

Sometimes damage or destruction is the result of a natural phenomenon, such as a flood or tornado. At other times, human carelessness or ignorance causes harm or ruin, as when improperly handled chemical products or sewage pollute water. In this lesson you will learn words associated with damage and deterioration.

WORD LIST

blight  
cataclysm  
decimate  
decomposition  
eradication  
havoc  
mar  
obliterate  
pulverize  
stagnant

DEFINITIONS

After you have studied the definitions and example for each vocabulary word, write the word on the line to the right.

1. **blight** (blīt) *trans. verb* a. To cause to decline or decay; to ruin or destroy. b. To cause a plant to be affected with disease. *noun* a. Any of several diseases that cause plants to wither and deteriorate. b. Unfavorable environmental conditions.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

**Example** Weevils *blighted* the cotton crops in 1946.

2. **cataclysm** (kăt'ə-klīz'əm) *noun* a. A violent upheaval; a disaster. b. A violent, sudden change in the earth's crust. c. A destructive flood. (From the Greek word *kataklysmos*, meaning "deluge" or "flood")

2. \_\_\_\_\_

**Related Word** *cataclysmic adjective*

**Example** When the *cataclysm* struck Putney Corners at 3:00 A.M., the earth began to shake like a maraca.

3. **decimate** (dēs'ə-māt') *trans. verb* To destroy or kill a large part of.

3. \_\_\_\_\_

**Related Word** *decimation noun*

**Example** The Black Plague *decimated* the population of western Europe during the Middle Ages.

ETYMOLOGY NOTE:  
Decimate, from the Latin word for ten, originally meant "to destroy or kill one out of ten."

4. **decomposition** (dē-kōm'pə-zīsh'ən) *noun* The process of decaying, rotting, or breaking down.

4. \_\_\_\_\_

**Related Word** *decompose verb*

**Example** The *decomposition* of the eggs caused a foul odor.

5. **eradication** (i-rād'ī-ka'shən) *noun* Elimination, as if by tearing out by the roots; ridding. (From the Latin *ex-*, meaning "out," and *radix*, meaning "root") 5. \_\_\_\_\_

**Related Word** *eradicate verb*

**Example** The mayor's goal is the *eradication* of poverty in Millwood.

6. **havoc** (hāv'ək) *noun* a. Widespread destruction. b. Confusion; disorder. 6. \_\_\_\_\_

**Example** The sudden windstorm created *havoc* at the Fourth of July picnic.

7. **mar** (mār) *trans. verb* To damage; spoil the quality of. 7. \_\_\_\_\_

**Example** A scratch can *mar* the beauty of fine furniture.

8. **obliterate** (ə-blīt'ə-rāt', ō-blīt'ə-rāt') *trans. verb* To do away with completely; to wipe out. (From the Latin word *oblitterare*, meaning "to erase") 8. \_\_\_\_\_

**Related Word** *obliteration noun*

**Example** I can't wait to *obliterate* your sand castle when you finish it!

9. **pulverize** (pül'və-rīz') *trans. verb* a. To pound, crush, or grind into a powder. b. To destroy, as if by crushing into powder. (From the Latin word *pulvis*, meaning "dust") 9. \_\_\_\_\_

**Example** In order to make flour, one must *pulverize* grains of wheat.

10. **stagnant** (stäg'nənt) *adjective* a. Foul from standing still; stale. b. Lacking in freshness, liveliness, or originality. (From the Latin word *stagnum*, meaning "swamp") 10. \_\_\_\_\_

**Related Words** *stagnancy noun; stagnate verb*

**Example** Fish could not live in the *stagnant* pond because it lacked oxygen.