

## Lesson Five

### A New Word: *Stem*

1 When we take prefixes or suffixes away from a word, the part that is left over is called the **stem**. So if we took the prefix *re-* away from the word *repaying*, we would have the word *paying* left over — and we call that leftover part the stem. If we took the suffix *-ing* away from the word *repaying*, the stem would be *repay*.

We also use the word *stem* to refer to a word to which we are going to add prefixes or suffixes. If we added the prefix *re-* to the word *pay*, we would say that *pay* was the stem of the new word, *repay*.

So the word *stem* can be used in two different ways: It can be used to refer to what is left over after prefixes or suffixes are taken away from a word, and it can be used to refer to a word to which we are going to add prefixes or suffixes.

2 Fill in the blanks as we have done with the first three:

<b>Word</b>	<b>minus a prefix or suffix</b>	<b>=</b>	<b>Stem</b>
repayments	– prefix <i>re-</i>	=	<i>payments</i>
repayments	– suffix <i>-s</i>	=	<i>repayment</i>
repayment	– prefix <i>re-</i>	=	<i>payment</i>
repayment	– suffix <i>-ment</i>	=	<i>repay</i>
payment	– suffix <i>-ment</i>	=	<i>pay</i>
repay	– prefix <i>re-</i>	=	<i>pay</i>

3 Here are some words with both prefixes and suffixes. Take away the prefix or suffix given for each word to reveal a stem. Watch for cases of twinning and final <e> deletion:

<b>Word</b>	<b>minus a prefix or suffix</b>	<b>=</b>	<b>Stem</b>
researched	– re-	=	<i>searched</i>
researched	– -ed	=	<i>research</i>
untruthful	– -ful	=	<i>untruth</i>
untruths	– -s	=	<i>untruth</i>
untruthful	– un-	=	<i>truthful</i>

<b>Word</b>	<b>minus a prefix or suffix</b>		<b>=</b>	<b>Stem</b>
dismounted	–	-ed	=	<i>dismount</i>
remounting	–	-ing	=	<i>remount</i>
worried	–	-ed	=	<i>worry</i>
reacting	–	re-	=	<i>acting</i>
unchallenging	–	un-	=	<i>challenging</i>
dishonest	–	dis-	=	<i>honest</i>
untapped	–	un-	=	<i>tapped</i>
resettlement	–	re-	=	<i>settlement</i>
befriended	–	-ed	=	<i>befriend</i>

4 In the following table you start with a stem to which you add a prefix or a suffix to create a new word:

<b>Stem</b>	<b>+ prefix or suffix</b>		<b>=</b>	<b>New Word</b>
noticed	+	un-	=	<i>unnoticed</i>
disservice	+	-es	=	<i>disservices</i>
quiz + z	+	-ed	=	<i>quizzed</i>
serviceable	+	un-	=	<i>unserviceable</i>
digested	+	un-	=	<i>undigested</i>
repack	+	-ing	=	<i>repacking</i>
licensed	+	un-	=	<i>unlicensed</i>
charged	+	dis-	=	<i>discharged</i>
disbar + r	+	-ed	=	<i>disbarred</i>
original	+	un-	=	<i>unoriginal</i>
waxed	+	re-	=	<i>rewaxed</i>
announce	+	-ment	=	<i>announcement</i>
obliged	+	un-	=	<i>unobliged</i>

4 The word *stem* is a handy one to know. Remember that the same word can make different stems because stems are whatever is left when we take away prefixes or suffixes. And remember, too, that we also use the word *stem* to refer to a word to which we are going to add prefixes or suffixes.

Some stems do not have prefixes or suffixes. They contain just one or more bases. But although a stem does not have to have a prefix or suffix, every stem must have at least one base.

We call bases that can stand free as words free bases, like the base *paint* in the word *repainted*. We also call stems that can stand free as words **free stems**, like the stems *repaint* and *painted* in the word *repainted*.

### Teaching Notes.

Item 1. The definition of *stem* can be tricky for students. The fact that some words can have more than one stem, the fact that a stem can be what is left over or what you start with — these can be difficult notions for the youngsters. But the word *stem* will be useful enough in their future work with words that it is worth the difficulty encountered in this lesson. The word *stem* is useful because it can be used to refer to many different things: a base plus a suffix, a prefix plus a base, a base plus two suffixes . . . .

Item 4. It is important that the students understand why we call both *repaint* and *painted* free stems of the word *repainted*. Which stem we get depends on what we remove from the original word.

Notice that a free stem may consist of only a free base. Such an element can actually be called by three different names: *free base*, *free stem*, or *word*.