

LESSONS 15 AND 16

The Shapes of Things

LESSON 15

Redit agricolis labor actus in orbem.
The farmer's work returns in a circle.—VIRGIL

Key Words		
circuitous	configuration	figurative
circumference	cyclic	orb
circumspect	encyclopedic	orbit

Familiar Words

circle
circuit
circular
circulate
circumstance
circumvent
circus

CIRCUM <L. "around"

1. **circuitous** (sər kyōō'ə təs)
adj. Roundabout; indirect.

Driven off course by storms and deterred by adventures, Aeneas travels from Troy to Rome in a **circuitous** journey around the Mediterranean.

circuitously, *adv.*; **circuitousness**, *n.*; **circuitry**, *n.*

2. **circumspect** (sûr'kəm spēkt) [*spectare* <L. "to look at"]
adj. Cautious and watchful; prudent.



Challenge Words

circa
 circlet
 circumambulate
 circumlocation
 circumlunar
 circumsolar
 cirque

Despite her mother's reminder to be **circumspect** on the way to Grandmother's house, Little Red Riding Hood reveals her destination to the ostensibly friendly wolf.

circumspection, *n.*; **circumspectly**, *adv.*

3. **circumference** (sər kŭm fər əns) [*ferre* <L. "to carry"]
n. The outer boundary of a circle; the perimeter.

An ancient defensive wall still stands unbroken on the **circumference** of the French town of Carcassonne, encircling its medieval city limits.

circumferential, *adj.*

NOTA BENE: The prefix *circum* appears in more than twenty-five words listed in most dictionaries. In many words, *circum* is joined to a noun suffix that names the thing around which something moves or exists. For example:

- *circumlunar*—"around the moon"
- *circumsolar*—"around the sun"
- *circumpolar*—"around the pole"
- *circumterrestrial*—"around the earth"

In a large number of words, *circum* is followed by a verb suffix that shows the action by which something moves "around":

- *circumambulate*—"to walk around"
- *circumlocation*—literally "talking around" or "using roundabout language"
- *circumrotate*—literally "to roll around" or "rotate"
- *circumspect*—literally "to look around" or "be cautious"
- *circumvent*—literally "to come around" or "overcome"

Challenge Word

orbicular

ORBIS <L. "circle," "anything round"
ORBITA <L. "wheel"



4. **orbit** (ôr'bīt)

n. 1. Path of one body as it revolves around another body.

Several dozen human-made satellites are now in **orbit** around the Earth.

2. A sphere of influence; a range of action or experience.

Since the death of her husband, Martin Luther King, Jr., the **orbit** of Coretta Scott King's influence has increased to make her one of America's most important women.

orbital, *adj.*; **orbiter**, *n.*

5. **orb** (ôrb)
n. 1. A sphere; anything spherical in shape (for example, a planet, an eye).

To astronauts observing from outer space, Earth looks like a blue-green **orb**.

2. A globe carried by a monarch as a symbol of office.

At her coronation Queen Elizabeth II was invested with the crown, scepter, and **orb** of Great Britain.



Familiar Words
 figure
 disfigure

FIGURA <L. "form," "shape"

6. **configuration** (kən fīg'yə rā'shən) [*con* = *cum* <L. "with"]
n. A shape or outline; a method of arrangement.

To encourage conversation, they arranged the chairs in **configurations** of six or eight.

configurational, *adj.*

7. **figurative** (fīg'yər ə tīv)
adj. Using figures of speech; symbolic, not literal.

Unless one has a fatal foot disease, "My feet are killing me" is a **figurative** expression.

figuratively, *adv.*; **figurativeness**, *n.*

Challenge Words
 prefigure
 transfigure

Familiar Words
 bicycle
 cycle
 cyclone
 tricycle
 unicycle

KUKLOS <G. "wheel," "circle"

8. **cyclic** (sī'klīk, sīk'līk)
adj. Occurring or moving in cycles.

Because it moves around the sun in a **cyclic** pattern that takes approximately 76 years, the reappearance of Halley's comet can be calculated precisely.

cyclical, *adj.*; **cyclically**, *adv.*

9. **encyclopedic** (ĕn sī klə pē'dīk) [*en* <G. "in"; *paideia* <G. "education"]
adj. Possessing information about many subjects or intensively about one subject.

Having lived in this town for sixty years, he is an **encyclopedic** resource for local history.

encyclopedically, *adv.*; **encyclopedist**, *n.*



Challenge Words
 cyclamen
 cycloid
 cyclotron
 encyclical

EXERCISE 15A

Circle the letter of the best SYNONYM (the word or phrase most nearly the same as the word in bold-faced type).

1. the building's **configuration** a. construction b. shape c. purpose
d. landscape e. ideology
2. the **circumference** of the forest a. setting b. outer edge c. form
d. total area e. sphere
3. a perfect **orb** a. circle b. gemstone c. form d. circumference
e. sphere

Circle the letter of the best ANTONYM (the word or phrase most nearly opposite the word in bold-faced type).

4. a(n) **encyclopedic** understanding a. scholarly b. prejudiced
c. ignorant d. rote e. sympathetic
5. to inquire **circuitously** a. directly b. prejudiciously
c. ignorantly d. malevolently e. quickly
6. a reputation for **circumspection** a. recklessness b. losing things
c. self-centeredness d. generosity e. ire
7. a(n) **figurative** statement a. circumspect b. blunt c. imaginative
d. literal e. irate

EXERCISE 15B

Circle the letter of the sentence in which the word in bold-faced type is used incorrectly.

1. a. None of the planets' **orbits** around the sun is perfectly circular.
b. Satellites in **orbit** around the earth now relay television signals and report on weather conditions.
c. Although the **orbit** of her social life has been severely limited since her illness, extensive reading has given her a deeper understanding of the world.
d. Our **orbit** to school takes us conveniently past the candy store.
2. a. Romantic poets have sometimes referred to eyes as emerald **orbs**.
b. Among the treasures of the Holy Roman Empire is an **orb** carried by emperors on state occasions since the twelfth century.
c. The path of Mars around the sun is an elongated **orb**.
d. Archaeologists uncovered a mysterious stone **orb** that proved to be a dinosaur's fossilized egg.
3. a. Tides are **cyclic** with two flood tides and two ebb tides in approximately 24 hours.
b. Because gasoline and automobile tires were scarce during World War II, many Americans rediscovered the bicycle and began to travel **cyclically**.
c. Many cultures regard time as **cyclical**, with similar events recurring in different eras rather than once and for all.

- d. People in tropical climates do not experience the **cyclic** nature of the seasons as dramatically as people in temperate zones.
- 4. a. Young children are often alarmed by adult **figurativeness**, such as statements like "I'm so hungry I could eat a horse."
- b. **Figurative** language includes personifications like "the wind screamed" and metaphors like "the wind was a scream."
- c. Ballet dancers must be extremely **figurative**, both in strength and flexibility.
- d. My parents are going to kill me when they see my grades, **figuratively** speaking, of course.
- 5. a. Driving on **circuitous** roads always makes me car sick.
- b. She approached the topic of a loan **circuitously**, chatting first about the weather, then about how long they had been friends, and finally about her unforeseen educational expenses.
- c. Despite the **circuitry** of our conversation, which never once mentioned business, I became aware that the dealer was ready to sell at my price.
- d. Although this route is more **circuitous** than the highway, it permits you to see more of the countryside.

EXERCISE 15C

Fill in each blank with the most appropriate word from Lesson 15. Use a word or any of its forms only once.

1. The _____ of the constellation Ursa Major is like a bear or a dipper.
2. During the nineteenth century few parts of the world were out of the _____ of British influence.
3. After years of teaching, she has acquired a(n) _____ grasp of French literature.
4. To avoid being followed, we took a(n) _____ route that wandered around town.
5. Although she strives to be as _____ and proper as her aunt requires, Anne of Green Gables often acts impulsively and gets into trouble.
6. Along the _____ of the small park was an elegant wrought-iron fence.
7. Some _____ expressions like "as quick as a wink" and "as smart as a whip" have become cliches, statements worn out with use.
8. Our educational system is _____, with a new year beginning every September and ending every June, followed by a summer vacation.