

# LESSON 3

## Word Forms

### Word Forms

You have explored using context clues as well as using prefixes and suffixes to figure out the meaning of unknown words. Another strategy to use is to look for the “core” of a word to determine its meaning. Once you have found that core—that “word within a word”—decoding the whole word becomes easier.

For example, the word *establishment* contains the core word *establish* (a verb meaning “to set up, to found”). Once you know the basic meaning of *establish*, you can reason that the *-ment* ending turns the core word into a noun meaning “something set up or founded.” In fact, you can apply your knowledge of any core word to work out the meanings of all the other forms (or parts of speech) it might take.

Here are some examples of different formations a core word can take.

| Adjective                           | Noun                               | Verb                                 | Adverb                                      |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---|
| decisive<br>democratic<br>necessary | decision<br>democracy<br>necessity | decide<br>democratize<br>necessitate | decisively<br>democratically<br>necessarily |

### Word Forms in Action

Read the following passage.

The Caribbean is the American Mediterranean in a strategic as well as a climatic sense . . . . The superb arc of islands [the West Indies] has an amazing fertility; the extension of sugar culture around 1650 made even the

smallest of them immensely valuable, and the slaves imported from Africa thrived beyond all expectation.

From Morison et al., *The Growth of the American Republic*, p. 48.

The underlined words in the paragraph above may seem difficult. Attacking the words logically makes them much more manageable. For example, the first two words—*strategic* and *climatic*—both end in *-ic*, which is typical of many adjectives. What core words do these two adjectives contain? *Strategy* (meaning “a large-scale plan”) is the core word in the first case. *Climate* (meaning “usual or average weather conditions”) is the core word in the second. *Strategic*, therefore, means “having to do with strategy,” and *climatic* means “having to do with climate.”



## Word Forms (continued)

What word within a word does *fertility* contain? The answer is *fertile* ("rich in resources, fruitful"). The *-ity* ending (which turns adjectives into nouns) gives this word the meaning "the condition or state of being fertile."

How about *immensely*? The word within a word here is the adjective *immense*, which means "enormous, huge." The *-ly* ending usually turns adjectives into adverbs, as is the case here. The meaning of *immensely*, therefore, is "to an enormous extent."

Finally, the word *expectation* contains the core word *expect* (a verb meaning "to look for, to anticipate"). The suffix *-tion*, which turns verbs into nouns, gives this word the meaning "the state of being expected."

### Application

Read the passage below, then answer the questions that follow. Remember to look for the "words within words" as you analyze each underlined item.

Despite this tendency to territorial disputes, Indians did not . . . have "ancient" or "traditional" enemies. Each group surely had its allies and [foes], but such relationships were neither permanent nor necessarily long-lived. Alliances changed . . . both before and after European contact.

Probably far more frequently than they fought with each other, different peoples learned from each other. Absorbing new influences . . . did not signal the decay or diminution of any culture.

From Milner et al., *The Oxford History of the American West*, pp. 15-16.

1. The word *tendency* means
  - (a) a trend or inclination
  - (b) being present, attending
  - (c) boredom, tediousness
  - (d) connecting tissue between bonesThe core word in *tendency* is \_\_\_\_\_. (Hint: It is a one-syllable verb meaning "to lean, to be directed in a certain way.")
2. The word *territorial* means
  - (a) very frightening
  - (b) a special breed of dog
  - (c) third in a series
  - (d) relating to land or propertyThe "word within a word" in *territorial* is the noun \_\_\_\_\_.  
This means \_\_\_\_\_.



## Word Forms (continued)

3. The ending of *necessarily* indicates that this word is
- (a) an adverb
  - (b) an adjective
  - (c) a verb
  - (d) a noun

The core word in *necessarily* is \_\_\_\_\_, which means

\_\_\_\_\_.

4. *Alliances* means
- (a) having a certain geographic location
  - (b) joining of groups for a common purpose
  - (c) deception, lying
  - (d) foreigners entering the land

The two-syllable core word in *alliances* is \_\_\_\_\_, which means \_\_\_\_\_ . This word form (or part of speech) is a/an \_\_\_\_\_.

5. The word *diminution* means
- (a) very low intelligence
  - (b) lessening, fading
  - (c) faulty weapon
  - (d) two nations joining together

*Diminution* is a noun of four syllables; the three-syllable verb form of this word is \_\_\_\_\_.

