
Unit 5 - Subway Superman

5A Introduction

This is the real life story of Wesley Autrey, the “Subway Superman.”

5B Song Lyrics

*Some people just want to stay **anonymous**, blend in with the crowd so no one knows who they are.
But sometimes, you need to step up...*

Welcome to New York! Where so many people act tough,
Yelling on the bus, maybe they should keep their trap shut.
“Where is the love?” That’s a mystery,
This **grimy** city’s so dirty it needs Mr. Clean.
That’s my complaint; it’s rightful, **legitimate**.
Can we please step it up, I mean just a little bit?
I’m going to hit the right spot, get it in the mitt,
When I pitch, the way we live, man I’m sick of it.
But when I found life boring and **stodgy**,
I heard about this dude named Wesley Autrey.
Yes, that’s Autrey, are you catching the name?
He and his two daughters, they were catching the train.
They were waiting on the platform minding their business,
They saw a guy fall; they were like, “Yo, what is this?”
You better believe, dude was having a seizure,
Autrey didn’t want to be just a **bystander** neither.
That’s someone standing, watching, doing nothing.
The guy fell on the tracks; Autrey had to do something.
But the train was coming, he could see the lights,
It was coming superfast ’cause they were really bright.
So Autrey did what he had to do.
He wasn’t thinking about the size of his actions, the **magnitude**.
He jumped down on the tracks, pushed the guy beneath,
While the train **hurtled** down the tracks, went full speed.
He pushed the guy down low, he was **astute**,
Smart and clever, because that move saved the dude.
The train passed right over them by half an inch ,
That’s like the width of the doors on your cabinets.
The guy asked, “Am I **deceased**, am I dead?”
Autrey said, “Nah, man, but don’t move your head.”
The guy could’ve died, could’ve paid the price,
But a dude like you straight saved his life.



*Flying through the tunnel, it's a bird, it's a plane!
The Subway Superman is on the way!
Risk everything to save the day,
Double S on his chest, symbol of the best!*

*Flying through the tunnel, it's a bird, it's a plane!
The Subway Superman is on the way!*

*He didn't do it for the spotlight, no!
He only did what he felt was right.*

We need more like him: a Superman to save all,
In the subways to fix our mistakes, y'all.
He went to work to do what he gets paid for,
The boss bought him lunch and gave him the day off.
Wes became famous and rose to stardom,
Received a new nickname "The Hero of Harlem."
Approached by strangers who gave thanks and praises,
Handed him bills and change because
He performed an act so **downright** dangerous.
Yes, so completely dangerous,
It could have been deadly and **lethal**,
But it shows the world is filled with great people.
Wes didn't want to see this guy become a **casualty**,
That's someone who dies in an accident.
He didn't want that happening, so he quoted,
"If you see someone in distress, go for it."
He **admonished** heads for just standing around,
Cautioned against it; smart to begin with.
For that, the city paid respect, paid **homage**,
His daughters got scholarships for college.
He earned free trips, his own world tour,
Plus he earned several awards.
Got a new car, his children computers,
A Walt Disney trip for the future.
Given the **utmost** praise, the greatest awards,
Checks for more money he's ever made before.
Then up close with the Pres weeks later,
He got honored for being a life saver.

Hook

5C Words Defined

Below you'll find each vocabulary word that was used in the song. Each word is followed by the part of speech, a simple definition and a meaningful sentence. Some words will also have synonyms, antonyms and other forms of the word listed.

1. admonish (verb) 1. to warn against something 2. to scold someone

1. Mr. Paddington *admonished* us not to throw food in the cafeteria. 2. After the food fight, the principal *admonished* us for having participated.
Synonyms: 1. advise, forewarn 2. reprimand

2. anonymous (adj) 1. unknown or unnamed 2. lacking individuality or character

1. The author of the book remained *anonymous* even after the book won countless awards.
2. My block was a long row of boring, *anonymous* houses.
Synonyms: 1. incognito, secret
Antonyms: 1. known, recognized
Other forms: The actor tried to maintain his anonymity (noun) in the crowd, but he was soon recognized.

3. astute (adj) smart and perceptive

Young Jordan made the *astute* comment that bullies often have problems at home.

Synonyms: bright, insightful

Antonyms: ignorant, idiotic

4. bystander (noun) one who looks on or observes; a person present but not taking part

Among all the *bystanders* at the parade, I was the shortest so I had the worst view.

Synonym: witness, spectator

Antonym: participant

5. casualty (noun) a person killed or injured in a war or accident

During the American Civil War there were 360,222 Union *casualties* and 258,000 Confederate *casualties*, making it by far the deadliest war in American history.

6. deceased (adj) dead

The *deceased* soldier was given a full military funeral.

Antonyms: alive

Other forms: *Deceased* can also be a noun meaning “a dead person or people,” as in: Some people believe that the *deceased* watch down over us.

7. downright (adverb) thoroughly, totally

Camille is just a *downright* nice girl.

Other forms: *Downright* can also be an adjective meaning “total”: That is a *downright* lie!

8. grimy (adj) very dirty, covered with dirt or soot

Acey’s house was on the north side of town, among the *grimy* industrial buildings and smokestacks.

Antonyms: clean, pure

Other forms: When was the last time you cleaned your room? There’s *grime* (noun) and dirt everywhere!

9. homage (noun) honor or respect shown publicly

The mayor paid *homage* to the students who had helped build the new skate park.

Synonyms: praise

Antonyms: dishonor

10. hurtle (verb) to move with great speed; to rush violently

The out-of-control truck *hurtled* down the freeway.

11. legitimate (adj) 1. lawful; according to the laws or rules 2. genuine or justifiable

1. In soccer, hitting the ball with your hand is not a *legitimate* shot. 2. I felt that my complaint about the heat in our classroom was *legitimate*, but the custodian wouldn’t listen to me.

Synonyms: accepted, customary, rightful

Antonyms: illegal, invalid, illegitimate

Other forms: If you are famous, you are *renowned* (adj).

12. lethal (adj) causing death or made to cause death

Socrates was forced to swallow a *lethal* dose of poison.
Synonyms: fatal, deadly

13. magnitude (noun) the great size or importance of something

The *magnitude* of electing the first African-American president will be felt for generations.
Synonyms: greatness, significance
Antonyms: insignificance, unimportance

14. stodgy (adj) heavy, dull, or boring; old-fashioned

Chris likes reading comic books, not *stodgy* old novels from the 19th century.
Synonyms: dreary, formal
Antonyms: exciting
Other forms: The *stodginess* (noun) of Leah's plain clothes make her seem older than she actually is.

15. utmost (adj) greatest, highest, farthest

Respecting people who are different from you is of the *utmost* importance.
Synonyms: absolute, maximum
Antonyms: little, slightest
Other forms: *Utmost* can also be a noun meaning "the extreme limit or greatest possible," as in: My patience was tested to the *utmost*.

5D Fix the Mistake

Each of the sentences below has a mistake. The wrong vocabulary words have been used, so the sentences don't make sense. Rewrite each sentence using the correct vocabulary word from this unit.

1. My grandmother's apartment is rather **legitimate**; I don't think she's bought a new piece of furniture in 40 years.

2. Keiran is so allergic to peanuts that just one bite of a peanut butter and jelly sandwich can be **astute**.

3. The children **admonished** down the hill in a high-speed race to the pond.

4. The emcee wrote a song that paid **magnitude** to the brilliance of hip-hop pioneer Grandmaster Flash.

5. It was difficult for me to grasp the **casualty** of suddenly learning that my father was a werewolf.

6. Although I was just an **homage** at the football game, the excitement of the moment made me feel like I was on the team.

7. Most people at the meeting thought Dmitri's questions were stupid, but I thought he had some **lethal** concerns.

8. My bike was all **deceased** because I'd left it lying in the mud for two days.

9. My dad still misses his brother, who was a **bystander** of the Vietnam War.

10. When our class took a field trip, our teacher's **stodgy** concern was making sure we all got back on the bus safely.

11. I wrote a **downright** letter to the school newspaper, because I knew my teacher would be mad if she knew I was the one who wrote it.

12. The school dance was a **grimy** catastrophe; 20 people came down with food poisoning from drinking the tainted punch.

13. Eloise still misses her grandmother terribly, even though she's been **anonymous** for several years.

14. Mrs. Banks **hurtled** us for turning in a project that we'd clearly slapped together right before school.

15. You make an **utmost** observation : Most people do look stupid in bicycle shorts.

5E Pick the Winner

Circle the word that best fits into the sentence. Then write a sentence below that uses the word you didn't pick in a meaningful way.

- 1. By changing his voice, the celebrity caller tried to remain **(anonymous OR astute)**.

- 2. _____
- 3. Only experienced electricians should work with electrical wires; it's easy to get a **(deceased OR lethal)** shock if you don't know what you're doing.

- 4. _____
- 5. I found the museum fascinating, but my brother thought the paintings were too **(legitimate OR stodgy)**.

- 6. _____
- 7. The king stood before his subjects to **(hurtle OR admonish)** them for their lack of loyalty.

- 8. _____
- 9. I delivered a speech paying **(casualty OR homage)** to my mother at her 40th birthday party.

- 10. _____

5F Draw the Relationships

In each grouping of eight words below, draw straight lines between the synonyms (words that mean similar things) and squiggly lines between any antonyms (words that mean nearly opposite things). Every word should have at least one line connected to it. Some may have more.

1

admonish	clean	forewarn	witness
bystander	unimportance	grimy	magnitude

.....

2

recognized	downright	deceased	anonymous
alive	completely	hurtle	move with great speed

3

legitimate

astute

illegal

insightful

deadly

dishonor

homage

lethal

4

exciting

anonymous

person killed

unknown

casualty

stodgy

slightest

utmost

5G Understanding What You Read

Read the passage below. Then answer the questions.

The True Story of the Subway Superman

It's easy to feel anonymous when you live in New York City. With more than 19 million residents, people often get lost in the crowd. But every so often, someone does something of such magnitude that the entire world takes notice.

On January 2, 2007, Wesley Autrey was standing in a subway station with his two daughters. As they waited for their train to arrive, a young man next to them suddenly had a seizure. Autrey watched as the man stumbled off the subway platform and onto the grimy subway tracks. In the distance, Autrey could see the lights of a subway train hurtling toward the man. He knew that this would definitely be a lethal situation if he didn't do something.

While a crowd of bystanders looked on, Autrey jumped off the platform. He tried to lift the man back onto the platform, but there was not enough time: The train was moving too quickly. Thinking fast, Autrey made the astute decision to move the man between the tracks. As the train approached, Autrey dropped to the ground and protected the young man with his body. He continued to hold the man down as the subway rushed over them, a mere inch or so above his head. If it weren't for Autrey's bravery, the young man would have certainly been a casualty.

The story of Autrey's daring rescue instantly became worldwide news. Newspapers called him "The Subway Superman" and "The Hero of Harlem." Gifts and cards streamed in from around the globe, paying homage to him for his brave act. The unknown construction worker was suddenly a downright celebrity. He appeared on several television shows, including The Ellen DeGeneres Show and The Late Show with David Letterman. Donald Trump gave him \$10,000, his daughters received college scholarships, and he was a guest of honor at President Bush's 2007 State of the Union Address.

Why did Autrey's story attract so much attention? For one thing, his rescue came at a time when there wasn't a lot of positive news on TV. People saw Autrey's story as a beam of light in a dark time. But perhaps most of all, Autrey's brave act showed the world that we all have the power to be heroes.

1. Why, most likely, did Autrey move the young man to between the tracks?

- (A) The train conductor told Autrey to move the young man.
- (B) The high-voltage third rail wasn't activated.
- (C) Both the young man and Autrey would have been crushed otherwise.
- (D) The train was moving on a different set of tracks.

2. What does Autrey do for a living?

- (A) He works for the subway.
- (B) He is a construction worker.
- (C) He is a teacher.
- (D) He is a doctor.

3. The author's tone in the third paragraph could best be described as

- (A) Hopeless
- (B) Romantic
- (C) Comedic
- (D) Suspenseful

4. How is the last paragraph organized?

- (A) Order of importance
- (B) Chronological order
- (C) Question and answer
- (D) Cause and effect

5. Read this sentence from the passage:

"People saw Autrey's story as a beam of light in a dark time." The author means that Autrey's story

- (A) Gave people hope
- (B) Seemed unimportant
- (C) Did not seem to be true
- (D) Was humorous

5H Thinking Creatively

Answer each question below. Don't be afraid to think creatively.

1. Make an **astute** point.

2. Write the opening sentence to a novel called Mr. **Anonymous**.

3. Who in your life most deserves an **homage**, and why?

The Word Up Project: Level Yellow

admonish / anonymous / astute / bystander / casualty / deceased / downright / grimy / homage / hurtle / legitimate / lethal / magnitude / stodgy / utmost

4. Rewrite this phrase using synonyms: He **downright admonished** him for being **grimy**.

5. _____
What is the last thing for which you were **admonished**?

Word Breakdown

The word *homage* has a long history. Much of medieval Europe lived under a political system called feudalism. In *feudalism*, the king would give large plots of land to men known as “lords.” The lords would, in turn, give parts of the land to workers known as “vassals.” A vassal would have to declare on his knees that he would be loyal to the lord, which was known as being the *hommage* of the lord. Then, as now, paying *homage* was a sign of respect. It’s this meaning that a rapper from Wu-Tang Clan uses when he rhymes, “Bow and pay homage, I rap with a garment / Like one of the prophets that’s teaching faith.”

The word *utmost* is an example of a word that has been shortened over time. The original word was *outermost*, which means “at the farthest point.” After some time, this began to be spelled *uttermost*, which was later shortened to just *utmost*.