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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>aura</th>
<th>impediment</th>
<th>opportune</th>
<th>reactionary</th>
<th>zealous</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>fabricate</td>
<td>mediocre</td>
<td>qualm</td>
<td>stamina</td>
<td>zephyr</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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 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**

**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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COLUMN A</th>
<th>COLUMN B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11. <strong>word:</strong> n. a distinctive quality surrounding a person or thing; an invisible, enveloping glow</td>
<td>(A) <strong>Hurston’s use of natural dialogue enlivens her stories.</strong> She captures dialects and regional expressions easily. She is even able to imitate speech impediments such as stuttering and stammering.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. <strong>word:</strong> n. an uneasiness, misgiving, or doubt; a slight feeling of sickness or nausea</td>
<td>(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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. <strong>word:</strong> adj. intensely devoted; eager; enthusiastic</td>
<td>(C) Hurston’s work is now recognized as exceptional, far above mediocre.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. <strong>word:</strong> n. a speech disorder; an obstruction of some kind</td>
<td>(D) Hurston collected folklore at an opportune time, when the old stories were still being passed along orally.</td>
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<tr>
<td>15. <strong>word:</strong> n. a gentle wind; a mild breeze</td>
<td>(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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. <strong>word:</strong> adj. only average or ordinary; medium; neither bad nor good</td>
<td>(F) Drawing upon her own experience, Hurston skillfully fabricated unforgettable characters and stories.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. <strong>word:</strong> 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</td>
<td>(G) Hurston was zealous about her work. Her devotion and enthusiasm are evident in her collection of folklore, <em>Mules and Men</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. <strong>word:</strong> v. to build or manufacture; to make up or invent (as a story or an excuse)</td>
<td>(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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. <strong>word:</strong> n. vigor; strength; endurance</td>
<td>(I) While Hurston sympathetically portrayed the circumstances of the period, she was not reactionary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. <strong>word:</strong> adj. right for the purpose; advantageously timed</td>
<td>(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.</td>
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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 ... opportunistic

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) staminal ... 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