



## A Health Crisis

Jim sat behind his desk in the newsroom, staring at the paper in front of him. The red light was blinking on the camera five feet away; in mere moments he would have to go live with this report.

“Three, two, one,” the cameraman mouthed to him, and then pointed at Jim. Jim looked into the camera.

“The mysterious disease that has been claiming lives all over the country for the past month has just been declared an epidemic by the Centers for Disease Control. A spokesperson for the CDC said, and this is a quote, ‘I cannot overemphasize the gravity of this situation. Prospects for the speedy development of a vaccine are bleak,’ though he stressed that scientists are working on the problem around the clock. Grim reports have been coming in from every major city across the country. . .”

As soon as the words were out of his mouth, Jim paused, and looked down at the paper in his hand once again. Every major city? Were reports **ONLY** coming in from major cities? What about small towns? What about rural areas? Were people getting sick there too, or was all the sickness confined to major metropolitan areas?

The cameraman cleared his throat, reminding Jim that he was on the air. He glanced at his paper again.

“Authorities are doing everything they can to ensure that this latest crisis doesn’t erode the public’s faith in the CDC’s ability to predict, prepare for and prevent our nation falling victim to unexpected illnesses. Next update at ten.”

“And we’re clear,” the cameraman said. “What the heck happened to you up there?”

Jim jumped out from behind his seat and grabbed his jacket. “I had an idea,” he said. “I think there may be a mystery to solve!”

1. Which two words are synonyms?

- A. epidemic and erode
- B. grim and bleak
- C. grim and gravity

3. What does “epidemic” mean?

- A. rare occurrence of a disease
- B. widespread presence of a disease
- C. when a disease that has been gone comes back

2. What does “erode” mean?

- A. damage
- B. slowly wear away
- C. destroy

4. If a situation has “gravity,” it is:

- A. serious
- B. light
- C. confusing