

## FOCUS ON VOCABULARY AND LANGUAGE

*Page 1: Outer space staggers us with its enormity, but inner space enthralls us.* The vastness of the universe (*outer space*) astonishes and amazes us (it *staggers us*). But our consciousness and internal mental life (our *inner space*) also delight and fascinate us (they *enthrall us*). Scientific psychology provides answers to many of the questions we have about ourselves, our thinking, emotions, and behavior, and our interactions (*interplay*) with others.

*Page 2: Have you ever played peek-a-boo with a 6-month-old . . . ? Peek-a-boo is a game played in most cultures where a person hides or pretends to hide from a child and then reappears saying "PEEKABOO!"* The important questions for psychologists are why do infants all over the world react similarly to this game; what are they actually feeling, perceiving, and thinking?

*Page 2: Such questions provide grist for psychology's mill . . .* The expression "*provide grist for the mill*" derives from an earlier practice where farmers brought their grain (*grist*) to the *mill* (a building with machinery for grinding grain into flour). Today, the expression means that a greater volume of work (*grist*) does not present a problem; in fact, it is welcomed. The amount of grain (*grist*) is analogous to the variety of questions asked, and the research conducted to answer them is like the *mill* producing flour from the *grist*. Thus, psychology is a science that thrives on attempting to answer a variety of questions about how we think, feel, and act through scientific methodology (research).

### What Is Psychology?

*Page 3: As introspection waned, so did structuralism.* To *wane* means to fade away or decline in power. Systematic *introspection* (self-reflective analysis of immediate sensations, thoughts, feelings, etc.) was not a reliable scientific method. As its use decreased (*waned*) so too did **structuralism**, the school devoted to finding the basic elements of the mind through *introspection*.

*Page 3: . . . down-to-earth . . .* This means to be straightforward and practical. William James promoted the study and investigation of basic or ordinary (*down-to-earth*) emotions, memories, habits, and inner subjective experiences as they flow through our minds (*moment-to-moment streams of consciousness*).

*Page 4: . . . wise-cracking . . .* William James was well-known for joking and making witty remarks (*wise-cracking*) during his psychology lectures. He also showed great courage (*displayed spunk*) by admitting Mary Calkins into his graduate seminar despite the objections of Harvard's president.

*Page 5: This list of pioneering psychologists—"Magellans of the mind," . . .* Ferdinand Magellan (1489–1521) was a famous Portuguese navigator who made many discoveries and explored areas of the world previously unknown to his fellow Europeans. Because early psychologists made exciting discoveries and explored unknown frontiers, they were preparing the way (they were *pioneers*) for future psychologists and can thus be considered "*Magellans of the mind*."

*Page 6: Let's unpack this definition.* *Unpack* here means to take apart or disassemble. So psychology, defined as the science of behavior and mental processes, is broken down into overt behavior (i.e., observable events) and covert processes (i.e., events hidden within, such as thoughts, feelings, perceptions, beliefs, and so on) and is studied using the scientific or empirical method.

### Contemporary Psychology

*Page 6: . . . mushrooming . . .* Membership in psychological societies is growing at a rapid rate (*mushrooming*), and psychology is becoming more and more international (*globalizing*).

Page 7: . . . psychology has *wrestled* with some issues . . . Psychology has struggled (*wrestled*) with a number of debates. The biggest and most enduring is the controversy over the relative influence that genes (*biology*) and environment (*experience*) have on the development of psychological traits and behaviors (the **nature-nurture issue**).

Page 7: In the 1600s, European philosophers *rekindled* the debate [nature-nurture]. *Rekindled* means to restart, as in to restart a fire (*rekindle*). In the 1600s, John Locke repeated what Aristotle had said 2000 years before—that humans are born without any knowledge (i.e., that we are blank slates, or blank paper, at birth) and that all knowledge comes from experience (*nurture*). Plato, and later René Descartes, argued that we are born with some innate knowledge (*nature*).

Page 7: The nature-nurture debate *weaves a thread* from the ancient Greek's time to our own. This simply means that the issue has concerned scholars and others from the time of the Greek philosophers right up to modern times. The debate connects the past to the present (*weaves a thread* between the two).

Page 7: Yet over and over again we will see that in contemporary science the nature-nurture *tension dissolves*. The main point is that both sides of the debate have something to offer: Each contributes to the search for the truth. Thus, in modern science the strained relations (*tension*) over this issue diminish (*dissolve*). As Myers notes, we are biologically predisposed (*genetic influences*) to adapt and learn from experiences (*environmental influences*); *nurture works on what nature endows*.

Page 9: “*Red in the face*” and “*hot under the collar*” refer to the physical changes that often accompany emotional arousal (e.g., anger). A person's face may become red due to blood rushing to it (blushing), and he or she may feel hot and perspire (*hot under the collar*). Different perspectives (neuroscience, evolutionary, behavior genetics, psychodynamic, behavioral, cognitive, and social-cultural) examine the same event (emotional change) using different **levels of analysis** (see Table 1, p. 9). Myers points out that these different levels of analysis are not necessarily in opposition to each other but, rather, are complementary; that is, each level helps to complete the puzzle of why the event occurs by supplying answers from different points of view (*perspectives*).

Page 10: But there is a *payoff*: Psychology is a *meeting ground* for different disciplines. Myers points out that there is much diversity in the discipline of psychology (i.e., it lacks unity), but this is beneficial (a *payoff*) because it provides a setting that is comfortable to work in (a *perfect home*) for those who have broad or diverse (*wide-ranging*) interests. Thus, it is the ideal gathering place (*meeting ground*) for different disciplines. In a sense, psychology is like those centralized airports (*hubs*) where passengers arrive on flights from many different places (*psychology is a hub scientific discipline*).

Page 10: . . . *from womb to tomb* . . . Developmental psychologists conduct basic research on the changes that take place throughout the life span, from conception to death (*from womb to tomb*), investigating how we mature physically, psychologically, and socially. (Another humorous expression describing the life span, or life cycle, is from “sperm to worm.”)

Page 11: . . . *psychoceramics* (the study of crackpots). This joke derives its humor from the fact that some English words or phrases have more than one meaning, and it is this “play on words” that makes the joke funny. *Ceramics* is concerned with the work (or art) of making pottery, porcelain, and so on. Some of the pots may develop small breaks or splits and consequently would be referred to as “cracked pots.” The term *crackpot*, on the other hand, is a colloquial (informal) expression used to describe a useless, impractical, or even a crazy person. Although psychologists engage in a variety of interdisciplinary studies, such as psychohistory, psycholinguistics, and so on, there is obviously no such thing as “*psychoceramics*—the study of crackpots.” **Clinical psychologists**, of course, assess and treat mental, emotional, and behavioral disorders (mental illness or psychopathology). (Note that Myers confesses in a

footnote that he wrote this sentence on April 1st, April Fools' Day, which traditionally involves people playing practical jokes on other people. Did he fool you?)

***(Close-Up) Tips for Studying Psychology***

*Page 12:* One of psychology's oldest findings is that *spaced practice* promotes better retention than *massed practice*. *Spaced practice* refers to studying over a longer period of time, say 2 hours a day over 5 days rather than 10 hours on 1 day (*massed practice* or cramming). Distributing your study time is much better for learning and retention than an extended cramming session (one long study *blitz*). Be sure to follow the other tips, such as the SQ3R method, that Myers suggests in this Close-Up.