

LESSON 19

from **The Curious Case of Benjamin Button** (fiction)
by F. Scott Fitzgerald

Mr. Roger Button, the president of Roger Button & Co., Wholesale Hardware, began to run toward Doctor Keene with much less **dignity** than was expected from a Southern gentleman of that picturesque period. "Doctor Keene!" he called. "Oh, Doctor Keene!"

The doctor heard him, faced around, and stood waiting, a curious expression settling on his harsh, medicinal face as Mr. Button drew near.

"What happened?" demanded Mr. Button, as he came up in a gasping rush. "What was it? How is she? A boy? Who is it? What—"

"Talk sense!" said Doctor Keene sharply. He appeared somewhat irritated.

"Is the child born?" begged Mr. Button.

Doctor Keene frowned. "Why, yes, I suppose so—after a fashion." Again he threw a curious glance at Mr. Button. . . .

"Is it a boy or a girl?"

"Here now!" cried Doctor Keene in a perfect passion of irritation, "I'll ask you to go and see for yourself. Outrageous!" He snapped the last word out in almost one syllable, then he turned away muttering: "Do you imagine a case like this will help my professional reputation? One more would ruin me—ruin anybody."

"What's the matter?" demanded Mr. Button, appalled. "Triplets?"

"No, not triplets!" answered the doctor **cuttingly**. "What's more, you can go and see for yourself. And get another doctor. I brought you into the world, young man, and I've been physician to your family for forty years, but I'm through with you! I don't want to see you or any of your relatives ever again! Good-bye!"

Mr. Button stood there upon the sidewalk, **stupefied** and trembling from head to foot. What

horrible **mishap** had occurred? He had suddenly lost all desire to go into the Maryland Private Hospital for Ladies and Gentlemen—it was with the greatest difficulty that, a moment later, he forced himself to mount the steps and enter the front door.

A nurse was sitting behind a desk in the opaque gloom of the hall. Swallowing his shame, Mr. Button approached her.

"Good-morning," she remarked, looking up at him pleasantly.

"Good-morning. I—I am Mr. Button."

At this a look of utter terror spread itself over the girl's face. She rose to her feet and seemed about to fly from the hall, **restraining** herself only with the most apparent difficulty.

"I want to see my child," said Mr. Button.

The nurse gave a little scream. "Oh—of course!" she cried **hysterically**. "Upstairs. Right upstairs. Go—up!"

She pointed the direction, and Mr. Button, bathed in cool perspiration, turned falteringly, and began to mount to the second floor. In the upper hall he addressed another nurse who approached him, basin in hand. "I'm Mr. Button," he managed to **articulate**. "I want to see my—"

Clank! The basin clattered to the floor and rolled in the direction of the stairs. Clank! Clank! It began a **methodical** descent as if sharing in the general terror which this gentleman **provoked**.

"I want to see my child!" Mr. Button almost shrieked. He was on the **verge** of collapse.

Clank! The basin reached the first floor. The nurse regained control of herself, and threw Mr. Button a look of hearty contempt.

Exercise I: Context Clues

Read the passage above, paying special attention to the words in dark type. These are the Master Words you will study in this lesson. As you read, look for context clues in the sentences and paragraphs around each Master Word. Circle any words and phrases that give clues to the meaning of the Master Words.

Master Words

Place a check by words you feel you know; underline words you don't know.

articulate

dignity

methodical

provoke

stupefied

cutting

hysterical

mishap

restrain

verge

Exercise 2: Using Context Clues

in the form for each of the Master Words listed below with context clues (if any), your definition, and dictionary definition. If you have difficulty writing a definition, try using the word in a sentence instead.

articulate Part of Speech: *v.* Context Clues: _____

Your Definition: _____

Dictionary Definition: _____

cutting Part of Speech: *adj.* Context Clues: _____

Your Definition: _____

Dictionary Definition: _____

dignity Part of Speech: *n.* Context Clues: _____

Your Definition: _____

Dictionary Definition: _____

hysterical Part of Speech: *adj.* Context Clues: _____

Your Definition: _____

Dictionary Definition: _____

methodical Part of Speech: *adj.* Context Clues: _____

Your Definition: _____

Dictionary Definition: _____

mishap Part of Speech: *n.* Context Clues: _____

Your Definition: _____

Dictionary Definition: _____

provoke Part of Speech: *v.* Context Clues: _____

Your Definition: _____

Dictionary Definition: _____

restrain Part of Speech: *v.* Context Clues: _____

Your Definition: _____

Dictionary Definition: _____

stupefied Part of Speech: *adj.* Context Clues: _____

Your Definition: _____

Dictionary Definition: _____

verge Part of Speech: *n.* Context Clues: _____

Your Definition: _____

Dictionary Definition: _____

Exercise 3: Synonyms and Antonyms

Use the synonyms and antonyms in the word list to fill in the blanks except where you see an X.

	Synonyms	Antonyms	Word List	
1. dignity	_____	_____	accident	nasty
2. cutting	_____	_____	agitated	orderly
3. stupefied	_____	_____	bewildered	plan
4. mishap	_____	_____	clearheaded	release
5. restrain	_____	_____	composure	shame
6. hysterical	_____	_____	control	squelch
7. articulate	_____	_____	disorganized	state
8. methodical	_____	_____	edge	tranquil
9. provoke	_____	_____	kind	trigger
10. verge	_____	X	mumble	

Exercise 4: Sentence Completion

From the Master Words, choose the appropriate word for the blank in each of the following sentences. Write the word in the space provided at the right.

- Her ...?... words hurt my feelings. _____
- One child's yelling is likely to ...?... more noise from the other children. _____
- Besides breaking the plate, is there any other ...?... I should know about? _____
- He finds it hard to ...?... his feelings; instead he shows them through actions. _____
- She stared silently at the giant, simply ...?... by his incredible size. _____
- Our neighbors use an invisible fence to ...?... their dog. _____
- He is a man of quiet...?..., deeply respected for his gentlemanly ways. _____
- We are on the ...?... of an amazing discovery. We will announce it next week. _____
- After losing her wallet she became ...?..., and no one could calm her down. _____
- If you use alphabetical order or another ...?... approach, you most likely will name all fifty states correctly. _____

Exercise 5: Using Words with Multiple Meanings

The word *cutting* has different meanings depending on how it is used in a sentence. Choose the number of the correct definition for cutting for each of the following sentences.

cutting

1. *v.* mowing down, as with a scythe or a lawn mower
2. *n.* a clipping from printed material, such as a newspaper
3. *n.* dividing a deck of playing cards at random
4. *n.* a slip or shoot of a plant used to start another plant
5. *adj.* hurtful; nasty; bitter

1. The dealer traditionally has the player on his or her right do the **cutting**. _____

2. He is **cutting** the grass now, before it gets too hot to be out in the sun. _____

3. You can grow that type of geranium from a **cutting**, even one without roots. _____

4. Ana ignored his **cutting** remarks, pretending they did not wound her. _____

5. She has the recipe on a **cutting** she made from a magazine. _____

Exercise 6: Analogies

Determine the relationship between the first pair of words in each item. Then write the Master Word in the blank that would create a similar relationship with the second pair of words. The types of analogies used are action/receiver of action, item/category, synonyms, and antonyms. (See page 158 for a guide to analogy types.)

watch : actress :: _____ : prisoner

center : middle :: _____ : edge

sew : dress :: _____ : speech

poverty : wealth :: dishonor : _____

pushup : exercise :: fall : _____

Write About It: Dialogue About an Event

Write a **dialogue** in which two characters converse about an upsetting or unusual event. Use formal language except for the words the characters speak, which should sound like everyday conversation. Remember to start a new paragraph each time the speaker changes, and proofread your dialogue to make sure it is punctuated correctly.