# Brrons 1100 W40

## W31

### CHOOSE SAGELY\*

Today, one significant influence in the forming of public opinion is propaganda. It is not heresy to our democratic beliefs to state that pressure groups play an important part in our lives. Propaganda makes one vulnerable\* to the influences of others. The prudent person will face both credible and deceptive propaganda efforts. While propaganda has the ostensible purpose of informing the public, the most fervid propagandists use methods that must be examined by the thoughtful citizen. The ability to distinguish the spurious from the true facts requires more than a perfunctory\* examination of prevalent\* propaganda efforts.

### A FREE SOCIETY

In a free society it is understood that individuals and groups have the inherent\* right to propagate ideas and try to win converts. We do not look upon an idea different from ours as an anomaly that should be avoided. Nor do we permit only innocuous or congenial\* beliefs and forbid those that we believe are dubious\* or spurious.\* In a country of competing pressures we are accosted\* by a surfeit of propaganda that tends to overwhelm us. Thus, we live in a milieu of ubiquitous\* bombardment from countless, and often unrecognized, propagandists.

### WHO LISTENS?

As the quantity of propaganda becomes greater, ideas are presented in more strident tones in order to overcome the increased competition. Those who are the targets of the propaganda can find it more difficult to discern\* between or analyze the new and expanded pressures. The concomitant situation that develops with the stepped-up propaganda is one in which the individual may retreat into a state of lassitude. He has an aversion\* to all attempts to influence him. So we can see the intrinsic\* weakness inherent\* in an increased level of propaganda. It has the deleterious result of reducing its efficacy upon the individuals or groups who were its objective.

### THE PEOPLE DECIDE

The place of propaganda in a milieu\* that is not free differs from its place in an open society. In a dictatorship there is rarely competing propaganda. Those who dissent from the official line may do so only in a clandestine\* manner. Where there is no open ferment of ideas, the possibility of discerning\* the true from the spurious\* is attenuated. In a democracy, the inevitable\* arbiter of what propaganda is to be permitted is the people. It is incumbent upon each citizen to choose between competing propagandas while remaining cognizant\* of the value for a democracy of the existence of all points of view.

## W32

### ANYONE FOR GOOGLE?

As automation permeates\* many new areas of life, its effect upon us becomes concomitantly\* more profound. Information processing, blogs, search engines of all types have found their ways into businesses, as well as our homes, schools, and libraries. Here they alleviate the burden of storing and providing us with an accumulation of information that is becoming more prodigious in this era of specialization and threatening to inundate\* our society.

Youngsters in the primary grades now know how to manipulate their computers to extract information that would have taken their grandparents an eternity to produce. Machines whose celerity can scan thousands of words in nanoseconds help expedite the selection of pertinent\* information for those schoolchildren.

### EVERYONE IS TALKING

Can anyone under the age of 30 remember a time when the dial telephone was the only method of voice communication over long distances? What a bizarre concept this must seem for today’s youth. It has become an antiquated\* cultural form of personal contact. The instrument for the modern communicator is the cell phone, which has usurped the wire-connected stationary model. With cell phone companies competing for customers, they eschew\* offering a paltry amount of data to browse the Internet. The cell phone user can also take advantage of a plethora\* of special deals and carry on with significant or trivial phone conversations for seemingly endless time, and in almost any location. Often, these personal talks are held in the most public places, and those within hearing find it difficult to condone the inconvenience caused by the indiscriminate\* use of this ubiquitous\* instrument.

Don’t look back at the “new words.” Did you spot bizarre as a reintroduced word?

### THE FUTURE IS HERE

We have ardently\* taken to the cell phone as a replacement for the venerable land line model. The most striking feature of the cell phone is the variety of uses to which it can be put. The land line phone is restricted to the menial task of mere conversation. For the garrulous\* person who isn’t restricted to one place, the mobile cell phone has a myriad\* of uses. Should one be in an area that requires silence, there is an ability to utilize the succinct text messaging feature. Should one come upon an ambiguous situation, one may photograph it or make it into a video for further study. Do not preclude\* from the list of uses, the access to your computer, music, and weather reports. It’s hard to imagine an extraneous technical application that will not be controlled from the cell phone in the future.

### IT’S HAPPENING NOW

The flood of new technology makes each modern marvel appear archaic within the briefest time period. An assiduous\* examination of today’s communication methods will make clear how quickly a rabid purchaser of the newest product will want to emulate friends and buy the next one. The most basic cell phones and music-downloading devices are being replaced with more powerful and exciting products. It would not be facetious to claim that engineers will persevere\* in devising new ways for us to contact each other by voice, photographs, and print messages that give us access\* to ever more salubrious features.

## W33

### AT A LOSS

With the trivial\* sum of $10 in his pockets, Robert Lacy was feeling far from complacent about the future. In fact, it was his somber estimate that no matter how frugal\* he was, his money would run out before the next day. He owed $5 in debts to friends; with the remainder he would have to eat enough to maintain his strength. Hunger would debilitate him to the point where he could not continue his fervid\* search for Evelyn. There was no hope of an impetuous stranger suddenly thrusting money upon him. There was still less solace\* for him in the hope that, after all this time, he might develop the occult power that would give him a mental image of where Evelyn could be found.

### MAKING PLANS

Robert had arrived in New York a week earlier. He had begun by asking discreet questions of Evelyn’s former landlord. There was no need to foment opposition at the very beginning. The landlord was recondite,\* and all Robert had been able to glean from the cryptic\* replies was that Evelyn had moved to a residence that catered to single women. Robert was in a hopeless situation; in this immense city his quarry could be hiding in one of dozens of such places. This would obviate\* the possibility of his dashing from one place to another in an impetuous\* manner. His search, while it had to be concluded with celerity,\* could not be carried out in such slovenly fashion. He required a succinct\* and meticulous\* plan.

### A NEWSPAPER AD

On the premise\* that Evelyn knew she was being sought, Robert’s first step was to abjure fruitless\* searching and place an ad in the leading morning newspaper. He would importune\* in a most careful way for her return. The ad read, “Evelyn. Come out of hiding. I do not reproach you for your actions. I expect no penitent confession. There is nothing ambiguous\* about my offer. Please contact. Robert.” He added a box number for a reply. When Robert went to the paper the next morning, he felt sanguine\* about the chances of locating her. His evanescent concerns disappeared; there was a letter for him, and with tremulous\* fingers he tore it open. It contained one sentence, and it was tantamount to a challenge; “If you really care about me, you will find me by midnight, Friday, Evelyn.”

### AT THE BALLET

Evelyn was an anomaly*: she had a propensity for folk music and rock and roll dancing, and, at the same time, she was an avid* fan of classical ballet. At one time she had been a fledgling\* ballet dancer. Robert headed for a theater where a venerable\* ballet company was performing. He knew he had to be wary so that Evelyn might not see him first. It was Tuesday evening; two days gone with so little to show. Only three more remaining before the deadline set by Evelyn. He tried hard to allay the sudden fear that came over him that he might not locate her. Nothing would deter him from succeeding! And so, although he was far from a connoisseur of the dance, he was standing among the throng\* in the lobby, hoping it would be a propitious\* evening for him.

## W34

### ANOTHER PLAN

Robert was far from tranquil\* as he waited in the lobby for almost an hour after the performance had begun. Disgruntled,\* he quit the site of his vigil. He had to face the fact that he was making no tangible\* progress. Tomorrow he would telephone several women’s residences. It was a cumbersome way of going about the hunt, but it was all that he could think of at the moment. He would interrogate the desk clerks, and perhaps he might uncover a pertinent\* clue to Evelyn’s whereabouts. If he could only get someone to divulge her hiding place! Perhaps tomorrow would culminate\* in success.

### A HOPE DASHED

The next day, Wednesday, saw Robert become more frustrated.\* He would fluctuate between high hopes of finding Evelyn and unmitigated despair when he was almost ready to desist\* in his search. The phone calls had elicited\* almost nothing. Robert had rushed to one women’s residence when the clerk described a girl who might just be Evelyn. The desk clerk phoned to her room on the pretext\* that she had a special delivery letter. Robert waited in the commodious lobby, replete\* with large, antiquated pieces of furniture. He watched from a discreet\* distance as she came down the stairs. One look at her wan\* face, slovenly\* dress, and disheveled hair was enough to inform Robert that he needed no further scrutiny.\* This could not be his impeccable\* Evelyn.

### TO THE POLICE

Thursday was Robert’s next-to-last day. He had been tenacious in following up every lead. Now he was behind the eight ball.\* He could hardly galvanize\* himself to do anything else. The façade of hope he had worn for almost a week was crumbling; there was nothing left to be sanguine\* about. In desperation he turned to the police and placed his problem within their jurisdiction.\* They asked many questions, and they requested that he not leave anything out. Some of the questions seemed asinine. When they inquired about his relationship to the missing girl, he replied, with a grimace, “Fiancé.” When they suggested she might be hiding in that part of the city where the “punk” coterie\* congregated, he was incredulous\* and accused the police of calumny against her good name and reputation.

### EVELYN DISCOVERED

Failure was imminent,\* and Robert was bereft\* of hope. It was now Friday. Despite his abstemious\* and parsimonious\* way of living, his money had been reduced to a mere pittance. A perverse\* impulse brought him to an unfamiliar section of the city. Always fastidious about proper dress and behavior, he had never been au courant with this neighborhood’s fashions and music. A moment later he saw her! Evelyn! She was sitting at a table in a coffee shop, surrounded by a coterie\* of the most noisome individuals he had ever seen. Evelyn was not incongruous,\* for she herself was unkempt. So this was her new habitat!\* At that instant Robert knew as an incontrovertible\* fact that he had lost her. With a grimace,\* he turned and walked, a doleful\* and melancholy figure, toward the bus depot and home.

## W35

### A MODERN AESOP

The telling of a story in simple terms that has an inherently\* important message is a venerable\* art form. The parable may be found teaching a moral lesson in the Bible. Aesop is an incontrovertible\* master of the fable. This story form is far from antiquated\* as shown by the whimsical approach to life taken by the modern Aesop, James Thurber. His stories lampoon the strange behavior of his fellow men. Thurber seems unable to countenance the ideas that permeate\* our society regarding the rules by which we should live. Least of all is he able to accept the sanctimonious notion that some people promulgate\* that good always wins out against evil. Thurber’s stories often take an exactly opposite point of view.

### MODERNIZING A PARABLE\*

Thurber punctures in an incisive\* way the platitudes\* that come from stories handed down through the generations. These old saws are accepted by everyone. One such tale is about a tortoise who had read in an ancient book that a tortoise had beaten a hare in a race. The sage\* old tortoise construed\* this story to mean that he could outrun a hare. With equanimity he hunted for a hare and soon found one. “Do you have the effrontery to challenge me?” asked the incredulous\* hare. “You are a nonentity,” he scoffed\* at the tortoise. A course of fifty feet was set out. The other animals gathered around the site.\* At the sound of the gun they were off. When the hare crossed the finish line, the flabbergasted tortoise had gone approximately eight and three-quarter inches. The moral Thurber draws from this debacle for the tortoise: A new broom may sweep clean, but never trust an old saw.

Which of the five “new words” have you seen before? Answer with equanimity.

### THINGS HAVE CHANGED

Thurber modernizes an old story that everyone has read or heard. It has to do with a nefarious\* wolf who kept a vigil\* in an ominous\* forest until a little girl came along carrying a basket of food for her grandmother. With alacrity,\* this vivacious youngster told the wolf the address to which she was going. Hungry and gaunt, the wolf rushed to the house. When the girl arrived and entered, she saw someone in bed wearing a nightcap and a nightgown. While the figure was dressed like her grandmother, the little girl surmised\* with only a perfunctory\* glance that it didn’t have the old lady’s mien. The girl approached and became cognizant\* of the hirsute face of the wolf. She drew a revolver from her purse and shot the interloper\* dead. Thurber arrives at a moral for this story that anyone would find difficult to refute: It is not so easy to fool little girls nowadays as it used to be.

### ANOTHER SURPRISE

Thurber’s stories are written in a jocose\* manner, but they contain enough serious matter to make one pensive. He tells of some builders who left a pane of glass standing upright in a field near a house they were constructing. A goldfinch flew across the field, struck the glass, and was knocked inert.\* He rushed back and divulged\* to his friends that the air had crystallized. The other birds derided\* him, said he had become irrational,\* and gave a number of reasons for the accident. The only bird who believed the goldfinch was the swallow. The goldfinch challenged the large birds to follow the same path he had flown. This challenge served to whet their interest, and they agreed with gusto.\* Only the swallow abjured.\* The large birds flew together and struck the glass; they were knocked into a stupor. This caused the astute\* swallow to wince with pain. Thurber drew a moral that is the antithesis\* of the cliché we all accept: He who hesitates is sometimes saved.

## W36

### CHARLOTTE BRONTË

The nineteenth century saw the female novelist attain the same prestige\* as men. England was prolific\* in producing women writers. One of the foremost in this genre was Charlotte Brontë. In Jane Eyre, she presented a candid portrait of a woman caught up in a clandestine\* affair with a married man. Bronte’s readers were engrossed\* in this story. She took this unsavory subject and presented it in a way that did not degrade the relationship. She showed that true passion can be healthy. Brontë did not disparage\* Jane’s feelings or besmirch\* her character. The author was generous in her verdict. The affair was considered merely a venial sin because Jane was never false in her feelings or her actions.

### VICTOR HUGO

The epitome of French romantic writers in the nineteenth century was Victor Hugo. With the utmost dexterity he wrote poetry, novels, and drama. His highly popular novels, Notre Dame de Paris and Les Misérables, are replete\* with melo-dramatic situations and grotesque characters. He had a profound\* sense of social justice and a compassion for the poor, hapless,\* and downtrodden. He could not work under the aegis\* of Napoleon III and fled into exile. When the repugnant rule came to an end, the expatriate\* returned. He was received with adulation\* and acclaim as the idol of the Third Republic.

### AN ENGLISH REALIST

The movement toward realism in the English novel of the nineteenth century reached its acme with the works of Charles Dickens and William Makepeace Thackeray. Charles Dickens was a prolific\* writer. Among his copious works are Oliver Twist, a candid\* exposure of England’s repugnant\* Poor Laws; Nicholas Nickleby, in which the life of boys in a boarding school is vehemently attacked; Hard Times, in which the author wanted to depict the infamous\* life in a factory during an early period of the industrial revolution; and The Pickwick Papers, about a naive gentleman who has numerous misadventures. The novels, aimed at exposing the sordid\* and pernicious\* elements of English life, were said to have helped galvanize\* people into action leading to improvement in these conditions.

### A SCHEMING HEROINE

William Makepeace Thackeray was known for his moralistic study of upper and middle class English life. His best known work, Vanity Fair, has as its central character Becky Sharp. She is a perfidious woman who has an insatiable\* desire to get ahead in the world. She covets the wealth of one man, but when marriage is not feasible\* she succeeds in a plan to ingratiate herself into the heart of her employer’s son. Their marriage is not a salubrious\* one and Becky, who lives ostentatiously,\* forms a surreptitious\* liaison with another man. The affair culminates\* in a debacle.\* She is exposed, her husband leaves her, and she must live in penury in Europe. This is the ignominious end for a clever, but misguided, woman.

## W37

### A MAN OF NATURE

Henry Thoreau attempted to confront the problem and solve the enigma\* of how one might earn a living and yet not become an ignominious\* slave to the task. He viewed the industrial revolution with antipathy. Man in a servile role to extraneous\* possessions was a main target of his writings. He believed that one could attain genuine wealth not by accumulating objects or money, but through enjoyment and perusal\* of nature. By his own volition he gave up friends and comforts for a two-year sojourn by himself at Walden Pond. What others might judge as penury\* was seen by Thoreau as the epitome\* of wealth.

### THE GOOD LIFE

Thoreau’s book about the austere but happy life at Walden Pond propagated\* his fame around the world. He built a small hut and began living an ascetic\* existence. He found it to be a felicitous experience. In this idyllic\* setting he was able to spend his time reading, studying nature, writing, and thinking. Far from being indolent,\* he kept busy in many ways. At the end of the experiment, he recalled the halcyon days with pleasure. He believed he had learned the secret of a truly happy existence. The only tenable way of life is one in harmony with nature; material possessions are superfluous.

### THE MIND’S SECRETS

The study of the human mind and behavior has had many prominent practitioners, but few are as revered\* as Sigmund Freud. An Austrian physician, he is said to be the father of psychoanalysis. He taught that man has a subconscious mind in which he keeps repugnant\* memories that come to the surface surreptitiously\* and motivate behavior. Man often tries to rationalize his actions, when, in reality, they are really the result of suppressed memories coming to the surface. Freud’s approach was to attempt therapy by examining the dreams that make cognizant\* what the cause of a patient’s troubles might be. Only with the airing of deleterious,\* buried emotions can the person move from the nascent stage to that of full health. Freud was considered an iconoclast in the field of psychology when his ideas first appeared at the beginning of the twentieth century.

### AMATEUR PSYCHOLOGISTS

The ideas of Freudian psychology have become part of our everyday life. Our language is replete\* with clichés\* that have their origin in Freud’s writings. There is a surfeit\* of amateur psychologists who, with celerity,\* analyze an individual’s problems from the slightest evidence. Despite their dubious\* education and training in this field, they discuss symptoms and cures in a most erudite fashion. Should a person express a fear of heights, this phobia is examined; events from childhood are considered germane to the problem. Is it possible he or she was dropped as an infant? Perhaps something in a dream is pertinent\* to explain the feelings of vertigo that accompany height. For some reason, non-trained people find the Freudian approach to the workings of the human mind most conducive to their practicing as amateur psychologists.

## W38

### THE ENIGMA\* OF FASHION

My friend Will, who is so glib when he speaks of “individuality,” becomes part of a homogenous mass when he takes notice of the latest craze in fashion. How can some people become so malleable in the hands of those who “make” fashion? Perhaps the sudden shifts in fashion occur fortuitously.\* Or are designers, through legerdemain, switching styles and customs on us right before our eyes? Will seems to be quite gullible\* when it comes to embracing the latest trend in fashion. But then, he has me as an example to follow!

### THE ECONOMICS OF FASHION

In dress, the fashion appears to be “set” by a few designers and a handful of affluent\* individuals who purchase these designs. The fashion industry is cognizant\* of the fact that fashions must change rapidly and often, or their economy would become stagnant. For this industry it would prove fatal if it were not vigilant\* and prepared well in advance for a new fashion trend.\* As the old fashion becomes passé and a new fashion seems to be in the making, the garment manufacturers cannot afford to procrastinate. They rush large sums of money into production for a mass market. Having invested heavily, the manufacturers do everything possible to influence and motivate\* the purchasers. Through every facet of publicity and advertising, the industry exploits\* the natural desire for people to be au courant\* with the latest fashions.

### WHAT NEXT?

Once the fashion industry has been able to foist a new style on the public, some tend to stigmatize it as a form of rebellion. What is often misunderstood is that trend-setting consumers capitulate to what is originated\* by someone outside of their group. The feelings of individuality and audacity that one may get from a new style of dress result from the propensity\* of others to disparage\* them. While people are becoming complacent\* about the “new,” the clothing industry is busy planning how to tantalize the consumer with next year’s “fashion.” This arbitrary\* decision is guaranteed to foment\* consternation\* among naysayers once again in the following year.

### SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE

To derogatory\* comments from the general public, trendsetters might retort that new fashions and styles are eventually adopted by others with alacrity.\* Though she complains, Emma emulates\* her daughter Meryl by shortening or lengthening her hems. Emma may appear reticent about the bother and expense of altering her wardrobe, but she gives tacit approval to the change by rushing to the department stores where shoppers jostle\* each other to buy copies of the more expensive dresses. The conclusion one might reach after observing how members of the public countenance\* the arbitrary\* changes year after year is that they are naive\* or victims of some chicanery practiced by the clothing industry. But the real truth may lie in the fact that they are so obliging because they secretly enjoy the yearly excitement around the latest fashions.

There’s another familiar word reintroduced today. Did you recognize reticent?

## W39

### RULE, BRITANNIA

An unforgettable saga of World War II has to do with the small French coastal town of Dunkirk. There, in 1940, thousands of British troops made a belated escape from the awesome\* power of the German army and air force. They were removed by an array\* of private boats, from huge yachts to decrepit fishing boats. At their own volition,\* the skippers came close to the shore, while German planes bombed implacably.\* They remained imperturbable under heavy fire. When their vessels were loaded, they dashed back to England. Once unloaded, they did not vacillate, but returned with equanimity\* to their vigil\* in the danger zone. The British proved once again that they are paragons\* of comradeship in times of jeopardy.\*

### THE GOOD GUYS VS. THE BAD GUYS

The international adventure stories prevalent\* on television follow meticulously\* a plot that is inexorable\* in its development. Those on the side of law and justice face perfidious\* men and organizations. These are anathema\* to those values the staunch heroes would defend. These infamous\* men have no capacity for compassion,\* and they treat the lovely women with opprobrium. The intrepid\* heroes are placed in deleterious\* situations as a result of the Machiavellian maneuvers of their opponents. One unconscionable act of duplicity\* follows another until the total destruction of the “good guys” seems at hand. At the last moment, usually amidst the pandemonium of a battle, the cause for which the heroes strive triumphs. However, evil is ubiquitous,\* and next week another fracas\* will erupt.

### A FAMOUS MUTINY

One of the most repugnant\* names in popular legend is that of Captain William Bligh. He was the captain of the H.M.S. Bounty in 1789, and the mutiny that erupted\* aboard that ship was the basis for a film in which Charles Laughton portrayed Bligh as an unmitigated\* bully and villain. He would flay both the body and the spirit of anyone who crossed him. The crew developed such an aversion\* to Bligh’s mortifying actions and demeanor that, led by Fletcher Christian, they set the captain and 17 shipmates off in a lifeboat in the South Pacific. The ship continued to the Pitcairn Islands where the crew remained to live with the islanders. Laughton’s delineation of Bligh remains as the image we have of him. Only recently has any attempt been made to vindicate Captain Bligh and to remove the heinous reputation that permeates\* history.

### FAIR PLAY!

Recently, there has been an attempt to improve Captain Bligh’s tainted\* image. Historians maintain that there was no turpitude in Bligh’s actions aboard the H.M.S. Bounty. Perhaps he was imprudent\* in failing to keep his temper under control. While an infraction aboard ship was quickly criticized, Bligh never carried out those callous actions the movie dramatized in order to depict\* an evil man, say his defenders. After the mutiny, Captain Bligh astutely\* navigated the lifeboat with the other 17 men for over 3,000 miles to safety. This prodigious\* feat alone, say those who would restore Bligh’s good name, should be enough to redress wrongs that have been blamed on him for over 150 years. While the coterie\* defending Captain Bligh do not ask the public to praise him, they do request a more benevolent\* attitude toward this traditionally\* reprehensible\* figure, and an end to the vituperation\* heaped upon him for these many years.

## W40

### A POLITICAL SHOW

Most elections offer us examples of politics as show business. Politicians have prepared speeches dealing with the prevalent\* topics of the day. They can maintain a fervid\* flow of rhetoric for hours at a time. In each locality where he is to appear, the advance work is prepared by a clique of trustworthy aides. In preparation for the show, they have dispersed\* leaflets, put up posters, and sent out cars and trucks with loudspeakers to extol the erudite\* qualities of their candidate. Soon, the crowd gathers. Loyal party workers come forward to shake the hand of their mentor. Now, with the facile solutions to complex problems carefully memorized, the show is ready to begin. One moment facetious,\* the next moment profound,\* the candidate works to convince the incredulous\* among the voters.

### GETTING A GOOD LOOK

The television press interview is conducive\* to close scrutiny\* of a candidate. His public speeches may contain many cant phrases, but a sharp question by an astute\* reporter can destroy a cliché\* filled statement. The politician now will procrastinate\* in his answer; a new facet\* of his personality may be revealed by his demeanor.\* Perhaps he will take umbrage at a suggestion that he favors the affluent.\* His record is searched for evidence that he has been equally magnanimous to the indigent.\* He accuses the reporter of attempting to vilify him. Is he being accused of turpitude\* in office? It is time to discreetly\* go on to another topic. The candidate wishes to extol\* the virtues of his program and record. The press wants to allude\* to things that keep him in the midst of controversy. They insist that he elucidate positions that the politician would rather leave in a nebulous\* state.

### SEEING IS LEARNING

While we are all cognizant\* of the importance of words to create certain impressions, gesture is relegated\* to a much lesser role. Gestures are an important concomitant\* to even the most vapid speech, enhancing it and giving the hearer something to look at while he listens. The value of seeing at the same time as listening was shown when a class at a university, unwieldy because of its large size, was split up. One group was put into a room in proximity to good loudspeakers. Every nuance\* of the lecturer’s voice could be heard clearly. Because they had no person on whom to place their attention, they soon took on the appearance of extreme lassitude; most students became lethargic\* and rested their heads on their desks. The separation of visual and aural communication tended to vitiate the learning process. The listening group received grades lower than those received by those who could look at as well as hear the instructor.

Once more your keen eye and memory were being tested. Did you recognize lassitude as being from an earlier lesson?

### THE HAMMY OLD DAYS

Actors depend upon their ability to gesticulate\* almost as much as upon speech to obtain their desired histrionic\* effects. With them, gesture serves much more than merely to augment speech. When their communication is by gesture alone, it is called pantomime. In the early silent motion picture period, gestures were flamboyant.\* To show that he was distraught\* about the danger in which the heroine had been placed, the hero would go through the most fatuous actions. He would stagger, beat his breast, tear his hair, and contort his face into the most doleful\* appearance. There weren’t many simple or restrained gestures in his repertoire. The heroine, to indicate her love, would fling her arms wide and ardently\* jump into her sweetheart’s arms. It was only much later that it became in vogue\* for actors to communicate with the audience through discreet\* gestures and almost imperceptible changes in facial expression that could transmit nuances\* of emotion.

## W41

### IT’S A BUYER’S MARKET

Grocery manufacturers are well aware of the consumer’s power to make one product a success and another a failure. They spend huge sums developing new products with which to curry favor. Fearful that a successful product will soon begin to pall, the manufacturers, without cessation,\* come out with “new and improved” versions to whet\* the appetite. Sometimes it is only a box or package that has been changed—perhaps a colorful photo of a succulent meal on a frozen dinner box. In larger supermarkets, the shopper is faced with a satiety of merchandise, particularly in the copiously\* stocked laundry detergent section. While there may be no intrinsic difference among the many brands, advertising and packaging serve to importune\* the customer to buy one rather than another.

Did you spot it? The “new word” you’ve seen before? It’s intrinsic.

### IT’S WHAT’S OUTSIDE THAT COUNTS

Packaging of grocery items is a facet\* of advertising that is too little appreciated by consumers. Walking up and down the aisles of a supermarket, one seldom stops to analyze the individual package in the potpourri of items on the shelves. The manufacturer had to glean\* and test many different designs before he accepted the one you see in the array\* before you. Before he will sanction the use of a particular can, box, or bottle, he must know many things about its efficacy.\* He wants to know if the colors attract: a white box may denote cleanliness, a red one, strength. There may be a photo or a drawing that will allude to the product’s use or special qualities. A lackluster\* package may be fatal.\* Next, the size and shape are important elements. The buyer may want a small package for easy storing, but a larger package may suggest economy. A round bottle may look attractive, but a square one is easier to stack. These are some of the insidious aspects of packaging, the main purpose of which is to attract your attention as you peruse\* the crowded supermarket shelves.

### “TRIED AND TRUE”

Few question the propriety of the current haste on the part of manufacturers to bring out “new and improved” products at the prevalent\* rate. At one time, in the dim, distant past before the advent of television, it was the vogue\* for products to be advertised on the merits of their “tried and true” qualities. Few advertisers were impious enough to jettison\* any part of a product that had been accepted by the public. Year after year, the local grocery store owner would proffer the same box of cereal, the same house cleaner. The acceptance was of the time-tested product, and it appeared almost unconscionable\* for the manufacturer to change his merchandise. Today’s spate of transient\* products would have been considered an anomaly\* in those days.

### WHAT’S IN A NAME?

Supermarkets often carry their own products to compete with the national brands. These “house” brands are not in a felicitous\* position because they cannot be advertised widely. Supermarkets overcome this encumbrance\* by making these brands less expensive. Many people believe the shibboleth, “You get what you pay for,” and they purchase items on the premise\* that quality varies as the price does. Are the claims made by nationally advertised brands bogus? How can one bread company substantiate its nutritive superiority over another? As there is no incontrovertible\* evidence, the more expensive bread (or coffee, etc.) must compensate\* by increased advertising. They make inordinate\* claims, using those raucous techniques proven so successful in convincing the frugal\* consumer to switch to a more costly brand.

## W42

### YOU CAN’T HELP BUT WATCH

The consumer is in a quandary about making a felicitous\* selection among the array\* of products. The advertisers must influence the malleable\* consumer, and often they do it in the most callous ways. Television offers many tangible\* advantages for reaching the consumer. As a result, the consumer is inundated\* by commercials. The advertiser knows that a television commercial is the most expedient way to reach large numbers of people. The cost for each commercial film is prodigious,\* but because the audience is so large, the cost per viewer is negligible. Each commercial is prepared in the most meticulous\* way in order to catch the attention of even the most blasé viewer and hold it until the message is through.

The reintroduced “new word” should have stood out immediately. Did it? It’s callous, of course.

### TRICKS OF THE TRADE

Some television commercials, trying to break through the ennui built up in the viewer by the plethora\* of competition, employ humor. Others feature comely models as a pretext\* for getting the viewer to stay tuned in. At times raucous\* music, accompanied by some frenetic activities, is designed to preclude\* the viewer’s loss of attention. The advertiser will employ every bit of artifice at the filmmaker’s command to make a trenchant\* commercial. The diversity of appeals made to the viewer is a concomitant\* of the many ways people react to commercials. A great deal of time and money has gone into placing the consumer’s psychological makeup under scrutiny.\*

### GOING TO THE SOURCE

The wide diversity\* of reasons people have for buying one product rather than another are investigated by the advertising people in order to prepare efficacious\* commercials. They do not have the slightest qualm about questioning the consumer about personal things in her own domicile.\* The consumer is requested not to expurgate\* her answers. Generally, people are not reticent\* and do not begrudge giving the time and effort. The questions delve rather deeply, and what the artless responses divulge\* will help the advertiser decide what to put into his next commercial. After a large number of interviews, the copious\* results make it feasible\* to prognosticate\* how well the commercial will do. The interviewer usually offers no gratuity to the person who has helped, but often a sample of the product is proffered\* as thanks.

### IT SEEMS TO WORK

Despite the antipathy\* toward commercials expressed by the viewers, the remarkable success of television commercials in selling products makes it manifest that the advertiser has gleaned\* what the viewer wants to see and hear from his research interview. This has helped the advertiser delve deeply into what motivates\* people when they go into the supermarket to purchase products. The advertising agency is never capricious and can vindicate\* spending large sums of money on research. Having uncovered what the public wants, the advertiser expedites\* putting the requisite words, music, and photographs of the product on film. He will thus replenish the never-ending, ubiquitous\* television commercial supply in the hope that the consumer will remember some facet\* of the film and buy the product.

## W43

### IT TAKES MORE THAN MEDICINE

If one were to look at the roster of physical disabilities, one would reach the somber\* conclusion that the list is a long one. Included would be stunted development of an arm or leg due to a birth anomaly.\* Others would be the result of a crippling disease that has caused muscles to atrophy. The list would go on with illnesses and injuries that maim and debilitate.\* Modern medicine has done much to ameliorate the physical problems. However, there are an inordinate\* number of issues of disabled persons that have yet to be addressed. Most people are not naturally callous,\* but some repress\* their concerns about people with disabilities.

### DOING THE RIGHT THING

The obstacles that frustrate\* a disabled person seeking employment may turn him into a cynic. Sometimes a prospective employer, with an unctuous manner, may proffer\* employment that is really beneath the abilities of the jobseeker. The employer appears to be acting in a benevolent manner, but his attitude shows no compassion,\* for he really expects the person seeking the job to remain subservient. This iniquity cannot but give people with disabilities a feeling that they are being discriminated against.

### A BETTER WAY

Why is there ever a question about the propriety\* of hiring people with disabilities? No one can condone\* this attitude. The offering of employment should not be considered a largess. There should be no need to vindicate\* the hiring of any person; the only criterion should be what he is capable of doing. If this is the approach, no worker will feel he is an encumbrance\* to his boss. The employer, on the other hand, will find it conducive\* to good work, and will not repent his having tried something new just to mollify his conscience. Even for the most mercenary employer, there should be no reticence\* in eliciting\* the best that is possible from any worker, including a person with a disability.

### JUST BE YOURSELF

As a result of citizen activism, new laws have ensured greater accessibility\* and acceptance for people with disabilities. Historically, many held themselves aloof from contact with those who were “different.” For some, this social separation propagated\* additional feelings of antipathy.\* But when able individuals engage with those with disabilities, they learn in a pragmatic way that a disability does not make a person any less “human.” As long as there is a vestige of stigmatizing\* others, the work to transform society is not yet complete. Although still more needs to be accomplished, by rejecting the discredited guise of physical superiority, we demonstrate an attitude that is helpful to all.

## W44

### HAVE WE MASTERED OUR ENVIRONMENT?

Natural disasters tend to nullify the best efforts of mankind. It is as though there are forces at work that are contemptuous\* of our proud achievements. Who has not read of or seen the waters that deluge our towns and cities, jeopardizing\* lives and culminating\* in the destruction of the results of endless work in the space of a few moments? We are all vulnerable\* to feelings of futility as we view the carnage caused to cattle from the sudden inundation.\* Despite the laudable\* advances made in technology,\* it can be seen that we cannot yet say we have mastered our environment. Disasters of this type, leaving only pathetic vestiges\* of homes and shops, are accepted as inevitable,\* and all we can do is to attempt to ameliorate\* the conditions that result.

### GOOD NEWS—AND BAD

One of the latent\* dangers indigenous\* to our constitutional guarantee of freedom of the press has to do with the protection of the individual against the detriment\* that might come from news reports involving him. There are libel laws that protect against false charges. If an individual believes his character or livelihood has been damaged by a defamatory article, he can sue. As the plaintiff, he must refute\* the story and show how the defendant caused him harm by printing a canard. The defendant attempts to substantiate\* the truth of the article. The printing of news may besmirch\* an individual’s character, but there is no way to alleviate\* this problem without changes in the Constitution. This would be tantamount\* to destroying the efficacy\* of our coveted\* right to learn the truth from the press. We all deprecate a situation in which someone suffers because of exposure in the newspapers. Only when the harm is caused by someone with a desire to malign\* under the guise\* of printing the news can the individual expect to win compensation\* through the courts.

### A PHILOSOPHER FOR OUR TIME

Soren Kierkegaard was a Danish philosopher who is reputed to be the forerunner of the current vogue\* of existentialism. In appearance he was a frail and ungainly man. An extremely erudite\* thinker and writer, he was a potent force in propagating\* the new approach to life. His philosophy would excoriate those who believed that man could stand aside from life. In his philosophy it is a heresy\* to take a detached point of view; it is incumbent\* upon the individual to get involved. What is germane\* is not that we exist, but that our existence is determined by our acts. He was a religiously devout man who fervidly\* believed that the individual is always paramount.\*

### THE ISLAND OF WILD DOGS

The saga\* of the introduction of that diminutive songbird, the canary, into the homes of the world as tame pets is an interesting one. In the sixteenth century, a trading ship going to Italy stopped at an island named “Canis,” from the Latin word for wild dog, which could be found there in profuse numbers, off the coast of Africa. The dulcet song of the wild birds whetted\* the interest of the captain. In impromptu cages, hundreds were taken aboard to be traded. The sailors called these graygreen birds, spotted with yellow, “canaries.” As they approached the island of Elba, near Italy, a malevolent storm put the boat in jeopardy\* of sinking. A member of the crew released the birds, and the intrepid\* canaries instinctively flew towards land. The peasants on Elba took the wild canaries in as pets. Eventually, the birds found their way into homes throughout Europe where they were domesticated and bred for variety of song and shades of colors. The canaries prevalent\* today differ greatly from the ones discovered over four hundred years ago.

## W45

### IN DAYS OF YORE

Current novels are replete\* with lurid\* crimes, carnage,\* and death. Do you get wistful when you recall the romantic tales that begin with an innocent maiden travelling through the rustic\* countryside? She is dressed in glittering raiment. The scene is idyllic.\* Without warning, the group is set upon by a virile\* brigand, who, in the most perfunctory\* and callous\* fashion, carries her off. Pandemonium\* results! Her entourage\* is in a state of bedlam.\* Her corpulent escort is irate,\* but unable to do anything to thwart\* this debacle.\* All he can do is rail against the catastrophe.\* What to do? What to do?

### WOE IS ME!

The raconteur of our story about idyllic\* times gone by goes on to elucidate\* how the comely\* heroine is taken to the bandits’ hideout. There, a sullen crew of cutthroats is gathered. They don’t wish to procrastinate*; she must be taken immediately to a foreign land where much treasure will be paid for her. Their cupidity* knows no bounds. The leader wants to hold her for ransom from her wealthy parents. The gang demurs*; they are reticent.* There is a rift among the criminals. Their leader remains belligerent,\* and they agree to wait for just two days for the ransom money. An emissary from the grief-stricken parents is expected at any moment. The wan\* maiden, her spirits at their nadir,\* has time to ruminate about her lugubrious\* fate.

### TO THE RESCUE

Back at the castle, the situation is taut with emotion. The fair maiden’s mother is livid with fear and anxiety; she has attacks of vertigo.\* She talks about her daughter’s audacity\* in riding out into the ominous\* forests despite many similar kidnappings. The girl’s father, a martinet who rules his family with an iron hand, staunchly\* refuses to pay the ransom. Iniquity\* shall not be rewarded! At this moment of crisis, a heroic knight volunteers to rescue our heroine; he has had a secret yen for the young beauty. Avoiding rhetoric,\* he pledges his all to castigate\* those responsible for this ignominious\* deed. He holds his life as a mere bagatelle against the duty he owes his beloved mistress. At the propitious\* moment, he rides off to do or die for her.

### WELL DONE, SIR KNIGHT!

Seeking his adversaries,\* the knight rides to their hideout. Despite his callow appearance, he is reputed\* to disdain\* danger and to be a prodigious\* horseman. The kidnappers lose their equanimity\* at his approach. They are appalled at the prospect, and they are in a quandary\* as to which one will meet him on the field of combat. The leader, under duress,\* rides out. “Do you have a penchant to die?” derides\* the knight. More vituperative\* remarks follow. They spur their horses toward each other. It takes but one blow for our hero to decapitate the villain. The others flee to avoid their imminent\* destruction. The knight takes the maiden on his horse, and they ride back to the castle. Their wedding soon follows. Little do the two realize that they have strongly divergent opinions on politics and morality, and they will spend their days trading caustic\* remarks. Still the cliché,\* “And they lived happily ever after,” must conclude our fabricated\* tale.

## W46

### A MIGHTY EMPIRE

One of the anomalies\* of our approach to history is the propensity\* to study the venerable\* empires of Europe, but we do not feel it incumbent\* upon us to ascertain much about the civilizations in our own hemisphere. Americans often deprecate\* the history of this part of the world as though progress lay dormant and that other peoples were irrelevant\* until the Pilgrims arrived at Plymouth Rock. In South America, from 2000 B.C. until their empire reached its acme\* at the beginning of the 16th century, lived the Incas. The site\* of the capital city of the Inca empire, Cusco, lay at a height of 11,000 feet. This civilization is reputed\* to have burgeoned until it covered more than 2,500 miles of the western part of the continent. Its population fluctuated\* between 4 and 7 million. This empire had a highly efficacious\* political and social system. Its potentate ruled with absolute power. As the empire conquered new lands, it would disseminate its language, religion, and social customs.

### A BATTLE FOR POWER

The Inca emperor derived his prodigious\* power and authority from the gods. The paramount\* god was the sun god. It was from him the ruler passed on his prerogative to rule to his most astute\* son. This nepotism had worked with great efficacy\* for centuries. The land holdings were immense*; there were rich farmlands and llamas and alpacas for wool. Precious metals were plentiful: silver, copper, bronze, and the most sacred of all, gold. This metal resembled the sun god whom they extolled.* There was no dearth of idols and ornaments hammered from this gleaming metal. There was always more gold coming from the mines to replenish\* the supply. At the acme\* of his power, the Inca ruler died without naming the requisite\* successor. In 1528, two sons began an internecine struggle for control. For the next four years, the empire sank into the lassitude\* caused by civil war.

### A PERFIDIOUS\* CONQUEROR

The feuding between the rival sons reached its pinnacle\* in 1532; at that moment Francisco Pizarro came onto the scene. A native of Spain, he was sojourning\* in Panama when he heard of the riches of the Incas. Overwhelmed with cupidity,\* but still a tyro when it came to wresting\* power and wealth from hapless\* people, he joined with an inveterate\* adventurer. They gathered a small band of mercenaries.\* The first two attempts failed, and Pizarro returned to Spain to request authority and money in order to conquer the West Coast of South America. Whether by sophistry or cajolery,\* he was given the requisite\* aid. With a force of 180 men, the dregs\* of society, he invaded Inca territory. He reached the city where the current ruler, Atahualpa, was holding court. The Incas welcomed Pizarro who, in a factitious display of friendship, heaped encomiums upon Atahualpa. Unknown to the Incas, Pizarro had brought guns that were still beyond the technology\* of these people. The obloquy of his next act, ambushing the Incas and taking Atahualpa prisoner, will live in the history books that are replete\* with tales of conquest.

### THE END OF AN EMPIRE

The Machiavellian\* Pizarro held the captured Atahualpa for ransom. He was adamant\* about receiving a room filled with gold to the height of a man’s shoulder. This was taken as hyperbole at first, but Pizarro knew the gullible\* Incas would be munificent when it came to rescuing their sacred ruler. They did not procrastinate,\* and a frenetic\* collection of gold took place. Pizarro, to whom prevarication was natural in dealing with the Incas, had no qualms\* about executing their ruler as soon as he had the gold. The Inca empire was moribund,\* but the charisma that surrounded Atahualpa was such that, after his death, the Incas fought on tenaciously\* in his name for several years. Eventually, superior weapons quelled\* all opposition. A policy of genocide was adopted by the Spanish conquerors, and almost two million of the proud Incas died in the carnage\* that followed. The saga\* of an ancient civilization thus came to an end.