

LESSON 16

From **Oedipus Rex** (drama)
by Sophocles

OEDIPUS: What word, dear Creon, do you bring from the oracle?

CREON: If thou would hear my message publicly, I'll tell thee straight, or with thee pass within.

OEDIPUS: Speak before all; the burden that I bear is more for these my subjects than myself.

CREON: Let me report then all the god declared. King Phoebus bids us drive out a **baleful** pollution that infests the land. Cut out the **inveterate** disease, not harbor it until it is beyond cure.

OEDIPUS: What purification means he? What is this trouble?

CREON: Banishment or death to the one whose stain of blood makes shipwreck of our state.

OEDIPUS: Whom can he mean, the **malefactor** thus denounced?

CREON: Before you assumed the **helm** of State, the sovereign of this land was Laius.

OEDIPUS: I heard as much, but never saw the man.

CREON: He was slain; and now the god's command is plain: Punish his killers, whoever they be.

OEDIPUS: Where are they? Where in the wide world to find the faint traces of a bygone crime?

CREON: In this land, said the god; "he who seeks shall find; he who sits with folded hands or sleeps is blind."

OEDIPUS: Was Laius in his palace, or afield, or traveling, when he met his fate?

CREON: Abroad; bound for Delphi, but he never returned.

OEDIPUS: Was there no news, no fellow-traveler to give some clue?

CREON: But one escaped, who flying for dear life, could tell of all he saw.

OEDIPUS: And what was that? One clue might lead us far, with but a spark of hope to guide our quest.

CREON: Robbers, he told us, not one bandit but a troop of knaves, attacked and murdered him.

OEDIPUS: Could a bandit dare so bold a stroke, unless indeed he were aided by **agitators** bent against Thebes?

CREON: So it was **surmised** at the time. Given the trouble that **ensued**, none was found to take up that matter and to avenge his murder.

OEDIPUS: What trouble can have hindered a full quest, when royalty had fallen thus miserably?

CREON: The riddling Sphinx compelled us to let the past mystery slide to attend to **prevailing** troubles.

OEDIPUS: Well, I will start afresh and once again make dark things clear. Right worthy the concern of Phoebus, worthy thine too, for the dead; I also, as is meet, will lend my aid to avenge this wrong to Thebes and to the god. Not for some far-off kinsman, but myself, shall I expel this poison in the blood; for whoso slew that king might have a mind to strike me too with his assassin hand. Therefore in righting him I serve myself. Up, children, haste ye, quit these altar stairs, take hence your suppliant boughs, summon hither the Theban commons. God will decide whether we flourish in a purified state or we **languish** under this **scourge**.

Exercise 1: Context Clues

Read the selection, paying special attention to the words in dark type. These are the Master Words you will study in this lesson. As you read, look for context clues in the sentences and paragraphs around each Master Word. Circle any words and phrases that give clues to the meaning of the Master Words.

Master Words				
Place a check by words you feel you know; underline words you don't know.				
agitator	ensue	inveterate	malefactor	scourge
baleful	helm	languish	prevailing	surmise

• • • • Exercise 2: Using Context Clues

Fill in the form for each of the Master Words listed below with context clues (if any), your definition, and the dictionary definition. If you have difficulty writing a definition, try using the word in a sentence instead.

1. **agitator** Part of Speech: *n.* Context Clues: _____

Your Definition: _____

Dictionary Definition: _____

2. **baleful** Part of Speech: *adj.* Context Clues: _____

Your Definition: _____

Dictionary Definition: _____

3. **ensue** Part of Speech: *v.* Context Clues: _____

Your Definition: _____

Dictionary Definition: _____

4. **helm** Part of Speech: *n.* Context Clues: _____

Your Definition: _____

Dictionary Definition: _____

5. **inveterate** Part of Speech: *adj.* Context Clues: _____

Your Definition: _____

Dictionary Definition: _____

6. **languish** Part of Speech: *v.* Context Clues: _____

Your Definition: _____

Dictionary Definition: _____

7. **malefactor** Part of Speech: *n.* Context Clues: _____

Your Definition: _____

Dictionary Definition: _____

8. **prevailing** Part of Speech: *adj.* Context Clues: _____

Your Definition: _____

Dictionary Definition: _____

9. **scourge** Part of Speech: *n.* Context Clues: _____

Your Definition: _____

Dictionary Definition: _____

10. **surmise** Part of Speech: *v.* Context Clues: _____

Your Definition: _____

Dictionary Definition: _____

Exercise 3: Synonyms and Antonyms

Use the synonyms and antonyms in the word list to fill in the blanks after each Master Word.

	Synonyms	Antonyms	Word List	
1. scourge	_____	_____	advantageous	hero
2. languish	_____	_____	blessing	noxious
3. helm	_____	_____	cause	peacemaker
4. agitator	_____	_____	command	presume
5. ensue	_____	_____	curse	result
6. baleful	_____	_____	doubt	subservience
7. malefactor	_____	_____	established	troublemaker
8. surmise	_____	_____	fleeting	uncommon
9. prevailing	_____	_____	flourish	villain
10. inveterate	_____	_____	hardened	wither

Exercise 4: Sentence Completion

From the Master Words, choose the appropriate word for the blank in each of the following sentences. Write the word in the space provided at the right.

- The dictator's ...?... attacks left thousands homeless.
- The mayor at the ...?... of this community has to steer it wisely.
- Without proper watering and feeding, houseplants will ...?... .
- The drought of 2012 was (a, an) ...?... on farmers and ranchers.
- To stir trouble, the ...?... passed out leaflets filled with propaganda.
- Poverty is (a, an) ...?... problem and needs attention more than ever.
- The ...?... was the No. 1 person on the FBI's Most Wanted List.
- The ...?... view that low-fat diets are best is being questioned.
- The detective ...?... (d, ed) that the crime had taken place one day ago.
- No one could have predicted what would ...?... after the surprise appearance of the movie star.

Exercise 5: Related Words and Meanings

The italic words in the sentences below are synonyms of the Master Words. Write the matching Master Word from the list on the line following the sentence. You may have to adjust the spelling of some words to fit the context.

ensue	inveterate	prevailing	scourge	surmise
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1. The *dominant* view of critics is that *The Lord of the Ring* trilogy is among the top ten movie trilogies. _____
2. What would *happen* if politicians were forced to keep their promises? _____
3. The illegal drug problem is a *plague* on impoverished youth. _____
4. Emma could *assume* from the still-swinging door that Matt had just left. _____
5. Consumerism is an *ingrained* way of life among many Westerners. _____

Exercise 6: Analogies

Determine the relationship between the first pair of words in each item below. Then write the Master Word on the blank that would create a similar relationship with the second pair of words. The analogy types used in this activity include synonyms, antonyms, adjective/related noun, whole/part, and action/actor. (See page 158 for a guide to analogy types.)

1. ardent : apathetic :: beneficial : _____
2. procrastinate : anticipate :: _____ : thrive
3. helpful : hint :: radical : _____
4. pray : believer :: steal : _____
5. car : dashboard :: ship : _____
6. practice : rehearse :: hypothesize : _____
7. debate : disagreement :: _____ : plague
8. send : receive :: _____ : precipitate
9. scintillating : dull :: exceptional : _____
10. strenuous : workout :: _____ : habit

Write About It: Retell the Scene

Rewrite the scene from Oedipus Rex in your own words. Use at least four Master Words in your rewrite. With a partner, read each other's rewritten scenes aloud.

Unit Word Study

Classic Roots and Affixes (*sol*-, *loqu*, -*y*)

The Master Word **soliloquy** is based on the Latin root *loqu*, sometimes spelled *locu*, which means “speak.” The root comes from the Latin word *loqui*, which means “to speak.” The prefix *sol*- means “alone” or “only” and the suffix -*y* often means “quality or condition” and is used to form nouns, so **soliloquy** is a noun that literally means “the condition of speaking alone.”

Matching

Write the letter of the matching etymology after the word on the left.

- | | | |
|--------------------------|-------|---|
| 1. circumlocution | _____ | a. using graceful, persuasive speech |
| 2. colloquial | _____ | b. fond of speaking; talkative |
| 3. elocution | _____ | c. a roundabout way of speaking about something |
| 4. eloquent | _____ | d. a speaker able to project his or her voice so that it seems to come from another source, such as a dummy or a large puppet |
| 5. loquacious | _____ | e. having to do with spoken language; conversational |
| 6. ventriloquist | _____ | f. the art, study, or style of speaking in public |

Understanding Word Origins

The Master Word **polymath** contains the prefix *poly*-, which means “many” and the Greek root *math*, meaning “to learn” or “learning”; a polymath is “a person with learning in many subjects.” Based on this information, write the number of the correct definition of the word in bold type in each sentence below the definitions.

Definitions

1. *n.* area of many islands in the Pacific Ocean east of the International Date Line
2. *adj.* having many tones or sounds at the same time
3. *n.* an instrument that simultaneously records many body functions; used as a lie detector
4. *adj.* having many syllables
5. *n.* any plane figure with many sides
6. *adj.* worshipping many gods

- _____ The dictionary shows the correct hyphenation of **polysyllabic** words.
- _____ Results from a **polygraph** are not always accurate and so they are not allowed in court.
- _____ Hawaii, Tahiti, and Samoa are all part of **Polynesia**.
- _____ The ancient Greeks were **polytheistic**, with Zeus as their chief god.
- _____ A hexagon is a **polygon** with six angles and six sides.
- _____ Slaves from Africa brought with them **polyphonic** music of great complexity.

Unit Word Study

Academic Vocabulary

Some of the Master Words in Unit 4 are part of your academic vocabulary. These are words that you might not use often in daily conversation but that you use to understand concepts in academic areas.

The sentences below are the type you might encounter in a school assignment, test, or textbook. Write the word that best completes each sentence.

analytic

clarify

firsthand

intuitive

surmise

1. ...?... the meaning of the word by supplying an example of its use. _____
2. Pretend you witnessed the Boston Tea Party. Write (a, an) ...?... account of events. _____
3. From the details in the passage, what do you ...?... is the reason for the change? _____
4. Using (a, an) ...?... approach, examine the parts and draw a logical conclusion. _____
5. Even if you have (a, an) ...?... grasp of grammar, you still need to learn the rules. _____

Domain-Specific Words

Domain-specific words are part of the vocabulary of a particular subject area. Some of the Master Words in Unit 4 are specific to the domain, or subject, of social studies. Using your knowledge of the Master Words and a dictionary if necessary, complete the following chart of these domain-specific words. The first row is done as an example.

Word	Definition in Everyday Language	Example
anthropologist	a social scientist who studies cultures and societies	Anthropologist Margaret Mead won fame with her study about coming of age in Samoa.
1. franchise		
2. monopoly		
3. progenitor		
4. subcontinent		

Unit Assessment

I. Read the passage below. Then answer questions 1–8.

The Story of Oedipus

Sophocles based *Oedipus Rex* on a famous myth from ancient Greece. At the **outset** of the myth, King Laius of Thebes and his queen are very proud of their new son. So they go to an oracle, or prophet, to learn the great things in store for the boy. Instead of a rosy future, however, the oracle predicts that the boy will grow up to kill his father. Shocked by this **infernal** prediction, the couple gets rid of the child, who is eventually adopted by the king and queen of Corinth and given the name of Oedipus. As a young man, Oedipus himself hears the same hellish prediction. With no **inkling** who his real father is, he thinks the prediction refers to his father in Corinth, so he runs away to avoid tragedy.

On the road to Thebes, Oedipus meets an old man whom he kills in a quarrel. Then, just outside the city, he encounters the **scourge** of the people of Thebes: a Sphinx who blocks the city gates. The Sphinx, a creature with the face of a woman and the body of a lion, asks each passerby a riddle: *What has one leg in the morning, two legs at noon,*

and three legs at night? Only by answering the riddle can a person enter the city, but so far no one has solved the **enigma**. What is more, the **baleful** Sphinx eats the person who cannot solve the riddle.

Oedipus, however, is cleverer than most. He recognizes that the answer to the riddle is a human being, who crawls on all fours in early life (“morning”), walks on two feet in the prime of life (“noon”), and often uses a cane in later life (“night”). When he solves the puzzle, the Sphinx is so upset that she destroys herself, and Oedipus is invited to take the **helm** in Thebes, whose king, Laius, has recently been murdered.

As the new king, one of Oedipus’s first tasks is to find the **malefactor** who killed the king before him. In a typical twist of fate, it turns out that King Laius was the old man that Oedipus killed on the road. Thus, Oedipus has in fact killed his own father—thereby fulfilling the prophesy and proving that fate is **inexorable**.

Questions 1–3: Find the word most nearly opposite in meaning to the given word.

1. outset is most nearly **opposite** in meaning to

- | | |
|------------|----------------|
| (A) start | (D) climax |
| (B) middle | (E) resolution |
| (C) end | |

2. baleful is most nearly **opposite** in meaning to

- | | |
|-------------|-----------------|
| (A) hurtful | (D) meaningless |
| (B) helpful | (E) cruel |
| (C) useless | |

3. inexorable is most nearly **opposite** in meaning to

- | | |
|-------------------|-----------------|
| (A) pretense | (D) predictable |
| (B) appearance | (E) avoidable |
| (C) disappearance | |

continued

Unit Assessment

Questions 4–6: Find the word most similar in meaning to the given word.

4. inkling is most **similar** in meaning to

- (A) spot
- (B) idea
- (C) question
- (D) answer
- (E) youngster

5. enigma is most **similar** in meaning to

- (A) riddle
- (B) answer
- (C) development
- (D) monster
- (E) code

6. malefactor is most **similar** in meaning to

- (A) traveler
- (B) newcomer
- (C) visitor
- (D) criminal
- (E) dictator

Questions 7–8: Choose the answer about the part of speech of the given word as used in the sentence.

7. What is the part of speech of the word **scourge** as used in the sentence below?

Oedipus encounters the **scourge** of the people of Thebes.

- (A) verb
- (B) noun
- (C) adjective
- (D) adverb
- (E) preposition

8. What context clue in the passage best helps you understand the meaning of **infern**al?

- (A) shocked
- (B) prediction
- (C) get rid of
- (D) young man
- (E) hellish

Questions 9–10: Choose the answer with the words from the unit that best fit the blanks and complete the sentence.

9. Killing one’s father is (a, an) ...?... crime, from which all manner of evil is likely to ...?... .

- (A) analytic, clarify
- (B) intuitive, languish
- (C) dormant, surmise
- (D) diabolic, ensue
- (E) inveterate, tolerate

10. Beginning with the famous words “To be, or not to be,” Hamlet speaks (a, an) ...?... of great ...?... in Shakespeare’s play.

- (A) phenomena, inkling
- (B) monopoly, skepticism
- (C) soliloquy, renown
- (D) pivot, franchise
- (E) adornment, polymath

continued

Unit Assessment

II. Read the passage below and answer the questions that follow.

Captain Ransome had retired from the parapet to his proper post in rear of his guns, where he stood with folded arms, his bugler beside him. Here, during the hottest of the fight, he was approached by Lieutenant Price, who had just sabred a daring assailant inside the work. A spirited colloquy **ensued** between the two officers—spirited, at least, on the part of the lieutenant, who gesticulated with energy and shouted again and again into his commander’s ear in the attempt to make himself heard above the **infernal** din of the guns.

—from “One Kind of Officer” by Ambrose Bierce

11. What word is most similar to the word **ensued**?
- Ⓐ followed Ⓒ argued
Ⓑ ended Ⓓ agreed
12. Which detail from the passage best helps the reader understand the meaning of **ensued**?
- Ⓐ the actions of the captain
Ⓑ the actions of the bugler
Ⓒ the actions of the lieutenant
Ⓓ the contrast between the captain and the bugler
13. Which dictionary definition below best matches the use of the word **infernal** in the passage?
- Ⓐ of the mythic world of the dead
Ⓑ of Hell
Ⓒ hellish; horrible
Ⓓ tiresome; very annoying

III. Read the passage below and answer the questions that follow.

Thomas Paine, (a, an) ...?... who spurred rebellion in his famed political pamphlet *Common Sense*, made a very ...?... argument for American independence—an argument almost as persuasive as that of the Declaration of Independence.

14. Which pair of words best completes the blanks in the passage?
- Ⓐ anthropologist, firsthand
Ⓑ agitator, convincing
Ⓒ polymath, tremulous
Ⓓ malefactor, exclusive
15. Which two words or phrases from the passage best help the reader answer question 14?
- Ⓐ spurred rebellion, persuasive
Ⓑ famous, American independence
Ⓒ pamphlet, argument
Ⓓ Declaration of Independence

continued

Unit Assessment

IV. Read the passage below and answer the question that follows.

The Americans of the United States must inevitably become one of the greatest nations in the world; their offset [land] will cover almost the whole of North America; the continent which they inhabit is their dominion, and it cannot escape them. What urges them to take possession of it so soon? Riches, power, and **renown** cannot fail to be theirs at some future time, but they rush upon their fortune as if but a moment remained for them to make it their own.

—from *Democracy in America*, by Alexis De Tocqueville

16. Which words from the passage provide comparisons that best help you understand the meaning of **renown**?

- Ⓐ United States, North America Ⓒ riches, power
Ⓑ world, continent Ⓓ future time, a moment

V. Comparing Informational and Literary Text: Analytical Writing

The passages by Robert Kaplan (from *The Nothing That Is*, Lesson 18) and Nicholas Nicastrò (from *Circumference*, Lesson 19) both explore significant achievements in human understanding. Write an essay in which you compare and contrast the two passages. Examine the similarity in the kinds of achievements that each passage explores. Then examine the differences in the type of language each author uses to describe the achievement and convey its significance. The following Master Words from this unit may be especially appropriate for your essay. Use as many of them as you can.

analytic	convincing	ensue	odds	renown
clarify	enigma	inkling	polymath	surmise

Developing and Strengthening Your Writing Process

Go through the writing process—planning, drafting, revising, and editing—as you work on your analytical essay. In the planning stage, for example, you may want to make a two-column comparison-and-contrast chart with one column for the Kaplan text and another for the Nicastrò text. Add notes in each column about the differences and similarities you see. Then develop the central idea your notes suggest and plan out a structure for your essay. The advance planning will help you write a good first draft. Share that draft with a partner and ask for feedback, revising your essay accordingly. When you are satisfied with your revision, edit your report for grammar, spelling, and other conventions.