

## 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.

aura	impediment	opportune	reactionary	zealous
fabricate	mediocre	qualm	stamina	zephyr

#### EXERCISE 1 Wordbusting

**Directions.** Follow these instructions for this word and the nine words on the next page.

- Figure out the word's meaning by looking at its **context**, its **structure**, and its **sound**. Fill in at least one of the three CSS boxes. Alternate which boxes you complete.
- Then, look up the word in a dictionary, read all of its meanings, and write the meaning of the word as it is used in the sentence.
- Follow this same process for each of the Vocabulary Words on the next page. You will need to draw your own map for each word. Use a separate sheet of paper.

1. **aura** → From the love and humor shown in her writing, a reader probably imagines Hurston as having had an air, or **aura**, of pleasantness about her.

Context:

Structure:

Sound:

Dictionary:

2. **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.
3. **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.
4. **mediocre** → There is variety in Hurston's writing, and none of her writing is **mediocre**. There is nothing average about it.
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 did not blossom.
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 African Americans were inferior. Older African American 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 has passed subtly and softly, like a **zephyr** or gentle breeze.



# EXERCISE 2

## Context Clues

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**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.* a distinctive quality surrounding a person or thing; an invisible, enveloping glow
- \_\_\_\_ 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; *n.* one who advocates a return to an earlier policy or condition
- \_\_\_\_ 18. word: \_\_\_\_\_  
*v.* to build or manufacture; to make up or invent (as a story or an excuse)
- \_\_\_\_ 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) The use of these techniques gives her characters an **aura** of authenticity. Natural dialogue helps capture the feeling of realism that surrounds a character.
- (C) Hurston's work is now recognized as exceptional, far above **mediocre**.
- (D) Hurston collected folklore at an **opportune** time, when the old stories were still being passed along orally.
- (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) Drawing upon her own experience, Hurston skillfully **fabricated** unforgettable characters and stories.
- (G) Hurston was **zealous** about her work. Her devotion and enthusiasm are evident in her collection of folklore, *Mules and Men*.
- (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) While Hurston sympathetically portrayed the circumstances of the period, she was not **reactionary**.
- (J) Hurston had great **stamina**. Her strength and endurance were demonstrated by the fact that, in addition to writing her many books, she worked at various times as a staff writer, a maid, a librarian, a journalist, a part-time teacher, and a professor of drama.

# EXERCISE 3

## Sentence Completion

**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) fabrication  
 (E) stamina
23. The lack of opportunities for African American writers, the lack of 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. From the details in her stories, the reader can almost see the vitality and brightness surrounding these characters.  
 (A) qualms  
 (B) auras  
 (C) zephyrs  
 (D) impediments  
 (E) mediocrities
26. Hurston's autobiography, *Dust Tracks on a 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 . . . qualms  
 (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) aura . . . 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 a segregated cemetery in Fort Pierce, Florida.  
 (A) mediocre . . . qualms  
 (B) zealous . . . reactionaries  
 (C) opportunistic . . . fabrications  
 (D) reactionary . . . impediments  
 (E) qualmish . . . zephyrs