

## Umtanum

Yakima is a small city located an hour and a half's drive(1) from Wenatchee. It is a wide valley, famous for its grapes and apples. We were there last weekend for a baseball tournament, the first of the season(2). One interesting fact about Yakima is that its name is taken from the Yakama Indians who are from this area. There are actually Indian names in many areas of the state. When the baseball tournament was over and we were leaving Yakima, we drove past a barren(3), rocky few miles and crossed over a bridge. Immediately after the bridge, I saw a sign 'Umtanum Canyon'. The name sparked my interest(4). "Now, that must be an Indian name," I thought to myself. When I got home, I looked up the name on the internet. I found quite a few pages about Umtanum, but no translation of its name. Reading about the canyon made me even more eager to find out its name, because the land is geographically interesting, and has a wealth(5) of wildlife. Hunters would love it because there are big horn sheep, deer, and coyotes, as well as pheasants and all kinds of rodents(6). Most of these creatures come to the creek, which is a small river, to drink. The predators obviously take advantage of this being the only water source for all the animals nearby. The canyon walls are steep and rocky, which are perfect for big horn sheep who are expert climbers. The banks of the creek are grassy with wildflowers, a perfect place for ground squirrels, marmots, and rabbits. They have to watch out for the coyotes all year round, and the rattlesnakes in the summer. Infact, it's recommended that hiking parties go during the autumn, winter, and spring, and avoid the snakes in the summer. Umtanum, I would say(7), is typical of eastern Washington. There are many such large expanses of land that look seemingly(8) empty, lifeless, dry, even boring. But, when you get out of the car, and walk deeper into the countryside, you find that it is full of life.

1. An hour and a half's drive. When the duration of something is between one and two hours, we use an apostrophe s to show possession.

- a. It's a two hour walk. It's a three day hike. It's a four hour swim.
- b. The mall is an hour's drive from here. It's an hour and a quarter's wait until the next bus.

Note that it is used mainly with one hour or when 'half' an hour is being used.

2. The first of the season is easily understood. I am emphasizing this because it is a very natural sounding add-on to a sentence that will make you seem more native.

- a. On May 2nd there is a country dance, the first of the season.
- b. We waited to see the main ballerinas, the best of the dance troupe.
- c. The politician answered the questions, the most difficult ones he has been asked.

3. Barren is a word often used for being lifeless, bare, or childless. It is quite poetic, and often used for bare landscapes.

- a. The land looked like a barren wasteland.

4. To spark someone's interest means to get someone's attention and create curiosity. You can also spark anger.

- a. The sudden movement of something in the dark sparked the cat's curiosity.
- b. The conversation sparked his anger.

5. A wealth of wildlife. 'A wealth of' is used to describe a large quantity. It implies something positive.

- a. On that beach, you'll find a wealth of different crabs.
- b. My grandmother and her friends are a wealth of knowledge and experience.

6. 'Rodent' is the general name for mice, rats, rabbits, and other small ground creatures.
7. 'I would say' is a little phrase that expresses opinion. Sometimes 'you could say' is used in its place. It's rare now for people to use 'one could say' or 'one would say'.
- a. Elizabeth, you could say, has the destiny of becoming a star.
- b. I would say that growing wheat on that barren land is a rough, tough job.
8. Seemingly means to have an appearance of. It comes from the verb 'to seem' and, as you can see, it implies that perhaps reality is not what is seen.
- a. The house was run down, lightless, and seemingly deserted. But then, from a distance they heard music coming from the upstairs.
- b. When I spoke to him he didn't respond, was quiet, and seemingly uninterested.

Let's hear the paragraph once more.

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