

Everyday Use

by Alice Walker

Pre-Reading Vocabulary Practice

Optional Post-Reading Quiz Included

Practice words: cowering, dingy, doctrines, hangdog, heritage, homely, oppress, rifling, scalding, sidle

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

verbalworkout.com

(all resources free)

Vocabulary Preview

Everyday Use

by Alice Walker

Name _____ Date _____ Period _____

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

1. The puppy spent the thunderstorm **cowering** under the bed, trembling at every rumble.

- A. pacing back and forth out of restlessness
- B. crouching or shrinking back in fear
- C. curling up tightly to stay warm and rest

2. Years of coal smoke had left the once-white curtains looking **dingy** and gray.

- A. stiff, wrinkled, and hard to smooth out
- B. dark, dull, and dirty-looking
- C. thin, worn, and nearly see-through

3. New members were expected to study the organization's **doctrines** before participating in meetings.

- A. rituals or ceremonies performed at events
- B. records or documents kept on file
- C. beliefs or principles held by a group

4. After forgetting his mother's birthday, Jake wore a **hangdog** expression for the rest of the week.

- A. stubborn and unwilling to apologize
- B. dazed and confused, as if lost in thought
- C. sad, guilty, or defeated in appearance

5. The family reunion included storytelling and recipes that celebrated their shared **heritage**.

- A. traditions and values from earlier generations
- B. reputation and status earned in a community
- C. wealth and property owned by a family

6. The actress wore no makeup for the role, wanting to look **homely** enough that the audience would overlook her at first.

- A. plain and unattractive in appearance
- B. warm and comfortable to be around
- C. shy and reluctant to speak up

7. Throughout history, rulers who **oppress** their people often discover that fear alone cannot maintain loyalty.

- A. to keep down by unjust use of power
- B. to ignore by refusing to acknowledge
- C. to mislead through false promises

8. She caught her brother **rifling** through the desk drawers, scattering papers everywhere.

- A. glancing casually without much interest
- B. organizing neatly into separate piles
- C. searching hurriedly and carelessly

9. Her **scalding** reply left him speechless, his confidence shattered in a single sentence.

- A. loud and meant to attract attention
- B. burning hot; here, sharply hurtful
- C. clever and designed to entertain

10. The stray cat would **sidle** along the fence, never quite trusting the hand that held out food.

- A. to dart away in quick, sudden bursts
- B. to edge along quietly and cautiously
- C. to creep forward slowly on all fours

Reading Helpers

(Not quizzed — helpful for this text.)

lye — a harsh chemical used in soap; here compared to caustic, hurtful remarks

churn — a container in which cream is stirred or shaken to make butter

dasher — the paddle or plunger inside a butter churn used to stir the cream

checkerberry snuff — powdered tobacco flavored with checkerberry

ANSWER KEY

Vocabulary Preview

Everyday Use

by Alice Walker

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

Vocabulary in Context

Everyday Use

by Alice Walker

Name _____ Date _____ Period _____ Score _____ / 10

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

1 “Maggie will be nervous until after her sister goes: she will stand hopelessly in corners, homely and ashamed of the burn scars down her arms and legs, eying her sister with a mixture of envy and awe.”

As it is used in the excerpt, the word “homely” most nearly suggests that Maggie...

- A. feels comfortable and at home in the house
- B. is simple and unsophisticated in her manner
- C. is plain and unattractive in appearance

2 “Have you ever seen a lame animal, perhaps a dog run over by some careless person rich enough to own a car, sidle up to someone who is ignorant enough to be kind to him? That is the way my Maggie walks.”

In the passage, Maggie is characterized as...

- A. timid and cautious in her movements
- B. physically slow because of her injuries
- C. eager to win attention and sympathy

3 “I see her standing off under the sweet gum tree she used to dig gum out of; a look of concentration on her face as she watched the last dingy gray board of the house fall in toward the red-hot brick chimney.”

The author most likely describes the board as “dingy” in order to...

- A. show that Dee disapproved of the house
- B. suggest the fire made the board look darker
- C. emphasize the worn, neglected state of the house

4 “Impressed with her they worshiped the well-turned phrase, the cute shape, the scalding humor that erupted like bubbles in lye.”

It can reasonably be inferred that Dee’s humor is described as “scalding” because it...

- A. caused her friends to blush with embarrassment
- B. made people feel warm and welcome
- C. was sharp enough to sting or wound others

5 “She stoops down quickly and lines up picture after picture of me sitting there in front of the house with Maggie cowering behind me. She never takes a shot without making sure the house is included.”

Which detail from the excerpt best supports the claim that Maggie feels afraid of Dee?

- A. Dee stoops down quickly to take pictures
- B. the house is always included in the shot
- C. Maggie is cowering behind Mama

6 “She’s dead, Wangero said. “I couldn’t bear it any longer, being named after the people who oppress me.””

The passage most strongly suggests that Dee rejects her given name because she...

- A. believes the name sounds old-fashioned
- B. wants to honor a specific African ancestor
- C. believes the name ties her to an unjust past

7 “Hakim-a-barber said, ‘I accept some of their doctrines, but farming and raising cattle is not my style.’”

In the passage, Hakim-a-barber is characterized as...

- A. someone who selectively adopts beliefs that suit him
- B. a deeply committed follower of the group
- C. openly critical of the group’s core principles

8 “After dinner Dee (Wangero) went to the trunk at the foot of my bed and started rifling through it. Maggie hung back in the kitchen over the dishpan. Out came Wangero with two quilts.”

Which choice best describes the narrator’s attitude toward Dee’s behavior in the excerpt?

- A. indifferent to how Dee searches the trunk
- B. impressed by Dee’s interest in family items
- C. critical of Dee’s sense of entitlement

9 “She had filled her bottom lip with checkerberry snuff and gave her face a kind of dopey, hangdog look. It was Grandma Dee and Big Dee who taught her how to quilt herself. She stood there with her scarred hands hidden in the folds of her skirt.”

As it is used in the excerpt, the word “hangdog” most nearly suggests that Maggie looks...

- A. angry and stubborn
- B. defeated and resigned
- C. confused and distracted

10 “You just don’t understand ... [y]our heritage,” she said. And then she turned to Maggie, kissed her, and said, “You ought to try to make something of yourself, too, Maggie. It’s really a new day for us. But from the way you and Mama still live you’d never know it.”

Which contrast best shows Dee’s view of heritage versus Mama and Maggie’s?

- A. something to escape vs. something to hide
- B. something to redefine vs. something to live
- C. something to forget vs. something to protect

ANSWER KEY

Vocabulary in Context

Everyday Use

by Alice Walker

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