



English 7: Reading: Module 1: Lesson 1: Section 6

Understand New Vocabulary Using Roots and Affixes

It All Adds Up

Instructions: Read “Montana Soccer-Mom Moment” by Laura Munson below. Pay attention to the highlighted words and phrase. When you are finished reading the article, return to the lesson to answer the multiple-choice questions.

Montana Soccer-Mom Moment by Laura Munson

I live in northwest Montana, and I have a teenager, and my teenager plays sports. That means a lot of driving —over-the-Rocky-Mountains-and-back-in-one-day kind of driving. I think about Meriwether Lewis every time I cross the Continental Divide, usually with sleeping soccer players wearing headphones in the back of my Suburban. I want to say, “Can you imagine everything depending on your horse and your ability to dream of an ocean past the mountains?” But it isn’t worth the eye-rolling.

Teenagers seem devoid of wonder. I get tired of making the trip yet again, this tremendous beauty being met with the clicking of tiny buttons on tiny devices. The conversation: “Why isn’t there a Gap here? Why do we live in the middle of nowhere?” I want to shake them back to who they were just a few years ago, **skipping and yawping** at the bounty that Montana dishes up daily.

Last week, something **miraculous** happened. My daughter’s teammates had rides, so she and I made our mountain crossing alone. She forgot her iPod. There was no cellphone service.

I didn’t want to jinx it. I kept my mouth shut and turned up a CD of hers that I had in the car in hopes of this exact moment.

“I love this song,” she said.

I held my breath. *Try to remain cool.* But the opportunity to get into her heart again was just too much to pass up. So I risked it.

“Remember when we used to play that game?” I asked. “We’d come up with a list of things that might be on the road, and then we’d get points if we saw them.”



Source: 42-15488306, Elk City Oklahoma, Flickr



Source: Near Anaconda, Montana, Lee Bennett, Flickr

My hopes **hovered** like a red-tailed hawk. “Like a red-tailed hawk. Or a doe with a fawn. Or —”

“A kid on a unicycle.”

She’s alive! “A kid on a unicycle?”

“Yeah. We had a category: Weird Things. And we saw a kid on a unicycle. Remember?”

I resisted the urge to say that the word “weird” is a relative term, just like the word “normal.” “Yeah, a kid on a unicycle,” I said. “Weird.”

She did a little half-laugh—gracious for a 14-year-old. “How ’bout Situations You Wouldn’t Want to Be In,” she said. “There’s a ton of those in Montana.”

I didn’t take her comment personally, as if she were about to yell, “Being stuck with my stupid mother on a road trip without friends or technology.”

And then it came. A camper on the side of the road, missing a wheel. A man on the other side of the road, picking up a wheel. A family standing next to the camper with their hands on their hips.

We both shouted, “There’s one!”

“How about rare wildlife,” she said. “Or . . . like . . . you know the way you can see rain coming? That. Or . . . what about a hitchhiker? Or roadkill. Or a sign that leads to nothing. Or an avalanche chute.”

I loved hearing that list tumble off her tongue, playing this old game. I thought about what it was to be raised out here versus my city upbringing. Maybe, to my child, crossing a mountain pass twice in a day really is “normal,” but a guy on a unicycle is “weird.”

“A sign that leads to nothing!” she screamed. And sure enough, there was an old sign on a post with the word BAR on it, and an arrow pointing to a stand of trees.

“That’s only worth five points,” she said. “We’re always passing signs that point to nothing.”

Maybe she’s been paying more attention than I thought.



I watched as she got hungry for it. As she leaned into it. Pressed her forehead on the window.

“Oh . . . my . . . God,” she said, the way you talk around candles lighted for something sad or holy or both. “Stop the car.”

I pulled onto the shoulder, in a particularly remote part of our already-remote drive. No buildings or sign of humans. And I watched my daughter walk toward something that most people would run from. I stopped. My city mind begged her to stop, to come back to the safety of the car. But my heart told me to stay out of it. Because this wasn't just roadkill. It was a mountain lion.

In all my Montana years, I'd never seen one. They say you don't—not until their teeth are around your neck.

My daughter stood over it, splayed out as if it were asleep but for the gashes on its hind legs and the blood pooling from its mouth. “It must have been sick,” she said. “It must have wanted to get hit. To be put out of its misery.” I saw that she was crying.

Infinite points for this, I thought.



Source: Big Hole Pass, Hike395, Wikimedia