

“The Leap” by Louise Erdrich
Vocabulary Warm-up Word Lists

Study these words from “The Leap.” Then, complete the activities that follow.

Word List A

anticipation [an tis uh PAY shuhn] *n.* expectation; looking forward to

Our anticipation increased in the final inning of the ball game.

associate [uh SOH see ayt] *v.* to connect in the mind

Many people associate spring with the color green.

carelessly [KAIR luhs lee] *adv.* without care; without paying attention

The cat ran out because I carelessly left the back door open.

collapsed [kuh LAPST] *v.* fell down; broke down suddenly

During the earthquake, several buildings collapsed.

culprit [KUL prit] *n.* offender; person guilty of a crime or action

The police caught the culprit responsible for the broken window.

drama [DRAH muh] *n.* exciting or tense events

There was plenty of drama when the test answers were stolen.

overcoming [oh ver KUM ing] *v.* conquering; mastering; getting over

The athlete is overcoming all of her opponents.

radiance [RAY dee uhns] *n.* bright, glowing light

After so many days of rain, I miss the sun’s radiance.

Word List B

boredom [BAWR duhm] *n.* state of being bored or not interested

The loud yawns reflected the audience’s boredom.

calculated [KAL kyuh lay tid] *v.* planned or schemed to make sure things work out the way one wants

We calculated the effects of changing our plans.

collide [kuh LYD] *v.* crash together forcefully

When two objects collide, they both usually change direction.

extension [ek STEN shuhn] *n.* a part that adds to or continues something else

The new extension to the library adds storage and a reading area.

precision [pri SIZH uhn] *n.* exactness; accuracy

The manufacturer produced the car engine with great precision.

sequence [SEE kwens] *n.* series of events

Pay attention to the sequence when you follow a recipe.

sequined [SEE kwind] *adj.* covered with sequins, which are small, shiny, metal discs

The sequined costume sparkles in the light.

version [VER zhuhn] *n.* distinct or particular form

The new version of the software is much better than the first one.

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Vocabulary Warm-up Exercises

Exercise A Fill in each blank in the paragraph below with an appropriate word from Word List A. Use each word only once.

Before *Romeo and Juliet* began, you could sense the eager [1] _____ of the audience. When the curtain went up, stage lights cast their [2] _____, and the actors began. However, the [3] _____ soon took an unexpected turn. One of the set walls [4] _____, nearly hitting Romeo. Luckily, Juliet did a terrific job of [5] _____ the problem. She simply pushed the wall back up and kept going. After the show, the [6] _____ was discovered. One of the other actors had [7] _____ leaned against the wall. The play was a hit, but everyone in the audience will always [8] _____ *Romeo and Juliet* with falling walls.

Exercise B Decide whether each statement below is true or false. Explain your answers.

1. A calculated risk is one you take without thinking.
T / F _____
2. It might take a long time to sew a sequined dress by hand.
T / F _____
3. Boredom is a likely result if a movie plot is full of surprises.
T / F _____
4. An extension ladder is a ladder that cannot be made longer.
T / F _____
5. The written version of a story is always better than the movie.
T / F _____
6. Making miniature models of buildings requires precision.
T / F _____
7. Rearranging the sequence of an experiment can change the results.
T / F _____
8. If two basketballs collide, only one is likely to move.
T / F _____

“The Leap” by Louise Erdrich
Reading Warm-up A

Read the following passage. Pay special attention to the underlined words. Then, read it again, and complete the activities. Use a separate sheet of paper for your written answers.

On July 6, 1944, the sun’s bright radiance lit up the afternoon sky in Hartford, Connecticut. More than 6,000 people decided to attend a matinee performance of the Ringling Brother and Barnum & Bailey Circus. Faces in the audience stared in eager anticipation, waiting for the next thrilling act. No one could have predicted that their happiness would soon turn to terror.

The circus was in progress when the drama shifted from the jugglers and gymnasts to the audience and the circus tent itself. Suddenly, a fire started. The flames spread with astonishing speed, becoming a raging inferno in moments. Why did the fire spread so quickly? One key factor was that the circus tent was painted with a mixture of wax and paraffin to make it waterproof.

The huge tent quickly collapsed, falling to the ground as it burned. People inside the tent rushed to the exits. “There was pushing and shoving, people just frantic to get out of there. It was a mass exodus,” recalled Eunice Groark, who was six years old at the time.

Although the tragic fire caused the deaths of 100 children and 68 adults, its cause remains a mystery. Was it started by a carelessly tossed match or cigarette? Or did someone intentionally set the fire?

In 1950, Robert D. Segee of Circleville, Ohio, said he was the culprit, claiming to have set the fire himself. He was convicted, but later investigators have cast doubt on his confession. After reopening the investigation in 1991, the case was reclassified as undetermined.

In the years after the fire, many people in Hartford could only associate the circus with sadness and loss. Overcoming feelings of fear has been difficult for survivors and witnesses. “I am still terrified,” says Groark. “When I go to the movies or am in a big crowd, I need to find the exit.” Soon, a memorial will be built in Hartford to honor those lost in this frightening tragedy.

1. Underline the words that describe what the sun’s radiance did. Then, tell what radiance means.
2. Underline the words that tell what the audience’s anticipation was for. What might make you feel anticipation?
3. Underline the words that tell who and what the drama shifted to. Describe another situation with a lot of drama.
4. Underline the words that tell what happened to the tent when it collapsed. Tell what collapsed means.
5. Underline the words that name an action that might have been done carelessly. What can happen when an action is done carelessly?
6. Underline the words that tell what the culprit claimed. What is a culprit?
7. Circle two things that many people in Hartford associate with the circus. Then, tell something you associate with the circus.
8. Underline the words that tell what survivors had difficulty overcoming. Then, tell what overcoming means.

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Reading Warm-up B

Read the following passage. Pay special attention to the underlined words. Then, read it again, and complete the activities. Use a separate sheet of paper for your written answers.

Modern circuses feature a huge variety of delights, from clowns and jugglers to trapeze artists in sequined costumes that sparkle and glisten in the light as they soar above our heads. With so many fascinating sights around us, boredom is out of the question.

The first circuses focused on just chariot racing. In Ancient Rome, chariot races took place in a circus, an oval track named after the Greek word for *circle*. The first circus in Rome was the Circus Maximus. Initially, there was no building, simply a flat, sandy track. The sport became so popular, however, that a huge building was constructed in the 6th century B.C. Archaeologists have calculated that the building was 620 meters long (678 yards) and about 150 meters (164 yards) wide. It could hold 150,000 spectators.

The circus was damaged in a terrible fire in A.D. 64 but was rebuilt. By A.D. 104, the most spectacular version of the circus was finished, complete with three tiers of seats. The efficient use of space in this vast building shows the precision of Roman engineering.

The audience for chariot races came from every part of Roman society, from slaves to emperors. Although the races were initially held only during religious festivals, the sport became so popular that the public demanded an extension to this limited schedule.

A day at the Circus Maximus always began with the same sequence of events. First, there was an elaborate parade led by the person who was sponsoring that day’s race. He was followed by the chariot teams, musicians, dancers, and priests. Then, the races began. Each one covered seven full laps of the track.

Most charioteers began slowly in order to save energy for the long race. Because they tied the horse’s reins around their waists, they were in danger when the chariots bumped together. When they would collide, the charioteers were often knocked out and dragged behind, sometimes to their death.

1. Circle the words that describe how the sequined costumes respond to light. Tell what *sequined* means.
2. Underline the words that explain why boredom is impossible at the circus. Describe a place where *boredom* is possible.
3. Underline the words that tell what archaeologists calculated. Then, explain what *calculated* means.
4. Tell which version of the circus you would like to have seen and explain why.
5. Underline the words that tell what part of the circus shows the precision of Roman engineers. Then, tell what *precision* means.
6. Circle the words that tell of what an extension was demanded. Tell what an *extension* is.
7. Circle the words that help you understand the sequence of events on race day. List the *sequence* of events at a modern sport.
8. Circle the word that is a synonym for collide. Then, describe two other objects that might *collide*.

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Literary Analysis: Plot

A **plot** is the sequence of related events that make up a story. A typical plot concerns a **conflict**—a struggle between opposing forces—and follows a pattern.

- In the **exposition**, the writer gives information about the characters and the situation.
- During the **rising action**, events occur that intensify the conflict.
- At the **climax**, the tension reaches its highest point because the outcome of the conflict is about to be revealed.
- The tension lessens during the **falling action**.
- The **resolution** is the final outcome of the conflict. It often involves a change or an insight.

Writers use various techniques to add tension to a story. One technique is **foreshadowing**—giving details that hint at coming events. For instance, when a character leaves a door unlocked in her haste, it may foreshadow a later event—a pet getting loose, for example.

Read the following passage from “The Leap.”

When extremes of temperature collide, a hot and cold front, winds generate instantaneously behind a hill and crash upon you without warning.

Here, the author uses foreshadowing to hint at an event caused by weather later in the story.

DIRECTIONS: *Identify each passage below as exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, or resolution. Then, tell what each passage foreshadows.*

1. I would, in fact, tend to think that all memory of double somersaults and heart-stopping catches had left her arms and legs were it not for the fact that sometimes, as I sit sewing in the room of the rebuilt house where I slept as a child, I hear the crackle, catch a whiff of smoke from the stove downstairs, and suddenly the room goes dark, the stitches burn beneath my fingers, and I am sewing with a needle of hot silver, a thread of fire.

Part of plot: _____ Foreshadows: _____

2. My mother once said that I'd be amazed at how many things a person can do within the act of falling.

Part of plot: _____ Foreshadows: _____

3. That is the debt we take for granted since none of us asks for life. It is only once we have it that we hang on so dearly.

Part of plot: _____ Foreshadows: _____

4. She has never upset an object or as much as brushed a magazine onto the floor. She has never lost her balance or bumped into a closet door left carelessly open.

Part of plot: _____ Foreshadows: _____

“The Monkey’s Paw” by W. W. Jacobs

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Integrated Language Skills: Grammar

Common and Proper Nouns

A **common noun** is a general name for any one of a group of people, places, or things. A **proper noun** names a particular person, place, or thing. A proper noun always begins with a capital letter.

Examples

Common Nouns: student, teacher, country, skyscraper, book

Proper Nouns: Will Fordham, Ms. Ruiz, Japan, Empire State Building, *The Outsiders*

A. DIRECTIONS: *In each of the following sentences from the selections, identify the underlined nouns as common or proper. For each common noun, name a proper noun that could take its place. For each proper noun, name a common noun that could take its place.*

1. Mrs. White drew back with a grimace.

Type of noun: _____

Substitute noun: _____

2. The soldier regarded him in the way that middle age is wont to regard presumptuous youth.

Type of noun: _____

Substitute noun: _____

3. “I was to say that Maw and Meggins disclaim all responsibility,” continued the other.

Type of noun: _____

Substitute noun: _____

4. “You’re afraid of your own son,” she cried, struggling.

Type of noun: _____

Substitute noun: _____

B. DIRECTIONS: *Rewrite each of the following sentences by correcting any errors in capitalization. Make sure that proper nouns are capitalized.*

1. The narrator’s Mother was one-half of a blindfolded Trapeze Act.

2. Mr. and mrs. white are horrified by the outcome of their Wishes.

3. Louise erdrich writes about a definitive moment in Her own life.

4. The Monkey’s Paw brings bad luck to anyone who uses it.
