

# LESSON 6

From **The Dark Is Rising** (fiction)  
by Susan Cooper

Will nodded, then stiffened. All at once he heard noises growing outside the hall, and knew with a dreadful shock of certainty why it was that he had felt such uneasiness a short time before. While the old lady sat motionless in her chair, and he and Merriman stood again beside the hearth, the great hall was filled suddenly with a hideous mixture of moaning and mumbling and **strident** wailing, like the caged voices of an evil zoo. It was a sound more purely nasty than any he had ever heard.

The hair prickled at the back of Will's neck, and then suddenly there was silence. A log fell, rustling, in the fire. Will heard the blood beating in his veins. And into the silence a new sound came from somewhere outside, beyond the far wall: the heart-broken, beseeching whine of a forsaken dog, calling in **panic** for help and friendliness. It sounded exactly as Raq and Ci, their own dogs, had sounded when they were puppies crying for comfort in the dark; Will felt himself **dissolve** into **sympathy**, and he turned **instinctively** towards the sound.

"Oh, where is it? Poor thing—"

As he looked at the blank stone of the far wall, he saw a door take shape in it. It was not a door like the huge vanished pair by which he had entered, but far smaller; an **odd**, pinched little door looking totally out of place. But he knew he could open it to help the **imploring** dog. The animal whined again in more **acute** misery than before; louder, more pleading, in a **desperate** half-howl. Will swung

impulsively forward to run to the door; then was frozen in mid-step by Merriman's voice. It was soft, but cold as winter stone.

"Wait. If you saw the shape of the poor sad dog, you would be greatly surprised. And it would be the last thing you would ever see."

**Incredulous**, Will stood and waited. The whining died away, in a last long howl. There was silence for a moment. Then all at once he heard his mother's voice from behind the door.

"Will? Will—ill. ... Come and help me, Will!" It was unmistakably her voice, but filled with an unfamiliar emotion: there was in it a note of half-controlled panic that horrified him. It came again. "Will? I need you ... where are you, Will? Oh, please, Will, come and help me—" And then an unhappy break at the end, like a sob.

Will could not bear it. He lurched forward and ran towards the door. Merriman's voice came after him like a whiplash. "Stop!"

"But I must go, can't you hear her?" Will shouted angrily. "They've got my mother: I've got to help—"

"*Don't open that door!*" There was a hint of desperation in the deep voice that told Will, through instinct, that in the last resort Merriman was powerless to stop him.

"That is not your mother, Will," the old lady said clearly. "Please, Will!" his mother's voice begged.

"I'm coming!" Will reached out to the door's heavy latch . . .

## 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.

acute	dissolve	incredulous	odd	strident
desperate	imploring	instinctive	panic	sympathy

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

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

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

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

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

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

3. **dissolve** Part of Speech: *v.* Context Clues: \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

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

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

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

5. **incredulous** Part of Speech: *adj.* Context Clues: \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

6. **instinctive** Part of Speech: *adj.* Context Clues: \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

7. **odd** Part of Speech: *adj.* Context Clues: \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

10. **sympathy** 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
1. imploring	_____	_____
2. panic	_____	_____
3. incredulous	_____	_____
4. acute	_____	_____
5. sympathy	_____	_____
6. odd	_____	_____
7. strident	_____	_____
8. desperate	_____	_____
9. instinctive	_____	_____
10. dissolve	_____	_____

Word List	
alarm	intended
answering	intense
begging	involuntary
calm	normal
compassion	resist
contented	soft
disbelieving	strange
distressed	trusting
harsh	weak
indifference	yield

### 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.

- I went into (a, an) ...?... when I heard a cough in the house I thought was empty.
- The dog had (a, an) ...?... response when the stranger got too close to her puppies.
- Raphael started complaining of (a, an) ...?... pain in his side.
- The music was ...?... ; a combination of country and punk rock.
- The contestant ...?...(d, ed) into tears of joy when she won.
- Maria made (a, an) ...?... sound, like the whine of a puppy.
- Sorab was ...?... when I told him the story we had made up to fool him.
- The protesters chanted ...?... slogans as they marched through town.
- Raul was so ...?... to get the new phone that he waited in line all night.
- I find it hard to feel ...?... for people who complain too much.

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## Exercise 5: Shades of Meanings

The bold words in the chart below are Master Words. Beneath each is a synonym. Although their denotations (dictionary definitions) are nearly the same, the Master Word and its synonym have different shades of meaning, or connotations. Based on shades of meaning, decide whether a Master Word or its synonym would better complete each sentence. Use a dictionary if necessary.

<b>acute</b>	<b>sympathy</b>	<b>panic</b>	<b>odd</b>
shrewd	fellowship	frenzy	occasional

1. My neighbors have an ...?... car. It only has three wheels. \_\_\_\_\_
2. The other towns nearby showed ...?... for the victims of the flood. \_\_\_\_\_
3. Paula shows (a, an) ...?... awareness of potential conflicts among her friends. \_\_\_\_\_
4. Some shoppers work themselves into a ...?... right before big sales events. \_\_\_\_\_
5. Marcia and I will meet for the ...?... tennis match. \_\_\_\_\_
6. To show ...?..., the team invited friends and family to celebrate their victory. \_\_\_\_\_
7. Over the summer there was an ...?... shortage of water. \_\_\_\_\_
8. To avoid a ...?..., the bank officials assured customers that their savings were secure. \_\_\_\_\_

## 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 degree, antonyms, and noun/related adjective. (See page 158 for a guide to analogy types.)

1. rain : downpour :: worry : \_\_\_\_\_
2. believer : trusting :: doubter : \_\_\_\_\_
3. angry : pleased :: minor : \_\_\_\_\_
4. agreement : harmonious :: argument : \_\_\_\_\_
5. sympathetic : critical :: giving : \_\_\_\_\_

## Write About It: Figurative Language (Atmosphere)

The author of the selection uses figurative language to create a specific mood, or atmosphere. For example, the simile "like the caged voices in an evil zoo" helps to create an atmosphere full of menace and danger. **Write a description of a fictional location** using similes and metaphors to create a specific atmosphere. Try not to use words that describe the mood you are trying to create. For example, if you want to create a peaceful atmosphere, do not use the word "peaceful" or its synonyms. Let the figurative language reveal the atmosphere.