

# LESSON 8

From **Travels with Charley: In Search for America** (autobiography)  
by John Steinbeck

It would be pleasant to be able to say of my travels with Charley, "I went out to find the truth about my country and I found it." And then it would be such a simple matter to set down my findings and lean back comfortably with a fine sense of having discovered truths and taught them to my readers. I wish it were that easy. But what I carried in my head and deeper in my **perceptions** was a barrel of worms. I discovered long ago in collecting and **classifying** marine animals that what I found was closely intermeshed with how I felt at the moment. **External** reality has a way of being not so external after all.

This monster of a land, this mightiest of nations, this spawn of the future, turns out to be the macrocosm of microcosm me. If an Englishman or a Frenchman or an Italian should travel my **route**, see what I saw, hear what I heard, their stored pictures would be not only different from mine but equally different from one another. If other Americans reading this account should feel it true, that agreement would only mean that we are alike in our Americanness.

From start to finish I found no strangers. If I had, I might be able to report them more

**objectively**. But these are my people and this my country. If I found matters to criticize and to deplore, they were tendencies equally present in myself. If I were to prepare one immaculately inspected **generality** it would be this: For all of our enormous **geographic** range, for all of our sectionalism, for all of our interwoven breeds drawn from every part of the **ethnic** world, we are a nation, a new breed. Americans are much more American than they are Northerners, Southerners, Westerners, or Easterners. And descendants of English, Irish, Italian, Jewish, German, Polish are essentially American. This is not patriotic whoop-de-do; it is carefully observed fact. California Chinese, Boston Irish, Wisconsin German, yes, and Alabama Negroes, have more in common than they have apart. And this is the more **remarkable** because it has happened so quickly. It is a fact that Americans from all sections and of all racial extractions are more alike than the Welsh are like the English, the Lancashireman like the Cockney, or for that matter the Lowland Scot like the Highlander. It is astonishing that this has happened in less than two hundred years and most of it in the last fifty. The American **identity** is an exact and provable thing.

## 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.

classifying

external

geographic

objectively

remarkable

ethnic

generality

identity

perception

route

## • 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. **classifying** Part of Speech: *n.* Context Clues: \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

7. **objectively** Part of Speech: *adv.* Context Clues: \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

10. **route** Part of Speech: *n.* Context Clues: \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

### • • Exercise 3: Using Synonyms

The words in bold type in the sentences below are synonyms of the Master Words. On the line below each sentence, write a new sentence using Master Words in place of the words in bold type.

1. The fossil was **noteworthy** because it was the first one found in that **geologic** location.

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2. The jury listened **impartially** to the evidence from both sides.

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3. A key task for plant experts is **grouping** plants on the basis of shared characteristics.

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4. The community was very diverse, with families from many different **cultural** groups.

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5. The mind plays a big role in a person's **sense** of pain.

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### • • Exercise 4: Sentence Completion

From the Master Words, choose the best word for the blank in each of the following sentences. Write the word in the space provided at the right.

1. The crust is the ...?... layer of the earth.

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2. Everyone's ...?... of the cause of the accident was different.

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3. José was an exception to the ...?... that teenagers tend to be messy.

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4. Sally's coach told her the ...?... to success was practice, practice, practice.

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5. The violinist gave (a, an) ...?... performance with the symphony.

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6. Culture, language, and religion are parts of a person's ...?... background.

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7. The police traced the ...?... of the burglars through fingerprints.

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8. Grammar is a way of ...?... words based on their use in a sentence.

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9. The ...?... region south of New England is called the Mid-Atlantic.

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10. Looking at the situation ...?..., Rae realized her mother was right.

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## Exercise 5: Personification

In the selection from "Travels with Charley," Steinbeck uses personification to help him explain the United States. Personification is a figure of speech that gives human or animal qualities to ideas or inanimate objects. The text of the personification is shown in the first column below. First, write the definition of the challenging words in bold type in the spaces in the right-hand column. Use a dictionary if necessary. Then explain the meaning of the personification.

Text of Personification	
This monster of a land . . . this <b>spawn</b> of the future, turns out to be the <b>macrocosm</b> of <b>microcosm</b> me.	
Challenging Word	Definition
spawn	
macrocosm	
microcosm	
Meaning of Personification	

## Exercise 6: Related Words and Meanings

The italic words in the sentences below are related to the Master Words. Write the matching synonym from the list on the line following the sentence.

classifying      generality      objectively      perception      route

- Everyone has a unique *sense* of taste. \_\_\_\_\_
- Sweet, bitter, sour, and salty are the groups usually used in *sorting* tastes. \_\_\_\_\_
- Many products are advertised with the *broad statement*, "It tastes great!" \_\_\_\_\_
- Blind taste tests try to rank tastes *impartially*. \_\_\_\_\_
- Your taste buds transmit signals to the brain along a *pathway* of nerves. \_\_\_\_\_

### Write About It: Cultural Connection

Write a narrative about a time when you had an experience with someone from a culture other than your own. Include a clear beginning, middle, and ending. Use at least five Master Words in your narrative.