UNIT 8

Child Prodigies



In this unit, you will

- read about child prodigies and the challenges they pose for their families and society.
- review making inferences.
- increase your understanding of the target academic words for this unit.

READING SKILLS Recognizing Comparison and Contrast

Self-Assessment

Think about how well you know each target word, and check (✓) the appropriate column. I have...

TARGET WORDS	never seen the word before	seen the word but am not sure what it means	seen the word and understand what it means	used the word, but am not sure if correctly	used the word confidently in *either* speaking *or* writing	used the word confidently in *both* speaking *and* writing
AWL						
challenge						
concentrate						
considerable						
enormous						
environment						
expert						
factor						
focus						
intelligence						
normal						
pursue						
resource						
reveal						
technology						
utilize						

Outside the Reading What do you know about prodigies?
Watch the video on the student website to find out more.

Oxford 3000™ keywords

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Before You Read

Read these questions. Discuss your answers in a small group.

1. Have you ever known anyone who was very, very smart? What could they do or what did they know that made them different from other people their age?
2. What can a family do to help or encourage a baby's mental development? Physical development? Emotional development?
3. Schools often want to know how intelligent children are. How do schools usually measure intelligence? What kinds of tools or tests do they use? What skills or abilities do they measure?

MORE WORDS YOU'LL NEED

prodigy: a person who is significantly advanced in a particular area; usually applied to children
society: the people of a particular culture who share general values and priorities

Read

This magazine article spotlights the unusual abilities of some very special children.

Child Prodigies

It seemed **normal** when Nguyen Ngoc Truong Son wanted to play chess with his parents. However, it was unusual when he **revealed** that he already knew how to play—before anyone taught him. Apparently the two-year-old had learned all of the rules by watching his parents. After only one month of playing with them, he was winning all of the games. By age four, he was competing in national tournaments. By age 12, he was Vietnam's youngest champion.

Another two-year-old child, Jay Greenberg, likewise surprised his parents by drawing pictures of musical instruments that he had never seen. They soon discovered that Jay "heard music in his head." He began to compose music at age three. By age ten, he was attending the well-known Juilliard Conservatory in New York, composing full symphonies. Jay was noted not only for the quality of his musical work, but also the speed at which he was able to produce it.



That is, while talented professional composers **normally** write five or six symphonies in a lifetime, Jay wrote five by the age of 12.

A third young child, Abigail Sin, was first introduced to piano lessons at age five and had what her tutor called an "unstoppable urge to master the keyboard." She became Singapore's most celebrated pianist by age ten.

Child prodigies such as these are a mystery to **experts** and non-**experts** alike. On the one hand, they attract praise and attention from everyone they meet; on the other hand, they attract criticism, and they find it difficult to fit in with the rest of the world.

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Child prodigies are highly **intelligent**, but this is not the only **factor** that sets them apart. They are considered prodigies because of their exceptional ability in one domain, or area. **Experts** define *child prodigy* as "a young child who displays mastery of a field that is usually undertaken by adults." Child prodigies usually have abilities in structured areas such as language, math, drawing, chess, and music. They are not as likely to appear in less structured domains such as medicine, law, or creative writing, areas that require experience.

Child prodigies can **focus** their attention for long periods of time, **concentrating** on tasks that would bore other children of the same age. Abigail Sin practiced piano at least 25 hours a week. Similarly, two-year-old Nguyen Ngoc Truong Son had the **concentration** to play chess for hours at a time. The distinction of "prodigy" thus goes beyond mere **intelligence**. For explanations, **experts** look in two directions: *nature*, the child's unique biology, and *nurture*, the child's **environment**.

When researchers look to *nature* to explain child prodigies, they study innate, or inborn, qualities. For example, they look at whether the brain structure of a prodigy is different from that of a child with average **intelligence**. **Technology** is a great help in answering this question. For instance, scientists **utilize** imaging **technology** to see the amount of activity in different parts of the brain. These brain scans **reveal** that the frontal lobe of a prodigy's brain is very active, unlike children with average **intelligence** doing the same tasks. Their frontal lobes are virtually inactive. Science has proven that the frontal lobe of the brain controls many aspects of thought and **concentration**. This may explain how prodigies can **focus** on a task, solve complex problems, and learn quickly.

When researchers look to *nurture* to explain child prodigies, they **focus** on the child's **environment** instead of the child's biology. The most important **factor** on the *nurture* side is the parents. Raising a child prodigy is extremely **challenging**. It requires **considerable** patience, creativity, and resourcefulness.

Some parents are delighted by the extraordinary abilities of their children. They make use of all the **resources** they have or can find to support them. For example, Jay Greenberg's parents bought their two-year-old son a cello when he requested it and arranged for music lessons.

Other parents are not so supportive of their child prodigy. On the contrary, some parents even see their offspring's gifts as a way to draw attention to themselves and their own interests. Boris Sidis, for example, was a well-known scientist with strong opinions about making the most of one's **intelligence** and about raising children. When his son Billy was born, Boris saw the child as an opportunity to test his theories.

From Billy's birth, it was clear that he was an exceptional child. His parents **utilized** every opportunity to teach him language, math, science, and logic. Boris was very poor, but he used his limited **resources** to buy or acquire toys and books for the young genius. Billy Sidis spoke five languages at age five. He passed entry exams for MIT and Harvard Medical School at age nine and was admitted to Harvard at age 11. He was considered a genius in mathematics, physics, and languages.

Boris claimed that his methods of child-rearing were responsible for his son's abilities and took his story to the press. The press, in turn, **focused** more on the young Harvard student's odd personal life than on his accomplishments. It was soon clear that Billy was unprepared to relate to other people, function successfully in the real world, or manage the **challenges** of being different. After college, he lived an isolated life. Despite his **intelligence**, he died unemployed and in poverty.

When people are unusual, they attract attention. In the case of child prodigies, the attention they receive is both positive and negative. It is positive because most people admire **intelligence**. It is negative because prodigies are very different from other people. They are a **challenge** for teachers, who expect seven-year-olds to prefer Batman to Beethoven. They are a **challenge** to parents, who want to help them but often lack the **resources** or find their needs and desires difficult to understand and meet. They present a **challenge** to scientists, who want to study them without further isolating them from **normal** society. And they **challenge** the world because they **reveal** the tendency that people have to reject those who are different from the norm. ■

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Reading Comprehension

Mark each sentence as *T* (true) or *F* (false) according to the information in Reading 1. Use the dictionary to help you understand new words.

___1. The parents of two-year-old Nguyen Ngoc Truong Son taught him to play chess, and he learned very quickly.

___2. The parents of Jay Greenberg did not provide an environment that was focused on music, but Jay had great interest in music at a very young age.

___3. Jay Greenberg wrote symphonies very quickly because he utilized the help of talented professional composers.

___4. The factors that seem to always be present in a child prodigy are 1) an unusually high intelligence and 2) the ability to master one area, such as music or math.

___5. The child prodigies mentioned in the reading showed considerable interest and ability in creative writing.

___6. Technology has revealed that the brains of highly intelligent children are different than the brains of children with normal intelligence.

___7. Child prodigies sometimes select areas of interest that they did not learn from their parents or their environment. This supports the explanation of *nurture*.

___8. All of the parents mentioned in the article provided their children with both educational and psychological resources.

___9. According to the article, people with normal intelligence present fewer challenges to society and are more accepted.

READING SKILL Recognizing Comparison and Contrast

LEARN

Writers often compare things and ideas to show how they are similar. They also contrast things and ideas to show how they are different. Comparisons and contrasts are important in helping the reader understand how things and ideas relate to each other. You can recognize comparisons and contrasts by the context clues that signal them.

APPLY

A. Read these context clues. Write *S* for those that indicate similarity (comparison) or *D* for those that indicate difference (contrast). Compare your answers with a partner.

S both	___ in the same way	___ on the contrary
___ but	___ instead of	___ on the other hand
___ despite	___ likewise	___ similarly
___ however	___ moreover	___ unlike

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Some words signal a contrast between the central meanings of two sentences. Careful reading will often reveal that *words* are also being contrasted.

> *Child prodigies attract praise and attention from everyone they meet; on the other hand, they attract criticism, and they find it difficult to fit in with the rest of the world.*

B. **Look at these lines from Reading 1. Write the context clue and circle whether it indicates comparison or contrast. Then, write which words are being compared or contrasted.**

1. Line 3
   Context clue: *however* Comparison or (contrast?)
   Words: *normal / unusual*
2. Line 13
   Context clue: _____ Comparison or contrast?
   Words: _____
3. Line 33
   Context clue: _____ Comparison or contrast?
   Words: _____
4. Line 52
   Context clue: _____ Comparison or contrast?
   Words: _____
5. Line 68
   Context clue: _____ Comparison or contrast?
   Words: _____
6. Line 77
   Context clue: _____ Comparison or contrast?
   Words: _____
7. Line 89
   Context clue: _____ Comparison or contrast?
   Words: _____

Vocabulary Activities STEP I: Word Level

A. **Read these excerpts from another article on child prodigies. For each excerpt, cross out the one word or phrase in parentheses with a different meaning from the other three choices. Compare your answers with a partner.**

1. Parents can create a positive or a negative environment for their highly intelligent children. The mother of six-year-old Hungarian cellist Janos Starker wanted her son to (*display / concentrate on / focus on / think about*) his music practice, so she made tiny sandwiches and left them on his music stand. She didn't want him to have to get up and look for a snack.

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2. Given the results, we should not be critical of this mother's methods. Janos Starker's (*considerable / great / expert / extensive*) success as an international cellist lasted over 50 years, and his is one of the great musical careers of our time.
3. Another musician to (*reveal / display / utilize / demonstrate*) exceptional musical promise was pianist Ruth Slezynska. She performed at a major concert for the first time in 1929 at the age of four.
4. Whereas Starker's mother encouraged him with tiny sandwiches, Slezynska's father created (*a feeling / an environment / an atmosphere / a setting*) of fear. He forced her to practice nine hours every day and hit her when she played a wrong note.
5. The abnormal (*isolation / anxiety / pressure / stress*) was too much for the young girl. At 15 she suffered a major breakdown that ended her career.

The word *resource(s)* refers to something that a person or a country can use. It can be tangible (money, equipment) or intangible (moral support, knowledge).

CORPUS

B. **Which of these items would be useful resources for a doctor? Put a check (✓) next to these items. How might a doctor utilize each resource? Discuss your answers with a partner.**

___1. books
___2. a computer
___3. another doctor in the family
___4. coal
___5. a microscope
___6. a hammer
___7. knowledge of astronomy
___8. a telephone

C. **What are some resources that these people might utilize? Think of as many resources as possible. Discuss your answers in a small group.**

1. marathon runner
2. journalist
3. business student
4. kindergarten teacher

To *reveal* something means "to make something known that was previously secret or unknown." A *revelation* is something important and usually surprising that is revealed.

CORPUS

D. **With a partner, discuss these questions: What might each of these people *not* want to reveal? Why? What might result from the revelation?**

1. a spy
2. a research scientist
3. a used-car salesman
4. a politician
5. a psychiatrist

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Vocabulary Activities STEP II: Sentence Level

Word Form Chart			
Noun	**Verb**	**Adjective**	**Adverb**
challenge	challenge	challenging challenged*	_____

*When used as an adjective, *challenged* has a different meaning from the other words in its family. It means "having a particular type of difficulty" (for example, *visually challenged* or *physically challenged*). A synonym is *handicapped*. This form is not used in this unit.

E. Answer the questions using each form of *challenge* at least once. Refer to Reading 1 for information. Discuss your answers in a small group or as a class.

1. How did the Greenbergs feel about raising Jay?
   For the Greenbergs, raising a child prodigy was a challenge, but they enjoyed supporting him and encouraging his interests.
2. What were some of the difficulties faced by Billy Sidis in his adult life?
   _____
   _____
3. What difficulties do researchers or experts face as they try to better understand child prodigies?
   _____
   _____
4. What difficulties do child prodigies pose for society?
   _____
   _____
5. In your opinion, why do child prodigies "challenge the world" and the society they live in?
   _____
   _____

Word Form Chart			
Noun	**Verb**	**Adjective**	**Adverb**
expertise expert	_____	expert	expertly
_____	_____	considerable	considerably
technology technologist	_____	technological	technologically
resource(s)	_____	resourceful	resourcefully

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F. **Read the story about another child prodigy, Chandra Sekar. Then restate each of the sentences in your notebook using the words in parentheses. Do not change the meanings of the sentences. Be prepared to share your work aloud.**

1. Chandra Sekar grew up in India. Even though his family was too poor to own a computer, he was very interested in technology when he was a toddler. (*considerable, technological*)

   Chandra Sekar didn't have a computer, but he showed considerable interest in technological things from a very early age.

2. His father wanted to encourage Chandra's technological skills. (*technology*)
3. He hoped that Chandra would one day become a recognized expert in computers. (*expertise*)
4. His father was poor, but he found ways to earn enough money to buy the young boy a computer when he was only four years old. (*resourceful* or *resources*)
5. Chandra found a way to teach himself to use the operating system MS-DOS, and the computer programs LOTUS and MS-Word. (*technological resources* or *resourceful*)
6. He was only ten when he became the world's youngest Microsoft Certified Systems Engineer. The average age for engineers is 30. (*considerably*)
7. When he was 11 and a student at a university in Madras, the government of India honored Chandra because he was very knowledgeable about the technology related to computer network security. (*expertise* or *expert*)

G. **Imagine you are a journalist and you have a chance to interview Chandra Sekar. Prepare interview questions using the cues provided. Record the questions in your notebook. Be prepared to act out your interview with a partner.**

1. how / environment

   How did your home environment help you succeed?

2. which / factors
3. what / challenges
4. when / intelligent or intelligence
5. how / normal / different
6. who / influence
7. where / expertise
8. what / resources
9. why / concentrate or focus / technology

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READING 2

Before You Read

Read these questions. Discuss your answers in a small group.

1. What do you think would be the biggest challenges for parents of a prodigy? Why do you think this is true?
2. Doctors and other experts claim that it is impossible for a child prodigy to live a "normal" life. What do you think they mean by this? Do you agree?
3. Children with high intelligence often score *lower* on standardized tests than do children of normal intelligence. Why do you think this happens?

Read

This *New York Times* article gives advice to parents of child prodigies on how to meet the needs of their extraordinary children.

Not Like Other Kids



Last summer, after serious thought, Toby Rosenberg announced to his friends and family that he was changing his name. "Toby," he felt, was "a little boy's name." Instead, he would be called Karl, like his father before him. His school accepted the switch. His parents had no argument. Toby—now Karl—was five years old.

And he had a point: regardless of his age, Karl has never been a little boy. At 14 months, he began to read aloud from the posters he viewed from his stroller. It would be another full year before he talked on his own; but once he did, he spoke fluent English and Polish (his mother, Anna, is from Krakow) and several other languages. He trained himself to write Japanese after studying the label on a bottle. He taught himself the Hebrew alphabet after seeing the characters on a dreidel, a type of toy. Last year, after seeing a book in a museum shop on ancient Egypt, he compiled a dictionary of hieroglyphics. The impression you get when you first meet Karl is that of a bookish teenager, a middle-aged diplomat, and a talkative grandmother trapped together in the body of a first-grader.

"You don't know what it's like with Karl," his father says, laughing tiredly. Karl Sr. was once an artist, and is now a website designer. He spends at least an hour every afternoon in the family's one-bedroom Brooklyn apartment drafting sketches and submitting them to his son's critiques. "He stands behind me and tells me to draw things over and over to his specifications," Karl says. "If he's not on the Internet, he's here, issuing commands over my shoulder. We just want to encourage his interests and support him any way we can. Nobody in this household is trying to tell him what to do." Which is just as it should be.

Experts offer parents of child prodigies this advice about raising their gifted children:

1. Don't overstructure your child's life. **Experts** advise parents of hyper-**intelligent** children that, instead of filling their time with planned activities, they should try not to be too controlling. "Profoundly gifted kids are highly curious and likely to **pursue** all kinds of interests with great passion," says Sandra Berger, a gifted-education specialist for more

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than 20 years. "It's best to let the child's interests be your guide."

2. Provide as many learning opportunities as possible. Parents should strive to introduce their children to a wide variety of subjects. They should take them on field trips and museum tours; moreover, the child's **normal environment** should be treated as an experiential playground. It was reportedly his early walks in the woods with his father that alerted Richard Feynman, the Nobel-prize-winning physicist, to the complexity of life. For Karl, it was drives past the Williamsburg Bridge that piqued his avid interest in construction.

Such interests can prove a distraction. When he was taking his Educational Records Bureau exam in January, Karl spent much of the allotted time lecturing the test-givers on the unusual architecture of the Chrysler Building, which was visible through the classroom window. When the examiners tried to summarize Karl's irregular score, they mentioned his "most noteworthy...fund of knowledge."

Of course, even without a standardized-test score, Karl's parents know he's a genius. On the other hand, they know that they should never, ever use that term.

3. Avoid calling your child a genius. "There are three reasons the label could only be unhelpful," says Dr. Jack Shonkoff, an **expert** on early childhood development. "One, it puts an **enormous** burden on the kid that he or she will have trouble living up to. Two, it's a setup for other people—relatives, teachers—to be disappointed in the kid's future performance. And three, it serves to set the child apart from other children." Shonkoff says that extremely talented kids are pigeonholed, or stereotyped, enough already. They don't need a label to isolate them even more.

4. Don't expect your child to be popular. Combating social isolation may be the greatest **challenge** for those raising exceptionally **intelligent** kids. Karl has had a typically uphill battle finding a school—let alone a circle of friends—that can contain him. At three years old, he was asked to leave his preschool program at the local Y.M.C.A. His teachers thought that his obvious boredom was a bad influence on the other children. After a search, his parents discovered the East Manhattan School for Bright and Gifted Children, but the independent school soon closed. Karl then transferred to a first-grade class at a public school in Brooklyn. He was immediately promoted to its accelerated program, but his social life lagged far behind.

It's no surprise. Adults tend to make friendships on the basis of shared interests and coincidental **pursuits**. Similarly, highly gifted children seek out friends like themselves, rather than falling into groups according to age or grade. "These kids just aren't likely to be part of a huge gang in the lunchroom," Berger says.

5. Don't sacrifice educational advancement to give your child a "normal" upbringing. Holding children back from upper-level grades and early college won't help them socially. On the contrary, it will frustrate them—and their teachers. "These kids will exhaust the **resources** of any **normal** classroom," Berger says. "Six-, seven-, and eight-year-olds who are interested in aerospace **technology** shouldn't be stuck in homeroom."[1]

Karl's extensive **pursuits** could exhaust just about anyone. He's played the piano since he was three. Two years later he requested a violin, and his parents managed to borrow one. In addition, the family's apartment was cluttered with Karl's drawings of the Titanic, which he reimagined as a medieval galleon, with his floor sculpture of Moscow's St. Basil's Cathedral reconfigured as an ancient Irish church and with the whirling presence of Karl himself.

Preparing to present his well-illustrated, self-assigned report on the Statue of Liberty, he announced to his family: "The architect was Frederic-Auguste Bartholdi; Auguste—I mean—did you hear that? A-goose. I said goose!" He bursts into giggles, and for the moment, at least, Karl Jr. is completely happy and six years old.

[1] *homeroom:* the room where children gather to start the school day and to wait for activities

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Reading Comprehension

Mark each sentence as *T* (true) or *F* (false) according to the information in Reading 2. Use the dictionary to help you understand new words.

___ 1. Toby Rosenberg pursued changing his name because he and his parents had a challenging relationship. They did not get along well.

___ 2. Karl Jr. learned languages before he went to school because his parents utilized the help of private tutors at home.

___ 3. Karl Jr.'s teachers believed that he was a bad influence on other children because he acted bored.

___ 4. Child prodigies usually have an enormous number of friends.

___ 5. Two factors that make life more challenging for bright children are isolation from other children their age and difficulty in finding an appropriate school.

___ 6. Intelligence comes naturally for child prodigies, but concentration does not.

___ 7. The article suggests that it is not necessary for parents to select new areas of interest for their children. Highly intelligent children do best when they are allowed to pursue their natural interests.

___ 8. Most classrooms don't have enough resources to meet the educational needs of exceptionally bright children.

READING SKILL Recognizing Comparison and Contrast

APPLY

Skim Reading 2 for context clues and record them. Circle whether they indicate comparison or contrast, and write which words or ideas are being compared or contrasted. Compare your findings with a partner.

1. Line(s): 4
   Context clue: Instead Comparison or (contrast?)
   Words being compared/contrasted: Toby, Karl
2. Line(s): _____
   Context clue: _____ Comparison or contrast?
   Words being compared/contrasted: _____
3. Line(s): _____
   Context clue: _____ Comparison or contrast?
   Words being compared/contrasted: _____
4. Line(s): _____
   Context clue: _____ Comparison or contrast?
   Words being compared/contrasted: _____
5. Line(s): _____
   Context clue: _____ Comparison or contrast?
   Words being compared/contrasted: _____

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REVIEW A SKILL **Making Inferences** (See p. 84)

What does Karl Sr. mean by "You don't know what it's like with Karl"? Why is he "laughing tiredly"? Support your inferences with information from Reading 2.

Vocabulary Activities STEP I: Word Level

A. Complete the sentences about Albert Einstein using the target vocabulary in the box. Use each item one time. The synonyms in parentheses can help you.

concentrated	an environment	intelligence	revealed
considerably	expertise	normal	
enormous	factor	pursued	

___ a. The enormous (very large) _____ (mental ability) of Albert Einstein is now well known, but it wasn't so obvious when he was young.

___ b. In school, the young Einstein loved mathematics and science, but he _____ (focused) less on other subjects. He received poor grades in history, geography, and languages.

___ c. When he was 16, he wrote a paper that _____ (made known) his early ideas about the theory of relativity.

___ d. Though it is _____ (usual) for children to speak before the age of three, Einstein didn't say his first words until he was nearly four. He didn't read until he was seven, which was _____ (much) older than other prodigies such as Abigail Sin or Billy Sidis.

___ e. As a boy, Einstein's two uncles gave him _____ (the surroundings) that challenged him and encouraged his interest in mathematics and science.

___ f. His _____ (knowledge) related to his theory continued throughout his life. He was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1921.

___ g. One _____ (thing) that led to his interest in physics sprang from an incident that occurred when he was only five. His uncles showed him a compass. From then on, Einstein _____ (tried to understand) physics with great passion.

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B. Tell the story of Einstein's life by putting the sentences in activity A into a logical order. Number them from 1 to 7 (more than one sequence may be possible). Then, use the target words as you compare stories with a partner.

C. Many academic words are also considered formal words. Which of the target words in this unit (see the list on page 113) are more formal synonyms for these informal words? Be sure to use the right form of the target words.

Informal	Formal
1. smart	_____
2. to use	_____
3. huge	_____
4. uncover	_____
5. difficulty	_____
6. (specialized) knowledge	_____
7. activities or pastimes	_____

A word analogy shows the relationship between two pairs of words. First, you identify the relationship between the first pair of words. The relationship is usually synonyms, antonyms, examples, or verb/object:

concentrate : focus	synonyms
heredity : environment	antonyms
psychologist : expert	example
focus : attention	verb/object

To complete an analogy, find a word for the second pair that shows the same relationship as in the first pair of words:

concentrate : focus AS utilize : *use*

The analogy is read like this: "*Concentrate* is to *focus* as *utilize* is to *use*." This means that the word "concentrate" has the same relationship to the word "focus" as the word "utilize" has to the word "use." *Concentrate* and *utilize* are each a synonym for the other word.

D. Use target vocabulary from this unit (in the correct form) to complete these analogies. Then write the type of relationship each analogy has. Compare your work with a partner's.

	Type of relationship
1. intelligent : unintelligent AS normal : *abnormal*	*antonyms*
2. a painting : art AS a computer : _____	_____
3. get : receive AS seek : _____	_____
4. car : transportation AS money : _____	_____
5. hide : reveal AS waste : _____	_____
6. show : respect AS focus : _____	_____

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E. **Read these sample sentences that feature the words *normal* and *norm* and answer the questions below in your notebook, using the dictionary as suggested. Compare your answers with a partner.**

- Technology has revealed that the brains of highly intelligent children are different from the brains of children with normal intelligence.
- Child prodigies challenge the world because they reveal the tendency to reject people who seem too different from the norm.
- Experts claim that it is impossible for a child prodigy to live a "normal" life.
- A child prodigy's normal environment should be treated as an experiential playground.
- Don't sacrifice educational advancement to give your child a "normal" upbringing.

1. What are some things that are referred to as *normal* in the sample sentences?
2. Look up the word *normal* in your dictionary and read the sample sentences. What are some other things that are referred to as normal?
3. What is implied when *normal* appears in quotation marks?
4. What is meant by *the norm*? Write a brief definition. Confirm it with your dictionary.

Vocabulary Activities STEP II: Sentence Level

F. **In a small group, discuss these questions. Use the dictionary to clarify word meanings, if needed.**

1. Think about a culture that you know well. What are the norms for each of these customs? What factors might have caused these norms to develop?
   a. the food eaten for the evening meal
   b. the gifts that are given for a major holiday
   c. the age that young people move away from their families
   d. the amount of money spent on children's education
2. What do you think are the three most important factors to consider when parents are choosing a school for their child?
   ___ a. location
   ___ b. number of children in a class
   ___ c. friendly classroom environment
   ___ d. the intelligence of the teachers
   ___ e. the intelligence of the other students
   ___ f. the school's technological resources
   ___ g. the condition of the school building
   ___ h. other: _____

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G. **Which of these pursuits do you consider most challenging? Rank them from *1* (most challenging) to *4* (least challenging).**

___ reading a book in Spanish
___ cooking dinner for ten people
___ fixing a broken computer
___ running a three-mile race

As a class or in small groups, make a chart and tally everyone's answers. Which item does the group find most challenging? Least challenging? Why do you think this is true? What environmental factors do you think might have contributed to the results?

Both hereditary and environmental factors have considerable influence on the person a child becomes. Hereditary factors include the biological traits that people inherit from their parents, such as eye color or height. Environmental factors refer to the things that happen to people after they are born: for example, the way their parents treat them, what they learn and experience, what they eat, where they live, and even illnesses or accidents that occur.

H. **Read these factors that have shaped the lives of some child prodigies. Write *H* in the blank for those you think are hereditary factors. Write *E* for those you think are environmental factors. Then explain your answer and how each factor may have affected the child. Present your opinions in a small group.**

___1. The parents of Nguyen Ngoc Truong Son make less than 100 U.S. dollars in a month.

_____

_____

___2. Jay Greenberg has "heard music in his head" since he was two years old.

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___3. Abigail Sin has a twin brother who is not a child prodigy.

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___4. Billy Sidis spoke five languages at the age of five, including his father's native Russian.

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The verb *pursue* means "to follow something in order to catch it or to work at something in order to accomplish it."

*The police **pursued** the robber in a car chase.*

The noun form, *pursuit*, is often followed by the preposition *of* and a noun.

*My parents are happy about my **pursuit** of a career in business.*

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