

Unit 2 — Dreams for Sale

2A Introduction

An infomercial is a television show that tries to sell a new product by telling you everything about it and how it will change your life. Infomercials are usually pretty dramatic. In this unit, an impossible new product is marketed in an infomercial. Would you buy it?

2B Song Lyrics

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Hey folks!
Do you wish there was a product you could take,
That could solve all your problems right away?
Do you have a yearning? Do you eagerly desire and **aspire**
To limbo lower and jump higher?
Do you wish you could **conjure** dead presidents?
Bring them around with a spell, well, you better get
This product! If you call now and act nice,
We'll throw in a second one at twice the price.
You need to **acquire** this product today,
Get it into your possession before it's too late!
If you don't want to listen to what I have to say,
Listen to a customer who's totally not fake.

"OK, at first, I admit I was **wary**,
Watchful, on my guard, it seemed scary.
But then I went from size this to a size this,
I used to sweat bullets, now I shvitz a fine mist!"

What did I say? Our product is timeless!
There are no side effects, except this tiny list.
Do you wish your personality was **magnetic**?
Attractive and charming? It's not genetic.
You can get it, call now, buy faster!
Listen to another non-paid actor.

"My goat was gloomy, sad and **sullen**,
'Til I gave him this, and then all of a sudden,
He was filled with joy and **mirth**,
I listened to him laugh 'til my ears hurt."

It's amazing! It **defies** explanation!
It resists and challenges any quotation.
Understand the **gravity** of your situation,
The seriousness and weight of it, what I'm saying,
You won't need food or sleep—did I mention
That physical laws will seem more like suggestions?



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Oh, is there **toxic**, poisonous gas,
Everywhere that you go? Well, then you need this fast!
This needs immediate action, it's **urgent**,
Call now, and you'll get the latest version!
You'll certainly be smelling fresher than detergent,
With the fine, fine motor skills of a surgeon,
Are you a troublemaker? Are you a **firebrand**?
Do you rally folks to a cause and inspire them?
Order now, not in stores, only by phone,
And if you want a refund, the answer is no.
And if you think that I'm being too **subtle**,
Delicate or difficult to understand,
Then I'll be less subtle: Buy! Buy! Buy!
Any thirst you have will be **quenched** and satisfied!
Happiness will be a permanent fixture,
Just look at our before and after pictures.

*Thanks, Don! That's the end of the segment. There's no **chorus** to this song, you know, the part that repeats. Our representatives are standing by ready to take your calls.*

Limited time offer, not available in stores, not intended to be used with drones, not intended to take the place of your parents or loved ones. All actors in this commercial were paid in high-fives. Use with caution. Call 1-800-555-8038. Once again, that's 1-500-ninety-nine...

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2C Words Defined

acquire / aspire / chorus / conjure / defy / firebrand / gravity / magnetic / mirth / quench / subtle / sullen / toxic / urgent / wary

Below you'll find each vocabulary word that was used in the song. Each word is followed by the part of speech, a simple definition and a meaningful sentence. Some words will also have synonyms, antonyms and other forms of the word listed.

1. acquire (verb) gain ownership of something; to obtain by one's own actions

Only once he became the spokesperson for a brand of cereal could the rapper finally *acquire* the yellow sports car he always wanted.

Synonyms: obtain

Antonyms: lose, forfeit

2. aspire (verb) to desire something eagerly, especially something important or in the future

Beyoncé always *aspired* to be a singer, but she never knew she'd become an actress as well.

Synonyms: yearn, long for

Other forms: Even though Jojoba was young, he had lots of big *aspirations* (noun).

3. chorus (noun) 1. a group of people trained to sing together 2. the part of a song that's repeated after each verse

1. The *chorus* was invited to sing at the White House. 2. The *chorus* to that song is so catchy!

Synonyms: 1. choir 2. hook

Other forms: Some *choral* (adj) concerts are pretty amazing.

4. conjure (verb) to make something happen or come into being as though by magic

The basketball captain announced that the team would have to *conjure* up \$200 this year to pay for uniforms.

Synonyms: summon

Other forms: A *conjuror* (noun) is a magician who makes things appear.

5. defy (verb) 1. to resist efforts at 2. to refuse to obey

1. This puzzle is known to *defy* solving. Don't even waste your time trying to find the solution! 2. The disobedient boy was always doing something to *defy* his father's rules.

Synonyms: 2. disobey, ignore

6. firebrand (noun) a troublemaker; someone who encourages others to rebel

Tony tried to get Lisa kicked off the school paper staff because he thought she was a firebrand.

Synonyms: rebel, agitator

7. gravity (noun) 1. very serious nature or manner 2. the force by which all objects in the universe are attracted to each other

1. Chloe didn't realize the *gravity* of her dad's illness until he was rushed to the hospital. 2. There is less *gravity* on the moon, so astronauts have been able to hop along the surface like kangaroos.

Synonyms: 1. importance, severity, seriousness

Antonyms: 1. unimportance, silliness

Other forms: With so much *gravitation* (noun), Jupiter sucked the space ship into its *gravitational* (adj) field. As a verb, *gravitate* can mean "to be naturally drawn toward/attracted to": I don't tend to *gravitate* (verb) toward science, though; I prefer history.

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8. magnetic (adj) 1. having the power to attract 2. being able to attract iron

1. Ronda has a *magnetic* personality, which is probably why she's so popular. 2. Some metals are more *magnetic* than others.

Synonyms: 1. alluring

Antonyms: 1. uninteresting, repellent

Other forms: My fridge is covered in *magnets* (noun).

9. mirth (noun) joy, fun and laughter

There was so much *mirth* around the Thanksgiving table; everyone seemed to be smiling and enjoying themselves.

Synonyms: glee, hilarity

Antonyms: sadness, distress

10. quench (verb) 1. to satisfy 2. to extinguish or put out

If I've been at cheerleading practice and I'm thirsty, for some reason milk just doesn't *quench* my thirst. 2. Luckily, the firefighters were able to *quench* the car fire.

Synonyms: 1. relieve 2. put down

11. subtle (adj) 1. difficult to detect or define; elusive or ambiguous 2. causing delicate effects, or able to make fine distinctions

1. There was *subtle* change in her son's attitude that only a very observant parent would notice. 2. The chicken had a very *subtle* flavor of lemon to it; I could barely taste it.

Synonyms: faint

Antonyms: blatant, obvious

12. sullen (adj) silent or gloomy because of anger or resentment

After finding out that they weren't going to stop and get ice cream, the toddler became *sullen* and frowned quietly.

Synonyms: glum, frowning

Antonyms: cheerful

13. toxic (adj) poisonous; causing harm

Don't drink laundry detergent: It's *toxic*!

Antonyms: harmless

Other forms: *Toxic* is sometimes used as a noun: Many cleaning supplies, like laundry detergent, are *toxics*.

14. urgent (adj) needing fast action or attention

Rory ran out of homeroom with an *urgent* note for his friend Camille.

Synonyms: critical, pressing

Other forms: An intense person, Kiki brought an *urgency* (noun) to everything she did.

15. wary (adj) cautious and watchful; careful of danger

In certain cities, you need to be *wary* of thieves who might try to pick your pocket.

Synonyms: alert, suspicious

Antonyms: careless

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2D Fix the Mistake

acquire / aspire / chorus / conjure / defy / firebrand / gravity / magnetic / mirth / quench / subtle / sullen / toxic / urgent / wary

Each of the sentences below has a mistake. The wrong vocabulary words have been used, so the sentences don't make sense. Rewrite each sentence using the correct vocabulary word from this unit.

1. Your cousin is always **magnetic**; it seems like he never smiles at all.

2. This ice cream is just what I need to **conjure** my desire for something sweet!

3. I put a **toxic** strip on the back of my picture so my grandma can easily put it up on her refrigerator.

4. Trent **quenches** to be the best singer in the school; unfortunately, no matter how many lessons he takes, he still sounds like a croaking frog when he sings.

5. Mary couldn't come tonight because she had **wary** business to attend to; her mother suddenly fell sick and had to be rushed to the hospital.

6. The rabbit became **subtle** and alert when it heard the baying of distant dogs.

7. The shy, serious boy might **firebrand** our expectations and become a famous comedian.

8. The lyrics to this song are awful, but the **gravity** gets stuck in my head.

9. When the robot army was finally defeated, the villagers had a feast that filled with songs, jokes, and **defiance**.

10. Hannah tried to be **urgent** so Kyle wouldn't be embarrassed; he didn't get the hint, though, so she finally blurted out, "Dude, you've got dragon breath!"

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11. If the workers aren't careful around the **sullen** waste from the nuclear power plant, it could make them extremely sick.

12. I'm not sure that you understand the **mirth** of the situation: If James doesn't get to school right now, he's going to fail English.

13. Dionne is so good at card tricks; she can **acquire** a pack of cards out of thin air.

14. Andres is such a **chorus**; in math class today he had everyone hooting like owls every time Mr. Stimpers used the word "angle."

15. The thief planned to rob the bank, but first he needed to **aspire** a getaway car.

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2E Pick the Winner

acquire / aspire / chorus / conjure / defy / firebrand / gravity / magnetic / mirth / quench / subtle / sullen / toxic / urgent / wary

Circle the word that best fits into the sentence. Then write a sentence below that uses the word you didn't pick in a meaningful way.

1. I returned your call quickly because my mother told me it was **(urgent OR subtle)**.

2. The runner **(quenched OR conjured)** his thirst with a giant glass of water.

3. Michelle is sometimes labeled a(n) **(firebrand OR chorus)** because of her wicked sense of humor, but in reality, she's very well-behaved.

4. I wouldn't eat that leftover Chinese food if I were you; it's been sitting in the refrigerator so long it's probably become **(magnetic OR toxic)**.

5. Young children should learn to be **(wary OR sullen)** of strangers.

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2F Draw the Relationships

acquire / aspire / chorus / conjure / defy / firebrand / gravity / magnetic / mirth / quench / subtle / sullen / toxic / urgent / wary

In each grouping of eight words below, draw straight lines between the synonyms (words that mean similar things) and draw wiggly lines between any antonyms (words that mean nearly opposite things). Every word should have at least one line connected to it. Some may have more.

1

desire	obvious	summon	urgent
critical	conjure	aspire	subtle

2

wary	satisfy	quench	acquire
gravity	lose	trusting	importance

3

choir	gravity	chorus	silliness
defy	toxic	resist	harmless

4

repellent	mirth	happiness	magnetic
firebrand	sullen	troublemaker	cheerful

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2G Understanding What You Read

acquire / aspire / chorus / conjure / defy / firebrand / gravity / magnetic / mirth / quench / subtle / sullen / toxic / urgent / wary

Read the passage below. Then answer the questions.

The Hip-Hop Houdini

When David Blaine was growing up in the 1970s, not a lot of kids aspired to become magicians. But Blaine defied these norms. From the moment he acquired his first magic trick, Blaine knew that he wanted to amaze people for a living. As a child, he devoted all his spare time to learning and practicing tricks.

Shortly after high school, Blaine moved to New York City. He worked as a waiter during the day, and at night, he performed magic at private parties. Blaine's specialty was close-up magic. He would use simple props like playing cards and cigarettes to astound party guests.

From the beginning, Blaine's style was different from many conjurers. Most magicians at the time had a mirthful approach to their craft. They told goofy jokes and aimed their shows at families. Blaine was a firebrand who wanted to bring a sense of danger back to magic; he filled his tricks with a sense of gravity. He took his tricks seriously, and had a magnetic personality that made people like him. Because of his youth and fashionable appearance, he became known as "the hip-hop Houdini."

His unique style soon caught the eye of Hollywood. In 1997, ABC aired a TV special called David Blaine: Street Magic, which showed Blaine performing tricks for people on the street. The special was a huge success, and made Blaine a household name.

Since then, Blaine has become probably the world's most talented magician. In 1999, he lived in a tiny glass coffin for seven days. A few years later, he lived inside a box over the river Thames in London for 44 days. In 2008 he broke a world record by holding his breath for 17 minutes and 4.4 seconds. As incredible as it may seem, none of these feats were tricks. They were real stunts that Blaine performed to test the limits of the human body.

Not everyone loves David Blaine. Some people are wary of his stunts, thinking he just wants attention. No matter what you might think about Blaine's stunts, however, there's no doubt he's made a tremendous impact on the world of magic.

1. Based on the information in the passage, you can tell that Blaine

- (A) does not do magic anymore.
- (B) works hard at his craft.
- (C) was born in Manhattan.
- (D) has only had one TV special.

2. Read this sentence from the passage:

"His unique style soon caught the eye of Hollywood."

The author means that Blaine

- (A) moved to Hollywood.
- (B) made people in Hollywood angry.
- (C) drew the attention of people in Hollywood.
- (D) influenced fashion in Hollywood.

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3. Which of these sentences from the passage is an opinion?

- (A) Shortly after high school, Blaine moved to New York City.
- (B) In 1997, ABC aired a TV special called David Blaine: Street Magic.
- (C) Since then, Blaine has become probably the world's most talented magician.
- (D) In 2008 he broke a world record by holding his breath for 17 minutes and 4.4 seconds.

4. What is one thing that makes Blaine different from many other magicians?

- (A) He does not tell silly jokes.
- (B) He became interested in magic as a child.
- (C) He performs close-up magic tricks.
- (D) He has performed at private parties.

5. According to the passage, when did Blaine become famous?

- (A) 1973
- (B) 1997
- (C) 1999
- (D) 2008

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2H Thinking Creatively

acquire / aspire / chorus / conjure / defy / firebrand / gravity / magnetic / mirth / quench / subtle / sullen / toxic / urgent / wary

Answer each question below. Don't be afraid to think creatively.

1. If you could **acquire** a new talent, what would it be?

2. When might it be good to be a **firebrand**?

3. What gives you **mirth**?

4. What would you put in a soup called "The **Toxic Stew**"?

5. What famous person do you **aspire** to be like?

Word Breakdown

It might be easy to assume that the second meaning of gravity ("heaviness or seriousness") comes from the scientific meaning ("the force that makes objects fall toward the Earth"). In reality, the Latin word *gravitatem*, meaning "weight," led to the scientific usage. Weight (*gravitatem*) existed before we knew what gravity was. Isaac Newton, the man who discovered how gravity works, wrote, "It is now established that this force is gravity, and therefore we shall call it gravity from now on."

The word *subtle* has an unusual trait: The "b" is silent. There are many words that end in "mb" in which the "b" is silent, such as *climb*, *limb*, *dumb*, and *tomb*. However, only two other words have a silent "b" that does not follow an "m"—*debt* and *doubt*.