

Flowers for Algernon — Novel

May

by Daniel Keyes

Pre-Reading Vocabulary Practice

Optional Post-Reading Quiz Included

Practice words: anguish, avert, despise, drive a wedge between, hallucination, inanimate, involuntarily, pompous, scapegoat, writhe

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 **anguish** of losing her closest friend kept her awake for weeks.

- A. intense suffering
- B. deep confusion
- C. quiet loneliness

2. He had to **avert** his eyes from the bright stage lights.

- A. to shade or cover
- B. to rest or close
- C. to turn away

3. She came to **despise** the bully who tormented her little brother.

- A. to fear greatly
- B. to envy secretly
- C. to hate with contempt

4. Jealousy can **drive a wedge between** even the closest friends.

- A. to cause division between
- B. to stir up envy among
- C. to spark rivalry between

5. After days without sleep, he had a **hallucination** of voices in the empty room.

- A. a sudden, vivid daydream
- B. a sense of something not there
- C. a faint, distant echo

6. The shelf was crowded with **inanimate** objects gathering dust.

- A. rarely used
- B. not living
- C. very fragile

7. She **involuntarily** flinched when the balloon popped.

- A. with obvious anger
- B. without meaning to
- C. out of pure habit

8. The **pompous** manager loved the sound of his own voice.

- A. arrogant and self-important
- B. loud and bad-tempered
- C. strict and demanding

9. After the project failed, they made Tom the **scapegoat**.

- A. one blamed for others' faults
- B. the new leader of the team
- C. the one who fixed the problem

10. He fell hard and began to **writhe**, clutching his hurt ankle.

- A. to limp slowly away
- B. to cry out loudly
- C. to twist and squirm

Reading Helpers

(Not quizzed — helpful for this text.)

sponge — here figurative — a person who soaks up knowledge quickly and completely

cage — here figurative — the safe, confined life Charlie has been shut out of, echoing Algernon's cage

ANSWER KEY
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#	KEY
1	A
2	C
3	C
4	A
5	B
6	B
7	B
8	A
9	A
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 “I kept my eyes averted from the register as I brought out the tray of éclairs ...”

As it is used in the passage, the word “averted” most nearly suggests that Charlie...

- A. guarded it carefully
- B. kept a close watch on it
- C. turned his eyes away from it

6 “... being close to a woman, or thinking of sex, sets off anxiety, panic, even hallucinations.”

According to the passage, Dr. Strauss says that closeness to a woman can set off...

- A. perceptions of things not really there
- B. memories of his lost childhood
- C. bursts of sudden physical strength

2 “Involuntarily, my mind totaled her purchases ...”

The passage most strongly suggests that Charlie totals Mrs. Wheeler’s purchases...

- A. automatically, without meaning to
- B. carefully, to catch Gimpy
- C. slowly and with great effort

7 “This intelligence has driven a wedge between me and all the people I knew and loved ...”

Which choice best describes how the excerpt functions in the text as a whole?

- A. It marks how his new mind isolated him
- B. It marks how his new mind calmed him
- C. It marks how his new mind rewarded him

3 “But I’m not an inanimate object,” I argued.”

The author most likely includes Charlie’s protest that he is “not an inanimate object” to...

- A. admit he once acted thoughtlessly
- B. show pride in his sharp new mind
- C. reject being seen as a lifeless thing

8 “So this is how a person can come to despise himself—knowing he’s doing the wrong thing and not being able to stop.”

Which statement is best supported by the passage?

- A. Charlie excuses his own actions
- B. Charlie feels contempt for himself
- C. Charlie pities his own weakness

4 “Smug, pompous—I felt like hitting him too.”

In the passage, Professor Nemur is characterized as...

- A. arrogant and self-important
- B. nervous and apologetic
- C. warm and encouraging

9 “... swishes past his shoulder as he writhes and twists away from it on the floor.”

The information in the excerpt primarily functions to...

- A. show the boy’s calm acceptance
- B. stress the mother’s exhaustion
- C. show the boy’s pain under the belt

5 “Without their agreement this could never take place. Why should Gimpy be the scapegoat?”

It can reasonably be inferred that, in calling Gimpy a “scapegoat,” Charlie means Gimpy is...

- A. the cleverest of the thieves
- B. blamed alone for a shared wrong
- C. the one who deserves the most blame

10 “... ashamed, and no longer able to control my anguish, I began to sob.”

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

- A. sudden embarrassment
- B. severe mental suffering
- C. physical exhaustion

ANSWER KEY
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#	KEY	NOTE
1	C	
2	A	
3	C	Event comprehension.
4	A	
5	B	Event comprehension.
6	A	
7	A	Event comprehension. 'Driven a wedge' is figurative for causing division.
8	B	
9	C	Event comprehension.
10	B	

Teacher Context: May

Charlie's intelligence climbs quickly: he reads constantly, begins to outstrip his coworkers, and his ties to Alice Kinnian and the people at the bakery grow complicated. May stands as its own section because it covers the swift, eventful rise that turns Charlie from patient into prodigy.