

Lesson 4: ASSESSMENT. Reading-Writing Worksheet H

Recommended Levels: I, II, III

A Few Words about Vocabulary

Directions: Read the passage below, then complete the activity that follows.

Ever been tongue-tied? You know what you want to say but your words get tangled? Sometimes you mix up the order of the words, like saying *Ever get tied-tongue?* Sometimes you insert a familiar-sounding word but one that doesn't mean the same thing, like saying *Ever get tong-tied?*

Writers often get "tongue-tied" too. They know what they want to write but they might mix up the order of the words or misuse a word. Being tongue-tied is usually the result of writing too quickly and not proofreading your work.

Here are other common vocabulary mistakes writers make: replacing a perfectly fine but common word—tongue—with a more flowery synonym, like "organ of speech." *Ever have your organ of speech tied?* sounds silly. Still beginning writers often make this mistake of using recently learned vocabulary words from English class incorrectly. Still others thumb

through the *Thesaurus* for words that sound intelligent. They think that by using big words they'll impress the judges. Good writing doesn't work that way.

The audience who reads your work should be able to hear your *voice*, not your just-learned vocabulary. When you write, be natural. Use the kinds of words you would in everyday conversation. That's not to say that vocabulary isn't important. It is. But if the words you use are confusing or sound too stuffy, then you need to revise your language.

Here is a surefire tip to help you untangle your vocabulary: **Read your letter aloud.** Listen to your voice. Listen to how the words and phrases sound. If the language is twisted or unclear, then you need revise.

ACTIVITY

The lines below come from submissions to past LAL contests. Read the sentence aloud and listen. What sounds awkward or out of place or too showy and unnatural? Suggest ways to improve each sentence.

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I saw Allie lying as stiff as board flat face. 2. I do not imply that <i>The Grapes of Wrath</i> was the means of my abandonment of any hope of satisfaction in life; I only mean to say that life was not as I had thought. 3. I feel silhouetted by how you were always willing to sacrifice something for the good of somebody else. 4. Your plot was extravagant. 5. As a reader I am very fastidious and don't usually like many books I read. 6. <i>Crosses</i> made me more aware of the ubiquitous actions that surround me. 7. <i>Matilda</i>, one of the many books you have written, is a book I mirror my life by. 8. The best thing about the book was that it was so | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> well decrypted you felt as if you were standing in the same room as her. 9. I'd march to my room right after dinner and my tired eyes would burst open almost like in fright at the sight of my book. 10. My animation used to be dull but ever since I read your book I have a better way of thinking. 11. Before I read your book, I was unaware of the popularity of child abuse. 12. I was recently dramatized by your series of three books based on your life. 13. Your book inculcated in me the idea that life should not be lived oblivious to the evils which life does most assuredly possess. 14. Corelli's Mandolin opened my eyes to the missing links in my historic knowledge. |
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