

MAKING NEW WORDS YOUR OWN

Lesson 24 **CONTEXT: Writers, Their Work, and Their Worlds**

African American Voices

Works by African Americans have been important to the American literary tradition. Since Africans first arrived in the United States, they have been contributing folk tales and poetry to the oral tradition. Early written African American literature includes the poems of Jupiter Hammon (c. 1720–c. 1800) and Phyllis Wheatley (1753–1784) and the prose of Prince Hall (1748–1807) and Gustavas Vasas (1745–1797).

In the following exercises, you will have the opportunity to expand your vocabulary by reading about African American writers who have played an important role in twentieth-century literature. Below are ten vocabulary words that will be used in these exercises.

- | | | | | |
|----------|--------------|--------------|-----------|------------|
| acclaim | circumscribe | incalculable | perennial | priority |
| affected | clamber | influential | poach | prominence |

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.

acclaim → A group of African American authors who have only recently received special **acclaim** is the writers of the Harlem Renaissance. These writers, who were based in the Harlem area of New York City in the 1920s, have been praised for their talent and vision.

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: _____

v. to scramble; to climb with difficulty using hands and feet

_____ 12. word: _____

adj. not able to be reckoned beforehand; uncertain; too great a number to be counted

_____ 13. word: _____

n. loud applause; praise; *v.* to applaud; to approve strongly

_____ 14. word: _____

adj. having or exerting influence; powerful; having effect

_____ 15. word: _____

adj. perpetual; enduring; *n.* a plant that lasts through all the seasons for many years

_____ 16. word: _____

v. to trespass on; to take something unfairly or illegally; to hunt illegally

_____ 17. word: _____

adj. influenced; stirred emotionally; speaking or behaving in a false way to make an impression

_____ 18. word: _____

n. precedence; something that is first in time, order, or importance

_____ 19. word: _____

n. the state or quality of being prominent or standing out; state of being famous or distinguished; distinction

_____ 20. word: _____

v. to restrict; to limit; to encircle; to draw a circle around

(A) A new generation of readers has discovered the writing of Zora Neale Hurston (1891–1960), and she finally has begun to receive the **acclaim** that she deserved.

(B) Although she was an **influential** writer who served as a role model for other African American women, Zora Neale Hurston died in poverty.

(C) Anyone who reads Hurston’s work cannot help but be **affected** by it. She moves her readers to both laughter and tears.

(D) Although Hurston grew up in a world that attempted to **circumscribe** the lives of women, and African American women in particular, she was determined to escape the boundaries that society had placed around her.

(E) Hurston always made the African American community her first **priority**. She spent much of her life collecting and publishing its folklore and tales.

(F) Even though she earned a place of **prominence** in the literature of the nation, no headstone marked her grave until years later, when Alice Walker furnished a memorial to her.

(G) Hurston’s autobiography, *Dust Tracks on the Road*, tells the story of a woman who often had to struggle mightily to **clamber** over life’s obstacles.

(H) For the sake of her work, Hurston risked her life wandering the back roads of the South. She had decided to **poach** on an area of rights traditionally reserved for white males—namely the right to travel where she pleased, when she pleased.

(I) Although serious difficulties played a **perennial** role in her life, Hurston continued to follow her mother’s advice to jump for the sun.

(J) The worth of Hurston’s mother’s advice is **incalculable**. This immeasurably valuable advice helped shape a woman who was to be an influence on many other lives.

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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. Following the Harlem Renaissance, many African American writers have received much _____ and risen to places of _____ in the country's literature.
 (A) acclaim . . . prominence
 (B) priority . . . prominence
 (C) clamber . . . priority
 (D) prominence . . . influence
 (E) acclaim . . . priority
22. These writers have been _____ by the writers of the Harlem Renaissance and in turn have become _____ themselves.
 (A) influential . . . circumscribed
 (B) affected . . . influential
 (C) circumscribed . . . affected
 (D) perennial . . . incalculable
 (E) poached . . . circumscribed
23. Writing with the traditions of the African American community in mind is still _____ for writers who value that heritage.
 (A) a priority
 (B) perennial
 (C) influential
 (D) an acclaim
 (E) an affectation
24. Many African American writers have extremely loyal followings. One young woman says that she would _____ over frozen mountain peaks and swim an ocean just to get her own autographed copy of a Toni Morrison novel.
 (A) acclaim
 (B) poach
 (C) circumscribe
 (D) clamber
 (E) affect
25. *A Raisin in the Sun*, a drama by Lorraine Hansberry (1930–1965), tells how a family's dreams are _____ by a society that _____, or limits, their lives.
 (A) influenced . . . clambers
 (B) affected . . . acclaims
 (C) poached . . . prioritizes
 (D) acclaimed . . . poaches
 (E) affected . . . circumscribes
26. The flowers that Alice Walker mentions in her poem "Revolutionary Petunias" may not be _____, but her work has continued to bloom year after year.
 (A) a priority
 (B) circumscribed
 (C) perennial
 (D) incalculable
 (E) affected
27. Another poet of _____ is Gwendolyn Brooks (b. 1917), who received national _____ when she won the Pulitzer Prize in 1950.
 (A) prominence . . . priority
 (B) priority . . . perennial
 (C) acclaim . . . priority
 (D) prominence . . . acclaim
 (E) influence . . . affectation
28. One of the most _____ writers of this century was James Baldwin (1924–1987), who serves as a model for many young African American writers today.
 (A) incalculable
 (B) perennial
 (C) affected
 (D) influential
 (E) priority
29. Once upon a time, some critics wanted to _____ the study of literature by restricting it to writers found in traditional anthologies. They looked upon those who disagreed with them as trespassers—as people who were trying to _____ in territory that was not rightfully theirs.
 (A) acclaim . . . poach
 (B) circumscribe . . . poach
 (C) circumscribe . . . acclaim
 (D) poach . . . acclaim
 (E) poach . . . clamber
30. The decision to ignore traditional criticism has produced an American literature of _____ worth.
 (A) prior
 (B) influential
 (C) incalculable
 (D) affected
 (E) perennial

