

UNIT 2

Read the following selection, taking note of the **boldface** words and their contexts. These words are among those you will be studying in Unit 2. As you complete the exercises in this unit, it may help to refer to the way the words are used below.

Constructing the New York City Subway

< Historical Nonfiction >

By 1900, nearly four million people lived in New York City, about five times as many as had lived in the same area fifty years earlier. The **celerity** of the population's increase was driven by a range of factors including economic growth, industrialization, and immigration. As an **overt** symptom of the prosperity of the city and the nation, rapid population growth was welcomed by many of the city's inhabitants. But the increase in population posed serious challenges. **Myopic** disregard for the supply of housing left many of the city's poorer inhabitants crammed into crowded tenements until construction began to keep pace. And the growing mass of people traveling throughout the city created unprecedented amounts of traffic in the streets.

Traffic congestion swelled beyond the bounds of **propriety**. Traffic accidents

were all too common, as drivers of horse-drawn omnibuses, in a rush to pick up passengers and earn fares, saw fit to trample pedestrians along the way. Street traffic was a constant target of **animadversion** in the press. But it was also a cause of innovation. As the streams of pedestrians and horse-drawn carriages grew steadily through the nineteenth century, railroads were elevated above street level to avoid interference with the **maelstrom** of traffic on the streets. Steam-powered elevated railways were soon replaced by cleaner electric-powered elevated lines.

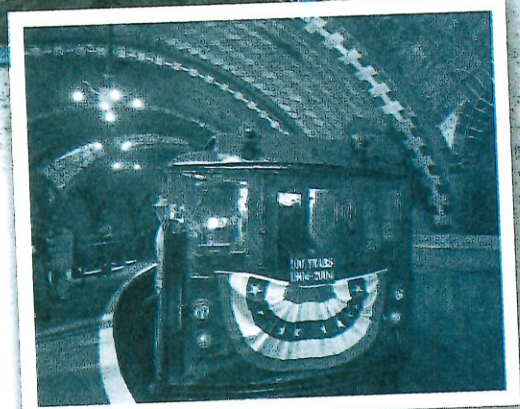
Plans for building a subway had been drawn as early as the 1860s, but the project was stalled for decades by **devious** local politics. Operators of surface railways and horse-drawn cars, who feared competition from the subway, cast the plan in a **pejorative** light, claiming

it was impractical and bound to fail. The **suppliant** protests of property owners who worried that prolonged subway construction would interfere with business helped strengthen opposition to the subway. **Avid** supporters of the subway plan, on the other hand, considered any opposition to be **sacrilege**. But adversity will not last forever. In the end, the clear benefits that the subway would bring to the city by increasing the speed of transit and by alleviating the traffic on the streets proved more compelling than the political **gambits** employed by opponents. After decades of false starts, **incendiary** rhetoric, and **histrionic** arguments on both sides, a contract for construction was signed on February 21, 1900. Construction began **summarily** in the following months.

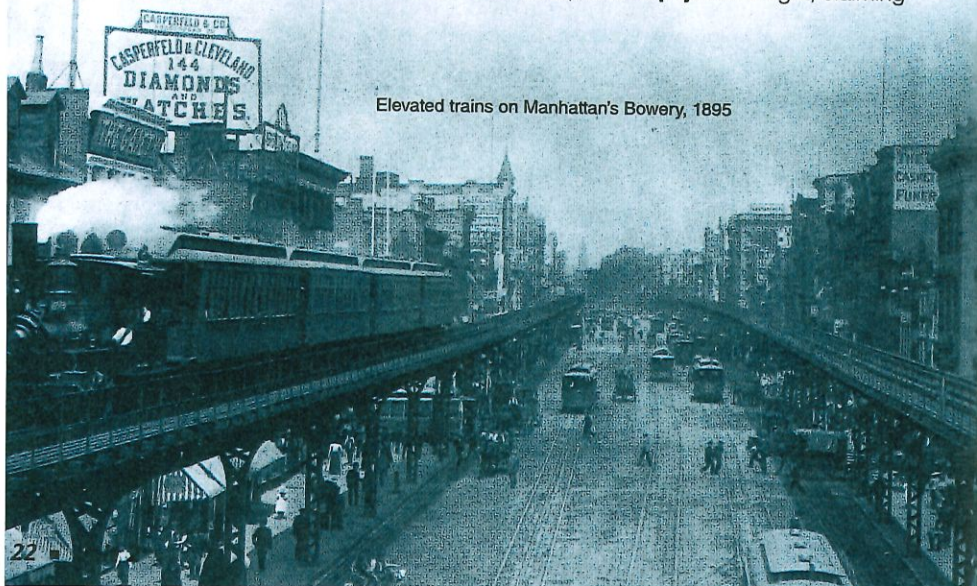
Thousands of laborers worked on the project. Most of the tunnels were built using the "cut-and-cover" method: Workers dug trenches through the streets and covered them with wooden planks and bridges to allow traffic to pass overhead while work continued. Down in the trenches, workers laid the tracks, built the subway stations, and surrounded the subway with steel and concrete. Then they rebuilt the street above. The construction company that built the subway was also responsible for building the coal-fueled generators that would produce the subway's electricity.



Left: Subway construction, 1902; Below: Vintage NYC subway, 2004



The subway opened to the public on October 27, 1904. About 150,000 people stood in line to pay the five-cent fare for a rocky, **undulating** ride on what was then the fastest public transportation system in the world. Over the next few decades, the city's subway system was expanded and integrated with the elevated lines above ground. An impressive feat of engineering for its time, the New York City subway system remains one of the largest in the world to this day.



Elevated trains on Manhattan's Bowery, 1895

Words



Snap the code, or go to vocabularyworkshop.com

Definitions

Note the spelling, pronunciation, part(s) of speech, and definition(s) of each of the following words. Then write the word in the blank spaces in the illustrative sentence(s) following. Finally, study the lists of synonyms and antonyms.

- 1. accost**
(ə kăst')

(v.) to approach and speak to first; to confront in a challenging or aggressive way†

The nobleman was _____ by beggars on his way to the castle.

SYNONYMS: buttonhole, approach
ANTONYMS: avoid, shun
- 2. animadversion**
(an ə mad vər' zhən)

(n.) a comment indicating strong criticism or disapproval

The inexperienced filmmaker was disheartened by the _____ of the film critic.

SYNONYMS: rebuke, reproof
ANTONYMS: praise, compliment
- 3. avid**
(av' id)

(adj.) desirous of something to the point of greed; intensely eager

Most writers are also _____ readers who have loved books since childhood.

SYNONYMS: keen, enthusiastic, grasping
ANTONYMS: reluctant, indifferent, unenthusiastic
- 4. brackish**
(brak' ish)

(adj.) having a salty taste and unpleasant to drink

The shipwrecked passengers adrift on the lifeboat became ill after drinking _____ water.

SYNONYM: saline
ANTONYMS: clear, sweet
- 5. celerity**
(sə ler' ə tē)

(n.) swiftness, rapidity of motion or action

Although the heavy snowfall was not expected, the highway department responded with surprising _____.

SYNONYMS: promptness, speed
ANTONYMS: slowness, sluggishness, dilatoriness
- 6. devious**
(dē' vē əs)

(adj.) straying or wandering from a straight or direct course; done or acting in a shifty or underhanded way

The interrogator used _____ methods to try to get the suspect to incriminate himself.

SYNONYMS: roundabout, indirect, tricky, sly, artful
ANTONYMS: direct, straightforward, open, aboveboard

- 7. gambit**
(gam' bit)

(n.) in chess, an opening move that involves risk or sacrifice of a minor piece in order to gain a later advantage; any opening move of this type

Asking an interesting stranger about his or her job is a popular party _____.

SYNONYMS: ploy, ruse, maneuver
- 8. halcyon**
(hal' sē ən)

(n.) a legendary bird identified with the kingfisher; (adj.) of or relating to the halcyon; calm, peaceful; happy, golden; prosperous, affluent

The teacher read the legend of the _____, a mythic bird that nested in a calm sea.

The woman often spoke of the _____ days of her childhood.

SYNONYMS: (adj.) tranquil, placid, palmy
ANTONYMS: (adj.) turbulent, tumultuous
- 9. histrionic**
(his trē ən' ik)

(adj.) pertaining to actors and their techniques; theatrical, artificial; melodramatic

Upon receiving his award, the young actor gave a _____ speech.

SYNONYMS: affected, stagy
ANTONYMS: muted, untheatrical, subdued
- 10. incendiary**
(in sen' dē er ē)

(adj.) deliberately setting or causing fires; designed to start fires; tending to stir up strife or rebellion; (n.) one who deliberately sets fires, arsonist; one who causes strife

The arsonist planted an _____ device in the basement of the store.

The radical _____ was sentenced to life imprisonment.

SYNONYMS: (adj.) inflammatory, provocative; (n.) firebrand
ANTONYMS: (adj.) soothing, quieting; (n.) peacemaker
- 11. maelstrom**
(māl' strəm)

(n.) a whirlpool of great size and violence; a situation resembling a whirlpool in violence and destruction

Many innocent people caught in the _____ of the revolution lost their lives and property.

SYNONYMS: chaos, turbulence, tumult
- 12. myopic**
(mī əp' ik)

(adj.) nearsighted; lacking a broad, realistic view of a situation; lacking foresight or discernment

The _____ foreign policy of the last administration has led to serious problems with our allies.

SYNONYM: shortsighted
ANTONYM: farsighted

Choosing the Right Word

Select the **boldface** word that better completes each sentence. You might refer to the selection on pages 22–23 to see how most of these words are used in context.



The scarab beetle on this gold bracelet symbolized rebirth to ancient Egyptians.

- 13. overt** (ō vert') (adj.) open, not hidden, expressed or revealed in a way that is easily recognized
In order for Congress to declare war, the President must demonstrate an _____ threat.
SYNONYMS: clear, obvious, manifest, patent
ANTONYMS: clandestine, covert, concealed
- 14. pejorative** (pə jōr' ə tiv) (adj.) tending to make worse; expressing disapproval or disparagement, derogatory, deprecatory, belittling
The lawyer was accused of making a _____ remark when referring to the defendant's background.
ANTONYMS: complimentary, ameliorative
- 15. propriety** (prə prī' ə tē) (n.) the state of being proper, appropriateness; (pl.) standards of what is proper or socially acceptable
The social worker questioned the _____ of the police's request to see confidential records.
SYNONYMS: fitness, correctness
ANTONYMS: unseemliness, inappropriateness
- 16. sacrilege** (sak' rə lij) (n.) improper or disrespectful treatment of something held sacred
The anthropologist was accused of committing a _____ when she disturbed a burial ground.
SYNONYMS: desecration, profanation, defilement
- 17. summarily** (sə mer' ə lē) (adv.) without delay or formality; briefly, concisely
As soon as there was evidence of criminal wrongdoing, the official was _____ ousted from his post.
SYNONYMS: promptly, peremptorily
- 18. suppliant** (səp' lē ənt) (adj.) asking humbly and earnestly; (n.) one who makes a request humbly and earnestly, a petitioner, suitor
He made a _____ address to the parole board.
Stranded in the deserted city of Moscow, Napoleon had to turn to the Czar not as a conqueror but as a _____.
- 19. talisman** (tal' iz mən) (n.) an object that serves as a charm or is believed to confer magical powers, an amulet, fetish
Most people do not believe that rabbit's feet and other _____ actually bring good luck.
- 20. undulate** (ən' dyə lāt) (v.) to move in waves or with a wavelike motion; to have a wavelike appearance or form
The baseball fans began to _____ as they cheered, so that they appeared to move in a wave.
SYNONYMS: fluctuate, rise and fall

- In ancient Egypt, (**talismans, sacrileges**) with the image of a scarab beetle were considered sacred and believed to have healing and protective powers.
- The infatuated schoolboy, in one of his more restrained expressions, described himself as "a (**sacrilege, suppliant**) at the altar of love."
- "I realize that this kind of financial (**gambit, sacrilege**) has its risks," she said, "but I expect it to pay off handsomely in the end."
- "His acts of defiance have been so (**myopic, overt**) and premeditated that I have no choice but to fire him," she said sadly.
- John Masefield's poem "Sea Fever" has an (**avid, undulating**) rhythm that actually gives one the feeling of being on a rolling ship.
- Walt tends to react slowly, but when he feels that his own interests are at stake he can move with striking (**celerity, myopia**).
- Although all politicians must have some ability to dramatize themselves, it is very easy to overdo the (**proprieties, histrionics**).
- The adoring fan regarded my negative comments about his favorite singer as tantamount to (**maelstrom, sacrilege**).
- Without even considering the new evidence that I was prepared to present, they (**deviously, summarily**) denied my appeal to reopen the case.
- She was buffeted about in a veritable (**gambit, maelstrom**) of emotions, caused mainly by her own dissatisfaction with herself.
- He regarded his Phi Beta Kappa key as a(n) (**talisman, animadversion**) that would open all doors and win him universal acceptance.
- He is the kind of person who is concerned not with real moral values but simply with appearances and (**propriety, celerity**).
- Nary a ripple disturbed the (**halcyon, brackish**) calm of the sea on that glorious summer's afternoon.
- Instead of imbibing the (**brackish, suppliant**) waters of superstition, let us refresh ourselves with long drafts of pure, clean common sense.
- Because the word *appeasement* is associated with disastrous concessions to Adolf Hitler, it has acquired a(n) (**pejorative, overt**) connotation.

- 16. His reckless words had an (**incendiary, overt**) effect on the already excited crowd, and large-scale rioting resulted.
- 17. As the defendant left the courtroom, he was (**gambited, accosted**) by a group of reporters seeking his reaction to the verdict.
- 18. I certainly do not claim that my performance in office was beyond criticism, but I deeply resent (**animadversions, maelstroms**) on my honesty.
- 19. After years of failure to sell a single story, the young writer described himself bitterly as "a(n) (**pejorative, avid**) collector of rejection slips."
- 20. In an age when the United States has truly global responsibilities, we can ill afford leaders with (**myopic, pejorative**) points of view.
- 21. His methods were so complicated and his purposes so (**avid, devious**) that we were not sure if he was spying on the enemy or on us.
- 22. As reported in several online news sites, the (**incendiary, gambit**) accused in the destructive forest fires has admitted his guilt.
- 23. To the delight of the impatient graduates, the university president offered her comments at the commencement ceremony (**summarily, brackishly**).
- 24. After the young actor's audition, the casting directors delivered a harsh evaluation of his overly (**histrionic, undulating**) monologue.
- 25. My (**myopic, suppliant**) request for a later curfew proved successful.

Synonyms

Choose the word from this unit that is the same or most nearly the same in meaning as the **boldface** word or expression in the phrase. Write that word on the line. Use a dictionary if necessary.

- 1. a lucky **amulet** _____
- 2. the **vortex** of public opinion _____
- 3. **ripple** in the current _____
- 4. was taken in by her **stratagem** _____
- 5. swam in the **briny** water _____
- 6. **abruptly** resigned from the Cabinet _____
- 7. behaved with her usual **décorum** _____
- 8. memories of our **serene** beginnings _____
- 9. **confronted** the thief at the door _____
- 10. completed the job with **alacrity** _____

Antonyms

Choose the word from this unit that is most nearly opposite in meaning to the **boldface** word or expression in the phrase. Write that word on the line. Use a dictionary if necessary.

- 1. a pool of **fresh** water _____
- 2. made a very **low-keyed** plea for mercy _____
- 3. **evade** the nosy neighbor _____
- 4. described the **chaotic** surroundings _____
- 5. took **secret** action to avoid a crisis _____

Completing the Sentence

From the words in this unit, choose the one that best completes each of the following sentences. Write the word in the space provided.

- 1. Many a rich southern planter saw all his financial resources swallowed up in the _____ of the Civil War.
- 2. Saying that "people who live in glass houses shouldn't throw stones" is not an effective response to their _____ on your conduct.
- 3. My brother is such a(n) _____ collector of toy soldiers that I sometimes think our house has been invaded by a pint-sized army.
- 4. The _____ with which he accepted our invitation to dinner suggested that he was badly in need of a good meal.
- 5. We looked back on those _____ years before the war broke out as a kind of "golden age" in our history.
- 6. The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor was a(n) _____ act of war.
- 7. His pale face, hunched shoulders, and _____ stare showed that he had spent his life poring over old books and documents.
- 8. To our dismay, we discovered that the water we had worked so hard to bring to the surface was too _____ for human consumption.
- 9. I stand before you an abject _____, hoping against hope for a sign of your forgiveness.
- 10. In the eyes of most Americans, people who burn or spit on our flag are guilty of a kind of _____.

11. Down in the main square, a hard-working peasant was selling charms and _____ to ward off the evil eye.
12. After the prisoner had been found guilty of treason, he was led before a firing squad and _____ executed.
13. In Grandmother's day, standards of _____ required that a young lady wear a hat and gloves when she went out in public.
14. Any book on chess strategy usually discusses the standard opening moves, such as the "knight's _____."
15. To be really convincing on stage, an opera singer must possess both vocal and _____ abilities.
16. As an employee of the local polling service last summer, I had to _____ people on the street and ask their opinions.
17. The tons of _____ material ignited and turned the waste disposal plant into a roaring inferno.
18. The suffix *-ling* often has a(n) _____ connotation, as in the word *princeling*, derived from *prince*.
19. During the rainy season, the highway sank at so many points that its surface began to _____ like the track for a roller coaster.
20. On the return trip, we cut straight across the meadows rather than take the more _____ path along the river.

Writing: Words in Action

1. Look back at "Constructing the New York City Subway" (pages 22–23). Think about how the completion of the subway changed the lives of city residents. Write an essay in which you analyze the impact—both positive and negative—of this new mode of transportation on individuals and businesses in New York City at the turn of the century. Use at least two details from the passage and three unit words to support your view.
2. According to a 2005 Gallup Poll, most Americans consider electricity as the greatest invention of all time, with the automobile and the printing press ranking well behind. Do you agree? Write an essay of at least three paragraphs in which you explain what your top choice is and why. Support your answer with specific examples from your observations, studies, reading (refer to pages 22–23), or personal experience. Use at least three words from this unit in your essay.

Vocabulary in Context

Literary Text

The following excerpts are from Theodore Dreiser's novels *Sister Carrie* and *Jennie Gerhardt*. Some of the words you have studied in this unit appear in **boldface** type. Complete each statement below the excerpt by circling the letter of the correct answer.

1. For Carrie, as we well know, the stage had a great attraction. She had never forgotten her one **histrionic** achievement in Chicago. (*Sister Carrie*)
Something **histrionic** involves
 a. moneymaking c. acting and emotions
 b. education d. ambitions and goals
2. Though often disillusioned, she was still waiting for that **halcyon** day when she would be led forth among dreams become real. Ames had pointed out a farther step, but on and on beyond that, if accomplished, would lie others for her. (*Sister Carrie*)
Something that is **halcyon** is NOT
 a. peaceful c. happy
 b. turbulent d. calm
3. Hanson jumped out of bed with more **celerity** than he usually displayed and looked at the note. (*Sister Carrie*)
Celerity is
 a. nervousness c. determination
 b. irritability d. swiftness
4. Her support was assured, for her income was paid to her through a trust company. She had no desire for speculation or for the **devious** ways of trade. The care of flowers, the nature of children, the ordering of a home were more in her province. (*Jennie Gerhardt*)
If something is **devious**, it is
 a. unhealthy c. respectable
 b. shifty d. defiant
5. He had never really been healed of the wound that his father had given him. He had never been comfortable in his mind since Robert had deserted him so **summarily**. (*Jennie Gerhardt*)
Something done **summarily** is done
 a. abruptly c. gradually
 b. predictably d. sarcastically



The 1952 film *Carrie*, based on Dreiser's novel *Sister Carrie*, stars Laurence Olivier and Jennifer Jones.

Interactive
Quiz



Snap the code, or go to
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