

MAKING NEW WORDS YOUR OWN

Lesson 23 **CONTEXT: Writers, Their Work, and Their Worlds**

Historians

Historians are a special group of writers. They write to explain and interpret our past. Their work usually involves intensive research and planning. Some historians work to develop a style of writing that is almost literary. Some histories are as readable as novels.

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

- | | | | | |
|------------|--------------|-------------|-----------|-----------|
| accessible | immaterial | optimistic | ponderous | tentative |
| applicable | inconvenient | perceptible | premature | trivial |

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. accessible → Some historians write books primarily for other historians and for specialists in the field. Others write histories that are **accessible** to a broader audience—that is, histories that the general public can enjoy and understand.

↓

Your Guess:

↓

Definition: ← Other Forms:

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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

COLUMN B

_____ 11. word: _____

adj. easy to obtain, approach, or enter; capable of being used or reached

_____ 12. word: _____

adj. large, heavy, and clumsy; dull and tiresome

_____ 13. word: _____

adj. appropriate; suitable to be applied

_____ 14. word: _____

adj. too soon; too early; before the proper time

_____ 15. word: _____

adj. not important or relevant; not made of matter; spiritual

_____ 16. word: _____

adj. subject to change; uncertain

_____ 17. word: _____

adj. not convenient; not suitable to plans; bothersome; difficult to do

_____ 18. word: _____

adj. not important; insignificant

_____ 19. word: _____

adj. expecting the best; inclined to look on the bright side; cheerful; hopeful

_____ 20. word: _____

adj. noticeable; observable; perceivable

- (A) The histories of Barbara Tuchman (1912–1989) have been popular with readers because they are so **accessible**. Readers find them interesting and easy to understand.
- (B) Tuchman is especially good at helping people see the past as useful, as something that is **applicable** to their lives and times.
- (C) Modern readers may think that the history of ancient Troy is irrelevant, or **immaterial**. Tuchman’s book *The March of Folly* (1984) could convince them otherwise.
- (D) In its **tentative** stages, Tuchman’s *A Distant Mirror* (1978) was meant to be a history of the bubonic plague in Europe, but it became a history of fourteenth-century France.
- (E) At first, some history professors at major universities considered Tuchman’s work **trivial**. Later, they would recognize the significance of her work.
- (F) The history professors were **premature** in their judgment of Tuchman. They assumed that because she was not a Ph.D. she must be an amateur.
- (G) Tuchman made her first **perceptible** mark on the field of history in 1958 when she published *The Zimmerman Telegram*. But she became a major force in the field when she won the Pulitzer Prize for *The Guns of August* (1962).
- (H) One reason that Tuchman won the prize is because of her writing style; it is rich and lively, not at all **ponderous**, or dull.
- (I) In *The Proud Tower* (1966), Tuchman wrote about Europe just prior to World War I. Many leaders were **optimistic** about the future; they did not know the destruction modern warfare would bring.
- (J) Tuchman did not include in *The Guns of August* all of the information she had researched. If she had, the book would be an **inconvenient** size, difficult to hold or carry.

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. The documents a historian needs may not be easily _____. If the documents are in a faraway library, the historian may find it _____ or impossible to see them.
 (A) perceptible . . . inconvenient
 (B) perceptible . . . premature
 (C) accessible . . . inconvenient
 (D) accessible . . . premature
 (E) trivial . . . tentative
22. The historian may have to read through many old legal documents, often written in a _____ and confusing style.
 (A) ponderous
 (B) inconvenient
 (C) tentative
 (D) trivial
 (E) applicable
23. The historian is careful not to dismiss a piece of information. Something that may at first seem _____ could later prove to be _____, even important to his or her work.
 (A) inconvenient . . . applicable
 (B) premature . . . trivial
 (C) trivial . . . tentative
 (D) immaterial . . . applicable
 (E) tentative . . . immaterial
24. Sometimes, after examining the materials, a historian can only reach a _____ conclusion. There is not always enough evidence to justify certainty.
 (A) trivial
 (B) tentative
 (C) optimistic
 (D) premature
 (E) perceptible
25. Publishers are usually _____ that a well-written history will sell; they also know that an entertaining history does not have to be a _____ one.
 (A) perceptible . . . premature
 (B) optimistic . . . trivial
 (C) tentative . . . optimistic
 (D) optimistic . . . premature
 (E) immaterial . . . tentative
26. It is certainly not _____ to say that Will Durant (1885–1981) is a major historian. His history of western civilization has made a _____ difference in many people’s view of history.
 (A) perceptible . . . trivial
 (B) trivial . . . tentative
 (C) immaterial . . . premature
 (D) premature . . . perceptible
 (E) optimistic . . . ponderous
27. Views of history change. One group of historians may consider an event _____ and _____, but a later group may find it significant and relevant.
 (A) immaterial . . . trivial
 (B) immaterial . . . tentative
 (C) trivial . . . perceptible
 (D) ponderous . . . premature
 (E) premature . . . tentative
28. Much of what has been said of Will Durant is _____ to his wife Ariel, too, for she helped him with his work and co-authored several of the books with him.
 (A) immaterial
 (B) inconvenient
 (C) applicable
 (D) accessible
 (E) premature
29. In his books on the history of ideas, Durant made the works of many philosophers _____ to people who hadn’t understood them before.
 (A) trivial
 (B) tentative
 (C) immaterial
 (D) ponderous
 (E) accessible
30. A historian who writes for the general reading public enjoys helping people find ways to make history _____ to their lives.
 (A) inconvenient
 (B) optimistic
 (C) ponderous
 (D) accessible
 (E) applicable

