

A Worn Path

by Eudora Welty

Pre-Reading Vocabulary Practice

Optional Post-Reading Quiz Included

Practice words: dignified, erect, flicker, grace, limber, meditative, obstinate, pendulum, solemn, withered

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.



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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 **dignified** gentleman bowed slightly and took his seat.

- A. calm and composed
- B. cheerful and friendly
- C. proud and boastful

2. The soldier stood **erect** before the visiting general.

- A. tall and proud
- B. alert and watchful
- C. upright and straight

3. We saw a **flicker** of light from the distant lighthouse.

- A. a brief, unsteady flash
- B. a wide, sweeping beam
- C. a faint, colored ring

4. The skater moved with such **grace** across the frozen pond.

- A. great speed and power
- B. smooth ease of movement
- C. courage and boldness

5. The young dancer's **limber** body amazed the whole audience.

- A. flexible and supple
- B. tall and slender
- C. graceful and elegant

6. She sat in a **meditative** mood, watching the rain.

- A. sleepy and drowsy
- B. quiet and reflective
- C. gloomy and sad

7. The **obstinate** customer argued with the manager for an hour.

- A. loud and angry
- B. stubborn and unyielding
- C. confused and uncertain

8. He pointed to the **pendulum** as the grandfather clock chimed.

- A. a clock's painted dial
- B. a clock's winding key
- C. a swinging clock weight

9. He gave a **solemn** promise that he would never tell.

- A. sad and tearful
- B. firm and final
- C. deeply serious

10. An old **withered** apple sat forgotten at the back of the drawer.

- A. dried up and shrunken
- B. sour and unripe
- C. bruised and soft

Reading Helpers

(Not quizzed — helpful for this text.)

illuminated — lit up or made to glow

doing your appointed work — doing what you were assigned or destined to do

the Surrender — the Confederate surrender near the end of the Civil War in 1865

ANSWER KEY

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#	KEY
1	A
2	C
3	A
4	B
5	A
6	B
7	B
8	C
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 *"She was very old and small and she walked slowly in the dark pine shadows, moving a little from side to side in her steps, with the balanced heaviness and lightness of a pendulum in a grandfather clock."*

As it is used in the passage, the word 'pendulum' most nearly suggests that Phoenix's walk is...

- A. unsteady and off-balance
- B. steady and evenly rhythmic
- C. quick and jerky

2 *"This made a grave and persistent noise in the still air, that seemed meditative like the chirping of a solitary little bird."*

The author most likely describes the cane's noise as 'meditative' in order to...

- A. make it sound harsh and jarring
- B. give it a calm, thoughtful mood
- C. make it sound louder and faster

3 *"Under her small black-freckled hand her cane, limber as a buggy whip, would switch at the brush as if to rouse up any hiding things."*

In context, the word 'limber' emphasizes...

- A. how easily the cane bends
- B. how sharp the cane is
- C. how heavy the cane is

4 *"Big dead trees, like black men with one arm, were standing in the purple stalks of the withered cotton field."*

It can reasonably be inferred that the cotton in the field is...

- A. dried out and long dead
- B. green and still growing
- C. ripe and ready to pick

5 *"Her fingers slid down and along the ground under the piece of money with the grace and ease they would have in lifting an egg from under a setting hen."*

The passage most strongly suggests that Phoenix takes the nickel...

- A. clumsily, with great effort
- B. boldly, out in the open
- C. with smooth, practiced ease

6 *"But Phoenix only waited and stared straight ahead, her face very solemn and withdrawn into rigidity."*

Which choice best describes Phoenix's attitude as the nurse questions her?

- A. grave and withdrawn
- B. nervous and fidgety
- C. cheerful and chatty

7 *"With her hands on her knees, the old woman waited, silent, erect and motionless, just as if she were in armor."*

Which statement about Phoenix in the clinic is best supported by the text?

- A. She slumps in her chair
- B. She paces about the room
- C. She sits stiffly upright

8 *"At last there came a flicker and then a flame of comprehension across her face, and she spoke."*

It can reasonably be inferred that the understanding Phoenix regains...

- A. comes only partway, then fades
- B. comes back slowly and steadily
- C. comes faintly, then all at once

9 *"Then Phoenix was like an old woman begging a dignified forgiveness for waking up frightened in the night."*

In the passage, Phoenix is characterized as...

- A. ashamed and humiliated
- B. composed while apologizing
- C. angry and defensive

10 *"But it's an obstinate case."*

According to the text, the grandson's illness is best described as...

- A. stubborn and slow to heal
- B. sudden and newly caught
- C. mild and quickly improving

ANSWER KEY

Vocabulary in Context

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#	KEY	NOTE
1	B	
2	B	
3	A	
4	A	
5	C	Event comprehension. Here 'grace' means effortless ease of movement, not politeness or divine favor.
6	A	
7	C	
8	C	
9	B	
10	A	Event comprehension. The 'obstinate case' is the grandson's chronic throat injury from swallowing lye.