

## UNIT 4

Read the following passage, taking note of the **boldface** words and their contexts. These words are among those you will be studying in Unit 4. As you complete the exercises in this Unit, it may help to refer to the way the words are used below.

### Toni Cade Bambara

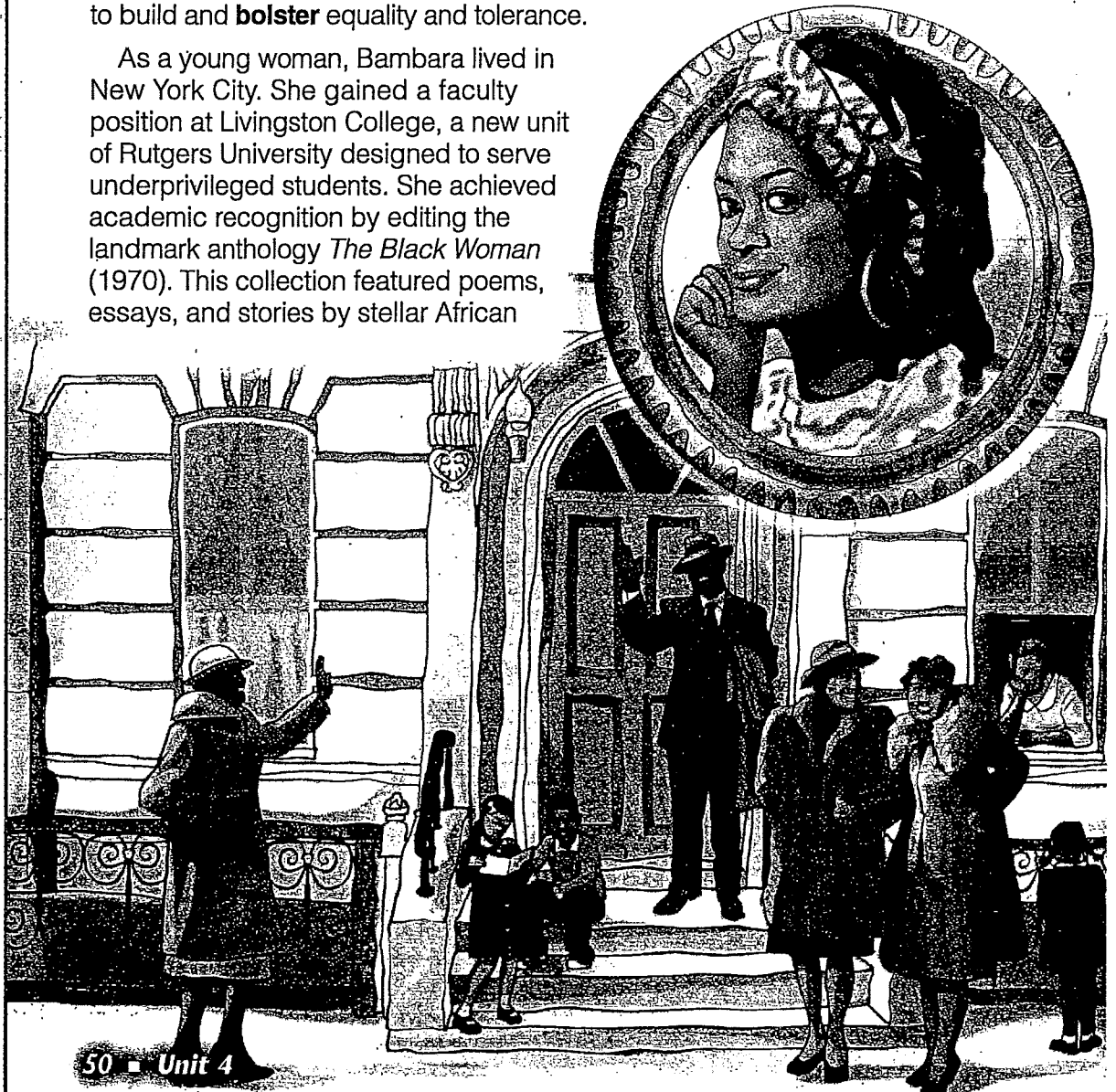
#### < Author Profile >

**T**oni Cade Bambara (1939–1995) wore many hats during her lifetime: writer, editor, teacher, filmmaker, activist, and social worker. Born in Harlem, she came of age during the civil rights movement and the stirrings of feminism. Bambara **deplored** social injustice. Her disapproval spurred her to work hard to **oust** injustice from American society. Her career united diverse interests in a single-minded effort to build and **bolster** equality and tolerance.

As a young woman, Bambara lived in New York City. She gained a faculty position at Livingston College, a new unit of Rutgers University designed to serve underprivileged students. She achieved academic recognition by editing the landmark anthology *The Black Woman* (1970). This collection featured poems, essays, and stories by stellar African

American writers, including Alice Walker, Audre Lorde, and Nikki Giovanni. When one **peruses** the anthology today, it is hard to imagine that no one before Bambara had attempted such a project.

Two years later, Bambara **mustered** a group of short stories for her publication entitled *Gorilla, My Love*. It decisively **annulled** any doubt that Bambara was a



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major new voice in American fiction. The stylistic traits that her work was **prone** to are clearly visible: urban settings, first-person narrators, the theme of community, and an uncanny mastery of the spoken word. For Bambara, urban language was far from **frivolous**. Instead, she used it to plunge the reader into a real and edgy world. Bristling with sassy humor, Bambara's leading characters are often young black girls who refuse to knuckle under to prejudice or disrespect. Strong and self-reliant, they feel no **qualms** about talking back, as is shown by Squeaky, the narrator in one of Bambara's best-known stories, "Raymond's Run." Squeaky may not have been born on Easy Street, but as portrayed by Bambara, she possesses a wealth of wisdom and compassion at an early age.

During the 1970s and 1980s, Bambara **sustained** a hectic schedule of teaching, writing, and social and political activism. Her first novel, *The Salt Eaters* (1980), focuses on a fictional community organizer, Velma Henry. After suffering a nervous breakdown, Velma seeks **recourse** with an untraditional healer. In the novel, Bambara presents illness and

pain as metaphors for social and political oppression. Health issues **obsess** many of the characters. The novel presents multiple perspectives and an intricate, experimental structure. *The Salt Eaters* won the American Book Award and the Langston Hughes Society Award in 1981.

During this period, Bambara was also active in documentary film work. Such films, she felt, could shake up indifferent viewers who had become **blasé** or **staid** about injustice and inequality. Her script for the film *The Bombing of Osage Avenue* (1986) received best documentary awards from the Pennsylvania Association of Broadcasters and the National Black Programming Consortium.

It was also during this period that Bambara began the novel that many critics consider her masterpiece: *Those Bones Are Not My Child*. Harrowing and suspenseful, the novel presents a city caught in the grip of political and racial tensions. Sadly, Bambara did not live to complete this work. She died of cancer on December 9, 1995. The Nobel Prize-winning novelist Toni Morrison, ever **solicitous** of her good friend Bambara, saw the book through to publication. Bambara's work remains popular and is often included in anthologies of notable stories for young adults.



Audio



For iWords and audio passages, snap the code, or go to [vocabularyworkshop.com](http://vocabularyworkshop.com).

## Definitions

Note the spelling, pronunciation, part(s) of speech, and definition(s) of each of the following words. Then write the appropriate form of the word in the blank spaces in the illustrative sentence(s) following. Finally, study the lists of synonyms and antonyms.

1. **annul**  
(ə nəl')

(v.) to reduce to nothing; to make ineffective or inoperative; to declare legally invalid or void

The state legislators voted by an overwhelming majority to \_\_\_\_\_ the out-of-date law.

SYNONYMS: cancel, abolish, invalidate, nullify

ANTONYMS: validate, authorize, ratify

2. **blasé**  
(blä zä')

(adj.) indifferent, bored as a result of having enjoyed many pleasures; apathetic

Battle-hardened soldiers may tend to become a bit \_\_\_\_\_ about the dangers they face.

ANTONYMS: enthusiastic, passionate, fervent

3. **bolster**  
(böl' stər)

(v.) to support, give a boost to; (n.) a long pillow or cushion; a supporting post

When you write a research paper, you should always use appropriate facts to \_\_\_\_\_ your case.

The sofa has four comfortable \_\_\_\_\_.

SYNONYMS: (v.) reinforce, buttress, validate

ANTONYMS: (v.) undermine, weaken, impair

4. **deplore**  
(di plôr')

(v.) to feel or express regret or disapproval

Social critics \_\_\_\_\_ what they believe is a widespread decline in good manners.

SYNONYMS: lament, bemoan, bewail

ANTONYMS: approve, commend, extol

5. **frivolous**  
(friv' ə ləs)

(adj.) of little importance, not worthy of serious attention; not meant seriously

I'll ignore your \_\_\_\_\_ suggestion.

SYNONYMS: silly, foolish, inane, petty

ANTONYMS: serious, important, significant

6. **muster**  
(məs' tər)

(v.) to bring together for service or battle; to gather or summon; to amount to, comprise, include; (n.) a list of military personnel; a gathering, accumulation

You will need to \_\_\_\_\_ your courage to face the bully who has been tormenting you.

7. **nonentity**  
(nän en' tē)

8. **obsess**  
(äb ses')

9. **ornate**  
(ôr nāt')

10. **oust**  
(aüst)

11. **peruse**  
(pə rüz')

12. **porous**  
(pôr' əs)

13. **promonto**  
(präm' ən')

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 you.

The sleepy new recruits assembled on the parade ground  
 for the early morning \_\_\_\_\_.

SYNONYMS: (v.) mobilize, marshal; (n.) roster, inventory

ANTONYMS: (v.) disband, dismiss, disperse

**7. nonentity**  
 (nān en' tē)

(n.) a person or thing of no importance

We may not be movie stars, but we did not deserve to be  
 treated as \_\_\_\_\_ by the presumptuous  
 and haughty headwaiter.

SYNONYM: nobody

ANTONYM: celebrity

**8. obsess**  
 (āb ses')

(v.) to trouble, haunt, or fill the mind

If you allow fear of failure to \_\_\_\_\_ you,  
 you will find it difficult or even impossible to achieve your  
 goals in life.

SYNONYM: preoccupy

**9. ornate**  
 (ōr nāt')

(adj.) elaborately decorated; showily splendid

If you ask me, an \_\_\_\_\_ gilded frame  
 distracts the viewer's eye from a simple drawing.

SYNONYMS: fancy, flashy, flamboyant

ANTONYMS: plain, stark, austere

**10. oust**  
 (aüst)

(v.) to remove, drive out of a position or place

Military leaders \_\_\_\_\_ the duly elected  
 president and took over the government.

SYNONYMS: expel, eject

ANTONYMS: admit, welcome

**11. peruse**  
 (pə rüz')

(v.) to read thoroughly and carefully

It is wise to have a lawyer \_\_\_\_\_ an  
 agreement before you sign it.

SYNONYMS: study, pore over, scrutinize

**12. porous**  
 (pōr' əs)

(adj.) full of tiny holes; able to be penetrated by air or water

Some synthetic materials are as \_\_\_\_\_  
 and strong as natural sponges.

SYNONYMS: leaky, permeable

ANTONYMS: airtight, impermeable

**13. promontory**  
 (prām' ən tōr ē)

(n.) a high point of land extending into water

We chose a high \_\_\_\_\_ overlooking the  
 sea as the perfect spot for our picnic lunch.

SYNONYMS: cliff, outcrop, jetty

## Choosing the Right Word

1. Isn't it strange Emily Dickens **promontory**?
2. I admire the v speech entire written notes.
3. If you want to you begin by the rules.
4. The team doc **solicitous** fig
5. The novelist is style, using m and involved
6. I think that tall private life is
7. When the mile **(sustain, obs**
8. After the claim estate will be
9. My uncle is (s watching ever
10. I hope somed beautiful view
11. Because they **perusing** the
12. It is all very w but why don't
13. After months ( **peruse, bols**
14. While my siste **(porous, blas**
15. The way the v my suspicion:

14. **prone** (prōn) (*adj.*) lying face down; inclined, likely  
 Unfortunately, I am \_\_\_\_\_ to earaches and sinus infections.  
 SYNONYMS: prostrate, liable  
 ANTONYMS: standing upright, unlikely
15. **qualm** (kwām) (*n.*) a pang of conscience, uneasiness, misgiving, or doubt; a feeling of faintness or nausea  
 Don't you have serious \_\_\_\_\_ about voting for such a relatively unknown and inexperienced candidate?  
 SYNONYMS: regret, second thought, scruple
16. **recourse** (rē' kōrs) (*n.*) a person or thing turned to for help or advice; the act of seeking help or protection  
 If my letter of complaint fails to get results, I will still have \_\_\_\_\_ to a higher authority.  
 SYNONYMS: redress, remedy
17. **residue** (rez' ə dü) (*n.*) a remainder, that which remains when a part has been used up or removed  
 A \_\_\_\_\_ of sticky taffy made the pan difficult to clean.  
 SYNONYMS: remnant, remains, leavings
18. **solicitous** (sə lis' ət əs) (*adj.*) showing concern or care; fearful or anxious about someone or something  
 Neighbors made \_\_\_\_\_ inquiries about the state of the elderly couple's health.  
 SYNONYM: concerned  
 ANTONYMS: unconcerned, indifferent, apathetic
19. **staid** (stād) (*adj.*) serious and dignified; quiet or subdued in character or conduct  
 Many companies have a dress code which requires that all employees wear \_\_\_\_\_ colors such as navy or gray.  
 SYNONYMS: sedate, sober, prim  
 ANTONYMS: gaudy, jaunty, unconventional
20. **sustain** (sə stān') (*v.*) to support, nourish, keep up; to suffer, undergo; to bear up under, withstand; to affirm the validity of  
 You may \_\_\_\_\_ a serious eye injury if you forget to wear your safety goggles when you work with chemicals or power tools.  
 SYNONYMS: foster, uphold

## Choosing the Right Word

Select the **boldface** word that better completes each sentence. You might refer to the passage on pages 50–51 to see how most of these words are used in context.



American poet Emily Dickinson wrote almost two thousand poems, but only about a dozen were published during her lifetime.

1. Isn't it strange that a great American writer like Emily Dickinson was considered a (**nonentity, promontory**) in her own lifetime?
2. I admire the way Anne delivered a long, involved speech entirely without (**muster, recourse**) to written notes.
3. If you want to learn to play chess, I suggest that you begin by (**deploring, perusing**) a summary of the rules.
4. The team doctor ran onto the field toward the (**prone, solicitous**) figure of the injured football player.
5. The novelist is known for her (**staid, ornate**) writing style, using many unusual words, figures of speech, and involved constructions.
6. I think that talking loudly on the phone in public so that everyone knows about your private life is (**deplorable, blasé**) behavior.
7. When the mile run began, Ken quickly took the lead, but we knew that he could not (**sustain, obsess**) that pace for the entire race.
8. After the claims of all the creditors have been satisfied, the (**residue, qualms**) of the estate will be shared by the children.
9. My uncle is (**sustained, obsessed**) with football and spends all day Sunday watching every game on television.
10. I hope someday to build a house on that (**nonentity, promontory**) commanding a beautiful view of the bay.
11. Because they failed to deliver the goods on time, we felt justified in (**annulling, perusing**) the entire contract.
12. It is all very well to criticize and (**bolster, deplore**) the mistakes of young people, but why don't you also give them credit for their good qualities?
13. After months of rejection, Leah decided to hire a professional manager, hoping to (**peruse, bolster**) her acting career.
14. While my sister's memory is as retentive as a steel trap, mine seems to be as (**porous, blasé**) as a sieve.
15. The way the witness blushed and stuttered when questioned (**ousted, bolstered**) my suspicions that he was not telling the truth.

16. I would not call Lucy a friend, as she made no (**qualms, muster**) about sharing your secret with everyone!
17. My brother tried to appear (**blasé, obsessed**) when he was named to the honor society, but I know that he was thrilled.
18. I like jokes as much as anyone, but I don't approve of making such (**frivolous, porous**) remarks when a serious matter is under discussion.
19. We learned that behind the old professor's (**ornate, staid**) exterior there was a keen wit and a lively sense of what life is all about.
20. After being the apple of her eye for years, I suddenly found myself (**ousted, sustained**) from her affections by an upstart rival.
21. "It will take all the strength we can (**annul, muster**) to dislodge the enemy from that hill," the general observed grimly.
22. Only a person who is (**obsessed, bolstered**) with a desire to create beautiful music can become a great pianist or violinist.
23. That wonderful woman could not have been more (**solicitous, frivolous**) of me if she had been my own mother.
24. I believed at the time that I was justified in refusing to help them, but later I felt some (**qualms, recourse**) about it.
25. Those who think recess is a (**staid, frivolous**) activity do not see its purpose.

## Synonyms

Choose the word from this Unit that is the same or most nearly the same in meaning as the **boldface** word or expression in the phrase. Write that word on the line. Use a dictionary if necessary.

1. to be regarded as an **unknown** \_\_\_\_\_
2. **apt** to take unnecessary chances \_\_\_\_\_
3. resisted efforts to **overthrow** the monarchy \_\_\_\_\_
4. made of a **penetrable** material \_\_\_\_\_
5. settled the dispute without **resort** to the law \_\_\_\_\_
6. may **strengthen** your ability to resist colds \_\_\_\_\_
7. chose an **intricate** silverware pattern \_\_\_\_\_
8. scrubbed away the lime **deposit** \_\_\_\_\_
9. special exercises to **maintain** muscle tone \_\_\_\_\_
10. the spectacular view from the **headland** \_\_\_\_\_

## Antonym

1. the **entirety**
2. sheep gra
3. an **unador**
4. designing
5. a room cro

## Complete the Sentence

1. When we h  
hospital to
2. The furnis  
more like a
3. It is now tir  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. When we t  
of the old t
5. Her public  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. Every able  
to fight off
7. "In that ba  
food to \_\_\_\_
8. When my c  
with his so
9. I do not cri  
attempt to
10. There I wa  
accomplis

## Vocabulary In Context

### Literary Text

The following excerpts are from *The Works of Edgar Allan Poe, Volume 2* by Edgar Allan Poe. Some of the words you have studied in this Unit appear in **boldface** type. Complete each statement below the excerpt by circling the letter of the correct answer.

1. Just opposite the **promontory** upon whose apex we were placed, and at a distance of some five or six miles out at sea, there was visible a small, bleak-looking island. . . . ("A Descent into the Maelström")

A **promontory** is a(n)

- a. lake  
b. cavern  
c. bluff  
d. mountain

2. The grave was carelessly and loosely filled with an exceedingly **porous** soil; and thus some air was necessarily admitted. ("The Premature Burial")

Soil that is **porous** is

- a. absorbent  
b. dense  
c. rancid  
d. arid

3. Another step before my fall, and the world had seen me no more. And the death just avoided, was of that very character which I had regarded as fabulous and **frivolous** in the tales respecting the Inquisition. ("The Pit and the Pendulum")

Something regarded as **frivolous** is NOT

- a. minor  
b. significant  
c. believable  
d. exciting

4. He was attired, as I had expected, in a costume altogether similar to my own; wearing a Spanish cloak of blue velvet, begirt about the waist with a crimson belt **sustaining** a rapier. A mask of black silk entirely covered his face. ("William Wilson")

When something is **sustaining** another object, it is

- a. supporting it  
b. complementing it  
c. decorating it  
d. concealing it

5. To give to this a better coloring, I had contrived to have assembled a party of some eight or ten, and was **solicitously** careful that the introduction of cards should appear accidental, and originate in the proposal of my contemplated dupe himself. ("William Wilson")

If an act is done **solicitously**, it is done with

- a. a lack of interest  
b. serious doubts  
c. clumsiness  
d. great care



An illustration from Poe's short story "The Pit and the Pendulum"

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Quiz



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