



LANGUAGE ARTS

STUDENT BOOK

▶ **10th Grade | Unit 4**

LANGUAGE ARTS 1004

The Power of Words

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The Power of Words

Introduction

A word is a *microcosm*, a little world, with a history of its own. The study of word derivations, etymology, tells us much about our culture and its impact on our language.

Words are more than mirrors of culture. They are the primary means of communication for all people. They are a link with the past, and through them we shall leave a record for future generations. More than symbols for things and ideas, words are persuaders and teachers. Words can evoke pictures in our minds. They can excite us, terrify us, anger us, or make us laugh or cry.

The power of words can be seen clearly in good poetry, which blends the sound and sense of words to create an emotional and intellectual experience for the reader.

In this LIFEPAK®, you will learn what etymology is, how to apply it to increase your vocabulary, and how to use an etymological dictionary. Through a study of connotations, you will learn how a word's associations affect both its literal meaning and its effectiveness in speech and writing. The study of poetic devices will help you to understand poetry on the literal and figurative levels. With this knowledge, you will be able to appreciate the poetry of many peoples and generations.

Objectives

Read these objectives. The objectives tell you what you will be able to do when you have successfully completed this LIFEPAK. Each section will list according to the numbers below what objectives will be met in that section. When you have completed this LIFEPAK, you should be able to:

1. Identify some of the word-making elements that compose the English language.
2. Use an etymological dictionary.
3. Show by examples how one word can be more effective than another in a particular context.
4. Explain the ways in which poetry differs from prose.
5. Name the various poetic devices and identify them in poetry.
6. Interpret poetry on both the literal and the figurative levels.
7. Define the vocabulary words listed in the glossary.

1. THE MEANING OF WORDS

To understand literature or to write or speak effectively, you must first understand what words are and how they affect a listener or reader. Words are *referents*; that is, they are symbols for things or concepts. A knowledge of etymology will help you to understand why one word and not another has been agreed upon to represent a particular idea. More than this, etymology shows how a word's form and meaning

change over time. Language is not static, but is living and growing.

In this section you will learn the history of common words, personal names, and place names. You will see how the connotations of a word affect its literal meaning and how connotations can be used to influence or persuade a reader or listener.

Section Objectives

Review these objectives. When you have completed this section, you should be able to:

1. Identify some of the word-making elements that compose the English language.
2. Use an etymological dictionary.
3. Show by examples how one word can be more effective than another in a particular context.
7. Define the vocabulary words listed in the glossary.

Vocabulary

Study these words to enhance your learning success in this section.

allusion

doublet

amelioration

literary allusion

cognate

pejoration

Note: All vocabulary words in this LIFEPAC appear in **boldface** print the first time they are used. If you are unsure of the meaning when you are reading, study the definitions given in the glossary.

ETYMOLOGY

The *etymology* of a word is its history, found by breaking the word into its basic elements and tracing it back to its earliest form. A good dictionary will give the etymology of a word along with its definition, pronunciation, and grammatical function. For example, one dictionary gives this etymology of *etymology*:

"<F *etymologie*<L *etymologia*<Gk. *etymon*, original meaning + *logos*, word, study."

In other words, *etymology* was borrowed from French as *etymologie* and can be traced through Latin back to the original Greek elements *etymon* and *logos*. *Etymology* literally means *the study of true (original) meanings*.

Etymologies may give more information than a recording of word parts. Often they demonstrate how a word's meaning has changed over time, or they may contain interesting additional information. If you look up *etiquette*, for example, you will find it is a **doublet** of *ticket*, just as *sherbet* is a doublet of *syrup*.

This definition of *shibboleth*, from the *Thorndike Barnhart Dictionary*, is in itself an etymology: "A test word or pet phrase of a party; a watchword. From the Hebrew word *Shibboleth*, given by Jephthah (Judges 12:4-6) as a test to distinguish his own men from the Ephraimites, who

used the pronunciation *sibboleth*."¹ The literal meaning of *shibboleth* is *ear of corn*.

Stories like that of *shibboleth* can be found in an etymological dictionary. The format of these books may be similar to that of an ordinary dictionary, with a more detailed explanation of etymology but with a shorter definition and without a pronunciation key. Other etymological dictionaries are less formal, giving definitions that are capsule histories in story form. Compare these two definitions of *parasite*, one from *A Concise Etymological Dictionary of Modern English* by Ernest Weekley, and the other from *Word Origins and Their Romantic Stories* by Wilfred Funk.

Parasite. G. *parasites*, from *sitos*, food.

Parasites. *They eat beside you*. A man of means in ancient Greece or Rome usually had a good many followers that would flatter and fawn on him in the interest of being well-fed at his table. They were the *parasites* of that day.² The Latin *parasitus* is responsible for the word, and it stems from the Greek *parasites*, formed from *para*, "beside," and *sitos*, "food." So nowadays a *parasite* is an obsequious flatterer who lives at another's expense, or an animal or plant that depends on another organism for existence.³

1 E.L. Thorndike and Clarence L. Barnhart. *Thorndike Barnhart Advanced Dictionary*. (Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1974), p. 938. used by permission of Scott, Foresman and Company.

2 Wilfred Funk. *Word Origins and their Romantic Stories*. (New York: Funk & Wagnalls Co.). Used by permission of Harper & Row Publishers.

3 Ernest Weekly. *A Concise Etymological Dictionary of Modern English*. (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press. Used by permission of Oxford University Press.



Complete the following activity.

Look up the etymologies of the following words in your dictionary and in an etymological dictionary. You can use online dictionaries. Write both etymologies below each word.

1.1 sheriff

a. _____

b. _____

1.2 tribulation

a. _____

b. _____

1.3 gauche

a. _____

b. _____

1.4 employ

a. _____

b. _____

Word elements. To fully understand etymologies, a reader must be familiar with word elements. Fifty thousand English words are derived from Latin. The number of Greek borrowings, direct and indirect, is also very large.

The double influence of Renaissance learning and the Industrial Revolution has made Greek and Latin elements an integral part of English. For this reason a knowledge of Greek and Latin roots is indispensable to a student.



Test your knowledge of roots. Without using a dictionary, define the following Greek roots. When you have finished, check your answers using a dictionary.

- 1.5 arch _____
- 1.6 anthropo _____
- 1.7 bio _____
- 1.8 gamos _____
- 1.9 geo _____
- 1.10 theos _____
- 1.11 therm _____
- 1.12 meter _____
- 1.13 polis _____
- 1.14 chron _____
- 1.15 philo _____

List and define the roots. Use a dictionary if you need to.

	Root	Meaning
1.16 homonym	a. _____	b. _____
	c. _____	d. _____
1.17 ethnic	a. _____	b. _____
1.18 ethic	a. _____	b. _____
1.19 zoology	a. _____	b. _____
	c. _____	d. _____
1.20 hippopotamus	a. _____	b. _____
	c. _____	d. _____

Of course, Greek and Latin are not the only languages from which English has borrowed. American English in particular is a miniature melting pot reflecting words from cultures as diverse as the Algonquian Indian tribes and the ancient Hebrews. The word *orangutan* was

borrowed from Malay, *waltz* and *kindergarten* are German, *troll* is Scandinavian, and *buffalo* comes from Portuguese. The list of borrowings is endless. Only about one percent of the 600,000 words in Modern English are derived from Anglo-Saxon; the rest are borrowed.



Complete the following activities.

1.27 Look up the etymology of *orangutan*.

What do the elements mean? _____

1.28 Look in the dictionary to find the original language from which each term was derived, and write that language on the line.

- a. protein _____
- b. amen _____
- c. tattoo _____
- d. zebra _____
- e. mongoose _____

Names. Like other words, names have etymologies. Most of the first names given to children in the United States today are derived from Hebrew, Greek, Latin, or German. A few, like *Faith* and *Rose*, are self-explanatory, but most have meanings that are not readily apparent. The names were borrowed without regard to their meanings, or the form of the name changed over time and the meaning was lost. An Anglo-Saxon named *Hrothbeort* would have been well aware that his name meant *bright, shining one*, a fact that his modern counterpart *Robert* is less likely to know.

In ancient times names were a matter of great importance, as shown by the Biblical account of Abraham and his wife. Abram’s name was

changed to Abraham when he was ninety-nine. To understand the significance of this change, we must know that *Abraham* means *father of a multitude*. The name was God’s promise to a childless old man that he would have many descendants.

Other Hebrew names in common use today include *John*, meaning *gracious gift of God*; *David*, *beloved*; *Mary*, *bitter*; *Michael*, *who is like God*; *Elizabeth*, *oath of God*; and *Susan*, *a lily*.

Among the common Greek-based names are *Timothy*, *honoring God*; *Philip*, *lover of horses*; and *Cynthia*, *belonging to the moon*. *Patricia*, meaning *noble*, and *Anthony*, *incomparable*, are of Latin origin.



Look up the following names in a collegiate or etymological dictionary. Write the definitions and language of origin.

Name	Meaning	Source language
1.29 Dennis	a. _____	b. _____
1.30 Valerie	a. _____	b. _____
1.31 Renee	a. _____	b. _____
1.32 Richard	a. _____	b. _____
1.33 Alexander	a. _____	b. _____
1.34 Catherine	a. _____	b. _____
1.35 Charles	a. _____	b. _____
1.36 Judith	a. _____	b. _____

Write a report.

1.37 Look up the entry, *Names*, in an online or printed encyclopedia.

On a separate sheet of paper, write a brief report explaining the origin of last names. Give examples of the various types.

TEACHER CHECK

_____ initials

_____ date

SELF TEST 1

Answer true or false (each answer, 1 point).

- 1.01 _____ The effect of propaganda depends largely on the denotative meanings of words.
- 1.02 _____ *Hemi-* and *semi-* are cognate forms.
- 1.03 _____ The majority of Modern English words are derived from Anglo-Saxon.
- 1.04 _____ The name *February* comes from a Latin word meaning *to open*.
- 1.05 _____ The connotations of a word have little effect on its literal meaning.

Match these items. (each answer, 2 points).

- | | | |
|-------------|----------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1.06 _____ | propaganda | a. reference to anything |
| 1.07 _____ | connotation | b. history of a word |
| 1.08 _____ | pejoration | c. extension of meaning |
| 1.09 _____ | atmosphere | d. mood |
| 1.010 _____ | allusion | e. raising in meaning |
| 1.011 _____ | specialization | f. convinces through connotations |
| 1.012 _____ | etymology | g. restricting in meaning |
| 1.013 _____ | referent | h. lowering in meaning |
| | | i. symbol for thing or concept |
| | | j. association or suggestion |

Write the letter of the correct answer in the blank (each answer, 2 points).

- 1.014 *Etymology* is derived from two Greek words meaning _____.
 a. true meaning b. word history c. word meaning d. word study
- 1.015 Two forms of the same word are called _____.
 a. cognates b. allusions c. doublets d. shibboleths
- 1.016 The Greek root *chron* means _____.
 a. green b. heat c. time d. love
- 1.017 The Greek combining form *hepta-* means _____.
 a. five b. six c. seven d. eight

- 1.018 The name *Abraham* means ____ .
- a. father of a multitude
 - b. bright, shining one
 - c. gracious gift of God
 - d. lover of horses

Complete these statements (each answer, 3 points).

- 1.019 The word *hippopotamus* is derived from the Greek roots *hippos*, meaning _____ and *potamos*, meaning _____ .
- 1.020 The word *etiquette* is a doublet of _____ .
- 1.021 The author of the pamphlet "Common Sense" was _____ .
- 1.022 February was called *Sprote-Kalemonath* by the Anglo-Saxons because it was the month when _____ .
- 1.023 The words *stink* and *weed* have undergone the process of _____ .

Define these terms (each answer, 5 points).

- 1.024 shibboleth _____

- 1.025 cognate _____

Write a paragraph on each of these topics (each answer, 5 points).

- 1.026 Explain how the connotations of a word affect its literal meaning.
- _____

- 1.027 Explain the difference between individual connotations and cultural connotations.



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