

# Lesson 17

## Word List

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

**afflict**

ə flɪkt'

v. To bring or cause pain and suffering.

The patient has been **afflicted** with swollen feet for several months.

**affliction** *n.* A condition of pain, suffering, or trouble.

Frida Kahlo's **affliction** was the result of a serious accident.

**barren**

bar' ən

*adj.* Not fruitful; not reproducing.

When the topsoil is washed away, the land is **barren**.

**consist**

kən sist'

v. To be made up; to contain.

The wedding banquet will **consist** of six courses.

**drought**

draut

*n.* A long period without rain.

The poor harvest was due to the **drought**.

**erode**

ē rōd'

v. To wear away bit by bit; to wear away by action of wind, water, or ice.

Heavy seas from yesterday's storm have **eroded** parts of the cliff.

**erosion** *n.* The process or state of eroding.

Cutting down many trees in one area leads to soil **erosion**.

**expand**

ek spænd'

v. 1. To make or become larger.

You can **expand** your chest by taking a very deep breath.

2. To give further details of.

Mr. da Silva asked me to **expand** on some of the information in my report.

**expansion** *n.* The act, process, or result of enlarging.

Ten new employees were hired as a result of the company's **expansion**.

**famine**

fam' in

*n.* A widespread and long-lasting shortage of food that may cause starvation.

The **famine** in Somalia was the result of several poor harvests in a row.

**fertile**

fərt' l

*adj.* 1. Able to produce good crops.

The major reason we grow such large tomatoes is the **fertile** soil.

2. Able to produce offspring.

A female cat is **fertile** at six months.

3. Able to produce ideas; inventive.

Many ideas sprang from Edison's **fertile** brain.

**oasis**

ō ā' sis

*n.* **oases** *n. pl.* (ō ā' sēz) A place where there is water in an otherwise dry area.

Travelers across the Sahara try to reach the next **oasis** before nightfall.

**pasture**

pas' chər

*n.* A field of growing grass where animals can eat; a meadow.

We put the sheep in a different **pasture** to give the grass in this one a chance to grow back.

v. To put animals out in a field to eat grass.

We **pasture** our horses on a neighbor's land.

**primitive**  
prim' i tiv

*adj.* 1. From earliest times; ancient.

The **primitive** cave drawings at Lascaux, France, are over fifteen thousand years old.  
2. Simple or crude.

The Weinsteins replaced the **primitive** shed behind the house with a modern garage.

**refuge**  
ref' yooj

*n.* 1. Shelter or protection from harm.

The hikers found **refuge** from the blizzard in a nearby cave.

2. A place of safety.

During the hurricane, families living in beach houses found **refuge** in the high school gym.

**refugee** *n.* A person forced to leave her or his home or country seeking protection from danger.  
A camp for Kurdish **refugees** was set up between Turkey and Iraq.

**revert**  
rē vurt'

*v.* To go back to an earlier condition, often one that is not as satisfactory.

During the week that the electric power lines were being repaired, we **reverted** to eating our meals by candlelight and lantern.

**teem**  
tēm

*v.* To be filled; to occur in large numbers.

The Columbia River once **teemed** with salmon.

**wither**  
with' ə

*v.* To become dried out; to lose freshness.

The crops will **wither** unless we have rain soon.

## 17A Finding Meanings

Choose two phrases to form a sentence that correctly uses a word from Word List 17. Write each sentence in the space provided.

1. (a) go beyond what is permitted. (c) To erode is to  
(b) To expand is to (d) gradually wear away.

afflict

barren

consist

drought

erode

expand

famine

fertile

oasis

pasture

primitive

refuge

revert

teem

wither

2. (a) a place with water in an otherwise dry area. (c) An oasis is  
(b) a condition from which one suffers. (d) A pasture is

3. (a) give more details about it. (c) To revert to something is to  
(b) To expand on something is to (d) mention it for the first time.

4. (a) To consist of something is to (c) be made up of it.  
(b) To teem with something is to (d) be associated with it.

5. (a) To wither is to (c) go back to an earlier condition.  
(b) continue to improve. (d) To revert is to

6. (a) a place of safety in time of danger. (c) A drought is  
(b) a grassy area where animals feed. (d) A pasture is
- 
7. (a) To wither is to (c) dry out from lack of water.  
(b) To teem is to (d) sink to a lower level.
- 
8. (a) A famine is (c) a long period without rain.  
(b) A drought is (d) an area where little can grow.
- 
9. (a) An expansion is (c) An affliction is  
(b) a place of great danger. (d) a condition causing suffering.
- 
10. (a) A refuge is (c) a person in poor health.  
(b) a place of safety. (d) A famine is

## 17B 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 17.

1. Al Kufrah is a well-known **place where water is found in an otherwise dry area** in Libya.
2. When children taunted her, it led to the **gradual wearing away** of her confidence.
3. The way the villagers draw water from the river may be **the same as that used in very early times**, but it is quite effective.
4. If the cow you bought is not **capable of producing calves**, the dealer will return the money you paid for it.
5. Our breakfast usually **is made up** of cereal, milk, fruit, and coffee.
6. Because the number of children taking tennis lessons is **growing larger** every year, we now offer three sessions during the summer.
7. Acid rain destroys lakes that once **were filled** with fish.
8. President Roosevelt was **made to suffer when he came down** with polio at the age of thirty-nine.

9. We **provide grass for** our goats in a neighbor's field.
10. Many **persons fleeing for their safety** from Nazi Germany came to the United States in the 1930s.

## 17C Applying Meanings

Circle the letter of each correct answer to the questions below. A question may have more than one correct answer.

- Which of the following might **wither**?
 

(a) crops	(c) leaves
(b) trees	(d) beaches
- Which of the following could one **expand**?
 

(a) one's knowledge	(c) one's home
(b) one's age	(d) one's chest
- Which of the following can result from **famine**?
 

(a) despair	(c) death
(b) sickness	(d) hunger
- Which of the following can be **barren**?
 

(a) a goat	(c) a pear tree
(b) a valley	(d) a pasture
- Which of the following might occur during a **drought**?
 

(a) restrictions on water use	(c) a yearning for rain
(b) forest fires	(d) flooding
- Which of the following can be **fertile**?
 

(a) a kitten	(c) a mind
(b) soil	(d) a morsel
- Which of the following might one find in a **pasture**?
 

(a) cargo	(c) sheep
(b) cows	(d) grass
- Which of the following can be **eroded**?
 

(a) soil	(c) cliffs
(b) confidence	(d) savings

afflict  
barren  
consist  
drought  
erode  
expand  
famine  
fertile  
oasis  
pasture  
primitive  
refuge  
revert  
teem  
wither

## 17D Word Study

Words that have different meanings and different spellings but sound the same are called homophones. *Sore* and *soar* are homophones.

Read the pairs of sentences below. Then choose the homophone that best fits each sentence.

### idol/idle

1. We didn't \_\_\_\_\_, as we wanted to finish our chores quickly.
2. The \_\_\_\_\_ was made of gold with rubies for its eyes.

### taper/tapir

3. The \_\_\_\_\_ was dripping wax onto the table.
4. The \_\_\_\_\_ is an animal with a long, flexible snout.

### teem/team

5. The streets \_\_\_\_\_ with tourists during the summer months.
6. May the best \_\_\_\_\_ win.

### reigns/reins

7. The chart lists the \_\_\_\_\_ of all the English kings and queens.
8. The \_\_\_\_\_ are used to control the horse.

### barren/baron

9. The Sahara is \_\_\_\_\_ except for the occasional oasis.
10. A \_\_\_\_\_ can sit in the British House of Lords.

### minor/miner

11. In the U.S., anyone under eighteen is considered a \_\_\_\_\_.
12. Every gold \_\_\_\_\_ in California hoped to strike it rich.

### flee/flea

13. A \_\_\_\_\_ can jump many times its height.
14. Most people were able to \_\_\_\_\_ inland before the hurricane struck.

### hanger/hangar

15. The aircraft was wheeled out of the \_\_\_\_\_.
16. I put the coat on a \_\_\_\_\_ and hung it in the closet.

## 17E Passage

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

## A Harvest of Sand

The ability of the earth to support life depends on the amount of rainfall it receives. The tropical rain forests of Africa, Asia, and Central and South America, which are **teeming** with life, get up to four hundred inches a year. Yet in other parts of the world, little or no rain falls, making the land **barren**. Areas where the annual rainfall is less than ten inches a year are called deserts.

The largest of the earth's deserts is the Sahara, in northern Africa, which covers an area almost as big as the United States. Apart from the central portion, which is mountainous, the Sahara **consists** mostly of sand. There is water, but it lies far below the surface in ancient underground lakes. In some places it bubbles to the surface in the form of springs. More often, though, wells have to be dug to get to it. In these places the soil is **fertile**, and people can grow crops and raise animals. **Oases** spring up around these places, often becoming the size of small towns. They are a welcome sight to the travelers who cross this harsh land on the backs of camels, or more commonly today, in four-wheel-drive vehicles.

South of the Sahara are the countries that make up the Sahel, an area that stretches four thousand miles from Senegal in the west to Ethiopia in the east. This part of Africa was once mostly grassland that provided good pasture for cattle and made it possible for the people of these countries to be reasonably well fed. In recent years, however, it has been afflicted with long dry spells, the worst in nearly two centuries. As the droughts continue, rivers and lakes dry up; without water, the grass withers and the cattle are left with nothing to feed on. To make matters worse, too many trees that held the soil in place have been cut down for firewood, resulting in widespread soil **erosion**.

Because of changing weather patterns, the Sahara is spreading into the Sahel. As it continues to **expand** southward, the Sahara has taken over more than a quarter of a million square miles since the 1950s. This is equivalent to an area roughly the size of France and Austria combined. Although nothing can be done to change weather patterns, scientists believe that in time conditions will change, and the land that is now desert may **revert** to grassland.

The people of the Sahel have suffered greatly, however. Hundreds of thousands have already died as a result of **famine**, and one third of all the children born in the Sahel still die before their fifth birthdays. Millions have left their once prosperous villages and have poured into the overcrowded cities to the south, where they live in **primitive** shelters. Nouakchott, on Africa's west coast, was home to fifteen thousand people in the 1950s. By 2004, the town's population had exploded to six hundred thousand people, most of them **refugees** from the slowly spreading desert to the north.

afflict  
barren  
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wither

Answer each of the following questions in the form of a sentence. If a question does not contain a vocabulary word from this lesson's word list, use one in your answer. Use each word only once. Questions and answers will then contain all fifteen words (or forms of the words).

1. Why are deserts **barren** places?

2. What happens to the people of the Sahel who are driven from their land?

3. Where is it possible to grow crops in the Sahara?

4. How has the Sahara changed in recent years?

5. What is the meaning of **fertile** as it is used in the passage?

6. In what way do tropical rain forests differ from deserts?

7. What is the main cause of **drought** in the Sahel?

8. What is the meaning of **primitive** as it is used in the passage?

9. How are cattle affected by the worsening conditions in the Sahel?

10. What happens to plants that don't get enough water?

11. Why does the cutting down of trees lead to soil **erosion**?

12. Why do scientists think that the Sahel may not remain a desert?

13. How does the present dry spell in the Sahel compare with those in the past?

14. Why would the Sahara have a brownish color when seen from space?

15. How can food shipments from outside help the people of the Sahel?

### FOUR MORE HOMO-PHONES

To **afflict** is to cause pain and suffering. To **inflict** (Word List 6) is to cause something damaging or painful to be felt. If you are confused by the similarity in meaning of these two words, you are not alone. The difference between them is that *afflict* deals with what is *felt*, whereas *inflict* with what is *done*. In the sentence "The judge *inflicted* a severe sentence," the judge *did* something. In the sentence "The prisoner was *afflicted* with guilt," the prisoner *felt* something.

**Barren** and *baron* are homophones. A *baron* is a nobleman. It was the English barons who, in 1215, forced King John to sign the Magna Carta, granting civil rights to English citizens.

**Primitive** tools, which may be tens of thousand of years old, are found buried in many parts of the world. They are among the first tools made by humans, as the word *primitive* suggests. It comes from

the Latin *primus*, which means "first." A number of other English words share this root. A *primary* reason is one that comes *first* in importance; a *primer* is a book of *first* instruction in a subject; and a *prime* minister in many countries is the leader who is *first* in importance.

**Teem** and *team* form another pair of homophones. A *team* is a group of people who play or work together.

**Wither**, a verb, should not be confused with the adverb *whither*, meaning "to what place; where." These two words are not homophones because the "h" in *whither* is sounded. *Whither* is a poetic word that is falling out of use. Once when people wished to know where someone was going, they would ask, "Whither are you going?" or "Whither goest thou?"