

Flowers for Algernon — Novel

March and April

by Daniel Keyes

Pre-Reading Vocabulary Practice

Optional Post-Reading Quiz Included

Practice words: cower, degenerate, fashion, hypothesis, opportunist, outstrip, regression, subconscious, unaccustomed, whimper

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.

Vocabulary Sections for this Book:

Section 1 · March and April · Charlie begins his progress reports

Section 2 · May · Charlie keeps growing smarter

Section 3 · June · Charlie navigates his new intelligence

Section 4 · July and August · Charlie pursues his own research

Section 5 · September, October, and November · The final progress reports

Bold = this section. Other sections are available at verbalworkout.com.



verbalworkout.com

(all resources free)

Vocabulary Preview
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Name _____ Date _____ Period _____

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

1. The puppy began to **cower** when the thunder crashed.

- A. to bark in warning
- B. to shrink back in fear
- C. to whine for attention

2. The judge called the prisoner a **degenerate** without mercy.

- A. a clever cheat
- B. a depraved person
- C. a foolish coward

3. From a lump of clay, the artist can **fashion** a small vase.

- A. to shape by hand
- B. to paint with skill
- C. to choose with care

4. The students built their **hypothesis** from a few early clues.

- A. a research method
- B. an idea to be tested
- C. a confirmed result

5. Everyone saw the **opportunist** grab credit the moment the project succeeded.

- A. one who distrusts every motive
- B. one who always expects the worst
- C. one who seizes chances for gain

6. On the last lap she began to **outstrip** the other runners.

- A. to move ahead of
- B. to keep pace with
- C. to glance back at

7. After weeks of progress, his sudden **regression** worried the coach.

- A. a return to an earlier state
- B. a loss of motivation
- C. a change in routine

8. Old fears can hide deep in the **subconscious** for years.

- A. the hidden part of the mind
- B. the power of clear reasoning
- C. the store of recent memories

9. She felt **unaccustomed** to the noise of the busy city.

- A. worried about
- B. tired of
- C. not used to

10. A faint **whimper** came from the corner of the dark room.

- A. a low, steady hum
- B. a sudden, sharp shout
- C. a weak, feeble cry

Reading Helpers

(Not quizzed — helpful for this text.)

pull a Charlie Gordon — to do something foolish or clumsy — a phrase the bakery workers coin from Charlie's name

Rorschach — a psychological test that uses inkblots to study personality and perception

fluttering — moving with quick, light, restless motions; here, figurative for the mother's nervous hovering

ANSWER KEY

Vocabulary Preview

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

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 “Your intellectual growth is going to outstrip your emotional growth.”

As it is used in the passage, the word “outstrip” most nearly suggests that Charlie’s mind will...

- A. develop faster than his feelings
- B. fall behind his emotions
- C. grow evenly with his feelings

6 “If we claim too much now, our whole hypothesis will come under fire.”

According to the passage, Strauss warns that claiming too much now will...

- A. end the project’s funding
- B. expose their theory to attack
- C. prove their theory correct

2 “... my subconscious is trying to block my conscious from remembering.”

It can reasonably be inferred that Charlie’s subconscious is...

- A. working outside his awareness
- B. deliberately chosen by him
- C. unrelated to his memories

7 “I’m not afraid of regression any more.”

The author most likely includes Nemur’s claim about “regression” in order to...

- A. hint Charlie’s gains may not last
- B. show Nemur fears for Charlie
- C. reassure us the work is safe

3 “You keep away from my kid sister, you degenerate.”

Which choice best describes Oscar’s attitude toward Charlie when he calls him a “degenerate”?

- A. pity for his confusion
- B. contempt for him as depraved
- C. gratitude for his gift

8 “They called each other names—opportunist, cynic, pessimist—and I found myself frightened.”

It can reasonably be inferred that calling someone an “opportunist” accuses them of...

- A. distrusting all motives
- B. expecting the worst always
- C. exploiting chances for gain

4 “He is unaccustomed to this rare moment of success.”

The passage most strongly suggests that, for Charlie, success is...

- A. a comfortable, routine event
- B. a strange, unfamiliar feeling
- C. a goal he no longer wants

9 “He cowers, not knowing what she will do. His body begins to shake.”

In the passage, the young Charlie is characterized as...

- A. terrified and submissive
- B. defiant and rebellious
- C. calm and unconcerned

5 “... he is able to twist off a section of the dough and fashion it into a roll.”

As it is used in the passage, the word “fashion” most nearly means...

- A. to dress with style
- B. to choose with care
- C. to shape by hand

10 “His whimper becomes a soft crying as suddenly he can control no longer, and he sobs and covers his face with his hands as he dirties himself.”

The information in the excerpt primarily functions to...

- A. stress the mother’s comfort
- B. show his stubborn defiance
- C. convey the child’s helpless distress

ANSWER KEY
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#	KEY	NOTE
1	A	
2	A	
3	B	The insult is ironic—Charlie's offense was an innocent valentine; the noun sense, 'a depraved person', carries the force.
4	B	
5	C	Tests the verb sense, 'to shape by hand', not the familiar noun (clothing or style).
6	B	
7	A	Event comprehension. Nemur's confidence reads as dramatic irony—the reader senses the regression he dismisses.
8	C	The distractors are the senses of the line's other two labels, 'pessimist' and 'cynic'; only 'opportunist' names self-serving exploitation.
9	A	Character comprehension.
10	C	Event comprehension.

Teacher Context: March and April

Charlie Gordon, a mentally disabled man, writes his first progress reports and is chosen for an experimental surgery meant to raise his intelligence. The operation is performed and Charlie slowly starts to change, at first frustrated that the lab mouse Algernon keeps beating him in the maze races. The opening two months are grouped so the section spans Charlie before the surgery and its earliest effects.