

MAKING NEW WORDS YOUR OWN

Lesson 8

CONTEXT: Expression

Zora Neale Hurston: Many-sided Writer

Zora Neale Hurston (1891?–1960) was always her own person—talented and prolific, hardworking and outspoken. She was born in Eatonville, Florida, where her father was a carpenter and served as the minister and mayor. When her mother died, Hurston left home and worked as a maid and later as a secretary while attending college. She began writing plays and stories and for a time was part of the black cultural revival known as the Harlem Renaissance.

In the following exercises, you will have the opportunity to expand your vocabulary by reading about Zora Neale Hurston, writer of novels, short stories, plays, folk tales, and works of anthropology. Below are ten vocabulary words that will be used in these exercises.

- | | | | | |
|------------|----------|-----------|-------------|---------|
| fabricate | mediocre | opportune | reactionary | zealous |
| impediment | mien | qualm | stamina | zephyr |

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. **fabricate** → Hurston did not need to completely fabricate, or make up, characters for her stories. She found inspiration for her characters in the lives of the people she knew.

Your Guess: _____

Definition: _____

Other Forms: _____

2. **impediment** → Hurston did not let having to work hard at low-paying jobs be an impediment to getting an education. She overcame all obstacles and attended Howard University and Barnard College.

3. **mediocre** → There is variety in Hurston's writing, and none of her writing is mediocre. It is all above average.

4. **mien** → From the love and humor shown in her writing, a reader probably imagines Hurston as having a pleasant mien, or appearance and manner.

5. **opportune** → Unfortunately, the time in which Hurston wrote was not an opportune one for African American writers. There was very little interest in literature about black families and folklore, and thus her literary career was not well timed.

6. **qualm** → Hurston may have had qualms about moving from a small town in Florida to New York City. It is natural to feel slightly doubtful and uneasy when facing a major change in your life and surroundings.

7. **reactionary** → Some people accused Hurston of having reactionary ideas when she opposed the desegregation ruling in 1954, but she was not advocating a return to an earlier policy. She was not an extreme conservative opposed to change.

8. **stamina** → Hurston felt that the Supreme Court ruling implied that blacks were inferior. Older black writers criticized her, a real test of her endurance, but she had the stamina to not back down.

9. **zealous** → After Hurston studied anthropology in college, she was zealous about recording the folklore and culture of African Americans in the South. Her great enthusiasm led her to publish *Mules and Men*.

10. **zephyr** → The importance of Hurston's writing was not recognized at the time she first published her novels, plays, and short stories. Her influence as a writer had passed subtly and softly, like a zephyr or gentle breeze.

EXERCISE 2**Context Clues A**

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 the 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: _____
n. bearing; appearance; manner
12. word: _____
n. an uneasiness, misgiving, or doubt; a slight feeling of sickness or nausea
13. word: _____
adj. intensely devoted; eager; enthusiastic
14. word: _____
n. a speech disorder; an obstruction of some kind
15. word: _____
n. a gentle wind; a mild breeze
16. word: _____
adj. only average or ordinary; medium; neither bad nor good
17. word: _____
adj. advocating a return to an earlier social, political, or economic policy or condition;
18. word: _____
n. one who advocates a return to an earlier policy or condition
19. word: _____
n. vigor; strength; endurance
20. word: _____
adj. right for the purpose; advantageously timed

COLUMN B

- (A) Hurston's use of natural dialogue enlivens her stories. She captures dialects and regional expressions easily. She is even able to imitate speech impediments such as stuttering and stammering.
- (B) Because Hurston wrote stories about crude situations and people, some critics thought her work was merely mediocre, rather than exceptional.
- (C) It is a shame that Hurston could not have written during a more opportune time, such as now, when there is a great appreciation for African American stories and writers. Today, her work would be very timely.
- (D) In her writing, Hurston describes appearances and manners so that the reader can picture each character's mien.
- (E) Hurston's stories are often earthy, telling of violence and marital difficulties, but you should have no qualms about reading them. Any doubts you have will vanish after a few pages.
- (F) She fabricated a reputation as a controversial and outspoken person, but Hurston also built a reputation as a skilled and hard-working author.
- (G) Hurston was zealous about her work. Her devotion and enthusiasm are evident in her collection of short stories, *The Eatonville Anthology*.
- (H) Florida's African Americans of the 1920s and 1930s live on in Hurston's writing. Readers can almost feel each zephyr that gently blows across Eatonville and smell the scents carried on the breeze.
- (I) A reader can appreciate the people and conditions of Hurston's time without being reactionary about them. There is little sense in returning to the conditions that existed then.
- (J) Hurston had great stamina. Her strength and endurance were demonstrated by the fact that, in addition to writing her many books, she worked as a staff writer, a maid, a librarian, a journalist, a part-time teacher, and a professor of drama.

EXERCISE 3**Sentence Completion A**

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 folklore stories Hurston wrote down were _____ that had been made up long ago by anonymous storytellers.
 (A) qualms
 (B) zephyrs
 (C) impediments
 (D) fabrications
 (E) mediocrities
22. Hurston seemingly had no _____ about telling about life as it really was. If she had doubts, she overcame them.
 (A) impediments
 (B) opportunities
 (C) qualms
 (D) mien
 (E) stamina
23. The lack of opportunities for black writers, the lack of interest and appreciation by the public, and her politics and lifestyle all served as obstacles, or _____, to Hurston's goals.
 (A) qualms
 (B) fabrications
 (C) opportunities
 (D) zephyrs
 (E) impediments
24. In spite of the hardships she endured, Hurston was often fortunate. It was _____, for example, that Hurston had other jobs offered to her, since she made little money writing.
 (A) zealous
 (B) reactionary
 (C) opportune
 (D) mediocre
 (E) fabricated
25. The _____ of certain individuals in Hurston's hometown must have been etched in her memory. Their appearances are described in detail in her stories.
 (A) qualms
 (B) mien
 (C) zephyrs
 (D) impediments
 (E) mediocrities
26. Hurston's autobiography, *Dust Tracks on the Road*, shows her to be a _____ individual whose dedication gave her a great deal of _____, or endurance.
 (A) zealous . . . stamina
 (B) mediocre . . . fabrication
 (C) reactionary . . . zephyrs
 (D) pallid . . . mediocrity
 (E) qualmish . . . impediment
27. Hurston achieved only a _____ reputation in her lifetime, not an exceptional one. Recently, however, her writings have been _____ received by an enthusiastic audience.
 (A) reactionary . . . opportunistically
 (B) mediocre . . . zealously
 (C) zealous . . . opportunely
 (D) reactionary . . . zealously
 (E) fabricated . . . opportunistically
28. Hurston now has many _____ fans, but she died almost unknown. Many people had _____ about her work—misgivings that are hard to understand today.
 (A) opportune . . . fabrications
 (B) mediocre . . . mien
 (C) reactionary . . . zephyrs
 (D) staminal . . . impediments
 (E) zealous . . . qualms
29. Hurston eventually lost her _____ health, and will to live. Her life force, once as strong as a gale, became little more than a _____.
 (A) impediment . . . mediocrity
 (B) mediocrity . . . fabrication
 (C) stamina . . . zephyr
 (D) qualms . . . reactionary
 (E) mien . . . zealousness
30. This talented woman, who was once accused of being backward-looking, even _____, who had faced and overcome all sorts of _____, is buried in an unmarked grave in a segregated cemetery in Fort Pierce, Florida.
 (A) mediocre . . . qualms
 (B) mien . . . reactionaries
 (C) opportunistic . . . fabrications
 (D) reactionary . . . impediments
 (E) qualmish . . . zephyrs
34. LESSON 8