

MAKING NEW WORDS YOUR OWN

Lesson 17 **CONTEXT: Reading, Writing, and Performing** *Biographies and Autobiographies*

Many people enjoy reading about other peoples' lives. When they go to the bookstore or the library, they are quick to head to the nonfiction section to search out the biographies and autobiographies. A biography is the story of the life of someone other than the author. An autobiography is the story of the author's life. Often these books are stories of famous or important people. Sometimes they are simply tales of ordinary people who have met major challenges. Regardless, biographies and autobiographies are among the most rewarding books to read.

In the following exercises, you will have the opportunity to expand your vocabulary by reading about biographies and autobiographies. Below are ten vocabulary words that will be used in these exercises.

- | | | | | |
|----------|-------------|-------------|-----------|-----------|
| abrasive | hindrance | necessitate | reconcile | turbulent |
| denote | irreducible | passive | somber | ultimate |

EXERCISE 1 *Mapping*

Directions. In the item below, a vocabulary word is provided and used in a sentence. Take a guess at the word's meaning and write it in the box labeled **Your Guess**. Then look the word up in your dictionary and write the definition in the box labeled **Definition**. In the **Other Forms** box, write as many other forms of the word, such as adjective and noun forms, as you can think of or find in your dictionary.

Then, following the same procedure, draw your own map for each of the nine remaining vocabulary words. Use a separate sheet of paper.

1. abrasive →

When writing a biography, an author must be honest. The person the author is writing about probably has some **abrasive**, or annoying, characteristics mixed in with the good ones.

↓

Your Guess:

↓

Definition:

←

Other Forms:

HRW material copyrighted under notice appearing earlier in this work.

EXERCISE 2

Context Clues 

Directions. Scan the definitions in Column A. Then think about how the boldface words are used in the sentences in Column B. To complete the exercise, match each definition in Column A with the correct vocabulary word from Column B. Write the letter of your choice on the line provided; then write the vocabulary word on the line preceding the definition.

COLUMN A

- _____ 11. word: _____
adj. acted upon rather than acting; yielding without resistance; submissive
- _____ 12. word: _____
n. a substance used for grinding; an irritant; *adj.* causing irritation
- _____ 13. word: _____
v. to bring together; to bring into harmony; to make friends again
- _____ 14. word: _____
v. to be a sign of; to indicate; to signify; to mean explicitly
- _____ 15. word: _____
adj. gloomy and sad; solemn and serious
- _____ 16. word: _____
n. an action, person, or thing that hinders or impedes; impediment; obstacle
- _____ 17. word: _____
adj. violently agitated; disorderly; stormy
- _____ 18. word: _____
adj. not capable of being made smaller or simpler
- _____ 19. word: _____
adj. last or final; basic; maximum; *n.* the final point; maximum level
- _____ 20. word: _____
v. to cause to be necessary; to force; to compel

COLUMN B

- (A) The fine autobiography *Under the Eye of the Clock*, by Christopher Nolan (b. 1965), shows that Nolan's serious birth defects were no **hindrance** to his career as a writer.
- (B) *Life and Death in Shanghai* tells of Nien Cheng (b. 1915), who was caught up in a **turbulent**, stormy period of Chinese history and survived six years in prison.
- (C) Haing Ngor's *A Cambodian Odyssey* (1987) is the solemn story of his life in a war-torn country. It offers a **somber** picture of death and deprivation.
- (D) In his book *Lovesong: Becoming a Jew*, African American writer Julius Lester tells of his exploration of several religious faiths and of his **ultimate** conversion to Judaism.
- (E) In *Winter Season: A Dancer's Journal*, Toni Bentley tells of her efforts to **reconcile** the desire to be a famous dancer with the fact that she was not talented enough to make it.
- (F) In *The Story of My Life*, Helen Keller (1880–1968) tells how she coped with her disabilities and was able to lead a rich and active life, avoiding a **passive** existence.
- (G) In *All God's Children Need Traveling Shoes*, Maya Angelou (b. 1928) discusses how a move to the African nation of Ghana **necessitated** changes in her thinking about Africans and also forced her to change her attitude toward African Americans.
- (H) Often a library will place the label YA (Young Adult) on the spine of a biography to **denote** a book of interest to young readers.
- (I) The writer of a successful autobiography finds that readers enjoy learning of his or her most irritating, or **abrasive**, faults.
- (J) An interesting life is complex and **irreducible**; that is why many biographies are so long.

EXERCISE 3 *Sentence Completion* 

Directions. For each of the following items, circle the letter of the choice that best completes the meaning of the sentence or sentences.

21. *Homeward the Arrow's Flight* tells how Susan Le Flésche's medical practice was just one part of a quest to fulfill her _____ goal of serving her own people.
 (A) irreducible
 (B) passive
 (C) ultimate
 (D) turbulent
 (E) abrasive
22. As the first Native American woman to become a doctor in the United States, Le Flésche overcame many _____. Yet her commitment to her people _____ her return to them as a trained doctor.
 (A) hindrances . . . irritated
 (B) necessities . . . denoted
 (C) abrasives . . . hindered
 (D) hindrances . . . necessitated
 (E) ultimates . . . reconciled
23. At times, Le Flésche may have found it difficult to _____ her own culture and beliefs with the demands of Western medicine.
 (A) reconcile
 (B) abrade
 (C) necessitate
 (D) reduce
 (E) hinder
24. *Woman Chief* is the story of a woman who became a chief of the Crow Nation. The title _____ both her position and her name.
 (A) denotes
 (B) reduces
 (C) hinders
 (D) irritates
 (E) necessitates
25. Scientists' biographies often describe complex concepts. They may explain, for example, that atoms are not _____, that something even smaller exists.
 (A) irreducible
 (B) hindrances
 (C) passive
 (D) abrasive
 (E) ultimate
26. Biographies of Lyndon Johnson reveal a complex man. Sometimes pleasant, other times _____, he led the country in the troubled and _____ 1960s.
 (A) irreducible . . . abrasive
 (B) passive . . . somber
 (C) ultimate . . . irreducible
 (D) abrasive . . . turbulent
 (E) somber . . . passive
27. *Anwar Sadat* tells the story of the Egyptian president who helped _____ the differences among peoples in the Middle East. Sadat's productive life ended on a _____ note with his assassination in 1981.
 (A) denote . . . somber
 (B) reconcile . . . somber
 (C) irritate . . . passive
 (D) necessitate . . . irreducible
 (E) denote . . . passive
28. The biographer of Josiah Henson shows that Henson was not _____ individual. He escaped from slavery and helped others do the same.
 (A) an irreducible
 (B) a somber
 (C) a passive
 (D) a turbulent
 (E) an abrasive
29. *Evita* describes Eva Peron as the most powerful woman in Argentina in the 1940s. She led a _____, stormy life.
 (A) turbulent
 (B) passive
 (C) somber
 (D) abrasive
 (E) hindrance
30. Often, biographies are about people who do not let events or circumstances _____ them. Seldom are biographies written about _____ people.
 (A) reconcile . . . turbulent
 (B) reconcile . . . passive
 (C) necessitate . . . somber
 (D) denote . . . turbulent
 (E) hinder . . . passive

