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The Custom House

Activity I

Matching Definitions

Directions: Match each of the words below with its definition based on the context in which the word appears in the book. Use the page numbers in parentheses to locate the word. Then, look up the word in the dictionary and change any answers that are not correct.

decorous (14)    discern (15)    propensities (32)
vicissitude (19)    vitiated (23)    unmalleable (25)
esoteric (27)    fathomed (36)    effusion (30)

1. ____________________ limited to a small group of people
2. ____________________ impaired; made ineffective
3. ____________________ perceive; understand
4. ____________________ inclinations
5. ____________________ a pouring forth
6. ____________________ understood
7. ____________________ proper behavior
8. ____________________ change; reversal; fluctuation
9. ____________________ unchangeable

tenacity (18)    slumberous (26)    inefficacious (35)
unobtrusive (35)    arduous (20)    rankling (15)
expatiate (23)    indolent (19)    contrivance (22)
torpid (34)

10. ____________________ difficult
11. ____________________ slow; dull; static
12. ____________________ unable to produce a desired result; ineffective
13. ____________________ hardly noticeable
14. ____________________ sleepy
15. ____________________ irritating
16. ____________________ persistence
17. ____________________ to speak at length
18. ____________________ ingenious plan
19. ____________________ lazy
4. But, one idle and rainy day, it was my fortune to make a discovery of some little interest. Poking and burrowing into the heaped-up rubbish in the corner; unfolding one and another document, and reading the names of vessels that had long ago foundered at sea or rotted at the wharves, and those of merchants, never heard of now on 'Change, nor very readily decipherable on their mossy tombstones; glancing at such matters with the saddened, weary, half-reluctant interest which we bestow on the corpse of dead activity,—and exerting my fancy, sluggish with little use, to raise up from these dry bones an image of the old town's brighter aspect, when India was a new region, and only Salem knew the way thither,—I chanced to lay my hand on a small package, carefully done up in a piece of ancient yellow parchment. This envelope had the air of an official record of some period long past, when clerks engrossed their stiff and formal chirography on more substantial materials than at present. (Pg. 30)

   Synonym for decipherable: ________________________________________________________
   Synonym for engrossed: __________________________________________________________
   Synonym for chirography: _______________________________________________________

5. While thus perplexed,—and cogitating, among other hypotheses, whether the letter might not have been one of those decorations which the white men use to contrive, in order to take the eyes of Indians,—I happened to place it on my breast. (Pg. 32)

   Synonym for cogitating: ___________________________________________________________

6. On Hester Prynne's story, therefore, I bestowed much thought. It was the subject of my meditations for many an hour, while pacing to and fro across my room, or traversing, with a hundredfold repetition, the long extent from the front-door of the Custom-House to the side-entrance, and back again. Great were the weariness and annoyance of the old Inspector and the Weighers and Gaugers, whose slumbers were disturbed by the unmercifully lengthened tramp of my passing and returning footsteps. Remembering their own former habits, they used to say that the Surveyor was walking the quarter-deck. They probably fancied that my sold object—and, indeed, the sole object for which a sane man could ever put himself into voluntary motion—was, to get an appetite for dinner. And to say the truth, an appetite, sharpened by the east-wind that generally blew along the passage, was the only valuable result of so much indefatigable exercise. (Pg. 33)

   Synonym for bestowed: __________________________________________________________
   Synonym for traversing: _________________________________________________________
   Synonym for indefatigable: _______________________________________________________

7. But the long habit of victory has made them generous. They know how to spare, when they see occasion; and when they strike, the axe may be sharp, indeed, but its edge is seldom poisoned with ill-will; nor is it their custom ignominiously to kick the head which they have just struck off. (Pg. 38)

   Synonym for ignominiously: ______________________________________________________
**Activity V**

**Roots and Prefixes**

**Part I**

**Directions:** From the definition provided for each vocabulary word, figure out the meaning of the word’s prefix.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WORD</th>
<th>DEFINITION</th>
<th>PREFIX</th>
<th>MEANING OF PREFIX</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>disinclined</td>
<td>not tending to; not wanting to</td>
<td>dis</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>disengaged</td>
<td>not involved; apathetic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>exclusive</td>
<td>shutting all others out</td>
<td>ex</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>exclaim</td>
<td>to shout out</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>infirmity</td>
<td>lack of strength</td>
<td>in</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>insensitive</td>
<td>not sensitive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>advent</td>
<td>a coming to; an approach</td>
<td>ad</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>adjacent</td>
<td>near to</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>transgress</td>
<td>to cross a boundary; violate a law</td>
<td>trans</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>transport</td>
<td>to carry across</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Part II**

**Directions:** Each of the following words has the prefix *auto*, meaning, “self” or “one’s own.” The other parts of the word are defined for you. Try to guess what each one means. Then compare your guess with the dictionary’s definition.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WORD</th>
<th>PARTS</th>
<th>YOUR GUESS</th>
<th>DEFINITION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>autobiography</td>
<td>bio: life&lt;br&gt;graphy: writing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>automaton</td>
<td>maton: one that acts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>autogenous</td>
<td>genous: generating; giving birth</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>autocracy</td>
<td>cracy: power</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6. The unhappy culprit sustained herself as best a woman might, under the heavy weight of a thousand unrelenting eyes, all fastened upon her, and concentrated at her bosom. It was almost intolerable to be borne. Of an impulsive and passionate nature, she had fortified herself to encounter the stings and venomous stabs of public \textit{contumely}, wreaking itself in every variety of insult; but there was a quality so much more terrible in the solemn mood of the popular minds, that she longed rather to behold all those rigid \textit{countenances} contorted with scornful merriment, and herself the object. …Yet there were intervals when the whole scene, in which she was the most \textit{conspicuous} object, seemed to vanish from her eyes, or, at least glimmered indistinctly before them, like a mass of imperfectly shaped and spectral images. Her mind, and especially her memory, was \textit{preternaturally} active, and kept bringing up other scenes than this roughly hewn street of a little town, on the edge of the Western wilderness; other faces than were lowering upon her from beneath the brims of those steeple-crowned hats. (Pg. 48-49)

Definition of \textit{contumely}:
A. display
B. scrutiny
C. scorn
D. analysis
E. esteem

Definition of \textit{countenances}:
A. people
B. faces
C. accusers
D. judges
E. lips

Definition of \textit{conspicuous}:
A. beautiful
B. scorned
C. sorrowful
D. lighthearted
E. striking

Definition of \textit{preternaturally}:
A. moderately
B. mildly
C. humbly
D. abnormally
E. unpretentiously