

EXERCISE 18-2 Exact Words

For each of the words italicized in the following passages, consider alternatives that the writer might have chosen instead. (A dictionary and a thesaurus will lead to other possibilities.) Then discuss why the author probably selected the word he or she did.

1. The forest, choked by growth and shadow, was like a jungle; the air hung thick with heat, muting the sound of their progress. Breathing in a pungent steam of sweet grasses and tangy needles, rotting wood and sunbaked fungi, she followed as best she could, plunging through the thicket to keep up with the young man ahead. —Diana West

2. A change of just a few degrees in atmospheric temperature over the next century would be catastrophic. A parade of scientists appearing before a Senate committee in June painted a graphic picture of what that could mean: melting icecaps and rising sea levels that would inundate seaboard cities and drown thousands in fierce storms; rainfall shifts that would make the deserts bloom and turn breadbaskets into dustbowls; and, of course, heat everywhere. —Matthew L. Wald