

# Lesson 9

## Word List

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

**absurd**  
əb sər'dʹ

*adj.* So unreasonable as to be laughable; foolish or silly.  
You'd look **absurd** in a suit and tie at the beach.

**accomplish**  
ə kām' plish

*v.* To do something by making an effort; to complete successfully.  
I know I will **accomplish** these errands by noon.

**accomplishment** *n.* Something requiring skill and determination that is completed successfully.  
Anne Sullivan's great **accomplishment** was to teach a deaf and blind child to speak and to read.

**ascend**  
ə send'

*v.* To rise, usually in a steady way.

The rocket **ascended** to a height of five hundred feet before falling to earth.

**dense**  
dens

*adj.* 1. Tightly packed; crowded close together.

The tired explorers hacked their way through **dense** vines and bushes to reach the coast.

2. Thick; hard to see through.

At the airport there was such **dense** fog that planes couldn't take off.

3. Stupid, thickheaded.

I don't want to seem **dense**, but I don't understand your question.

**experiment**  
ek spər' ə mən't

*n.* A test to prove or discover something.

The **experiment** shows that oxygen and hydrogen combine to form water.

*v.* 1. To carry out experiments.

Benjamin Franklin **experimented** with a kite to show that lightning was a form of electricity.

2. To try out new ideas or activities.

A good cook **experiments** with different herbs and spices to create new dishes.

**flimsy**  
flim' zē

*adj.* 1. Easily damaged or broken; not strongly made.

The cart was too **flimsy** to carry such a heavy load.

2. Not believable.

Saying you lost your pen is a **flimsy** excuse for not doing your homework.

**heroic**  
hi rō' ik

*adj.* 1. Very brave; showing great courage.

The teenager dove into the pond and made a **heroic** rescue of the child who couldn't swim.

2. Showing great determination; requiring enormous effort.

Firefighters made a **heroic** effort to put out the blaze.

**lumber**  
lum' bər

*n.* Wood that has been sawed into boards.

Have you ordered the **lumber** for the deck you are building?

*v.* To move in a clumsy or heavy way.

The fat old dog **lumbered** toward me.

**mimic**  
mim' ik

*v.* 1. To copy or imitate closely.

The parrot fascinated us because it could **mimic** human speech so well.

2. To make fun of by imitating.

I got upset when you **mimicked** my friend's limp.

*n.* One who can imitate sounds, speech, or actions.

A good **mimic** carefully studies the person being imitated.

**significant**  
sig nif' ə kənt

*adj.* Important; full of meaning.

July 4, 1776, is a **significant** date in American history.

**significance** *n.* The quality of being important or of giving meaning.

The **significance** of the Bill of Rights is that it spells out important freedoms enjoyed by all Americans.

**soar**  
sôr

*v.* 1. To fly high in the sky.

We watched the eagles **soar** until they were just specks in the sky.

2. To rise suddenly and rapidly.

The cost of a college education is expected to **soar** during the next few years.

**spectator**  
spek' tāt ər

*n.* A person who watches an activity; an onlooker.

The **spectators** jostled each other as they rushed onto the field at the end of the game.

**suspend**  
sə spend'

*v.* 1. To hang while attached to something above.

The hammock was **suspended** from the porch ceiling.

2. To stop for a while before going on.

The inspector **suspended** work on the building until the contractor obtained the proper permits.

3. To bar from working, attending, or taking part for a while.

The students caught cheating were **suspended** from school for one week.

**terminate**  
tər' mə nāt

*v.* To bring or to come to an end.

Heavy rain **terminated** the tennis match after only ten minutes of play.

**unwieldy**  
un wēl' dē

*adj.* Hard to handle or control because of large size or heaviness.

The sofa was so **unwieldy** that getting it up three flights of stairs was a real challenge.

## 9A Finding Meanings

Choose two phrases to form a sentence that correctly uses a word from Word List 9. Write each sentence in the space provided.

absurd  
accomplish  
ascend  
dense  
experiment  
flimsy  
heroic  
lumber  
mimic  
significant  
soar  
spectator  
suspend  
terminate  
unwieldy

1. (a) If you suspend something,  
(b) you make a copy of it.

(c) you bring it to an end.  
(d) If you terminate something,

2. (a) is easily broken.  
(b) is tightly packed.

(c) Something that is dense  
(d) Something that is unwieldy

3. (a) To accomplish something  
(b) is to complete it successfully.

(c) is to raise it to a higher level.  
(d) To mimic something

4. (a) that ends quickly.  
(b) A heroic effort is one

(c) that shows great determination.  
(d) An absurd effort is one

5. (a) To ascend is to  
(b) To experiment is to  
(c) test or try out an idea.  
(d) increase in size or amount.
6. (a) A flimsy container is one that  
(b) An unwieldy container is one that  
(c) is not strongly made.  
(d) is meant to hold liquids.
7. (a) go to a higher level.  
(b) To ascend is to  
(c) fall into a drowsy state.  
(d) To lumber is to
8. (a) someone who hears.  
(b) someone who watches.  
(c) A spectator is  
(d) A mimic is
9. (a) move in a clumsy way.  
(b) To lumber is to  
(c) To soar is to  
(d) feel pain or discomfort.
10. (a) that is meaningful.  
(b) A significant statement is one  
(c) An absurd statement is one  
(d) that goes on longer than necessary.

## 9B 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 9.

- The movie is about the **very brave** women and men who fight forest fires.
- The bicyclists could not see through the **very thick** fog.
- The comedian usually gets lots of laughs when he **imitates the sound of** the voices of famous movie stars.
- Francine's story about seeing a live dinosaur is **too silly to be believed**.
- The *Mayflower* passengers' spirits **suddenly rose** when they got their first sight of land.
- Leave the box where it is if you think it is too **large to be picked up and carried easily**.
- Coach Louis told us that any player who fails a course is **not allowed to take part in any games** for the rest of the season.

8. My family's visit to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C., was especially **full of meaning** because my uncle's name appears there.
9. Ms. Smith's **carefully controlled attempt to discover if it was possible** to grow orchids indoors year-round was very successful.
10. The **wood that has been sawed into boards** is stacked outside so that it will dry.

## 9C Applying Meanings

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

1. Which of the following can be **dense**?
- (a) a person (c) a hole  
(b) a crowd (d) a forest
2. Which of the following can **soar**?
- (a) hopes (c) prices  
(b) cows (d) birds
3. Which of the following would be an **accomplishment**?
- (a) going to jail (c) cheating on a test  
(b) winning a gold medal (d) eating a pizza
4. Which of the following can be **suspended**?
- (a) a bird feeder (c) work  
(b) a mistake (d) a student
5. Which of the following would be **unwieldy**?
- (a) a piano (c) a 36-inch television set  
(b) a flute (d) a sleep sofa
6. Which of the following could have **significance**?
- (a) a marriage (c) a graduation  
(b) a death (d) a birth
7. Which of the following might you **experiment** with?
- (a) hair styles (c) clothing  
(b) a chemistry set (d) food

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8. Which of the following can be **flimsy**?

- (a) an aroma (c) a shelter  
(b) a task (d) an excuse

## 9D Word Study

Words that have different meanings and different spellings but sound the same are called homophones. Here are five pairs of homophones:

prey/pray    course/coarse    route/root    hew/hue    soar/sore

Look at each of the sentences below and decide whether the word in bold is being used correctly. Put a check mark next to each correct use and an X next to each incorrect use.

1. We tried to get to the **route** of the problem. \_\_\_\_\_
2. The wolf seized its **prey** in its jaws. \_\_\_\_\_
3. I will **prey** for the safe return of those still missing. \_\_\_\_\_
4. The coastal **root** is the quickest way into town. \_\_\_\_\_
5. Nigel's manners are rather **course**. \_\_\_\_\_
6. We watched the rocket **soar** until it was out of sight. \_\_\_\_\_
7. Muslims **pray** to Allah. \_\_\_\_\_
8. A **soar** knee kept me from taking part in the race. \_\_\_\_\_
9. We left the harbor and set a **coarse** for Nantucket. \_\_\_\_\_
10. The **route** to the mountain summit is well marked. \_\_\_\_\_
11. Sharp tools were needed to **hew** the boat from a single log. \_\_\_\_\_
12. My job was to **hue** the branches from the tree. \_\_\_\_\_
13. The cost of living is expected to **sore** in the coming year. \_\_\_\_\_
14. **Coarse** salt is made up of larger grains. \_\_\_\_\_
15. The daffodils were a deep yellow **hue**. \_\_\_\_\_

## 9E Passage

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

## The Sky's the Limit

For as long as people have watched birds **soar** far above the earth, they have dreamed of being able to fly. The Montgolfier brothers of France, Jacques and Joseph, thought of a way this might be possible. In 1782, after observing smoke and hot air rising from a fire, they made a small cloth balloon, filled it with hot air, and watched it rise seventy feet. Hot air is less **dense** than cold air and so is lighter. The warmer, lighter air inside the balloon caused it to rise.

The next year they built a balloon with a diameter of thirty-five feet. They filled it with hot air by burning wool and straw on an iron grate that rested in a large basket **suspended** beneath the balloon. After this rose successfully, they built another one, which was even bigger. In September 1783, before a large crowd, which included the French royal family, the Montgolfier brothers placed a sheep, a duck, and a rooster in the balloon's basket and released it. The balloon **ascended** to a height of fifteen hundred feet and stayed in the air for eight minutes.

A hot-air balloon rises because it is lighter than the air around it, but the idea that something heavier than air could ever get off the ground seemed **absurd** to most people. Not everyone thought so, however. By the late 1800s, after the invention of the steam engine and, later on, the much lighter gasoline engine, the first airplanes were being made. Some of these had movable wings to **mimic** the flapping of birds' wings, but they were too **unwieldy** to fly. Some were powered by steam engines, which made them so heavy they couldn't get off the ground. But when the airplane's frame was made lighter, the plane became **flimsy**. Because of this problem, many early flights **terminated** in a crash. Some people believed that to fly in those days was almost a **heroic** act.

It took another pair of brothers, Orville and Wilbur Wright, to figure out how to build a machine that could stay up in the air. The Wright brothers made and repaired bicycles for a living at their shop in Dayton, Ohio. Like many other people at the time, the idea of flying fascinated them. After **experimenting** with kites and gliders, they built a plane with rigid wings that was powered by a small gasoline engine. This was much lighter than a steam engine.

December 17, 1903, is a **significant** date in the history of flying. On that day at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, the Wright brothers demonstrated that a heavier-than-air machine could successfully fly. Just a handful of **spectators** watched as the plane, with Orville Wright at the controls, began to **lumber** across the grassy field. They cheered as they saw the plane lift off the ground and stay in the air for twelve seconds before landing about 120 feet away.

That afternoon the Wright brothers made three more flights—the longest, lasting fifty-nine seconds, covered 852 feet. They had **accomplished** their goal and made it possible for humans to fulfill their dreams of flight. One hundred years later, an exact copy of the Wright brothers' plane was built. To celebrate the one hundredth birthday of their achievement, it was supposed to make a flight at Kitty Hawk on December 17, 2003. It looked just like the Wright Brothers' plane, but sadly it failed to get off the ground. You can see the airplane the Wright brothers built at the National Air and Space Museum in Washington, D.C.

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

1. Why is a hot-air balloon able to rise?

2. Why is Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, **significant** in the history of flying?

3. Describe one **accomplishment** of the Montgolfier brothers.

4. How high did the first balloon of the Montgolfier brothers rise?

5. Why were the early airplanes with flapping wings unsuccessful?

6. What is the meaning of **soar** as it is used in the passage?

7. What important family saw the Montgolfiers' hot-air balloon in September 1783?

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

9. Why were injuries a common occurrence among the first fliers?

10. Why did some early planes have movable wings?

11. How did the Wright brothers test their ideas before building the first airplane?

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

13. What problem developed when airplane frames were made lighter?

14. What might an aircraft designer of today think of the idea of using a steam engine to power an airplane?

15. Why is it not considered **heroic** to fly in today's airplanes?

### FUN & FASCINATING FACTS

The noun formed from **ascend** is *ascent*, the act of rising or going higher. (Our *ascent* to the summit took approximately four hours.) The antonyms of these words are *descend* and *descent*. Don't confuse *ascent* with its homophone *assent*. *Assent* means "agreement." (We cannot give our *assent* to the new proposal until the changes we asked for are made.)

**Soar** and *sore* are also homophones. A *sore* is a painful spot on the body, often with the skin broken. *Sore* is also an *adjective* and means "painful."

**Spectator** is formed from the Latin *spectare*, which means "to see" or "to look at." Two other words formed from this root are *inspect* and *spectacles*. When you inspect something, you *look at* it

closely; *spectacles*, another word for eyeglasses, help a person to see better.

A *pendant* is something that hangs from a chain around a person's neck. This word comes from the Latin *pendere*, which means "to hang." **Suspend** comes from the same Latin root.

The Latin *terminus* means "end." It provides the root for the verb **terminate**. Several other words are formed from this root. A *terminus* is the end of a bus or train line. *Terminal* means "of or relating to an end." A *terminal* illness is one that ends in death. Something that is *interminable* seems to go on without an end. (After an *interminable* wait, we finally saw the doctor.)