Key Vocabulary: Going Postal by Terry Pratchett

Vocabulary Word	Definition	Context
Ankh-Morpork	The fictional city where the story takes place.	"Welcome to Ankh-Morpork. Don't mind the dragons, they won't bite much."
Brouhaha	A noisy and overexcited reaction to something.	"The city had been consumed by brouhaha since it was announced that the Post Office was going to reopen."
Con artist	A person who deceives others by gaining their trust and then exploiting that trust for personal gain.	"Conning is an art, like horseshoeing or playing the bassoon. And true art is obtained only through diligent study and practice."
Cryptic	Mysterious or obscure in meaning.	"The whole place was cryptic, in the sense that it was obviously ancient, built by people who had a working knowledge of engineering, architecture and geometry, but had learned it all from different books."
Dystopian	An imaginary society in which social or technological trends have created a catastrophic decline in quality of life.	"He looked around. It was like being in a dystopian movie. Or possibly a dystopian book."
Espionage	The practice of spying or using spies to obtain information.	"We're going to have to do some espionage," said Moist. "Sneaking around, gathering information, listening at doors..."
Golem	In Jewish folklore, a clay figure brought to life to serve as a helper or protector.	"They made golems, too, but they always started to argue with each other and had to be taken apart after a day or two."
Inept	Lacking skill or competence.	"If I owned both Hell and the Post Office, I'd close down the Post Office and live in Hell," said Reacher Gilt. "They do things better there." "You would, sir? Why?" "At least there'd be a improvement in service." "Oh, sir," said Groat, trying to look on the bright side, "we do our best." "And that, Groat, is the problem. Because you and your colleagues are, to be quite frank, inept."
Larceny	Theft or the act of stealing.	"And, of course, there is the little matter of larceny," said Gilt. "Theft is such an ugly word, sir," said Moist. "I prefer to think of it as borrowing without permission."
Obfuscate	To make something confusing or difficult to understand.	"It was probably a good idea, although the horse involved had been Obfuscated for tax reasons and had never been seen again."
Postulate	To suggest or assume something to be true.	"It was a fact, although it was not actually a fact in the way that facts normally were, but more like a fact in the way that myths were, which is to say that it wasn't actually true but people wished it was and therefore it became sticky, and stuck to the inside of people's heads, like chewing gum on the sole of a shoe, and refused to go away, and the more people thought about it the more sticky it became, until it became known as the Postulate of Inevitable Historical Progress."
Repercussion	The unintended consequence or result of an action or event.	"It was amazing how many people took up stamp collecting after a serious misprint was issued. The printers were blamed for the mistake, but it was the Post Office that suffered the repercussion of the stamp's increased value."

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Historical and political context of the book

While "Going Postal" is set in the fictional Discworld universe, there are several historical and political contexts that inspired Terry Pratchett's writing.

Historically, the book reflects the changes in communication technology that occurred during the Industrial Revolution. In the novel, the postal service is being threatened by the emergence of "clacks," a new and faster system of long-distance communication. This mirrors the real-life competition between traditional mail delivery systems and new forms of communication like telegraph and telephone during the 19th century.

Politically, the book reflects Pratchett's criticisms of corporate greed and the privatization of public services. The character of Reacher Gilt, a corrupt businessman who attempts to take over the postal service for his own financial gain, is a commentary on the dangers of allowing profit-seeking individuals to control essential public services. Pratchett also critiques the inefficiency and bureaucracy of government institutions, as seen in the character of Lord Vetinari, the ruler of Ankh-Morpork, who uses unorthodox methods to achieve his goals.

Overall, "Going Postal" reflects Pratchett's views on the importance of communication and public services, and his criticisms of greed and corruption in both the private and public sectors.