

Unit 14 Reading

A Short History of Hygiene

<Informational Essay>

Cleanliness has deep roots in human civilization. The word *hygiene* is derived from the name of an ancient Greek goddess. Hygeia, the goddess of health and cleanliness, was said to prevent disease, and when an epidemic threatened, the Greeks went with **alacrity** to her temples. Ancient Romans worshipped Hygeia too, and Rome was famous for its advanced hygienic standards. Historians **laud** the Romans for both building aqueducts that carried fresh water into Rome and public toilets that collected waste. Dotting the city were comfortable bathhouses, where people would gather to **loll** in the waters. Perhaps it was here that Romans first earned their reputation as a **loquacious** people, for they would pass idle time chatting with friends.

An unexpected invader, however, added a **dissonant** note to Rome's hygienic way of life: Head lice were common, and without soap, these parasites were hard to control. To **alleviate** this problem, Romans covered their bodies with oil and then scraped themselves clean with an instrument called a strigil. Unfortunately, the Romans' hygienic way of life was endangered when barbarians sacked Rome in the fourth century AD. These **bellicose** invaders were not **magnanimous** to their enemies; they destroyed as much of the Roman civilization as possible. **Appalled** by the destruction, Romans fled for their lives, and the highly ordered Roman Empire soon collapsed.

Subsequent centuries in Europe were, hygienically speaking, the **antithesis** of what is prevalent today. The time between AD 500 and AD 1500, **disparaged** as the Dark Ages, was a period when the average life expectancy barely reached into the mid-thirties. Advice about hygiene in the Dark Ages seems almost **droll** today: A Latin proverb from the time warns people that "frequent bathing causes a wasting body." Certainly, sanitation and clean water were lacking in large cities, lice infestation was a constant problem, and diseases spread quickly. The Crusaders, soldiers in Holy Wars, brought soap back from the East, but it was a luxury and not widely used.

Authorities issued **edicts** against public bathhouses, fearing their use led to immorality, and many years passed before these orders were **rescinded**. In colder climates, bathing was infrequent because of the lack of heating. Also, in an era of plagues—which killed over a third of Europe’s population—many people believed the skin absorbed diseases from water. In the absence of scientific knowledge and with the cause of the terrifying plagues unexplained, people accepted such misinformation. While a full bath would have been an infrequent indulgence, most people did wash their hands and face with some regularity.

The discovery that bacteria caused disease, a revelation that came in the mid-nineteenth century, brought about a sea change in hygiene and public health. To control germs, experts said it was **mandatory** to wash hands regularly. In addition, to avoid disease, sewage had to be disposed of safely, and water had to be pure. Meeting these goals, a challenging undertaking, continues to this day. In the quest for better hygiene, science and technology **elucidated** the importance of new and better ways to promote health. Even relatively simple inventions, like the flush toilet and chlorinated water, have probably saved millions of lives. Washing machines and detergents played a big role too—they helped people clean clothes quickly and thoroughly. In the struggle to prevent bacterial diseases, modern society has clearly gone the extra mile. Hygeia would be pleased, for although she is no longer worshipped as a goddess, people today are cleaner than ever.

Unit 14 Examples

1. Neighbors responded with **alacrity** to the woman's cries for help.
2. The doctors and nurses did everything they could to **alleviate** the patient's severe pain.
3. Discriminatory practices may be said to constitute the very **antithesis** of our nation's democratic ideals.
4. The assassination of President John F. Kennedy in 1963 **appalled** the nation and the world.
5. Teddy Roosevelt's foreign policy was often driven by a rather **bellicose** brand of patriotism.
6. Don't you think voters are getting awfully tired of listening to politicians **disparage** their opponents' voting records?
7. The clamor of **dissonant** voices could be heard clearly through the closed doors of the meeting room.
8. The hero or heroine of a popular sitcom may be surrounded by a cast of **droll** eccentrics.
9. Only in fairy tales can human unhappiness and misery be banished forever by royal **edict**.
10. The precise meaning of a passage in *Middlemarch* is sometimes hard to **elucidate**.
11. At the assembly the principal **lauded** both students and teachers for the schoolwide improvement in reading scores.
12. There is nothing I would rather do on a hot, humid summer afternoon than **loll** in a hammock under a tree.
13. My dinner companion was so **loquacious** that our conversation quickly turned into a monologue.
14. The general's victory was so decisive that he could afford to be **magnanimous** toward his former enemies.
15. A union contract may stipulate that members are to receive a **mandatory** annual cost-of-living increase.
16. Fashion critics judged the designer's fall clothing line to be disappointingly **nondescript**.

17. Sloths are such **phlegmatic** creatures that they have earned the reputation of being the slowest animals on Earth.
18. A sitting Congress sometimes **rescinds** statutes passed by its predecessors.
19. A **vivacious** individual will certainly never lack for companions.
20. In most mystery novels, the first chapter is designed to **whet** your curiosity to find out "who done it."

Unit 14 Choosing the Right Word

1. In the eyes of such leaders as Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr., violence is the very **antithesis** of a civilized society.
2. Only a truly **phlegmatic** person could have remained calm in the face of such provocation.
3. The cake was delicious, but the serving was so small that it did little more than **whet** my appetite.
4. In the fight against air pollution, many states have made filtering devices **mandatory** for all cars sold within their borders.
5. Observers doubted that any coalition composed of such **dissonant** factions could long refrain from petty infighting.
6. It is sometimes said that women are more **loquacious** than men, but all the men I know do their full share of talking.
7. Churchill told the British to be resolute in war, defiant in defeat, and **magnanimous** in victory.
8. The only truly effective way to **alleviate** the poverty of developing nations is to help increase their capacity to produce wealth.
9. An **edict** was issued by the Holy Roman Emperor to ban the writings of Martin Luther because he challenged the absolute authority of the pope.
10. By **elucidating** the concept of a pyramid scheme in her opening statement, the attorney hoped to clarify why her client was innocent.
11. Her manner of speaking is so **vivacious** that even her most commonplace remarks seem to suggest charm and excitement.
12. There must be a serious flaw in the character of those who have a constant need to **disparage** others.
13. This young man has been **lauded** by many colleagues and fans as the most creative game designer in the industry.
14. Although Americans are not a **bellicose** people, they have proven themselves prepared to defend their nation at any cost.

15. His jokes were actually not too good, but his **droll** manner of delivering them made a big hit with the audience.
16. The houses in that development are a mixture of **nondescript** styles, with no particular architectural character or distinguishing features.
17. I see no reason to **laud** him in such glowing terms for doing no more than his duty.
18. Your relaxed and lackadaisical attitude reveals a **phlegmatic** personality, which means that you would not be happy in a fast-moving, high-pressure job.
19. Reporters asked the mayor to **elucidate** her ambiguous remarks about her plans to seek higher office.
20. Maya pretended to be indifferent about going to the dance, but I noticed that she accepted Joshua's invitation with **alacrity**.
21. What **appalled** us even more than their fearful living conditions was that the refugees seemed to have lost all hope.
22. The expression, "What goes up must come down," might be termed an **edict** of nature.
23. Would you rather **loll** in the back seat of a chauffeured limousine or drive your own convertible?
24. Because of the incidents that occurred during hazing week, the school may **rescind** the rules that allow fraternity initiations.
25. Do you have any remedies that can **alleviate** an upset stomach?

Unit 14 Synonyms

1. joined the **dynamic** group of dancers: **vivacious**
2. refused to obey the **directive**: **edict**
3. agreed to the proposal **with dispatch**: **alacrity**
4. **illuminate** fine points of the law: **elucidate**
5. a preview that **arouses** your curiosity: **whets**
6. a series of **strident** chords: **dissonant**
7. **lighten** the tax burden: **alleviate**
8. known to have a **stolid** temperament: **phlegmatic**
9. **revoke** the ban on parking in midtown: **rescind**
10. a truly **commonplace** personality: **nondescript**

Unit 14 Antonyms

1. conveys a **lively** personality: **phlegmatic**
2. **dulls** the blade of an axe: **whets**
3. adopted a **conciliatory** attitude: **bellicose**
4. enjoys a **languid** Sunday afternoon: **alacrity**
5. purchased the most **distinctive** car on the lot: **nondescript**

Unit 14 Completing the Sentence

1. Instead of waiting for government help, let's do all we can right now to **alleviate** the sufferings of the flood victims.
2. His disposition is so **bellicose** that he is apt to turn a simple difference of opinion into a full-scale donnybrook.
3. In spite of her inexperience as a programmer, she attacked her new job with **alacrity** and made good progress.
4. Although in America voting is not **mandatory**, every qualified citizen has a duty to go to the polls in every election.
5. Unlike you, I have never lived in France, but is that any reason for you to **disparage** my efforts to speak French?
6. The principal finally **rescinded** the unfair school regulation that prevented new students from trying out for the varsity teams.
7. You can make requests and suggestions if you wish, but please don't issue any **edicts**.
8. When the speaker tried to **elucidate** the statement he had just made, I became more confused than ever.
9. In a time of fast-talking, loud comedians, is there a place for his kind of quiet, **droll** humor?
10. At that dull, stodgy party, her **vivacious** personality was like a breath of fresh air.
11. His enthusiastic and colorful description of the new series on public TV has **whetted** my desire to see it.
12. I shall never forget your **magnanimous** offer to coach me, even though we were competing for the same role in the play.
13. Is this **nondescript** little house the "magnificent mansion" that you've been telling us about all these weeks?
14. Their sarcastic remarks introduced a(n) **dissonant** note into what had been a harmonious meeting.
15. Even the state troopers, who had been hardened by long experience, were **appalled** when they came on the scene of the automobile accident.

16. He may appear to be **phlegmatic**, but his friends are aware of the strong emotions simmering beneath his quiet exterior.
17. I'm usually quite energetic, but there are times when I want to do nothing but **loll** about and listen to my favorite music.
18. I would have preferred to enjoy the paintings quietly, without listening to the explanations of the **loquacious** guide.
19. His idle, pleasure-seeking way of life is the exact **antithesis** of all that his hardworking parents had expected of him.
20. Though her friends **lauded** her many achievements, her enemies ridiculed them.

Unit 14 Vocabulary in Context (Literary Text)

1. “With miles and miles of varied scenery between, there was no scene for her save the seven old gable-peaks.... This one old house was everywhere! It transported its great, lumbering bulk with more than railroad speed, and set itself **phlegmatically** down on whatever spot she glanced at.”

To position something phlegmatically assumes an attitude of

- ① urgency ② superiority ③ **indifference** ④ caring

2. “His present phase, as a daguerreotypist, was of no more importance in his own view, nor likely to be more permanent, than any of the preceding ones. It had been taken up with the careless **alacrity** of an adventurer, who had his bread to earn. It would be thrown aside as carelessly....”

A person who exhibits alacrity is NOT

- ① **sluggish** ② quick ③ decisive ④ spirited

3. “Then she was attracted by a chaise rapidly passing, and watched its moist and glistening top, and its splashing wheels, until it had turned the corner, and refused to carry any further her idly trifling, because **appalled** and overburdened, mind.”

A mind that is appalled is

- ① closed off ② idle ③ judgmental ④ **dismayed**

4. “Indeed they have; and the hour is noted on a card, which is, or ought to be, in Judge Pyncheon’s right vest-pocket. Let him go thither, and **loll** at ease upon his moneybags! He has lounged long enough in the old chair!”

To loll means

- ① to look upon ② to lie around ③ **to laugh merrily** ④ to run through

5. “The chicken, hereupon, though almost as venerable in appearance as its mother...mustered **vivacity** enough to flutter upward and alight on Phoebe’s shoulder.”

An animal that exhibits vivacity is

- ① indecisive ② lethargic ③ clever ④ **vigorous**

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An unexpected invader, however, added a _____ note to Rome's hygienic way of life: Head lice were common, and without soap, these parasites were hard to control. To _____ this problem, Romans covered their bodies with oil and then scraped themselves clean with an instrument called a strigil. Unfortunately, the Romans' hygienic way of life was endangered when barbarians sacked Rome in the fourth century AD. These _____ invaders were not _____ to their enemies; they destroyed as much of the Roman civilization as possible. _____ by the destruction, Romans fled for their lives, and the highly ordered Roman Empire soon collapsed.

Subsequent centuries in Europe were, hygienically speaking, the _____ of what is prevalent today. The time between AD 500 and AD 1500, _____ as the Dark Ages, was a period when the average life expectancy barely reached into the mid-thirties. Advice about hygiene in the Dark Ages seems almost **droll** today: A Latin proverb from the time warns people that "frequent bathing causes a wasting body." Certainly, sanitation and clean water were lacking in large cities, lice infestation was a constant problem, and diseases spread quickly. The

Crusaders, soldiers in Holy Wars, brought soap back from the East, but it was a luxury and not widely used. Authorities issued _____ against public bathhouses, fearing their use led to immorality, and many years passed before these orders were _____. In colder climates, bathing was infrequent because of the lack of heating. Also, in an era of plagues—which killed over a third of Europe’s population—many people believed the skin absorbed diseases from water. In the absence of scientific knowledge and with the cause of the terrifying plagues unexplained, people accepted such misinformation. While a full bath would have been an infrequent indulgence, most people did wash their hands and face with some regularity.

The discovery that bacteria caused disease, a revelation that came in the mid-nineteenth century, brought about a sea change in hygiene and public health. To control germs, experts said it was _____ to wash hands regularly. In addition, to avoid disease, sewage had to be disposed of safely, and water had to be pure. Meeting these goals, a challenging undertaking, continues to this day. In the quest for better hygiene, science and technology _____ the importance of new and better ways to promote health. Even relatively simple inventions, like the flush toilet and chlorinated water, have probably saved millions of lives. Washing machines and detergents played a big role too—they helped people clean clothes quickly and thoroughly. In the struggle to prevent bacterial diseases, modern society has clearly gone the extra mile. Hygeia would be pleased, for although she is no longer worshipped as a goddess, people today are cleaner than ever.

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