

# MAKING NEW WORDS YOUR OWN

## Lesson 7 **CONTEXT: Literary Traditions and Beyond** *Observing the Natural World*

Since ancient times, writing about the forces at play in the universe and about the natural world has been a significant part of world literature. Some popular authors who write about the natural world are professional scientists, while others are gifted amateur observers. Some write in a crisp, informative style, while others use highly poetic language. Among the most popular contemporary science writers are Isaac Asimov (1920–1992), Annie Dillard (b. 1945), Carl Sagan (b. 1934), Lewis Thomas (b. 1913), and Barry Lopez (b. 1945).

In the following exercises, you will have the opportunity to expand your vocabulary by reading about the role of science in our literary heritage. Below are ten vocabulary words that will be used in these exercises.

carnivorous	fauna	fraternize	sector	upheaval
centrifugal	flora	granular	stagnant	zodiac

### 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.

carnivorous

→

Paleontologists, the scientists who study fossils, say that the ferocious-looking dinosaurs who inhabited the earth were, for the most part, gentle creatures who ate only plants. The **carnivorous** tyrannosaurus was an exception.

↓

Your Guess:

↓

Other Forms:

←

Definition:

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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**

\_\_\_\_\_ 11. word: \_\_\_\_\_  
*adj.* containing grains or granules; grainy

\_\_\_\_\_ 12. word: \_\_\_\_\_  
*n.* plants collectively, especially plants of a particular region or period; a treatise describing the plants of a region or time

\_\_\_\_\_ 13. word: \_\_\_\_\_  
*n.* an imaginary belt in the heavens that is divided into twelve constellations and along which the sun and its principal planets appear to travel

\_\_\_\_\_ 14. word: \_\_\_\_\_  
*n.* a part or division of something; the portion of a circle bounded by two radii and one of the intercepted arcs

\_\_\_\_\_ 15. word: \_\_\_\_\_  
*adj.* flesh eating

\_\_\_\_\_ 16. word: \_\_\_\_\_  
*adj.* moving away from a center or axis; outward

\_\_\_\_\_ 17. word: \_\_\_\_\_  
*n.* a sudden violent change; a forceful lifting up from underneath

\_\_\_\_\_ 18. word: \_\_\_\_\_  
*v.* to associate in a friendly way; to be friendly with enemy troops

\_\_\_\_\_ 19. word: \_\_\_\_\_  
*adj.* not flowing; foul from standing still; stale; sluggish

\_\_\_\_\_ 20. word: \_\_\_\_\_  
*n.* animals collectively, especially those of a particular region or period

**COLUMN B**

- (A) David Attenborough's book *The Living Planet* (1984) was the inspiration for a PBS series. In this book, he describes the South American harpy, a giant, **carnivorous** eagle that eats monkeys.
- (B) According to Attenborough, human beings have done much to create **upheaval** in the animal world, but many animals recover from such disturbances and adapt to their new environments.
- (C) Attenborough describes the **fauna** of the Namib desert in Africa, including the black beetle, the gecko, the legless skink, and the golden mole.
- (D) Desert **flora** includes the Welwitschia plant, which may have the longest leaves in the world and which lives to be over a thousand years old.
- (E) Sand dunes are formed from desert rocks that crack and flake. The chips are beaten and blown and eventually become the **granular** material we call sand.
- (F) The world is full of life; life forms exist in flowing rivers and **stagnant** waters alike.
- (G) In his book *The Star Thrower*, Loren Easley (1907–1977), a poet, a naturalist, and a scientist, speculates on his hope that someday human beings and dolphins might be able to **fraternize**, to rejoice sincerely in each other's company.
- (H) Easley was interested in how non-scientists viewed the universe. He tells the story of a man he met who searched the stars for bones and believed that a planet had disappeared from the **zodiac**.
- (I) Many writers of books about science see beauty and mystery in-everything—from the **centrifugal** force pulling a race car outward as it banks a curve to the summer show of northern lights.
- (J) Many writers of books about science believe that we should stop thinking of the sciences and the arts as hostile armies occupying separate **sectors** in the world of knowledge.

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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. Some people are surprised to learn that \_\_\_\_\_ can be \_\_\_\_\_, but some plants actually eat insects.  
 (A) carnivores . . . centrifugal  
 (B) flora . . . carnivorous  
 (C) fauna . . . carnivorous  
 (D) fauna . . . centrifugal  
 (E) zodiacs . . . granular
22. If scientists do not \_\_\_\_\_ with one another, then they will not be able to share information, and their research may become \_\_\_\_\_.  
 (A) fraternize . . . stagnant  
 (B) stagnate . . . centrifugal  
 (C) fraternize . . . granular  
 (D) compete . . . centrifugal  
 (E) compete . . . carnivorous
23. The term \_\_\_\_\_ force was first used by astronomers to explain why the planets remained in their orbits and did not move inward toward the sun.  
 (A) zodiac  
 (B) granular  
 (C) carnivorous  
 (D) centrifugal  
 (E) stagnant
24. A violent earthquake can cause great \_\_\_\_\_ in a city.  
 (A) flora  
 (B) fauna  
 (C) stagnation  
 (D) upheaval  
 (E) zodiac
25. The pollens that the \_\_\_\_\_ of some regions produce are a \_\_\_\_\_ substance that can be inhaled by human beings; unfortunately, some people are highly allergic to plant pollens.  
 (A) fauna . . . granular  
 (B) fauna . . . centrifugal  
 (C) flora . . . granular  
 (D) flora . . . stagnant  
 (E) sector . . . granular
26. Astronomers, who are scientists, doubt the astrologers who divide the \_\_\_\_\_ into twelve \_\_\_\_\_, called signs, and use this design to interpret human affairs.  
 (A) zodiac . . . flora  
 (B) zodiac . . . fauna  
 (C) zodiac . . . sectors  
 (D) sector . . . zodiacs  
 (E) sector . . . fauna
27. Ecologists and naturalists are delighted to think that wolves may soon return to our national parks in large numbers, but sheep and cattle ranchers who live near the parks are worried about having \_\_\_\_\_ animals near their herds.  
 (A) floral  
 (B) centrifugal  
 (C) granular  
 (D) stagnant  
 (E) carnivorous
28. When water becomes \_\_\_\_\_, a scummy green substance called algae may appear on the surface.  
 (A) stagnant  
 (B) carnivorous  
 (C) floral  
 (D) granular  
 (E) centrifugal
29. A message that the brain sends outward to a muscle group is a \_\_\_\_\_ message; the message that the muscles send back to the brain is a centripetal message.  
 (A) granular  
 (B) centrifugal  
 (C) carnivorous  
 (D) stagnant  
 (E) fauna
30. Ecologists are interested in all the life in a region, so they study both the \_\_\_\_\_ and the \_\_\_\_\_.  
 (A) sector . . . fauna  
 (B) sector . . . flora  
 (C) stagnant . . . carnivorous  
 (D) zodiac . . . centrifugal  
 (E) flora . . . fauna

