

Flowers for Algernon — Novel

September, October, and November

by Daniel Keyes

Pre-Reading Vocabulary Practice

Optional Post-Reading Quiz Included

Practice words: burnout, convolutions, dissection, false pretenses, labyrinth, microcosm, obscene, platitudes, senility, stolid

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. After months without rest, the surgeon finally hit **burnout**.

- A. a brief dip in motivation
- B. a collapse from exhaustion
- C. a sudden flash of anger

2. The **convolutions** of the mountain road slowed every car.

- A. intricate twists or folds
- B. steep and sudden climbs
- C. rough and rocky patches

3. The biology class performed a **dissection** of a frog.

- A. the careful weighing of a body
- B. the cutting open of a body
- C. the preserving of a body

4. He got into the club under **false pretenses**.

- A. a special personal invitation
- B. a last-minute lucky break
- C. a false reason used to deceive

5. The castle's cellars twisted into a dark **labyrinth**.

- A. a maze of winding paths
- B. a vast storage chamber
- C. a deep underground well

6. To the biologist, one drop of pond water was a **microcosm**.

- A. a miniature of a larger whole
- B. a rare and precious sample
- C. a worthless speck of waste

7. The umpire ejected him for an **obscene** gesture.

- A. loud or boastful
- B. clumsy or awkward
- C. offensive or indecent

8. The coach answered every question with worn **platitudes**.

- A. dull, overused remarks
- B. harsh, cutting remarks
- C. long, rambling remarks

9. The doctor explained the early signs of **senility** to us.

- A. physical weakness in old age
- B. mental decline in old age
- C. deep sadness in old age

10. The **stolid** farmer kept plowing as the storm rolled in.

- A. stern and demanding
- B. slow and clumsy
- C. calm and unemotional

Reading Helpers

(Not quizzed — helpful for this text.)

evil eye — a superstitious curse believed to be cast by a malicious glare, bringing harm to its victim

Plato — the ancient Greek philosopher; the allusion is to his Allegory of the Cave, in which one who has seen the light returns 'without his eyes,' mirroring Charlie's fall from enlightenment

ANSWER KEY

Vocabulary Preview

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#	KEY
1	B
2	A
3	B
4	C
5	A
6	A
7	C
8	A
9	B
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 *“Soon there will be signs of emotional instability and forgetfulness, the first symptoms of the burnout.”*

As it is used in the passage, the word ‘burnout’ most nearly suggests that Charlie expects...

- A. his body to grow exhausted
- B. his mind to break down
- C. his motivation to fade

2 *“Dissection shows that my predictions were right.”*

Which statement about Algernon’s dissection is best supported by the passage?

- A. His living brain was scanned
- B. His data was reviewed again
- C. His dead body was cut open

3 *“Compared to the normal brain, Algernon’s had decreased in weight and there was a general smoothing out of the cerebral convolutions as well as a deepening and broadening of brain fissures.”*

As it is used in the passage, the word ‘convolutions’ most nearly refers to...

- A. the fluid surrounding the brain
- B. the folds on the brain’s surface
- C. the nerves linking brain regions

4 *“She doesn’t remember much these days. It’s old age—senility.”*

The passage most strongly suggests that Rose’s senility causes her to...

- A. grow frail and dependent
- B. forget recent events and people
- C. weaken physically with age

5 *“... could I accept her affection on false pretenses?”*

It can reasonably be inferred that Charlie sees Norma’s affection as ‘false pretenses’ because...

- A. she would not love the old Charlie
- B. he secretly resents her warmth
- C. he lied to her about his past

6 *“I heard myself speaking in reassuring platitudes.”*

The author most likely has Charlie speak in ‘reassuring platitudes’ in order to...

- A. show his comfort is empty
- B. lighten the scene’s mood
- C. show he has grown wiser

7 *“It was as if my mother’s accusation had made it true, that we were doing something obscene.”*

Which choice best describes how Charlie feels once Rose calls their closeness ‘obscene’?

- A. ashamed, as if guilty
- B. angry at her cruelty
- C. amused by her outburst

8 *“Stolid Strauss—unmovable. I’ll tell you something. I’m sick and tired of coming here.”*

In the passage, Dr. Strauss is characterized as...

- A. smart and caring
- B. weary and distracted
- C. calm and hard to provoke

9 *“... the atoms of my-self merge into microcosm.”*

The image of the self merging ‘into microcosm’ primarily functions to...

- A. show his mind expanding outward
- B. show his body growing stronger
- C. show his self collapsing inward

10 *“... unwound the string she had given me, and found my way out of the labyrinth to where she was waiting.”*

The author most likely describes finding a way ‘out of the labyrinth’ in order to...

- A. show he escaped his inner confusion
- B. show he lost his way again
- C. show he solved a real maze

ANSWER KEY
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#	KEY	NOTE
1	B	
2	C	Event comprehension.
3	B	
4	B	
5	A	Event comprehension. The false impression is that Charlie will stay intelligent; he knows he is reverting.
6	A	
7	A	Event comprehension.
8	C	
9	C	Earlier the vision expands outward; 'merge into microcosm' marks the turn inward as Charlie regresses.
10	A	Alludes to Ariadne's thread guiding Theseus out of the Minotaur's maze; Alice's love is the guiding 'string.'

Teacher Context: September, October, and November

Charlie faces the consequences of the experiment as its effects change, and the story moves through his last progress reports toward its close. The final three months are combined to carry the full closing arc in one section. Section runs to the end of the novel.