(d) Kelp is an **aquatic** plant that grows in abundance and has many uses. ____
7. (a) The **plight** of the stranded whales drew worldwide attention. ____
(b) I couldn't stop thinking about the **plight** of the lost puppy we had found. ____
(c) We thought we could do something to help his **plight**. ____
(d) The **plight's** colors were mostly gray. ____
8. (a) The sailor kept a **vigilant** watch for icebergs. ____
(b) Reporters keep a **vigilant** eye on what goes on in Washington. ____
(c) The guards had grown slow and **vigilant** and were taken completely by surprise. ____
(d) **Vigilant** sounds coming from the darkness made us shiver in fear. ____
9. (a) It was impossible to **avert** the disaster that followed. ____
(b) We **averted** ourselves closer to the water. ____
(c) I **averted** the unpleasant subject by talking about the weather. ____
(d) I **averted** my gaze from the accident on the news. ____
10. (a) I recognized the **ponderous** footsteps of Grandpa coming into the house. ____
(b) Uncle Biyen's **ponderous** jokes are very funny. ____
(c) The titanosaur was a **ponderous** beast, weighing in at a hundred tons. ____
(d) A **ponderous** cloud floated high above us, threatening rain. ____

10B

Making Connections

Circle the letter next to each correct answer. There may be more than one correct answer.

- Which word or words go with *happy*?
 (a) ecstatic (b) bleak (c) blithe (d) elated
- Which word or words go with *skillful*?
 (a) deft (b) bleak (c) ponderous (d) nimble
- Which word or words go with *watchful*?
 (a) lethal (b) observant (c) vigilant (d) negligent
- Which word or words go with *causing harm*?
 (a) vigilant (b) assert (c) mutilate (d) scald
- Which word or words go with *water*?
 (a) drought (b) aquatic (c) monitor (d) lethal
- Which word or words go with *clumsy*?
 (a) nimble (b) ungainly (c) aquatic (d) ponderous
- Which word or words go with *watch over*?
 (a) mutilate (b) monitor (c) supervise (d) avert
- Which word or words go with *death*?
 (a) lethal (b) slaughter (c) fatality (d) aquatic
- Which word or words go with *well behaved*?
 (a) acrid (b) docile (c) obedient (d) vigilant
- Which word or words go with *hopeless*?
 (a) inevitable (b) blithe (c) bleak (d) grim

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Determining Meanings

Circle the letter next to each answer choice that correctly completes the sentence. There may be more than one correct answer.

1. A lethal

- (a) dose of the poison could be as little as a single drop.
- (b) storm left thirty injured and two dead.
- (c) song came on the radio.
- (d) clue in the crossword puzzle had me scratching my head.

2. We monitored the

- (a) number of geese in our yard.
- (b) water quality, looking for a rise in minerals.
- (c) sites most students go to on the Internet.
- (d) popcorn into the microwave.

3. It verges

- (a) as fast as it possibly can.
- (b) on the absurd to see the kitten lying with the dog.
- (c) its way across the country in hours.
- (d) on insanity to give this much homework.

4. I averted

- (a) an accident by slowing my bike down.
- (b) anything with too much sugar.
- (c) some shoes somewhere in the apartment.
- (d) my thoughts from what had happened.

5. I asserted

- (a) the money into twenties, tens, fives, and ones.
- (b) my right to speak freely at school.
- (c) a group of friends together to decide what to do.
- (d) my reasons for voting the way I did.

6. A bleak

- (a) review in the local paper put the future of the television show in jeopardy.
- (b) weather forecast caused us to change our plans.
- (c) movie was on last night and filled me with joy and hope.
- (d) climate like Antarctica's is not popular with tourists.

7. A **docile**

- (a) dessert like strawberry shortcake is my favorite.
- (b) cat scratched and bit its owner.
- (c) pet is better for families with small children.
- (d) child can still get angry every so often.

8. **Dwindling**

- (a) food supplies meant we would need to cut our camping trip short.
- (b) temperatures might mean snow is coming.
- (c) his hands together, he stood and made an announcement.
- (d) one thing for another was a fair trade.



Completing Sentences

Complete the sentences to demonstrate your knowledge of the words in bold.

1. Something I can **assert** about myself is

_____ .

2. If a person's fingers are **nimble**, that means

_____ .

3. A **mutilated** apple looks

_____ .

4. I'm concerned about the **plight** of

_____ .

5. A **vigilant** parent would

_____ .

6. An example of an **aquatic** animal is

_____ .

7. If you have a **blithe** attitude, that means you

_____ .

8. A sad book might put me on the **verge** of

_____ .

9. If a movie is **bleak**, I feel

_____ .

10. Every day, I **monitor**

_____ .

| |
|-----------|
| aquatic |
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| avert |
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| blithe |
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| dwindle |
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| verge |
| vigilant |



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. It measures from eight to twelve feet in length and weighs up to three thousand pounds. The manatee's tapered body, shaped somewhat like that of an overgrown seal or miniature whale, has two front legs and a broad flat tail. The legs and the tail all act as flippers.

Manatees live singly or in small groups. They can eat two hundred 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. These sea creatures are quite **docile** by nature. In fact, they have no fear of humans; they seem to love company! Manatees allow swimmers to play alongside them, something that is discouraged by game wardens.

Manatees feed just below the surface. They 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. 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. Perhaps they are simply not **nimble** enough to get out of the way in time.

Because of the enormous increase in the number of powerboats in Florida, for years the manatee population **dwindled**, and the animal's prospects of survival were **bleak**. These creatures were on the **verge** of extinction. But 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. More needs to be done, though. People operating powerboats 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.

Still, something amazing has happened. In recent years, because Florida authorities carefully **monitored** the manatee population and took actions to protect them, an aerial survey showed that more than six thousand manatees now inhabit the area's waters. Manatees were removed from the endangered-species list in 2016.

► Answer each of the following questions with a sentence. If a question does not contain a vocabulary word from the lesson's word list, use one in your answer. Use each word only once.

1. What manatee behavior 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 still endangered?

5. Have many manatees 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?

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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 Florida authorities 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. How do people feel about 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* 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 two people 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 is no longer in use, meaning “loyalty; faithfulness; honor.” It still appears as part of the word *betroth*, meaning “to promise to marry.”
- 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.

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