

English IV – *The Contender* Chapters 7-13 Vocabulary Words

1. **marquee**

permanent canopy over an entrance of a building

*Hundreds of people milled under the **marquee** of Madison Square Garden as Alfred and Henry came up from the subway.*

2. **seedy**

morally degraded

***Seedy** men with mashed-in faces waved their cigars at tall, well-dressed businessmen carrying attaché cases.*

3. **scowl**

frown with displeasure

*At the ticket window, a fat-faced white man **scowled** down at them, and Alfred was sure he would tell them to get lost.*

4. **gleaming**

bright with a steady but subdued shining

*In the center of the floor, **gleaming** white under hundreds of spotlights, was the ring.*

5. **preliminary**

preceding or in preparation for something more important

*The **preliminary** bouts were a blur of bodies and punches for Alfred, but he jumped up every time Henry and Jelly did.*

6. clench

squeeze together tightly

*Willie was sitting on an upholstered table, **clenching** and unclenching his taped hands as a doctor worked on his eye.*

7. contender

the contestant you hope to defeat

*"For a while I was rated the Number Seven light-heavyweight**contender**."*

8. shabby

showing signs of wear and tear

*They rode the rest of the way in silence, Spoon driving carefully as the clean, well-kept buildings in the quiet white neighborhoods gave way to **shabby** houses on streets filled with black children and garbage.*

9. mimic

imitate, especially for satirical effect

*"Where's James, where's James?" **mimicked** Major.*

10. shudder

tremble convulsively, as from fear or excitement

*Alfred closed the door behind him just as his knees sagged, **shuddering** violently.*

11. smirk

a smile expressing smugness or scorn instead of pleasure

*Don't you make fun of me, Alfred. Wipe that **smirk** off your face.*

12. hazy

indistinct in outline

*The sweat rolled off his forehead and flooded his eyes, but they wouldn't let him stop to brush the sweat away ... left ... left ... snap it out...
even as his reflection grew **hazy** in the full-length mirror.*

13. cackle

emit a loud, unpleasant kind of laughing

*Angel and Jose, the Puerto Rican boys, **cackled** like hens when the medicine ball knocked him over like a tenpin.*

14. righteousness

adhering to moral principles

*"What seems to be our problem, Sister Conway? Has Alfred strayed from the path of **righteousness**?"*

15. vague

lacking clarity or distinctness

*"Oh," said the preacher, his eyes moving around the room, his voice getting **vague**.*

16. **pursuit**

a diversion that occupies one's time and thoughts

*This is a passing phase. He'll soon grow tired of this meaningless**pursuit** and devote his . . .*

17. **flex**

exhibit the strength of

*Jake was still going to the bank in the afternoons, but Alfred couldn't get bothered about it, not when he felt his muscles **flex** every time he stacked the canned goods or lifted a box.*

18. **lull**

a pause during which things are calm

*There was a **lull** one afternoon. There were no customers in the store, and Alfred began throwing the hook at his reflection on the door of the steel food locker.*

19. **shuffle**

move about, move back and forth

*He tapped a bony shoulder, **shuffled** his feet, and threw a slow but graceful left hook.*

20. **racketeer**

someone who commits crimes for profit

*"Television came in, and used the same fighters over and over again, a few got rich, the rest had to get jobs. And even the rich ones lost their money. The **racketeers**, the crooked matchmakers, the rotten managers just—"*

21. sullen

showing a brooding ill humor

*Willie Streeter came back to the gym, **sullen** and overweight.*

22. amateur

an athlete who does not play for pay

*Six weeks, six damn weeks, gained six pounds and never punched anybody except my own face in the mirror. I'm not even an **amateuryet**.*

23. swagger

walk with a lofty proud gait

*"Hey, man, you're looking sharp," said Major, **swaggering** into mirror view.*

24. newcomer

a recent arrival

*Once the door opened for some **newcomers**, and he saw Arlene smiling up at him, her face puffy, the blond wig tipped over one eye.*

25. sprawling

an ungainly posture with arms and legs spread about

*He tried to clear his head, to think, to answer James' question, but the floor came up and sent him **sprawling**.*

26. **veer**

turn sharply; change direction abruptly

*While he was slipping them on, the car **veered** toward a young couple crossing the street.*

27. **mingle**

be all mixed up or jumbled together

*Alfred began to feel cramps in his stomach at the **mingled** smells of cotton candy, barbecue, fried chicken, and hot dogs.*

28. **accelerator**

a pedal that controls the throttle valve

*The policemen began to run, shouting, as Major stomped on the **accelerator** and pounded the horn at people crossing the street.*

29. **filthy**

disgustingly dirty

*He sorted the new crates, stacked the canned goods, lugged the **filthy** garbage pails out back.*

30. **silhouette**

represent by a drawing of the outline of an object

*He looked at the square head, **silhouetted** against the flickering neon lights.*

31. apologize

defend, explain, clear away, or make excuses for

*"You've got nothing to **apologize** to me for."*

32. mock

treat with contempt

*Angel's face, framed in the headguard, bobbed up, **mocking** him.*

33. reel

walk as if unable to control one's movements

*Alfred plunged forward, the months of shadowboxing taking over now, left. . . left. . . right to the face . . . hook . . . and Angel was **reeling** against the ropes, a drop of blood oozing from his nose.*

34. pride

a feeling of self-respect and personal worth

*"Don't tell Ryan where it comes from, **pride** he always had."*

35. arc

a continuous portion of a circle

*He pivoted on his left foot, and threw the hook in a smooth, short **arc**.*