

“The Lady and the Spider” by Robert Fulghum
Vocabulary Warm-up Word Lists

Study these words from “The Lady and the Spider.” Then, apply your knowledge to the activities that follow.

Word List A

clutches [KLUHCH ez] *v.* holds tightly, grabs at

As the bike begins to fall, she clutches at the handlebars to steady it.

disaster [di ZAS tuhr] *n.* a terrible event

The thunderstorm was a disaster for our picnic.

envy [EN vee] *v.* to want something someone else has; to be jealous

We all envy Marcia, because she gets such good grades without even studying.

fiber [FY buhr] *n.* a string-like thread of some material

The microscope made it easy to see each tiny fiber in the material.

flings [FLINGZ] *v.* throws, tosses

Tommy flings his coat onto the couch as soon as he steps in the house.

poisonous [POY zuhn us] *adj.* able to kill or harm a person or animal

A rattlesnake’s bite contains poisonous venom that can kill.

terms [TERMZ] *n.* words, a way of saying something

When he put his idea in simple terms, it was easy to understand it.

torn [TAWRN] *v.* ripped

The dollar was torn in half when the two boys grabbed at it.

Word List B

favorable [FAY ver uh buhl] *adj.* approving or positive

Mia was happy when the coach made favorable comments about her after the game.

inhabited [in HA bi tid] *adj.* lived in

The house looks empty; I don’t think that it’s inhabited.

luggage [LUHG ij] *n.* bags or suitcases used to carry things

Five suitcases and four bags are too much luggage to fit in the car.

powerful [POW er fuhl] *adj.* very strong

A powerful wave knocked me down while I was swimming.

suburban [suh BERB in] *adj.* in an area that is near a city, but not in the country

We live in a suburban neighborhood, far from the farms, but not downtown.

survivors [ser VY verz] *n.* people or creatures that can live through terrible events

Amazingly, there were two survivors when the plane crashed.

tornado [tawr NAY doh] *n.* a dangerous, funnel-shaped column of whirling winds

The tornado ripped through the farming community, destroying everything in its path.

wherever [wair E ver] *n.* any place at all

I’m not picky; we can go wherever you like.

The **tone** of a literary work is the writer’s attitude toward his or her audience and subject. The tone can often be described in one word, such as *playful*, *serious*, or *humorous*. Factors that contribute to the tone are word choice, sentence structure, and sentence length. Notice how the writer’s word choice creates a playful tone:

Spiders. Amazing creatures. Been around maybe 350 million years, so they can cope with about anything.

Sometimes, as in “The Lady and the Spider,” exaggeration and surprising comparisons help create a casual, informal tone. Fulghum’s use of contractions, such as *that’s* and *what’s*, also adds to the informal tone.

DIRECTIONS: *As you read “The Lady and the Spider,” look for details that add to the essay’s informal, playful tone. On the chart, write one example of each contributing factor.*

Informal word: _____

Mispronunciation of Spanish: _____

Untranslated Spanish word: _____

Exaggeration: _____

Humorous idea: _____

Sentence fragment: _____

Another informal word: _____

Contraction: _____

Reading: Understand the Difference Between Fact and Opinion; Use Resources to Check Facts

To evaluate a work of nonfiction, you must understand the difference between fact and opinion. A **fact**, unlike an opinion, can be proved. An **opinion** expresses a judgment that can be supported but not proved. For example, the statement “Spiders have eight legs” is a fact that can be proved by observation. All you need to do is look at a spider. The statement “Spiders are scary” is a judgment based on emotions. You can **check facts by using resources** such as

- dictionaries
- encyclopedias
- reliable Web sites on the Internet
- maps

A. DIRECTIONS: *Identify the following passages from “The Lady and the Spider” as fact or opinion. Write F if the statement is a fact and O if it is an opinion.*

_____ 1. This is my neighbor.

_____ 2. Nice lady.

_____ 3. Tries opening the front door without unlocking it.

_____ 4. Spiders. Amazing creatures.

_____ 5. Been around maybe 350 million years.

B. DIRECTIONS: Each statement below contains an error. Name the resource you would consult to check the statement. (If you would consult a Web site, write the name of the site.) Then, look up the statement in that resource, and rewrite it correctly.

1. A spider has six legs.

Fact-checking resource: _____ **Correction:** _____

2. Spiders eat only gnats.

Fact-checking resource: _____ **Correction:** _____

3. The scientific word describing the class that includes spiders is spelled *aracknid*.

Fact-checking resource: _____ **Correction:** _____

4. In temperate climates, 20 species of spiders are dangerous to human beings.

Fact-checking resource: _____ **Correction:** _____
