

# LESSON 10

From **Little Women** (fiction)  
by Louisa May Alcott

"We'll take this (editors never say I), if you don't object to a few **alterations**. It's too long, but omitting the passages I've marked will make it just the right length," he said, in a businesslike tone.

Jo hardly knew her own MS. again, so crumpled and underscored were its pages and paragraphs, but feeling as a tender parent might on being asked to cut off her baby's legs in order that it might fit into a new cradle, she looked at the marked passages and was surprised to find that all the moral **reflections**—which she had carefully put in as **ballast** for much romance—had been stricken out.

"But, Sir, I thought every story should have some sort of a moral, so I took care to have a few of my sinners repent."

Mr. Dashwood's editorial **gravity** relaxed into a smile, for Jo had forgotten her 'friend', and spoken as only an author could.

"People want to be amused, not preached at, you know. Morals don't sell nowadays." Which was not quite a correct statement, by the way.

"You think it would do with these alterations, then?"

"Yes, it's a new plot, and pretty well worked up—language good, and so on," was Mr. Dashwood's **affable** reply.

"What do you—that is, what **compensation**—" began Jo, not exactly knowing how to express herself.

"Oh, yes, well, we give from twenty-five to thirty for things of this sort. Pay when it comes out," returned Mr. Dashwood, as if that point had escaped him. Such **trifles** do escape the editorial mind, it is said.

"Very well, you can have it," said Jo, handing back the story with a satisfied air, for after the dollar-a-column work, even twenty-five seemed good pay.

"Shall I tell my friend you will take another if she has one better than this?" asked Jo, **unconscious** of her little slip of the tongue, and **emboldened** by her success.

"Well, we'll look at it. Can't promise to take it. Tell her to make it short and spicy, and never mind the moral. What name would your friend like to put on it?" in a careless tone.

"None at all, if you please, she doesn't wish her name to appear and has no **nom de plume**," said Jo, blushing in spite of herself.

"Just as she likes, of course. The tale will be out next week. Will you call for the money, or shall I send it?" asked Mr. Dashwood, who felt a natural desire to know who his new contributor might be.

"I'll call. Good morning, Sir."

As she departed, Mr. Dashwood put up his feet, with the graceful remark, "Poor and proud, as usual, but she'll do."

## 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.

affable	ballast	embolden	nom de plume	trifle
alteration	compensation	gravity	reflection	unconscious

## 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. **affable** Part of Speech: *adj.* Context Clues: \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

2. **alteration** Part of Speech: *n.* Context Clues: \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

3. **ballast** Part of Speech: *n.* Context Clues: \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

4. **compensation** Part of Speech: *n.* Context Clues: \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

7. **nom de plume** Part of Speech: *n.* Context Clues: \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

8. **reflection** Part of Speech: *n.* Context Clues: \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

9. **trifle** Part of Speech: *n.* Context Clues: \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

10. **unconscious** Part of Speech: *adj.* 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
1. affable	_____	_____
2. alteration	_____	X
3. ballast	_____	X
4. compensation	_____	_____
5. embolden	_____	_____
6. gravity	_____	_____
7. nom de plume	_____	X
8. reflection	_____	_____
9. trifle	_____	_____
10. unconscious	_____	_____

Word List	
aware	modification
cheer	payment
dignity	pen name
discourage	serious matter
disregard	small detail
friendly	stability
grouchy	thought
heedless	
informality	
loss	

### 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.

- The travelers' route needed a slight ...?... because of the detour.
- Tonya used her diary to record (a, an) ...?... every day.
- Elena was always ...?..., but her twin sister Marie was often unfriendly.
- The busy shoppers were ...?... of the beggars on the street corner.
- Rose felt bad about losing her bracelet, even though it was only (a, an) ...?...
- Mark Twain, the ...?... of Samuel Clemens, is a riverboat phrase that means "two fathoms deep," a depth safe for vessels.
- The visitor's smile ....?...(d, ed) the shy dog to approach her.
- As the police car drove up, they all realized the ...?... of the situation.
- The ...?... in the boat kept the vessel steady even in rough waters.
- The volunteer firefighters worked without financial ...?...

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## • • Exercise 5: Foreign Words and Phrases

You saw one foreign phrase in the reading passage: *nom de plume*. Its literal definition is "pen name." Its meaning is "pseudonym," the name someone takes to hide his or her true identity. Look at the following foreign words and phrases and their literal definitions. Then choose the best one to complete each sentence.

Definitions of Common Foreign Words and Phrases	
1.	bon voyage (French): good trip
2.	déjà vu (French): already seen
3.	du jour (French): of the day
4.	status quo (Latin): the way things are

1. Sam always ordered the soup ...?... because he knew it was fresh each day. \_\_\_\_\_

2. Though sad to see her go, May wished her sister ...?... and waved goodbye. \_\_\_\_\_

3. She had a sense of ...?... because the room looked so familiar to her. \_\_\_\_\_

4. Sometimes you have to shake up the ...?... to make progress. \_\_\_\_\_

## • • Exercise 6: Analogies

Determine the relationship between the first pair of words below. Then write the Master Word on the blank that would create a similar relationship with the second pair of words. The types of analogies used are synonyms, antonyms, category/task, "is a place where," and "is used for." (See page 158 for a guide to analogy types.)

- |            |   |           |    |           |   |       |
|------------|---|-----------|----|-----------|---|-------|
| 1. writing | : | revision  | :: | clothing  | : | _____ |
| 2. blur    | : | focus     | :: | treasure  | : | _____ |
| 3. wedding | : | joy       | :: | funeral   | : | _____ |
| 4. thanks  | : | favor     | :: | _____     | : | job   |
| 5. protect | : | safeguard | :: | encourage | : | _____ |

### Write About It: Point of View

Rewrite the scene from *Little Women* from the first-person point of view of Mr. Dashwood. (In first person, the character refers to himself as "I.") Use at least five Master Words or words related to the Master Words in your scene. Try to make Mr. Dashwood an interesting character.