



Unit 2

Where It All Begins

READING

As we learned last week, the mind seems to do three things as it goes about the business of learning the truth. The mind (1) learns what things are; (2) it judges how one thing is related to another; and (3) it groups judgements together to make arguments. Let's talk about the first of these steps.

How do you suppose that we begin to learn about things? There are five ways, which we know as the five senses: seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and touching. In other words, we learn by living in our bodies and experiencing the world.

Imagine for a moment that you are sitting in a castle tower with all of the windows covered with heavy, wooden shutters. As you sit inside the darkness of the room you have no knowledge of what is outside the tower. Everything is quiet, dark, and odorless. Rising to your feet you make your way around the room throwing up the shutters. Through one window, light shines brightly, revealing the myriad colors of the world—you see the fields and forests surrounding the tower. Through the next window enters a thousand sounds of the woods; the chirping birds, creaking trees, whistling winds, and babbling brooks. The next opened window allows in the breezes which touch your skin and warmth of the sun—all of the sensations of touch. The fourth window's opening reveals a bread stand and a baker who hands you a slice of freshly baked bread covered with butter—the tastes of the world flood in. The last window reveals the odors of the world—the perfume of the flowers and the hardy sweetness of the grass. Returning to the center you stand awash in the swirl of the experience of the world.

The point of the analogy is that the senses are like windows to the soul. They let the world in so that we can experience it directly. Without them our minds would have nothing to go to work on. We would never be able to gain enough experience to be able to grasp what something is, that first step of the mind's work mentioned above.

A good definition for sensation needs to capture this idea of being a window. So let's go with this: sensation is the process of knowing the physical world by direct bodily experience of it. Notice how our definition points out that you are knowing the world—just like a window, we experience the world itself, only it takes place *through* the sense organ. This also means that sensation lasts only as long as we are in contact with the object. Once the thing goes away, there is nothing there to sense.

Unit 2

We haven't yet talked about what happens to all of the experiences we gain through our senses after sensation stops, but we know that the story doesn't end there. Our brains hold onto our experiences; in the coming units we will talk more about that.

READING COMPREHENSION

Answer with complete sentences.

1. What are the three things the mind does?

2. How do we begin to learn about things?

3. What are the five senses?

4. What analogy is used to explain the senses?

5. How long does sensation last?

KEY CONCEPTS

Define these terms carefully.

Sensation (including a list of the five kinds):

IN-CLASS WORK

Write down and complete the problems covered in class here. Be neat!

FOLLOW-UP WORK

Complete these problems. Be neat!

State one thing each of your senses would tell you about each object. Be sure to state which sense each sensation goes with.

1. Tomato

2. Porcupine

3. Strawberry Jelly

4. A Blade of Grass

5. Pick your own object: _____

What is something you would have to learn through your senses before you could understand or judge the following statements.

1. $2 + 2 = 4$

2. Your mother loves you.

3. God exists.

4. Squirrels are clever rodents.

5. It is a sunny day.
