Word List

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

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

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

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

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

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

**docile**
*adj.* Well behaved; easy to handle.
Because it was my first attempt at riding, I was given the most docile horse in the stable.
Flourish and flower (as verbs) are synonyms; both can mean "to thrive." We can say that the arts flourished, or flowered, in Athens in the fifth century B.C.E. Both words come from the Latin flos, which means "a flower."

Don't confuse hoard, "something stored away secretly," with horde, "a large crowd or swarm." These two words are homophones; they sound the same but have different spellings and meanings.

Don't confuse principal with principle, which has three meanings: (1) "a rule or truth by which we govern ourselves" (The principle of the separation of church and state traces to the First Amendment); (2) "a truth from which other truths can be worked out" (One principle of plane geometry is that parallel lines never meet); (3) "a rule or law that explains how something works" (An electric bell works on the principle of the continuous making and breaking of an electric current).
**dwindle**
*dwin’ dal*  
*adj.* To keep on becoming less; to grow smaller in number or amount.  
My hopes of winning the arm wrestling match *dwindled* when I saw the size of my opponent's muscles.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**vigilant**
*vij’ a lant*  
*adj.* Watchful; ready for danger.  
Health authorities remain *vigilant* for any signs of the epidemic's return.
Choose two phrases to form a sentence that correctly uses a word from Word List 10. Write each sentence in the space provided.

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

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

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

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

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

6. (a) A plight is  
   (b) A monitor is  
   (c) a video screen that displays information.  
   (d) a blatant denial of what is clearly true.  

7. (a) can be changed as needed.  
   (b) suggests no future problems.  
   (c) A blithe response is one that  
   (d) A bleak response is one that  

8. (a) a difficult situation.  
   (b) A verge is  
   (c) an amusing diversion.  
   (d) A plight is  

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 aquatic  
 assert  
 avert  
 bleak  
 blithe  
 docile  
 dwindle  
 lethal  
 monitor  
 mutilate  
 nimble  
 plight  
 ponderous  
 verge  
 vigilant
9. (a) A fortune that verges (b) increases monthly. (c) A fortune that dwindles (d) decreases in size.

**10B Just the Right Word**

Improve each of the following sentences by crossing out the bold phrase and replacing it with a word (or a form of the word) from Word List 10.

1. Ramone **said in a very forceful way** that a ten-year-old is competent to babysit.

2. You have to be **able to move quickly and easily** to get on the gymnastics team.

3. Household chemicals such as bleach and other cleaning products can be **capable of causing death** if swallowed.

4. This machine **keeps a check on** the patient’s condition around the clock.

5. The White Mountains can be very **cold and dreary with strong winds and bad weather** in winter.

6. Some plants are **of a kind that flourish in water**, so they do not need soil in order to grow.

7. Such negligence in maintaining the vehicle **comes close to bordering** on indifference to the passengers’ safety.

8. Although its bark is intimidating, the dog is actually quite **easy to control**.

9. Following the accident, the driver drove off **as though not caring**, seemingly unaware of the damage to his car.

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

11. I **turned away** my eyes from the light when it became too bright.
10c Applying Meanings

Circle the letter or letters of each correct answer. A question may have more than one correct answer.

1. Which of the following are **aquatic** activities?
   (a) boating  
   (b) scuba diving  
   (c) golfing  
   (d) sunbathing

2. Which of the following is **ponderous**?
   (a) a mouse  
   (b) a planet  
   (c) a bulldozer  
   (d) a hippopotamus

3. Which of the following can be **nimble**?
   (a) a mind  
   (b) a tree  
   (c) a squirrel  
   (d) a dancer

4. Which of the following might be a **plight**?
   (a) being evicted  
   (b) inheriting money  
   (c) being a casualty  
   (d) facing a ruthless opponent

5. Which of the following might an **assertive** person say?
   (a) “Get in line.”  
   (b) “You don’t belong here!”  
   (c) “I was here first.”  
   (d) “Oh no, you don’t!”

6. Which of the following can be **bleak**?
   (a) a region  
   (b) a mountain  
   (c) a statement  
   (d) a delicacy

7. Which of the following can be **lethal**?
   (a) a snake bite  
   (b) a gunshot wound  
   (c) a garland  
   (d) a reprimand

8. Which of the following might a **docile** person do?
   (a) push to the front of the line  
   (b) wait patiently until called  
   (c) get irate with a sales clerk  
   (d) admonish a stranger
Write an antonym for each of the numbered words. Choose from the boldfaced words below.

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<th>ponderous</th>
<th>fierce</th>
<th>annoy</th>
<th>miserable</th>
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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 3,000 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 200 pounds of food a day, grazing contentedly on water hyacinths and other aquatic plants. A manatee sometimes may stand up straight in the water, often with strings of sea plants hanging like hair from its head.

In the United States, Florida's coastal waters are the manatee's principal habitat. 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.

Florida authorities monitor the manatee population carefully. A 2009 aerial survey showed that more than 2,000 manatees inhabit the area's waters. Manatees were once hunted for their hides and their meat. However, they have been protected by law from this practice for more than a century. Still, the alarming reality is that the manatee population has dwindled considerably in recent years. Sadly, this lovable creature, which has survived all these years without threats from predators, may now be on the verge of extinction. The main reason for this is related to the enormous increase in the number of powerboats in Florida.

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

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

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

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

2. What kind of plant is a water hyacinth?

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

4. Is the manatee population increasing or decreasing?

5. Have many manatees have been injured as a result of collisions with boats?
6. Can a manatee die as a result of being struck by the propeller of a boat?

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

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

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

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

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

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

13. Why should we be concerned about the manatee?

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

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