Two Poems (poetry)
by Emily Dickinson

**Much Madness Is Divinest Sense**
Much Madness is divinest Sense —
To a discerning Eye —
Much Sense — the starkest Madness —
'Tis the Majority
In this, as all, prevail —
Assent — and you are sane —
Demur — you're straightway dangerous —
And handled with a Chain —

**We Grow Accustomed to the Dark**
We grow accustomed to the Dark —
When light is put away —
As when the Neighbor holds the Lamp
To witness her Goodbye —

A Moment — We uncertain step
For newness of the night —
Then — fit our Vision to the Dark —
And meet the Road — erect —

And so of larger — Darkness —
Those Evenings of the Brain —
When not a Moon disclose a sign —
Or Star — come out — within —

The Bravest — grope a little —
And sometimes hit a Tree
Directly in the Forehead —
But as they learn to see —

Either the Darkness alters —
Or something in the sight
Adjusts itself to Midnight —
And Life steps almost straight.

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**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.

- accustomed
- alter
- demur
- majority
- stark
- adjust
- assent
- discerning
- prevail
- witness
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. accustomed
   Part of Speech: adj.
   Context Clues:
   Your Definition:
   Dictionary Definition:

2. adjust
   Part of Speech: v.
   Context Clues:
   Your Definition:
   Dictionary Definition:

3. alter
   Part of Speech: v.
   Context Clues:
   Your Definition:
   Dictionary Definition:

4. assent
   Part of Speech: v.
   Context Clues:
   Your Definition:
   Dictionary Definition:

5. demur
   Part of Speech: v.
   Context Clues:
   Your Definition:
   Dictionary Definition:

6. discerning
   Part of Speech: adj.
   Context Clues:
   Your Definition:
   Dictionary Definition:

7. majority
   Part of Speech: n.
   Context Clues:
   Your Definition:
   Dictionary Definition:

8. prevail
   Part of Speech: v.
   Context Clues:
   Your Definition:
   Dictionary Definition:

9. stark
   Part of Speech: adj.
   Context Clues:
   Your Definition:
   Dictionary Definition:

10. witness
    Part of Speech: v.
    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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Synonyms</th>
<th>Antonyms</th>
<th>Word List</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. demur</td>
<td>amend</td>
<td>lush</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. alter</td>
<td>approve</td>
<td>minority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. prevail</td>
<td>beat</td>
<td>most</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. discerning</td>
<td>bleak</td>
<td>new</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. adjust</td>
<td>challenge</td>
<td>observe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. witness</td>
<td>consent</td>
<td>participate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. assent</td>
<td>dissent</td>
<td>preserve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. stark</td>
<td>imperceptible</td>
<td>regulate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. accustomed</td>
<td>insightful</td>
<td>unbalance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. majority</td>
<td>lose</td>
<td>used</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**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.

1. If it is too warm in the room, you can ...?... the thermostat.

2. In the ...?... landscape the artist painted, there was no sign of life at all.

3. With her ...?... grasp of the problem, Eleni was able to find a good solution.

4. Once the agreement had been signed, neither party could ...?... it.

5. Determination will almost always ...?... in a contest with a challenging task.

6. Do you think the principal will ...?... to our plan to revise the dress code?

7. At the end of winter, it is a joy to ...?... the earth return to green growth.

8. After a few days, the puppy became ...?... to the collar around his neck.

9. The rest of the committee agreed that the club's funds could be spent without a vote, but Nick had to ...?... .

10. A ...?... of the United States population lives in an urban rather than rural area.
**Exercise 5: Shades of Meaning**

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 the context, decide whether a Master Word or its synonym would better complete each sentence. Use a dictionary if necessary.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>demur</th>
<th>prevail</th>
<th>stark</th>
<th>witness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>protest</td>
<td>dominate</td>
<td>sheer</td>
<td>observe</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. The naturalist will need to ...?... the behavior of wolves for many weeks before drawing any conclusions.

2. The idea for the medical breakthrough was ...?... genius.

3. With his greater height and talent, the home team’s forward ...?...(d, ed) in the championship basketball game.

4. The judge’s ruling seemed so unfair that the citizens ...?...(d, ed) loudly.

5. Tony ...?...(d, ed) the collision between the two cars on the icy road.

6. Teri’s mother knew that her daughter’s good judgment would ...?... and she would finish her homework before going out.

7. Alex’s friends asked him to run for school treasurer, but he ...?...(d, ed) because he was too busy.

8. Tonya’s boisterous laugh was in ...?... contrast to her quiet speaking voice.

**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 in this activity are action/receiver of action, part/whole, synonyms, and antonyms. (See page 158 for a guide to analogy types.)

- read : book :: ____________ : crime
- sovereign : monarchy :: ____________ : democracy
- talk : converse :: ____________ : approve
- overthrow : surrender :: preserve : ____________
- gloomy : optimistic :: neglectful : ____________

**Write About It: Figurative Language (Oxymoron)**

An oxymoron is a figure of speech that combines contradictory ideas. Oxymorons that have made their way into everyday use include “deafening silence” and “bitter sweet.” Dickinson’s “Much Madness is Divinest Sense” includes contradictory ideas which might be expressed as an oxymoron in these ways: “sensible madness” or “mad sense.” **Write five more oxymorons** using Master Words or words related to the Master Words.
Glossary of Definitions

Definitions and parts of speech of these Master Words are based on the usage in the selection in which it appears.

academy n. school; place of learning [20]
accompany v. to help; to aid [4]
acquainted adj. used to; familiar [11]
acquire v. to gain; to procure [14]
adieu interj. French word used at parting; good-bye [24]
adjust v. to change; to fix something so that it fits or is suited [11]
adorn v. to add beauty to; to make more attractive, especially by use of ornaments [22]
affecting adj. causing emotion; moving [11]
aide n. one who assists a superior [5]
sight v. come to rest; land [17]
alleged adj. (a crime or action) said to have taken place; claimed [28]
alter v. to change; to modify [1]
alteration n. change [23]
alternative n. one of two or more choices [18]
ambiguous adj. not clear; having more than one meaning [25]
amble v. walk leisurely; saunter [27]
amiable adj. friendly [23]
analysis n. the process of discovering the qualities and components of something; scrutiny [21]
annoying adj. disturbing or irritating [3]
anthem n. a song of praise; a patriotic song [8]
apparent adj. seeming; supposed [20]
applauding adj. showing approval; approving [15]
apprehended adj. understood; perceived [26]
apprise v. to inform; to notify; [11]
appropriate v. to take for your own purposes; to steal [20]
aspiring adj. trying to achieve something; desiring; hoping [28]
assert v. agree; concede [1]
assimilation n. process of being absorbed into a culture; acculturation [3]
assume v. to take upon oneself [5]
assumption n. something that is taken for granted; belief [4]
atonement n. satisfaction or reparation for a wrong; amends [23]
attached adj. have a sense of connection with a person, thing, or place; bond [19]
attribute v. to credit; to ascribe to [26]
authority n. a person having power or control; an official [19]
befitting adj. appropriate; suitable [14]
benign adj. beneficial; not harmful [29]
biography n. a work about a person [20]
borne v. past participle of bear; to carry; to endure [14]
bound adj. tied; in bonds; wrapped [17]
boundaryless adj. having no limits; vast [13]
brief adj. lasting a short period of time [17]
caprice n. sudden change of mind or of behavior; impulse [15]
career n. the cause of a person’s life, especially in a particular pursuit or profession [5]
incessant n. stop; pause [23]
chronic adj. continuing over a period of time or frequently recurring; lingering; continual [7]
chrysalis n. the hard outer case of the pupa of an insect; a transitional state [4]
clause n. part of a legal document; an article in a treaty or constitution [12]
code n. a set of rules used to translate information from one system to another [25]
coin v. to come up with a new word or phrase [26]
command n. rule; law; demand [13]
compassion n. to start; to begin [7]
commission n. a group of people given a certain task to complete; committee [6]
compliments adj. obedient to rules and laws; submissive [12]
component n. a part of something; an element [21]
conceit n. arrogance; an excessive pride in one’s own accomplishments and abilities [23]
concept n. a general idea; a mental construct [18]
confined adj. limited in scope; restricted [30]
conformity n. action in accordance with some specified standard or authority [5]
control n. agreement; approval [15]
consult v. to ask for advice; to seek information [2]
contribution n. a gift; effort made in common with others; participation [5]
conventional adj. based on what is normal; accepted; traditional [22]
coping adj. relating to a means or way of adjusting to situations [5]
corps n. a group of people under common leadership [10]
courtesies adj. marked by good manners; considerate [27]
cove n. a sheltered area [in a forest]; also, a small sheltered bay [29]
curator n. a person who oversees a museum or art collection [20]
debris n. litter; rubble [29]
deceptive adj. tending to mislead by a false appearance; misleading [18]
deem v. to consider; to think [11]
defect n. an imperfection; a fault [2]
defense n. the act of turning from one’s loyalty, duty, friends, etc. [9]
definitive adj. being the most complete or most accurate; authoritative [20]
demur v. disagree; object on the basis of values or morals [11]
departure n. a moving away from the norm; a change [22]
dependence n. state of needing help from someone; reliance [11]
derivative adj. characterized by ridicule, mockery, scornful laughter [16]
despair v. give up; surrender [13]
detachment n. an attitude of disinterest or aloofness [27]
devise v. to make; to create [15]
dialect n. language particular to a certain location; here used as adj. [26]
directive n. command; instruction [25]
discerning adj. clear-eyed; perceptive [1]
discipline n. training which strengthens the character; controlled behavior [7]
disclose v. to expose or reveal; to make known [9]
disinterested adj. not influences by selfish desire; detached [23]
dispatch v. to send off [11]
disperse v. to spread out from a point; [physics] divide into parts [21]
displace v. to take the place of something; to displace [26]
disposal n. control or command, as of funds or goods to be given out [9]
disposition n. attitude; state of mind [14]
disrupt v. to cause to break apart or stop; to disturb [29]
dissatisfied adj. lack of harmony; harsh sounding [13]
distinct adj. set apart; unequal [14]
diverge v. to move in different directions from a common point [16]
drill n. strict training involving much repetition [10]
economic adj. relating to the production, distribution, and use of wealth; financial [30]
elevation n. state in which the spirits are high, as from joy [16]

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electrify v. to excite someone; to stimulate [19]
emblem n. a sign or symbol that identifies something [4]
eminent v. well known; famous [2]
emit v. to put out or discharge something, such as a gas or light; release [21]
encounter v. to meet, often in an unpleasant or difficult way [30]
endear v. to attract; to charm [2]
endeavor v. to make an effort; to try [12]
endure v. to last; to go on existing [13]
enforce v. to administer; to discharge [12]
enforcement n. the act of putting into force or carrying out; execution [30]
enhanced adj. raised to a higher degree or value; elevated or enlarged [5]
entice v. to sign up; to gain or win [2]
entity n. an independent thing or being; a being [27]
entreaty n. an earnest request; a plea [15]
environment n. external conditions or influences; surroundings [16]
epic adj. large in scope; legendary [27]
equipped adj. having equipment for a job; supplied [19]
establish v. to set up; to begin [6]
estimate n. an educated guess; approximate value [6]
etymological adj. related to the history of words [26]
evince v. to display or exhibit as a quality or trait; manifest [16]
evolve v. to grow; to change over time; to become more complex [18]
exceed v. to be greater in number; to surpass [26]
execute v. to take upon oneself [10]
fabric n. framework or structure; pattern or plan of construction [18]
famine n. extreme scarcity, especially of food; starvation [7]
fictional adj. related to a fiction; imaginary; Invented [20]
flattering adj. playing upon the vanity of someone; beguiling; misleading [24]
foreordained adj. predestined; assured [4]
frantic adj. wild with passion, excitement, fear, etc.; frenzied [19]
fraternal adj. brotherly; friendly [11]
frayed adj. worn; tattered; ragged [29]
genetic adj. of or related to genes or heredity [25]
glum adj. moody; sullen or silent; gloomy [10]
haunt n. a familiar place often visited; hangout; stomping ground [29]
headlong adv. carelessly; brashly; recklessly; with force [6]
headway n. movement in a forward direction; progress [6]
heritage n. legacy; tradition [5]
hieroglyphic n. a figure or character with a meaning that is hidden; cypher [21]
historical adj. relating to the past [16]
humane adj. compassionate, kind, gentle [28]
hypocrisy n. the practice of pretending to be better than you actually are; dishonesty [3]
hypothesis n. an assumption, perhaps temporary, which is made without proof [9]
ideograph n. a written symbol as in a Chinese character [17]
idiology n. the worship of idols; excessive devotion [24]
immaculate adj. without spot or blemish; without fault or error; pure [8]
impease n. situation with no way out; a dead end [22]
impetus n. a stimulus; something that causes action [18]
improved adj. created or invented on the spur of the moment [2]
imprudent adj. careless; reckless [15]
inconsistent adj. not regular; lacking logic [6]
incorrect adj. changing; fickly [24]
incumbent adj. necessary; obligatory [23]
indifferent adj. without interest; apathetic [10]
indulgent adj. lax; tolerant; merciful [15]
inexorable adj. unavoidable; certain [28]
infinite adj. extreme; immeasurable; endless [16]
ingenuous adj. clever; inventive [4]
inscribed adj. marked with symbols; engraved [14]
ininst n. a natural drive or impulse; an urge [8]
integrity n. living by moral principles; honesty [28]
intimidate v. to fill with awe or fear; to frighten [12]
inventory n. an examination of goods on hand or a list of such goods [9]
issue v. come into sight; emerge [4]
keen adj. enthusiastic; interested [20]
laden adj. weighed down; overloaded [29]
legislation n. a governmental body that crafts laws; congress [27]
liberal adj. generous; giving [24]
logical adj. predictable; systematic [25]
loiter v. to move slowly; to linger; to dawdle or waste time [8]
lustrious adj. shining with reflected light; glossy; radiant [8]
majority n. the group with the most members or votes; plurality [1]
maneuver n. a skillful movement; an exercise by a group such as a troop or band [10]
martial adj. related to war or warriors; military [17]
mastery n. expert skill or knowledge in a particular subject [8]
mechanism n. the means by which something is accomplished; device [3]
mediocre adj. of average quality; ordinary [10]
mentor n. a teacher; advisor [28]
merit adj. being nothing more than; plain [17]
misleading n. feeling of doubt; worry [2]
modulation n. change in tone; in music, a transition to a different key [13]
morale n. a person's or group's mental attitude [10]
motive n. a reason for doing something; rationale [25]
mutability n. flux; state of change; instability [13]
mutable adj. shared; joint [15]
myriad adj. countless; many; variable [21]
namesake n. a person or object that has the same name as another; [20]
necessity n. something necessary; a need; a requirement [14]
nominal adj. in name only, not in reality; supposed [23]
norm n. standard; what is expected; model [3]
notorious adj. well known, sometimes in an unfavorable way; noted [6]
nuance n. subtle distinction or variation; nicety; overtone [3]
obscurant adj. covered over; blocked from view [20]
obsolete adj. outdated; behind the times [4]
obtain v. gather; collect [12]
obvious adj. easy to see or to understand; clear [25]
occur adj. hidden or secretive; also, mysterious and beyond understanding [9]
onperson adj. found everywhere; common [21]
opaque adj. not transparent; misty; cloudy [17]
oppress v. boss around; dominate [16]
optimist n. person who works with glasses or optical equipment [21]
opinion n. a tendency to see the best in things; hopefulness [27]
order n. community under religious rule; a society of knights [17]
organism n. any form of plant or animal life [18]
ornithologist n. a person who studies birds [19]
othodox adj. conforming to an accepted standard; conventional; approved [7]
pall v. to make weary; to make dull [15]
paralyzed adj. unable to move; helpless; stunned; amazed [19]
parasite n. a life form that lives off of another; leech [25]
pathetic adj. stirring up pity or sorrow [30]
pedestal n. a platform for an object such as a statue [13]
pedigree n. a record of ancestors; lineage [26]
perceive v. to see; to understand [14]
perpetuity n. endless duration; into the distant future [12]
persistence n. the act of remaining determined despite opposition; determination [2]
persona n. character; identity [28]
phenomenon n. remarkable event or person; occurrence [26]
post n. a position, usually in a government office; a duty [14]
preceding adj. going before; previous [10]
precise adj. exact; well defined [22]
presence n. company; existing in near proximity [17]
preservation n. the process of keeping alive, safe, or whole; to maintain [19]
prevail v. to be greater in strength; to win [1]
primal adj. existing at the beginning; ancient [25]
principle n. an established rule of conduct; standard of behavior; belief [5]
procure v. to acquire; to see to [24]
prospect n. outlook; expectation [11]
provision n. part of a legal document, law, etc.; that states terms or restrictions [30]
provoking adj. moving to anger or action; arousing [2]
prudence n. skillful management of practical matters; good judgment [9]
psyche n. mind or soul [5]
pursuit n. search; quest [22]
quality adj. peculiar in a pleasing, interesting, or old-fashioned way [8]
rambling adj. spread irregularly or unevenly in several directions [8]
random adj. aimless; without order or purpose [19]
range v. vary between two points; extend [21]
rash adj. reckless; impulsive [24]
ration n. an allowance or share; particularly a daily allowance of food or supplies [7]
readiness n. state of being ready or prepared [5]
rearrange v. to put back in order; to change the position of something [7]
reconnaissance n. investigation; inspection [12]
redress n. the act of setting right a wrong; amends [30]
relinquishment n. a giving up; a surrender [12]
remorse n. painful regret for a wrongdoing; mental anguish caused by guilt [30]
render v. to give; to supply [11]
replicate v. to make an exact copy; duplicate; reproduce [25]
repose n. sleep; rest [24]
reserve n. hidden supply; asset [15]
residential adj. reserved for homes; not commercial [27]
resort v. turn to; have recourse; to stoop down [3]
reveal v. to show; to disclose [15]
reverberate v. to have continuing influence; echo [28]
rite n. ceremony, such as a wedding or religious service [24]
rutile adj. related to a rite or ceremony; ceremonial [22]
root v. search for food in the ground with snout; dig; forage [29]
satiate adj. supplied with too much; often producing feelings of disgust [30]
scale n. thin coating on the surface of something; covering [29]
seclusion n. state of being separated from others; isolation; retirement; solitude [9]
secure v. to succeed in gaining something; obtain [30]
serene adj. peaceful; calm; tranquil [8]
sheer adj. unmixted with anything; pure; unqualified; absolute [10]
significant adj. important; having a special meaning [9]
site n. a location, such as the place where someone lives [19]
slowly adj. untidy or messy; careless or slipshod [7]
snobbery n. behavior in which belittles those considered inferior; arrogance [16]
sounding n. a measurement of the depth of water [6]
species n. type [11]
spectrum n. the entire range of colors or wavelengths of light; the extent of something [21]
spontaneous adj. arising on its own; unprompted [26]
spire n. a small twig or stalk of a plant, usually with flowers; shoot [29]

stampede v. to cause a sudden rush of startled animals or a crowd of people; etc. [9]
standstill n. situation in which there is no movement; dead stop [17]
stark adj. severe; grim; absolute [1]
subsist v. to keep going; to manage [11]
substantial adj. real; true; also, of considerable size or importance [24]
subtle adj. discreet; clever; skillful [16]
sufficient adj. plenty of; enough [23]
survey v. to take a broad, comprehensive view of a situation; to examine [16]
weltering adj. oppressively hot [27]
talent n. a natural or acquired ability or gift [5]
technique n. a specific way to make something or carry out a task; method [22]
tendency n. an inclination toward a certain manner or belief; a leaning [22]
tête-à-tête n. private conversation; chat [23]
them n. an idea or topic addressed in a work or movement; a concern [22]
transfixed adj. made motionless, as with amazement, terror, etc.; held in one position [8]
tyrannical adj. cruel; harsh; oppressive [27]
unacceptable adj. not satisfactory; intolerable [6]
uncouth adj. unsophisticated; without grace [14]
underestimate v. to minimize; to value something to low [4]
unrestrained adj. not hindered by limits; uncontrolled [18]
vague adj. not clearly defined; indistinct [7]
validity n. legality; lawfulness; authority [12]
verdict n. legal decision; judgment [28]
vicinity n. a location near a place; area [6]
vigilance n. face; appearance [13]
volatile adj. easily changed, usually for the worse; explosive [28]
voracious adj. craving; greedy; ravenous; also, eager in pursuing any desire [7]
wary adj. on guard; suspicious; leery [19]
wholly adv. completely; entirely [2]
wit n. see; to observe [1]
work n. achievements; creations; handiwork [13]
yoke n. something that binds or enslaves a person; bondage [4]