

UNIT ONE

III A comfit, like a confection, is a kind of dessert. The word comes from the Latin *confectum*, meaning “that which is prepared” (L. *con*, “together,” + *factum* = to make together, to prepare). To *discomfit* originally meant “to ruin someone’s preparations or plans” and now simply means “to embarrass.”

III Both feasible and malfeasance are derived from the French *faisant*, “doing,” which, in turn, comes from *facere*.

FAC

Latin *FACERE*, *FACTUM* “to make, do”

DISCOMFIT (dis kəm' fit) *v.* To embarrass and confuse
Although the presence of a large audience *discomfited* the violinist, she gave a magnificent performance.
syn: perturb *ant:* relax

EDIFICATION (ed ə fi kă' shən) *n.* Improvement or enlightenment
L. *aedis*, “building,” + *factum* = to make a building, to build up
Mrs. Marple, an etiquette expert, often gives hints for the *edification* of her audience.
syn: betterment

MALFEASANCE (mal fēz' əns) *n.* Misconduct or wrongdoing, especially by a public official
L. *mal*, “bad,” + *facere* = doing bad
The reporter uncovered a complex conspiracy intended to hide the mayor’s latest *malfeasance*.
syn: wrongdoing

FEASIBLE (fēz' ə bəl) *adj.* Capable of being accomplished
The Board of Education could not find a *feasible* solution to the overcrowding of city schools.
syn: possible *ant:* impossible

SURFEIT (sūr' fət) *n.* Condition of being too full; overabundance
L. *sur*, “over,” + *facere* = too much made
A *surfeit* of army boots led to lack of space in the warehouse.
syn: abundance *ant:* shortage; dearth



The shark feasted on a **SURFEIT** of **SURFERS**.

OPUS

Latin *OPUS*, *OPERIS* “work”
OPS, *OPIS*, “wealth, power, resource”

MAGNUM OPUS (mag' nəm ō' pəs) *n.* The greatest work of an artist, writer, or composer
L. *magnum*, “great,” + *opus* = great work
Wagner’s “Ring Trilogy” is considered by many to be the composer’s *magnum opus*.
syn: pinnacle

EXERCISES - UNIT ONE

Exercise I. Complete the sentence in a way that shows you understand the meaning of the *italicized* vocabulary word.

1. When they reached the *opulent* port city, the sailors saw...
2. Because their work could only be accomplished through a *laborious* series of maneuvers, the farmhands...
3. For the *edification* of her students, the sculpting teacher explained that...
4. George was *discomfited* by his parents' shouting match because...
5. The amazing *synergy* of the two companies became evident when...
6. Gerald would not *elaborate* on his plan to leave town because...
7. When the architect finished her *magnum opus*, she felt...
8. Executives may be involved in corporate *malfeasance* when they...
9. Donna felt that William was *belaboring* the point when he...
10. The farmer's plan to irrigate his crops twice a week was *feasible* because...
11. Parents can eliminate *lethargy* in younger children by...
12. The train robbers' *modus operandi* usually involved...
13. The *liturgy* at the Cathedral usually started with...
14. Because they had a *surfeit* of qualified applicants for the position, company managers...

Exercise II. Fill in the blank with the best word from the choices below. One word will not be used.

modus operandi laborious feasible edification discomfit

1. Liz found organizing her closet such a(n) _____ task that she decided she would never do it again.
2. The surgeon's _____ changed along with the advances in technology.
3. The magician revealed some of his secrets for the _____ of his audience.
4. Fearing that his large, rowdy St. Bernard would _____ his dinner guests, Carl locked the dog in the closet.

Fill in the blank with the best word from the choices below. One word will not be used.

malaise belabor feasible liturgy elaborate surfeit

5. Although many of her past schemes had not been _____, this time Rosa's invention seemed sure to work.
6. A printout of the _____ was available for newcomers unfamiliar with the religious service.
7. Bill attributed his recent _____ to the rainy weather and lack of excitement at his job.
8. When the quiz-show contestant began to _____ an issue related to his missed question, the host cut to a commercial.
9. Noticing the _____ of stray kittens at the shelter, Maureen offered to take some home.

Fill in the blank with the best word from the choices below. One word will not be used.

magnum opus malfeasance malaise synergy elaborate opulent

10. The acting coach hoped to develop some sort of _____ among the members of his ensemble.
11. Although Scott hinted that something major would be taking place in the next few days, he would not _____.
12. The inventor has come up with many spectacular ideas before, but we are still awaiting his _____.
13. The _____ committed by government officials will have negative consequences on many generations.
14. Captain Porter's _____ sailboat was decorated in gold and pearls.

Exercise III. Choose the set of words that best completes the sentence.

1. While crossing the river may be _____, it will require so much _____ preparation that it may hardly be worth it.
 - A. feasible; laborious
 - B. opulent; feasible
 - C. elaborate; opulent
 - D. laborious; elaborate

2. Because the comedian was _____ by her audience's silence, her mind froze, and she _____ one joke for more than five minutes.
- opulent; elaborated
 - belabored; feasible
 - discomfited; belabored
 - laborious; elaborated
3. Seeing the man's _____ gardens, fleet of pricey yachts, and multi-million dollar car collection, the inspector immediately suspected him of some kind of _____.
- laborious; magnum opus
 - laborious; edification
 - opulent; malfeasance
 - elaborate; lethargy
4. The composer's _____ was a composition originally intended to provide musical accompaniment to the prayers beginning the _____.
- liturgy; magnum opus
 - lethargy; edification
 - opulent; liturgy
 - magnum opus; liturgy
5. Mother would rarely _____ on the brief statements she made regarding our clothing and choice of friends, even though she said such things for our own _____.
- elaborate; edification
 - discomfit; lethargy
 - belabor; liturgy
 - elaborate; modus operandi

Exercise IV. Complete the sentence by inferring information about the *italicized* word from its context.

- If Rob tells the doctor that he has been feeling some *lethargy* lately, the doctor may ask if...
- When the restaurant critic writes admiringly about the *opulent* spread at the restaurant, he may note details like...
- Because Jen is *discomfited* by the silence in the room, she may try to...

Exercise V. Fill in the blank with the word from the Unit that best completes the sentence, using the root we supply as a clue. Then, answer the questions that follow the paragraphs.

"There is no theory. You only have to listen. Pleasure is the law." These were the words of Claude Debussy (1862-1918), French composer and founder of the Impressionist movement in music. What Debussy took pleasure in was the supreme and moving beauty of nature reflected in music. When he composed, he disregarded the harmonic style and _____ (LABOR) forms of his predecessors, the post-Wagnerians, such as Gustav Mahler and Richard Strauss. He attempted instead a kind of _____ (ERG) of music, mind, and nature that had not been heard before.

Debussy began studying piano at the age of nine, and only two years later he entered the Paris Conservatory, where he began studying composition as well as piano. As a young adult, however, he avoided the company of musicians in favor of the leading Impressionist poets and painters, who focused on celebrating the beauty of nature in their works. "Music," Debussy wrote, "is the expression of the movement of the waters, the play of curves described by changing breezes."

In many Impressionist paintings, the colors are soft and blended, the shapes barely discernible. In fact, up close,

such a painting may seem to be no more than a formless palette of colored dots. Standing back, however, one can see a pleasing image, perhaps of a river or garden. Debussy, like the painters of these works, wished to capture the subtleties of nature. He did not want his work to announce itself as a well-shaped musical composition. Instead, he wanted it to sound like an improvisation that had not been written down at all.

All of this anti-effort resulted in compositions with titles like “What the West Wind Saw,” “Dead Leaves,” “Sounds and Scents Revolve in the Evening Air,” and a _____ (OPUS) called “La Mer” (The Sea). The last has a mysterious, dreamlike quality—some have said as puzzling and changeable as the sea itself. One can imagine Debussy descending into a reverie to write it, mimicking the

spontaneous, fleeting qualities of nature, as he searched for musical notes and rhythms.

He also enjoyed composing works based on the poems of his friends. His first important orchestral work, “Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun,” was inspired by Stephen Mallarme’s poem “L’Après-midi d’un faune.”

Debussy wrote, “Beauty must appeal to the sense, must provide us with immediate enjoyment, must impress or insinuate itself into us without any effort on our part.” Seemingly effortless musical beauty is Debussy’s legacy. One only need hear “Claire de Lune”—a beautiful and understated piano piece—once to be convinced of that and to be grateful that Debussy dedicated his life to translating visual beauty into musical compositions.

1. The main point of this passage is that
 - A. Debussy was an innovator.
 - B. Debussy rejected the musical traditions of his forebears.
 - C. Debussy loved nature and created the Impressionistic style of music to express his feelings about it.
 - D. beauty must appeal to the senses.
2. Debussy was most positively influenced by
 - A. his teachers at the Paris Conservatory.
 - B. the Impressionist poets and painters.
 - C. the post-Wagnerians, Gustav Mahler and Richard Strauss.
 - D. all of the above.
3. Based on this essay, one might conclude that Debussy believed that
 - A. he would be an important influence on twentieth-century music.
 - B. his teachers at the Paris Conservatory disliked his style of music.
 - C. to feel the supreme and moving beauty of nature is almost like prayer.
 - D. to be a great musician he would have to be different.
4. The best title for this essay would be
 - A. Why Debussy Rejected his Musical Past.
 - B. Debussy’s Influence on the Twentieth Century.
 - C. Debussy: Translating Feeling into Sound.
 - D. What Debussy Discovered.

Exercise VI. Drawing on your knowledge of roots and words in context, read the following selection and define the *italicized* words. If you cannot figure out the meaning of the words on your own, look them up in a dictionary. Note that *ef*, from *ex*, means “out from.”

Greeling Helicopter Manufacturing is currently in the final stages of testing the new TG-45 helicopter. The designers promise a much more *ergonomic* seat and dashboard arrangement, which will allow the pilot to maximize attention to in-flight controls. The motor-uptake system in the TG-45 is said to be far more *efficacious* for short-range flights, delivering reliable bursts of power while minimizing energy use.