

A Sound of Thunder

by Ray Bradbury

Pre-Reading Vocabulary Practice

Optional Post-Reading Quiz Included

Practice words: annihilate, correlate, dictatorship, expendable, exquisite, mail, paradox, resilient, subliminal, taint

PRE-READING ACTIVITY

Vocabulary Preview 2

Answer Key — Preview 3

Caution: share only if self-checking

OPTIONAL POST-READING QUIZ

Vocabulary in Context 4

Answer Key — In Context 5

Caution: do not share with students

About the Pre-Reading Activity (open-dictionary; ungraded or completion grade):

Students preview 10 words from the upcoming reading, each in a sentence that supports understanding. They choose the best meaning from 3 choices.

About the Optional Post-Reading Quiz (use after reading, or skip):

Same words, now in real excerpts from the text, with questions that build reading and analytical skills.



More Short Works

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Vocabulary Preview

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Name _____ Date _____ Period _____

Read each prompt. Then choose the best meaning for the bold word.

1. The fire threatened to **annihilate** the entire village.

- A. to seize and take complete control of
- B. to destroy completely; to wipe out
- C. to overwhelm and drive out completely

2. Before the show begins, we **correlate** the music with the lights.

- A. arrange to fit together
- B. separate into parts
- C. compare for differences

3. The general established a **dictatorship** and silenced all opposition.

- A. a policy of strict censorship
- B. a system led by military officers
- C. rule by one person with total power

4. The commander treated new recruits as **expendable**, replacing losses without concern.

- A. required to follow orders without question
- B. disposable; able to be sacrificed
- C. willing to take on the most dangerous work

5. The jeweler crafted an **exquisite** ring with impossibly fine detail.

- A. delicate, beautiful, and rare
- B. ancient and carefully preserved over time
- C. grand and impressive in size or scale

6. The knight's **mail** clinked softly as he walked across the stone floor.

- A. thick leather padding with medals
- B. interlocking metal rings worn as armor
- C. a heavy cloth tunic bearing a coat of arms

7. It's a **paradox** that the busiest people often seem to have the most free time.

- A. something that seems likely to occur
- B. something that seems simple to prove
- C. something that seems to contradict itself

8. The gymnast's **resilient** muscles absorbed each landing without injury.

- A. springy; able to flex and spring back
- B. quick to react with fast, precise movement
- C. extremely firm and resistant to bending

9. She felt a **subliminal** sense of danger before she knew why.

- A. overpowering
- B. unmistakable
- C. subconscious

10. A **taint** of smoke in the air told them the forest fire was still burning.

- A. a subtle trace of harm or corruption
- B. a heavy concentration of visible particles
- C. a sudden rush or wave of sensation

Reading Helpers

(Not quizzed – helpful for this text.)

golden salamanders – in mythology, creatures said to live in and feed on fire

watchmaker's claws – Bradbury's phrase for the T. Rex's small forearms – comparing them to the hands of a watchmaker

empty of all expression save hunger – empty of all expression except hunger (“save” is an archaic and literary way of saying “except”)

gliding ballet step – the T. Rex's movement – eerily graceful, like a dancer's, despite its ten tons

ANSWER KEY

Vocabulary Preview

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#	KEY
1	B
2	A
3	C
4	B
5	A
6	B
7	C
8	A
9	C
10	A

Vocabulary in Context

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Name _____ Date _____ Period _____ Score _____ / 10

Read each excerpt carefully. Then choose the best answer to each question.

1 *“If Deutscher had gotten in, we’d have the worst kind of dictatorship.”*

As it is used in the excerpt, the word “dictatorship” most nearly suggests that Deutscher’s government would have been...

- A. run by competing political parties
- B. ruled by one person with unchecked power
- C. focused entirely on military conquest

2 *“With a stamp of your foot, you annihilate first one, then a dozen, then a thousand, a million, a billion possible mice!”*

It can reasonably be inferred that annihilating even one mouse...

- A. erases countless possible futures
- B. causes only immediate, visible damage
- C. requires more than one action to achieve

3 *“But you, friend, have stepped on all the tigers in that region. By stepping on one single mouse. So the caveman starves. And the caveman, please note, is not just any expendable man, no! He is an entire future nation.”*

The author most likely describes the caveman as “not just any expendable man” in order to emphasize that...

- A. his survival shapes all future history
- B. most people of that era were replaceable
- C. the caveman was physically fragile

4 *“Then I correlate our arrival in the Past so that we meet the Monster not more than two minutes before he would have died anyway.”*

According to the passage, what does Lesperance’s correlating of their arrival ensure?

- A. they travel no further back than planned
- B. they arrive just before the dinosaur dies
- C. they hunt the most dangerous dinosaur

5 *“That’d be a paradox,” said the latter. “Time doesn’t permit that sort of mess—a man meeting himself.”*

The passage most strongly suggests that a paradox...

- A. adds risk and excitement to time travel
- B. happens only in distant time travel
- C. is an impossibility that time won’t allow

6 *“It came on great oiled, resilient, striding legs.”*

In the passage, the T. Rex is characterized as...

- A. powerful but slow due to its weight
- B. clumsy despite its enormous size
- C. massive yet eerily fluid and powerful

7 *“Each lower leg was a piston, a thousand pounds of white bone, sunk in thick ropes of muscle, sheathed over in a gleam of pebbled skin like the mail of a terrible warrior.”*

As it is used in the excerpt, the word “mail” most nearly means...

- A. interlocking metal rings worn as armor
- B. a net or mesh used to trap animals
- C. a message or package sent by post

8 *“there was a thing to the air, a chemical taint so subtle, so slight, that only a faint cry of his subliminal senses warned him it was there.”*

The information in this sentence primarily functions to...

- A. set the scene in the prehistoric era
- B. suggest the air is naturally toxic
- C. an indication that something has gone wrong

9 *“there was a thing to the air, a chemical taint so subtle, so slight, that only a faint cry of his subliminal senses warned him it was there.”*

According to the passage, Eckels’s subliminal senses...

- A. respond only to very powerful stimuli
- B. sense what he hasn’t consciously noticed
- C. work mainly through his sense of smell

10 *“It fell to the floor, an exquisite thing, a small thing that could upset balances and knock down a line of small dominoes and then big dominoes and then gigantic dominoes, all down the years across Time.”*

The author most likely describes the butterfly as “an exquisite thing” in order to...

- A. contrast its delicate beauty with catastrophic power
- B. explain why the characters wish to preserve it
- C. show it is rare and hard to replace when lost

ANSWER KEY
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#	KEY	TEACHER NOTE
1	B	
2	A	
3	A	
4	B	
5	C	
6	C	
7	A	Mail here means chain mail – interlocking metal armor rings. The T. Rex's pebbled skin is compared to the gleaming surface of a warrior's armor.
8	C	
9	B	
10	A	
