Context: Literary Figures-British Poets

For more than a thousand years, writers from England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland have interpreted the world through poetry. During this long history, the style and subject of British poetry have varied dramatically. Yet all great British poets hold this in common: They have contributed immeasurably to the beauty of the English language and to the richness of the world's literature.

Directions

In the following exercises, you will have the opportunity to expand your vocabulary by reading about some of Britain's great poets. Below are ten vocabulary words that will be used in these exercises.

- banal
- finesse
- lampoon
- nefarious
- pseudonym
- bellicose
- glib
- lugubrious
- nemesis
- purloin

Exercise 1: Vocabulary words appear in bold print in the sentences below. The sentences give large hints to the meanings of the words. Read each carefully. Use a highlighter to highlight the words which help tell meaning.

1-- Many great British poets are quoted so often that their words now seem banal. Yet their phrases were anything but commonplace and trite when they were first written.

2--A variety of colorful individuals have contributed to Britain's poetic heritage. Alexander Pope (1688-1744), for example, was small and physically weak, yet he was often aggressive and bellicose.

3-- The poet Sir Thomas Wyatt (1503-1542) handled relationships with finesse. He demonstrated such delicate skill in dealing with people that he served as a diplomat for King Henry VIII.

4--No one would accuse Sir Francis Bacon (1561-1626) of being glib. He was a smooth talker, to be sure, but his statements had substance.

5--British poets who were somewhat cynical liked to lampoon the institutions of their day. They had to be careful, though. Satirists could be punished severely for making fun of those in power.

6--British poets have written verse in every conceivable tone. Some poems are so joyful that they are almost ecstatic; others are so sad that they could be considered lugubrious.

7--This is in keeping with the variety of people who have become poets. Some great British poets had sweet, calm dispositions, while others had wicked, nefarious temperaments.
Unfortunately, many students view British poetry as their nemesis. With patience, though, most stop viewing this verse as an unconquerable foe and come to see it as a valued friend.

It was not unusual for a British poet of the past to use a pseudonym, although most wrote under their own names.

If you were to purloin a book of British poetry, you would be stealing something worthwhile. Still, you should buy or borrow the volume instead and read your poetry with a clear conscience.

Exercise 2: (1) Using a dictionary, find the word which matches the meaning and write it in the blank to the right of the number. (2) As you look up each word, write as many forms as possible of that word, using the space below each meaning. Provide the correct part of speech for each; keep in mind that not every word has multiple forms. (3) Using either the dictionary or a thesaurus, provide at least two synonyms for each word.

1. word: ________________________
   adj. easily spoken; speaking too smoothly to be sincere
   Forms:
   Synonym:

2. word: ________________________
   adj. sad or mournful, often to an exaggerated degree; doleful
   Forms:
   Synonym:

3. word: ________________________
   n. delicate skill; subtlety; v. to bring about with skill; to evade
   Forms:
   Synonym:

4. word: ________________________
   n. an avenger; an unbeatable rival; a person who punishes another for evil deeds
   Forms:
   Synonym:
(5). word: ________________________

v. to steal

**Forms:**

**Synonym:**

(6). word: ________________________

adj. commonplace; trite; stale from overuse

**Forms:**

**Synonym:**

(7) word: ________________________

n. a fictitious name assumed by an author; pen name

**Forms:**

**Synonym:**

(8). word: ________________________

n. strongly satirical writing; v. to ridicule or satirize

**Forms:**

**Synonym:**

(9). word: ________________________

adj. very wicked; infamous; having a bad reputation

**Forms:**

**Synonym:**

(10). word: ________________________

adj. warlike; inclined to fight

**Forms:**

**Synonym:**
Exercise 3: Complete the following by writing the correct word in the blank. Each is used once time.

(1) One of the greatest British poets was Alexander Pope, whose __________________________ with the English language is legendary. Few others have used words with such skill.

(2) One of Pope's most famous poems is “The Rape of the Lock,” a __________________________ intended to ridicule the petty daily lives of eighteenth-century England's aristocracy.

(3) The title of the poem refers to the theft of a lock of hair, which an adventurous baron________________________ from the fair Belinda.

(4) The action in the poem is based on an actual event. Pope wrote the poem, in part, to ridicule the people involved, who treat the __________________________, insignificant event as a major crisis.

(5) Pope himself was a fascinating individual. He was a literary success, yet he often felt __________________________; his sadness and depression led him to refer to his life as a "long disease."

(6) Pope was also __________________________. He frequently attacked his contemporaries in his writings, often with great vigor and always with great skill.

(7) Those who suffered from his attacks considered Pope to be vicious, even __________________________. They called him the 'Wicked Wasp of Twickenham,' after the villa in which he lived.

(8) To lesser literary figures of the day, Pope was sometimes seen as a __________________________, a rival who could not be beaten.

(9) Pope's pride in his work is revealed by the fact that he never used a __________________________ but always published under his own name.

(10) Today we __________________________ use the expressions "To err is human, to forgive, divine"; "Hope springs eternal in the human breast"; and "For fools rush in where angels fear to tread." We should take these phrases more seriously--after all, they are quotations from the great British poet Alexander Pope.
Exercise 4: For each of the following items, highlight the choice that best completes the meaning of the sentence or sentences.

1. A British poet who wished to remain anonymous could use a___.
   (A) banality
   (B) pseudonym
   (C) finesse
   (D) nemesis
   (E) mesmerism

2. Although some modern readers find his writing heavy-handed and lacking subtlety, others think poet and essayist John Milton (1608-1674) wrote with great___.
   (A) finesse
   (B) banality
   (C) bellicosity
   (D) glibness
   (E) nemesis

3. Satirist Jonathan Swift (1667-1745) was a master of the ____. His satires, which ridicule conventions of his day, are still considered to be among the best ever written.
   (A) lampoon
   (B) finesse
   (C) nemesis
   (D) propriety
   (E) euphemism

4. All of us ___ phrases from British poets. However, our theft of their words may be considered a tribute to their genius.
   (A) feign
   (B) allay
   (C) finesse
   (D) revile
   (E) purloin

5. A failed love affair left a young William Wordsworth (1770-1850) ___. With both care and ___, his friend and fellow poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834) helped Wordsworth move beyond his sadness and depression.
   (A) glib ... lampoon
   (B) lugubrious ... finesse
   (C) banal ... nemesis
   (D) nefarious ... glibness
   (E) bellicose finesse

6. Much of Robert Burns's (1759-1796) poetry is about the commonplace, even ___, events experienced by ordinary people.
   (A) glib
   (B) nefarious
   (C) banal
   (D) lugubrious
   (E) bellicose
7. The shy Alfred, Lord Tennyson (1809-1892) and the aggressive, almost ___, Arthur Henry Hallam (1811-1833) were friends. Hallam's early death left Tennyson feeling ___and heartbroken for years.
(A) bellicose ... lugubrious
(B) glib ... nefarious
(C) nefarious ... banal
(D) banal...lugubrious
(E) banal...bellicose

8. Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822) believed that the good could triumph over the___. He himself worked as the ___of evil in order to avenge oppressed people.
(A) glib ... finesse
B) lampoon ... pseudonym
(C) banal ... lampoon
(D) bellicose...finesse
(E) nefarious...nemesis

9. Among the memorable characters created by William Shakespeare are the angry ___,Tybalt and Falstaff, whose humor and ability to ___people and situations make him a merry, witty figure.
(A) bellicose...lampoon
(B) nefarious...finesse
(C) glib ... purloin
(D) lugubrious...lampoon
(E) bellicose ... purloin

10. Tuberculosis was John Keats's (1795-1821)___. Knowing at age twenty-five that the disease would cause his death, he wrote poetry that was sincere and deep felt, not___.
(A) nemesis ... glib
(B) pseudonym ... bellicose
(C) lampoon ... lugubrious
(D) finesse. . . banal
(E) nemesis ... nefarious

Exercise 5. Create ten sentences, each sentence containing a vocabulary word. Each sentence is worth three points: one for spelling, one for the appropriate part of speech, and one for sufficient context clues. Be careful not to create run-on sentences, as points will be deducted for run-ons!

Exercise 6: Make a flash card for each word. Write the word on one side, properly spelled, and the part of speech, meaning, and synonym on the other. Use these to study for the quiz on the words. They will be passed in with the completed unit and study cards.

Note: The completed unit is a grade; the sentences are a grade; the study cards are a grade. There will also be a quiz that counts as a grade. You may not take the quiz until the packet has been submitted in its entirety.
Vocabulary 1 – Quiz

Part 1: Definitions

Directions: As the words are called, write them in the space beside the appropriate definition. Make sure you are careful with spelling! Next, write the part of speech in the parentheses. (3 pts./each)

1. ________________________________ ( ) –sad or mournful, often to an exaggerated degree; doleful
2. ________________________________ ( ) –an avenger; an unbeatable rival; a person who punishes another for evil deeds
3. ________________________________ ( ) –strongly satirical writing OR to ridicule or satirize
4. ________________________________ ( ) –easily spoken; speaking too smoothly to be sincere
5. ________________________________ ( ) –warlike; inclined to fight
6. ________________________________ ( ) –to steal
7. ________________________________ ( ) –very wicked; infamous, having a bad reputation
8. ________________________________ ( ) –a fictitious name assumed by an author; pen name
9. ________________________________ ( ) –delicate skill; subtlety OR to bring about with skill; to evade
10. ________________________________ ( ) –commonplace; trite; stale from overuse

Part 2: Context

Directions: Complete each of the following sentences with the vocabulary word that fits into the sentence best. **Each vocab word will only be used once. (1 pt./each)

1. Everyone who attended the funeral of the young girl who was killed by a falling tree limb seemed especially ____________________________ at the loss, and it was uncertain if the community would ever recover from such a tragedy.
2. Some people believe that Napoleon Bonaparte was generally ____________________________ in order to make up for his short stature; this is where the idea of the “Napoleon syndrome” originated.
3. Will handled the car with such ____________________________ that it was impossible to guess that it was actually his first time behind the wheel.
4. After breaking into the jewelry story, the thief was able to ____________________________ many items and make an escape before the police appeared on the scene.

5. Since its introduction into pop culture via the character Michael Scott from The Office, the phrase “That’s what she said” has become increasingly ____________________________.

6. The film, Scary Movie goes out of its way to ____________________________ many horror films of the late 1990s and early 2000s, pointing out the humor in over-done thriller scenes.

7. Since the boy had been arrested three times and placed on house arrest, his family deemed him ____________________________ and no one could trust him any longer.

8. The ____________________________ young man was able to convince anyone to do anything he wanted by smoothly talking them into his ideas.

9. Jane’s ____________________________ always got her in trouble in class, while, at the same time, she made herself look like an angel in the eyes of the teachers and other students.

10. Last week’s Mystery Author bonus opportunity on Ms. Hain’s blog was Charles Lutwidge Dodgson who published his writing under the ____________________________ of Lewis Carroll.

Part 3: Synonyms
Directions: In the space provided, write the vocabulary word that corresponds with each group of synonyms. (1 pt./each)

1. ____________________________ – smooth-talking; effortless
2. ____________________________ – burglarize; rob
3. ____________________________ – belligerent; antagonistic
4. ____________________________ – adroitness; guile
5. ____________________________ – parody; tease
6. ____________________________ – cliché; mundane
7. ____________________________ – gloomy; dismal
8. ____________________________ – enemy; adversary
9. ____________________________ – heinous; atrocious
10. ____________________________ – alias; pen name
Vocabulary 1 – Quiz

Part 1: Definitions
Directions: As the words are called, write them in the space beside the appropriate definition. Make sure you are careful with spelling! Next, write the part of speech in the parentheses. (3 pts./each)

1. ___lugubrious_______________ (___ADJ___) – sad or mournful, often to an exaggerated degree; doleful
2. ___nemesis____________________ (___N___) – an avenger; an unbeatable rival; a person who punishes another for evil deeds
3. ___lampoon____________________ (___N/V___) – strongly satirical writing OR to ridicule or satirize
4. ___glib_________________________ (___ADJ___) – easily spoken; speaking too smoothly to be sincere
5. ___bellicose____________________ (___ADJ___) – warlike; inclined to fight
6. ___purloin______________________ (___V___) – to steal
7. ___nefarious____________________ (___ADJ___) – very wicked; infamous, having a bad reputation
8. ___pseudonym___________________ (___N___) – a fictitious name assumed by an author; pen name
9. ___finesse_______________________ (___N/V___) – delicate skill; subtlety OR to bring about with skill; to evade
10. ___banal________________________ (___ADJ___) – commonplace; trite; stale from overuse

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Directions: Complete each of the following sentences with the vocabulary word that fits into the sentence best. **Each vocab word will only be used once. (1 pt./each)

1. Everyone who attended the funeral of the young girl who was killed by a falling tree limb seemed especially ___ lugubrious _______ at the loss, and it was uncertain if the community would ever recover from such a tragedy.
2. Some people believe that Napoleon Bonaparte was generally ___ bellicose _______ in order to make up for his short stature; this is where the idea of the “Napoleon syndrome” originated.
3. Will handled the car with such ___ finesse _________ that it was impossible to guess that it was actually his first time behind the wheel.
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6. The film, Scary Movie goes out of its way to ___lampoon__________________ many horror films of the late 1990s and early 2000s, pointing out the humor in over-done thriller scenes.

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2. ___purloin__________________ – burglarize; rob
3. ___bellicose________________ – belligerent; antagonistic
4. ___finesse__________________ – adroitness; guile
5. ___lampoon__________________ – parody; tease
6. ___banal____________________ – cliché; mundane
7. ___lugubrious________________ – gloomy; dismal
8. ___nemesis__________________ – enemy; adversary
9. ___nefarious________________ – heinous; atrocious
10. ___pseudonym________________ – alias; pen name