

Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl

Chapters 1–9

by Harriet Jacobs

Pre-Reading Vocabulary Practice

Optional Post-Reading Quiz Included

Practice words: bequeathed, blasphemous, chattel, credulous, defrauded, emancipated, epoch, licentious, malevolence, notwithstanding

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 • Chapters 1–9 • Linda's childhood and family

Section 2 • Chapters 10–16 • A young woman's perilous years

Section 3 • Chapters 17–23 • The flight and life in hiding

Section 4 • Chapters 24–30 • The long wait in hiding

Section 5 • Chapters 31–41 and Appendix • A new life in the North

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



verbalworkout.com

(all resources free)

Vocabulary Preview
Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl
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Name _____ Date _____ Period _____

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

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>1. The old woman bequeathed her farm to her favorite nephew.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">A. sold to the highest bidderB. left to someone by willC. rented out for income <p>2. His blasphemous joke shocked the worshippers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">A. insulting to the elderlyB. insulting to what is sacredC. insulting to foreigners <p>3. Under those harsh old laws, the whole family could be bought and sold as chattel.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">A. people hired for wagesB. people held as prisonersC. people owned as property <p>4. The credulous boy handed over his money to the smiling stranger.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">A. easily embarrassedB. easily distractedC. easily convinced <p>5. The smooth-talking salesman defrauded dozens of customers out of their savings.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">A. chased for paymentB. charged too muchC. cheated by deceit | <p>6. The reformers fought for years to see the captives emancipated.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">A. sent into exileB. set freeC. held for ransom <p>7. The moon landing began a new epoch in history.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">A. a long stretch of timeB. a daring achievementC. a brief, exciting moment <p>8. The licentious nobleman wasted his fortune on wild, reckless parties.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">A. lacking moral restraintB. lacking common senseC. lacking good manners <p>9. Her eyes filled with malevolence as she plotted against her rival.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">A. a desire to harm othersB. a sense of cold prideC. a feeling of deep envy <p>10. The team played the entire match, notwithstanding the heavy rain.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">A. in spite ofB. on account ofC. in addition to |
|---|--|

Reading Helpers

(Not quizzed — helpful for this text.)

mulattoes — a now-dated term for people of mixed Black and white ancestry

God-breathing machines — Jacobs's coined image for enslaved people reduced to property

signed it with a cross — an X mark used as a signature by a person who cannot write

ANSWER KEY

Vocabulary Preview

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#	KEY
1	B
2	B
3	C
4	C
5	C
6	B
7	A
8	A
9	A
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 *“The slave child had no thought for the morrow; but there came that blight, which too surely waits on every human being born to be a chattel.”*

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

- A. a person can be owned as property
- B. a person is bound to one place
- C. a person is of low birth or rank

2 *“After a brief period of suspense, the will of my mistress was read, and we learned that she had bequeathed me to her sister’s daughter, a child of five years old.”*

It can reasonably be inferred that...

- A. she was inherited like property
- B. she was finally set free
- C. she chose her new household

3 *“Notwithstanding my grandmother’s long and faithful service to her owners, not one of her children escaped the auction block.”*

The passage most strongly suggests that...

- A. the family was sold for disloyalty
- B. loyalty won the family its freedom
- C. loyalty did not protect her family

4 *“Grandmother tried to cheer us with hopeful words, and they found an echo in the credulous hearts of youth.”*

In the passage, the children are characterized as...

- A. quick to trust hopeful words
- B. bitter toward their elders
- C. weary of empty comfort

5 *“Moreover, they thought he had spoiled his children, by teaching them to feel that they were human beings. This was blasphemous doctrine for a slave to teach; presumptuous in him, and dangerous to the masters.”*

The ironic label “blasphemous doctrine” primarily functions to...

- A. explain the slaves’ lack of faith
- B. expose the masters’ inverted morality
- C. defend the father’s religious views

6 *“... now my brother and I were slaves to the man who had defrauded her of her money, and tried to defraud her of her freedom.”*

According to the passage, the man who now owns the narrator had earlier...

- A. paid her grandmother fairly
- B. cheated her grandmother of money
- C. helped her grandmother stay free

7 *“But I now entered on my fifteenth year—a sad epoch in the life of a slave girl. My master began to whisper foul words in my ear.”*

In context, the word “epoch” emphasizes...

- A. a single, sudden event
- B. the start of a painful new period
- C. a brief, passing moment

8 *“They were the objects of her constant suspicion and malevolence.”*

Which choice best describes the mistress’s attitude toward the young slaves?

- A. active ill will toward them
- B. cautious concern for them
- C. cold indifference to them

9 *“The eldest daughter of the slave mother was promised in marriage to a free man; and the day before the wedding this good mistress emancipated her, in order that her marriage might have the sanction of law.”*

The passage most strongly suggests that...

- A. the daughter was already free
- B. the daughter married a slave
- C. the daughter had been enslaved

10 *“I can testify, from my own experience and observation, that slavery is a curse to the whites as well as to the blacks. It makes white fathers cruel and sensual; the sons violent and licentious; it contaminates the daughters, and makes the wives wretched.”*

The author pairs “violent” with “licentious” mainly to show that slavery makes the sons...

- A. angry yet basically honorable
- B. fearful and easily controlled
- C. aggressive and morally unrestrained

ANSWER KEY

Vocabulary in Context

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#	KEY	NOTE
1	A	
2	A	Event comprehension. The will hands her to a five-year-old, dashing the freedom her friends had hoped for.
3	C	
4	A	
5	B	
6	B	Event comprehension. The man is Dr. Flint, who kept the money his family borrowed and tried to sell the grandmother despite a promise of freedom.
7	B	
8	A	Character comprehension. The mistress is Mrs. Flint, jealous and suspicious of the slaves throughout this section.
9	C	
10	C	Theme comprehension. This states Jacobs's thesis that slavery corrupts the whole slaveholding household, borne out by the Flints across the section.

Teacher Context: Chapters 1–9

Linda Brent describes her relatively sheltered early childhood, the death of her kind first mistress, and her passage into the cruel household of Dr. and Mrs. Flint. These chapters establish her family — her grandmother, her brother William, her uncle — and survey the cruelties of neighboring slaveholders. The section breaks before Chapter 10, where the narrative turns from her upbringing to the sexual persecution that defines her adolescence.