

Intermediate Reading Course. Section 1: The Basics

Dealing with Vocabulary in Reading

Instructions. [Based on what you learned in this lesson](#), guess the meaning of each word. Use only the contextual information in each sentence or scenario. Do not use a dictionary.

1. What does “assuage” mean in the sentence below?

The professor tried to **assuage** students’ concerns about the final examination by giving them a complete review of the content and sample questions.

2. What does “desiccate” mean in the sentence below?

When Mary realized she had not watered her house plant in several days, its leaves were already completely **desiccated**.

3. What does “capricious” mean in the sentence below?

I was unfortunate to work for a very **capricious** manager in my very first job. One day he would be pleasant and let us leave early. The next day, he would not even let us take breaks and yelled at us for no good reason.



4. What does “corroborate” mean in the sentence below?

At first, we did not believe Joanna’s stories about her manager treating her poorly because he was always pleasant to everyone. One day, we overheard him call her “stupid” and tell her to get him coffee. That **corroborated** her complaints.

5. What does “enervating” mean in the sentence below?

The heat is **enervating** for some people. They have so little energy to do anything they just want to stay indoors in a cool place.

6. What does “obdurate” mean in the sentence below?

Students begged and gave the professor good reasons why he should give them a chance to take the exam again, but the professor remained **obdurate**. They just had to accept their low grades.

7. What does “garrulous” mean in the sentence below?

I wanted to sleep during my flight but ended up sitting next to a **garrulous** young man. He started talking the moment we got on the plane and didn’t stop until we said goodbye at the gate.



8. What does “acerbic” mean in the sentence below?

I don't mind being criticized, but there is no need for you to be **acerbic**. I don't care much about your sarcastic, negative tone.

9. What does “affable” mean in the sentence below?

Professor Ecks is a very **affable** man. The day we first met, we immediately got along. We talked for hours, and it felt as though I had known him for years.

10. What does “inconsequential” mean in the sentence below?

What color you paint the room is inconsequential to me. I have a lot more important things to worry about.



Answer Key

1. To “assuage” means to make something less painful, severe, serious, etcetera.
In this sentence, the professor did things that would reduce students’ concerns about the final exam.
2. To “desiccate” means to remove the water from something.
In this sentence, the plants had no water for several days, so its leaves were desiccated, that is, they were dry.
3. “Capricious” people change their mood and behavior very quickly and for no apparent reason.
In this sentence, the manager’s mood and behavior changed from pleasant to unpleasant from one day to the next.
4. To “corroborate” means to help prove something by providing evidence or proof.
In this scenario, overhearing Joanna’s boss treating her poorly provided evidence, or corroborated, her complaints about him.
5. The adjective “enervating” comes from the verb “to enervate,” which means to make someone weak or tired.
If the heat is “enervating” for you, it makes you feel weak or tired—lacking energy.
6. People are “obdurate” when they refuse to change despite what anyone says.
7. “Garrulous” means having the habit of talking a lot, especially about unimportant things.
8. “Acerbic” means having a sharply critical or sarcastic tone.
9. An “affable” person is friendly and easy to talk to.
10. Something “inconsequential” is unimportant or meaningless.
In this scenario, the speaker contrasts something inconsequential (that is, unimportant) with “more important things” to worry about.

