

Lesson 5

Descriptive Words

All the words in this lesson may describe attributes of people or objects.

abstruse ADJ. hard to understand (This report may be in English, but the unfamiliar terms employed are so *abstruse* we cannot use it.)

amphibious ADJ. capable of living or operating on land and water (Planes in Alaska are often equipped with *amphibious* landing gear.)

concentric ADJ. sharing the same center (The award-winning design featured three *concentric* circles enclosing a dragon.)

eminent ADJ. standing out or above others in quality or position (Dr. Malcolm is an *eminent* scholar who has lectured worldwide.)

inadvertent ADJ. unintentional or accidental (One *inadvertent* error in the calculations slightly altered the outcome.)

insipid ADJ. dull, unexciting, or bland (The stew was *insipid*, the salad limp, and the company tedious.)

marginal ADJ. barely adequate (Prehistoric peoples living in areas that offered only *marginal* subsistence developed agriculture out of necessity.)

maritime ADJ. having to do with navigation or commerce at sea (*Maritime* shipping has changed dramatically over the last century.)

nautical ADJ. having to do with sailors, ships, or navigating (The *nautical* story of the ghost ship *The Flying Dutchman* is one of my favorite tales.)

prodigious ADJ. awe-inspiring; unusually impressive or large (One of Hercules' many *prodigious* feats was winning a wrestling match with Death.)

refractory ADJ. unruly; resisting authority (This class is unusually *refractory* and does not respond to usual methods of discipline.)

saccharine ADJ. overly sweet or agreeable (Mr. Manilov is so *saccharine* that people soon try to avoid him altogether.)

sensory ADJ. concerning the senses or sensations (Total lack of *sensory* input can drive people mad.)

stark ADJ. bare; harsh; blunt (The run-down building stood in *stark* contrast to the gleaming high-rise behind it.)

subsequent ADJ. coming after in time, order, or place (A person was seen fleeing the scene *subsequent* to the sounding of the alarm.)

supercilious ADJ. taking a superior attitude; haughty (Sometimes a person who is shy is misunderstood and thought to be *supercilious*.)

tacit ADJ. unspoken; implied but not expressed (I thought that we had a *tacit* agreement not to discuss the matter with others.)

thermal ADJ. concerning or caused by heat (The space shuttle sustained minor damage to its *thermal* shield.)

transcendent ADJ. beyond the material world (Many religions are based on a belief in a *transcendent* world.)

vicarious ADJ. experiencing indirectly through another (Some people settle for a *vicarious* enjoyment of life through the experiences of TV characters.)