

# LESSON 22

from **Coyote V. Acme** (humor)  
by Ian Frazier

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT,  
SOUTHWESTERN DISTRICT, TEMPE, ARIZONA  
CASE NO. BJ 9294, JUDGE JOAN KUJAVA, PRESIDING

WILE E. COYOTE, **PLAINTIFF**

-V.-

ACME COMPANY, DEFENDANT

OPENING Statement of Mr. Harold Schoff, attorney for Mr. Coyote: My client, Mr. Wile E. Coyote, a resident of Arizona and contiguous states, does hereby bring suit for damages against the Acme Company, manufacturer and retail distributor of assorted merchandise, incorporated in Delaware and doing business in every state, district, and territory. Mr. Coyote seeks compensation for personal injuries, loss of business income, and mental suffering caused as a direct result of the actions and/or gross **negligence** of said company, under Title 15 of the United States Code, Chapter 47, section 2072, subsection (a), relating to product liability.

Mr. Coyote states that on eighty-five separate occasions he has purchased of the Acme Company (hereinafter, "Defendant"), through that company's mail-order department, certain products which did cause him bodily injury due to defects in manufacture or improper **cautionary** labeling. Sales slips made out to Mr. Coyote as proof of purchase are at present in the possession of the Court, marked Exhibit A. Such injuries **sustained** by Mr. Coyote have temporarily restricted his ability to make a living in his profession of predator. Mr. Coyote is self-employed and thus not **eligible** for Workmen's Compensation.

Mr. Coyote states that on December 13th he received of Defendant **via** parcel post one Acme Rocket Sled. The intention of Mr. Coyote was to use the Rocket Sled to aid him in pursuit of his prey. Upon receipt of the Rocket Sled Mr. Coyote removed it from its wooden shipping crate and, sighting his prey in the distance, activated the ignition. As Mr. Coyote gripped the handlebars, the Rocket Sled **accelerated** with such sudden and precipitate force as to stretch Mr. Coyote's fore-limbs to a length of fifty feet. Subsequently, the rest of Mr. Coyote's body shot forward with a violent jolt, causing severe strain to his back and neck and placing him unexpectedly astride the Rocket Sled. Disappearing over the horizon at such speed as to leave a **diminishing** jet trail along its path, the Rocket Sled soon brought Mr. Coyote abreast of his prey. At that moment the animal he was pursuing veered sharply to the right. Mr. Coyote vigorously attempted to follow this maneuver but was unable to, due to poorly designed steering on the Rocket Sled and a faulty or nonexistent braking system. Shortly thereafter, the **unchecked** progress of the Rocket Sled brought it and Mr. Coyote into collision with the side of a mesa.

Paragraph One of the Report of Attending Physician (Exhibit B), prepared by Dr. Ernest Grosscup, M.D., D.O., details the multiple fractures, contusions, and tissue damage suffered by Mr. Coyote as a result of this collision. Repair of the injuries required a full bandage around the head (**excluding** the ears), a neck brace, and full or partial casts on all four legs. . . .

## Exercise 1: 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.

accelerate	diminishing	exclude	plaintiff	unchecked
cautionary	eligible	negligence	sustain	via

## Exercise 2: Using Context Clues

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

1. **accelerate** Part of Speech: *v.* Context Clues: \_\_\_\_\_

Your Definition: \_\_\_\_\_

Dictionary Definition: \_\_\_\_\_

2. **cautionary** Part of Speech: *adj.* Context Clues: \_\_\_\_\_

Your Definition: \_\_\_\_\_

Dictionary Definition: \_\_\_\_\_

3. **diminishing** Part of Speech: *adj.* Context Clues: \_\_\_\_\_

Your Definition: \_\_\_\_\_

Dictionary Definition: \_\_\_\_\_

4. **eligible** Part of Speech: *adj.* Context Clues: \_\_\_\_\_

Your Definition: \_\_\_\_\_

Dictionary Definition: \_\_\_\_\_

5. **exclude** Part of Speech: *v.* Context Clues: \_\_\_\_\_

Your Definition: \_\_\_\_\_

Dictionary Definition: \_\_\_\_\_

6. **negligence** Part of Speech: *n.* Context Clues: \_\_\_\_\_

Your Definition: \_\_\_\_\_

Dictionary Definition: \_\_\_\_\_

7. **plaintiff** Part of Speech: *n.* Context Clues: \_\_\_\_\_

Your Definition: \_\_\_\_\_

Dictionary Definition: \_\_\_\_\_

8. **sustain** Part of Speech: *v.* Context Clues: \_\_\_\_\_

Your Definition: \_\_\_\_\_

Dictionary Definition: \_\_\_\_\_

9. **unchecked** Part of Speech: *adj.* Context Clues: \_\_\_\_\_

Your Definition: \_\_\_\_\_

Dictionary Definition: \_\_\_\_\_

10. **via** Part of Speech: *prep.* Context Clues: \_\_\_\_\_

Your Definition: \_\_\_\_\_

Dictionary Definition: \_\_\_\_\_

### • • Exercise 3: Using Words in Context

Correct or Incorrect: Write **C** on the line if the word is used correctly; write **I** if the word is used incorrectly.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. The **plaintiff** sued the company for damages based on false advertising.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Through the teacher's **negligence** the students improved their test scores.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. The **cautionary** sign said it was perfectly safe to skate on the pond.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Anyone who has passed a CPR course is **eligible** to work as a volunteer during the marathon.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. It is common for skiers to **sustain** bumps and bruises during their first few times on the slopes.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Shannon communicates with the volunteer ushers **via** text messages.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. My bike tends to **accelerate** when riding up a hill.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. At sunrise the **diminishing** light coming in the window makes it difficult to sleep.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. The city council expressed concern about **unchecked** development in the wetland area.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Anyone who reads can join our book club. We want to **exclude** as many people as possible.

### • • 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.

- 1. People who have won a prize in the previous month are ...?... (d, ed) from entering the contest again. \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. The skateboard champion gave ...?... advice to beginners to help them avoid injuries. \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. Teenagers today are more likely to communicate ...?... text messages than through letters. \_\_\_\_\_
- 4. My grandmother goes to the gym regularly to keep her strength from ...?... as she gets older. \_\_\_\_\_
- 5. The company's ...?... in providing safety equipment for its workers led to many injuries on the job. \_\_\_\_\_
- 6. Those who go to work when they are ill can cause ...?... spread of the flu. \_\_\_\_\_
- 7. The ...?... in the lawsuit hopes to receive payment for medical bills. \_\_\_\_\_
- 8. All citizens who are age eighteen or older are ...?... to register to vote. \_\_\_\_\_
- 9. Gavin ...?...(d, ed) a serious head injury because he did not wear a helmet. \_\_\_\_\_
- 10. The plane ...?...(d, ed) as it moved down the runway preparing for take-off. \_\_\_\_\_

## Exercise 5: Hyperbole and Verbal Irony

*Hyperbole* is a figure of speech in which extreme exaggeration, or overstatement, is used to create an effect or make a point. Hyperbole is common in ordinary speech. For example, you may have used expressions such as "I'll die if I don't get to go to the concert." Hyperbole, along with its opposite, understatement, is a type of *verbal irony* in which the intended meaning is different from what is explicitly stated. Ian Frazier uses hyperbole as one technique to create this humorous legal brief that has a cartoon character as the plaintiff.

In the chart below, identify examples of hyperbole in the passage and explain how each one is an exaggeration. An example has been done for you.

Examples of Hyperbole	Explanation
"...restricted his ability to make a living in his profession of predator."	It is an exaggeration to say that being a predator is a profession.

## Exercise 6: Analogies

Determine the relationship between the first pair of words in each item below. Then write the Master Word on the blank that would create a similar relationship with the second pair of words. Analogy types used in this activity are synonyms, antonyms, and adjective/related noun. (See page 158 for a guide to analogy types.)

- health : illness :: defendant : \_\_\_\_\_
- because : since :: through : \_\_\_\_\_
- torrential : rain :: gross : \_\_\_\_\_
- reply : answer :: suffer : \_\_\_\_\_
- throbbing : pain :: \_\_\_\_\_ : tale
- increase : expand :: omit : \_\_\_\_\_
- slow : rapid :: restrained : \_\_\_\_\_
- adorable : baby :: \_\_\_\_\_ : bachelor

### Write About It: So, Sue Me

"Coyote v. Acme" is an example of satire, a type of writing that ridicules human failings or wickedness.

**Write a brief essay** explaining how this piece satirizes an aspect of the American legal system. Cite specific evidence from the essay to support your central idea. Use at least four Master Words or words related to the Master Words in your essay.