

Vocabulary Items

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“John Gardner referred to the writing of non-traditional narratives as “jazzing around.” I like that label much better than “experimental fiction.” An experiment can be something that the writer does for his own sake, with little thought for whether or not the reader will have any fun. Jazzing around, on the other hand, swings. Jazzing around is about improvisation, surprise, and having fun for the benefit of both the writer and the reader. One kind of jazzing around that I especially enjoy is taking some of non-literary language—a math problem, a recipe, a guide for expectant mothers—and writing a story in that form. So here’s a series of narratives that tests your reading comprehension and vocabulary. Use only a number two pencil to mark your answers. Begin.”

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CHOOSE THE APPROPRIATE WORD to complete the following sentences.

1. As citizens we would be if we did not make these facts public.

- A. derelict
- B. dirigible
- C. discreet
- D. detritus

In the city council chamber, the floor was opened for public comment. Two citizens came to the microphone.

Ms. Patricia Wilson, who was represented by Mr. Kyle in the Sixth Ward said: “My friend Amy, who is a nurse at the VA hospital, she can get me as much Percodan as I want. And I want a lot.”

Mr. Jim Smitts, who was represented by Ms. Turnbull in the First Ward said: “I’d just like to say one thing? My neighbor across the street, he’s got a daughter? She’s fourteen? And she’s real cute? And I seen her washing her Daddy’s car, and she was wearing shorts and she got wet? And now I’m sitting in my living room all the time, looking over there and hoping to see something like that again? That’s all I’d like to say.”

The correct answer is C.

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2. Many administrative assistants fail because they are not sufficiently .

- A. versatile
- B. voracious
- C. varicolored
- D. venal

On his way to a board meeting, Mr. Matthews stopped by Jane's desk. "Pull the files on the Brandywine account for me," he said. "I'd like to review them when I get back this afternoon."

"They'll be on your desk."

"Is that letter ready for my signature?"

She gave him the letter. He signed it.

"Oh," he said, "and I noticed on my way in that there's a Cape buffalo by the water cooler."

"Is there?" said Jane.

"Yes. A dead one. Take care of it, will you?"

"Of course." She got up from her desk to have a look.

The buffalo was a big one, weighing many hundreds of pounds. It lay on its side, eyes open. Jane put her hand on one massive hoof and pushed. The leg yielded. The buffalo hadn't been dead for long.

Jane knew that an animal of this size was more than she could handle alone, so she went from office to office, from cubicle to cubicle, gathering the other administrative assistants. Then Jane crouched close to the buffalo. With her powerful claws, she tore open the still-warm carcass and used her teeth to rip out a goblet of flesh. The other administrative assistants fell to, as well. Soon their hands and faces were smeared with blood. They gorged on flesh until they could eat no more. Then they retreated to their work stations to doze a while and renew their appetites.

However, even after a second round of feeding, the buffalo was scarcely half devoured when Mr. Matthews returned from his meeting. He scowled at Jane. "Is that all?" he said. "You've barely started on the entrails, and one of the forelegs hasn't even been touched!" He shook his head. "I'm sorry to say this, Jane, but I'm going to have to let you go." He looked at the others. "You, too. The lot of you. You're all *fired!*"

The correct answer is B.

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3. The best way to choose a soldier for a suicide mission is to pick someone by drawing lots.

- A. rationally
- B. randomly
- C. repeatedly
- D. retroactively

The night before the selection was to be made, the officers gathered in the Colonel's bunker to decide which of the enlisted men they most disliked. It came down to Mimsby, Hawkins and Pimm. The officers then considered which of these three men, by his permanent absence from the trenches, might actually have a positive impact on morale. Without a doubt, the answer was Pimm, but he was so defective that he might not be able to carry off even a simple suicide mission. Hawkins seemed the next best choice until one of the captains said he rather *liked* Hawkins playing the harmonica of an evening, and maybe not *all* the enlisted chaps hated it. Perhaps those who enjoyed the harmonica simply hadn't spoken up. So the officers settled on Mimsby. In the morning, one of the majors went among the men with a bundle of sticks. Short stick would draw the mission. "Don't pick the blue one," the major said to each man in turn, and when he came at last to Mimsby, there was only one stick left, the one painted blue. It was the short stick.

"Sorry about that, lad," major told him. "Luck of the draw, what?"

The correct answer is A.

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4. Mr. Evans objected to the day care center next to his home because the children were .

A. obstreperous

B. ovoid

C. officious

D. obsequious

“Good Lord, but they are noisy today,” Mrs. Evans said.

Mr. Evans grunted, put down his paper, and went to the open window. “Hey!” he shouted. “Pipe down out there!”

“Sorry, Mr. Evans,” said one of the children.

“We didn’t mean to disturb you,” said another.

“We appreciate your letting us know that we were getting out of hand,” said a third. “We’re happy to have you as neighbors. We appreciate some contact with the older, wiser generation.”

“We’ll try to play more quietly now. Don’t hesitate to tell us if we’re bothering you again.”

“Yeah, okay,” said Mr. Evans, and to his wife he said, “God, they give me the creeps!”

She said, “I know what you mean.”

A few minutes later, the doorbell rang. It was the children. “My, you are looking well today, Mrs. Evans,” said one of the boys. “Have you lost weight?”

“Why, no, I ... What can I do for you?”

“Is Mr. Evans home?”

Mr. Evans came to the door. “What?”

“Mr. Evans, we couldn’t help noticing that the leaves are collecting in your gutters. You really ought to do something about that.”

“I don’t see how that’s any business of yours,” said Mr. Evans. “Go away.”

“Mr. Evans, those leaves could eventually block your down spouts,” said a girl. “You could get water under your eaves, and dry rot.”

Another girl added, “You can buy a plastic gutter scoop at Home Depot for under five dollars, a very good price, I’m sure you’ll agree.”

“Or,” said a boy, “you could let us clean out your gutters. We’d be happy to do it at no cost to you. Just say the word!”

“No,” said Mr. Evans. He closed the door and shivered.

“I know,” said Mrs. Evans. “They are so unnaturally helpful and polite for children.”

“Polite, hell!” said Mr. Evans. “Haven’t you noticed the shape of their *heads*?”

The correct answer is B.