

Learning to Read and Write

Chapter 7 of: *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*

Pre-Reading Vocabulary Practice

Optional Post-Reading Quiz Included

Practice words: abhor, apprehension, chattel, denunciation, depravity, divest, emancipation, incompatible, vindication, wretched

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.



More Short Works

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Vocabulary Preview

Learning to Read and Write

by Frederick Douglass

Name _____ Date _____ Period _____

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

1. My grandmother would **abhor** any form of dishonesty, no matter how small the lie.
 - A. hate or loathe deeply
 - B. carefully avoid or stay away from
 - C. feel uncertain or conflicted about
2. A growing **apprehension** filled the hikers as dark clouds gathered above the mountain trail.
 - A. fear or anxiety about what might happen
 - B. curiosity about an unfamiliar situation
 - C. confusion caused by unexpected events
3. The form required the family to list all their **chattel**, from furniture to jewelry.
 - A. personal property that can be owned
 - B. a resource shared among a community
 - C. a worker bound by a signed contract
4. The editorial was a fierce **denunciation** of the company's waste-water policy.
 - A. a strong public condemnation of something
 - B. a formal announcement of an upcoming plan
 - C. a detailed explanation of a complicated topic
5. The detective was shocked by the **depravity** of the crime.
 - A. calculated cleverness or scheming
 - B. moral corruption or wickedness
 - C. deep sadness or emotional suffering
6. To avoid a ban, the Chinese company had to **divest** its ownership of TikTok.
 - A. allow a public audit of
 - B. give up or rid oneself of
 - C. minimize the value of
7. The prisoners wept with joy upon hearing that the court had ordered their **emancipation**.
 - A. the act of reversing guilty verdicts
 - B. the act of setting someone free
 - C. the act of moving someone away
8. The two roommates quickly discovered that their sleeping schedules were completely **incompatible**.
 - A. unable to exist or work together
 - B. difficult to explain or understand clearly
 - C. not yet fully tested or proven reliable
9. The experiment's results were a complete **vindication** of the scientist's unpopular theory.
 - A. a careful investigation into a past event
 - B. a flat rejection of a popular belief
 - C. a defense or justification of something
10. After weeks of failed harvests and empty cupboards, the family lived in a **wretched** state.
 - A. physically weakened by a long illness
 - B. overly cautious and easily frightened
 - C. extremely unhappy or miserable

Reading Helpers

(Not quizzed — helpful for this text.)

stratagems — tricks or clever plans used to achieve something

the ell — an old unit of measurement; here, used in a variation on the proverb "Give them an inch and they'll take a mile."

bestow upon the hungry little urchins — give to the hungry little children

gave tongue to — gave voice to

the silver trump of freedom — the silver trumpet of freedom — a metaphor for the call or promise of freedom

ANSWER KEY

Vocabulary Preview

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

Vocabulary in Context

Learning to Read and Write

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Name _____ Date _____ Period _____ Score _____ / 10

Read each excerpt carefully. Then choose the best answer to each question.

1 *"She at first lacked the depravity indispensable to shutting me up in mental darkness."*

As it is used in the excerpt, the word "depravity" most nearly suggests that...

- A. wickedness was needed to deny him an education
- B. physical strength was needed to control him
- C. the mistress was naturally lazy and indifferent

2 *"In entering upon the duties of a slaveholder, she did not seem to perceive that I sustained to her the relation of a mere chattel, and that for her to treat me as a human being was not only wrong, but dangerously so."*

As it is used in the excerpt, the word "chattel" most nearly means...

- A. a dependent member of the household
- B. a servant with specific duties
- C. a piece of property to be owned

3 *"Slavery soon proved its ability to divest her of these heavenly qualities. Under its influence, the tender heart became stone, and the lamblike disposition gave way to one of tiger-like fierceness."*

The author most likely describes slavery's ability to "divest" the mistress of her qualities in order to...

- A. show how slavery stripped away her compassion
- B. prove that the mistress had always been cruel
- C. argue that she was never truly compassionate

4 *"I have had her rush at me with a face made all up of fury, and snatch from me a newspaper, in a manner that fully revealed her apprehension."*

It can reasonably be inferred that the mistress's "apprehension" was driven by...

- A. concern about inappropriate newspaper content
- B. anger that Douglass was neglecting his duties
- C. fear that reading would undermine her control

5 *"... a little experience soon demonstrated, to her satisfaction, that education and slavery were incompatible with each other."*

According to the passage, the mistress concluded that education and slavery were "incompatible" because...

- A. literacy in an enslaved person threatened her control
- B. enslaved people were not capable of learning
- C. teaching interfered with her household duties

6 *"The slave was made to say some very smart as well as impressive things in reply to his master—things which had the desired though unexpected effect; for the conversation resulted in the voluntary emancipation of the slave on the part of the master."*

The information in this excerpt primarily functions to...

- A. show that reasoned argument could win freedom
- B. argue that enslaved people were naturally eloquent
- C. argue that slaveholders often freed slaves

7 *"What I got from Sheridan was a bold denunciation of slavery ..."*

According to the passage, what Douglass found in Sheridan's writing was...

- A. a detailed history of slavery's origins
- B. a personal account of life under slavery
- C. a forceful public condemnation of slavery

8 *"What I got from Sheridan was a bold denunciation of slavery, and a powerful vindication of human rights."*

The passage most strongly suggests that Sheridan's "vindication of human rights" gave Douglass...

- A. a moral justification for the freedom he sought
- B. a reason to feel ashamed of his condition
- C. practical instructions for escaping slavery

9 *"The more I read, the more I was led to abhor and detest my enslavers. I could regard them in no other light than a band of successful robbers, who had left their homes, and gone to Africa, and stolen us from our homes, and in a strange land reduced us to slavery."*

Which choice best describes the narrator's attitude toward his enslavers in this excerpt?

- A. resigned acceptance of their power
- B. deep moral hatred and disgust
- C. cautious distrust mixed with pity

10 *"It had given me a view of my wretched condition, without the remedy. It opened my eyes to the horrible pit, but to no ladder upon which to get out."*

Which choice best describes how this excerpt about Douglass's "wretched condition" functions in the text?

- A. it suggests his condition had recently grown worse
- B. it shows the pain of awareness with no escape
- C. it shows that Douglass regretted learning to read

ANSWER KEY

Vocabulary in Context

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#	KEY	TEACHER NOTE
1	A	
2	C	
3	A	
4	C	Students may know <i>apprehension</i> as arrest or understanding, but its most common meaning is fear or dread.
5	A	
6	A	
7	C	
8	A	
9	B	
10	B	The “horrible pit, but no ladder” metaphor is one of the most quoted passages in the chapter.