

Flowers for Algernon — Short Story

by Daniel Keyes

Pre-Reading Vocabulary Practice

Optional Post-Reading Quiz Included

Practice words: despised, deterioration, hypothesis, introspective, opportunist, refute, regression, stimulus, tangible, vacuous

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 cruel landlord was **despised** by everyone in the village.

- A. hated and scorned
- B. mocked and teased
- C. feared and avoided

2. Years of neglect led to the **deterioration** of the old stone bridge.

- A. minor adjustment
- B. gradual worsening
- C. complete rebuilding

3. The scientist tested her **hypothesis** by running the experiment twice.

- A. a careful measurement
- B. a final conclusion
- C. a testable explanation

4. On quiet evenings he became **introspective** and rarely spoke to anyone.

- A. inward-looking
- B. easily bored
- C. quietly stubborn

5. Critics labeled the senator an **opportunist** the moment he switched sides.

- A. a reckless risk-taker
- B. one out for personal gain
- C. a clever negotiator

6. The lawyer worked hard to **refute** the witness's claim in court.

- A. to calmly restate
- B. to prove wrong
- C. to slightly doubt

7. After weeks of progress, the patient suffered a sudden **regression**.

- A. a burst of anger
- B. a total memory loss
- C. a slide backward

8. Researchers introduced a new **stimulus** partway through the experiment.

- A. a trigger for a reaction
- B. a record of results
- C. a measure of success

9. The new policy produced **tangible** benefits within the first year.

- A. quick and surprising
- B. rare and unexpected
- C. real and measurable

10. His **vacuous** expression never changed throughout the long meeting.

- A. blank and empty
- B. tense and worried
- C. proud and stubborn

Reading Helpers

(Not quizzed — helpful for this text.)

feeble-minded — a dated and offensive term for someone believed to have very low intelligence

ANSWER KEY

Vocabulary Preview

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#	KEY
1	A
2	B
3	C
4	A
5	B
6	B
7	C
8	A
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 "... an opportunist who was trying to ride to glory on his coattails."

As it is used in the passage, calling Dr. Strauss an 'opportunist' most nearly suggests that he...

- A. grabs chances for his own gain
- B. flatters the powerful for favor
- C. takes wild risks without thinking

6 "... find the reason for the sharp regression in Algernon."

It can reasonably be inferred that the 'regression' in Algernon alarms Charlie because it...

- A. proves the mouse was never smart
- B. foretells his own coming decline
- C. means he can win their races again

2 "Before, they laughed at me and despised me for my ignorance and dullness; now, they hate me for my knowledge and understanding."

In the passage, the people who once knew Charlie are characterized as...

- A. secretly envious of him
- B. gently protective of him
- C. contemptuous of his dullness

7 "The surgical stimulus to which we were both subjected has resulted in an intensification and acceleration of all mental processes."

Based on the surgical 'stimulus' described, which statement is best supported?

- A. It steadied their emotions
- B. It measured their intelligence
- C. It set off rapid mental change

3 "... finds it necessary to see tangible results of his work."

It can reasonably be inferred that Dr. Nemur is satisfied only by results that...

- A. can be seen and measured
- B. come faster than his rivals'
- C. win praise from his wife

8 "The hypothesis here proven may be described simply in the following terms:"

In the report, presenting 'the hypothesis here proven' primarily functions to...

- A. announce a tested claim he will state
- B. recall a fact everyone accepts
- C. raise a question he cannot answer

4 "... how Nemur could refute Rahajamati's attack on his method and results if Nemur couldn't even read them in the first place."

According to the passage, Charlie doubts that Dr. Nemur can...

- A. outwork his foreign rivals
- B. disprove his critics' attack
- C. forgive Strauss's mistakes

9 "However, by all indications, my own mental deterioration will be very rapid."

The passage most strongly suggests that Charlie expects to...

- A. decline only after many years
- B. hold on to most of his gains
- C. lose his mind quickly, like Algernon

5 "I felt sick inside as I looked at his dull, vacuous smile ..."

In the passage, the boy with the 'vacuous' smile is characterized as...

- A. cheerful and quick-witted
- B. empty-faced and uncomprehending
- C. shy but quietly clever

10 "I keep telling myself how important this introspective journal will be."

Which choice best describes how calling the journal 'introspective' functions here?

- A. frames it as self-examination he values
- B. frames it as a message to his doctors
- C. frames it as a record of daily errands

ANSWER KEY
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#	KEY	NOTE
1	A	
2	C	
3	A	
4	B	
5	B	Character comprehension.
6	B	Event comprehension. The key rests on the Algernon–Charlie parallel — Algernon's slide foreshadows Charlie's own.
7	C	
8	A	
9	C	Event comprehension.
10	A	