

Macbeth

Act I

by William Shakespeare

Pre-Reading Vocabulary Practice

Optional Post-Reading Quiz Included

Practice words: construction, dwindle, foul, grain, impedes, opinions, received, spent, transported, trifles

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 Play:

Section 1 · Act I · The witches' prophecy on the heath

Section 2 · Act II · Night at Inverness castle

Section 3 · Act III · Banquo's suspicions at Forres

Section 4 · Act IV · Return to the witches' cave

Section 5 · Act V · Night watch at Dunsinane castle

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. Years of friendship taught her the **construction** of his mind.

- A. range of learned knowledge
- B. skill at solving problems
- C. inner character or makeup

2. He watched his savings **dwindle** month after month.

- A. swing up and down
- B. shrink away gradually
- C. change hands quietly

3. The villain hatches a **foul** plan to ruin his own brother.

- A. evil or wicked
- B. clumsy and careless
- C. risky and desperate

4. He held a **grain** of wheat between his finger and thumb.

- A. a single seed
- B. a thin husk
- C. a dry stalk

5. A stubborn committee **impedes** every plan she proposes.

- A. alters in small ways
- B. blocks or holds back
- C. argues loudly about

6. A single scandal cost the mayor the good **opinions** of the town.

- A. loyalty of close allies
- B. votes cast in an election
- C. regard others hold for you

7. Her excuse was **received** without question by the whole class.

- A. passed along to others
- B. noted down in writing
- C. believed or accepted

8. By the last mile of the climb the horses were completely **spent**.

- A. worn out and exhausted
- B. wild with fright
- C. soaked through with sweat

9. The music **transported** her far beyond the crowded little room.

- A. lulled gently to sleep
- B. carried away by emotion
- C. made restless and uneasy

10. He refused to waste an evening arguing over **trifles**.

- A. unimportant little things
- B. old family grudges
- C. rumors spread by others

Reading Helpers

(Not quizzed — helpful for this text.)

Golgotha — The hill where Christ was crucified, littered with skulls — here, a field of slaughter.

Thane — A Scottish lord — a noble title held of the king.

get kings — Father kings — Banquo will sire a line of rulers though he never reigns himself.

earnest — A down payment that guarantees more to come.

illness — Ruthlessness — the wickedness ambition needs in order to act, which she says he lacks.

ANSWER KEY

Vocabulary Preview

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#	KEY
1	C
2	B
3	A
4	A
5	B
6	C
7	C
8	A
9	B
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 "Fair is foul, and foul is fair:
Hover through the fog and filthy air."

As used in the passage, the word 'foul' most nearly means...

- A. against the rules
- B. spoiled or rotten
- C. evil or wicked

2 "Doubtful it stood;
As two spent swimmers that do cling together
And choke their art."

It can reasonably be inferred from the comparison to 'two spent swimmers' that...

- A. the battle was fought in the water
- B. the armies had worn each other out
- C. one side was close to victory

3 "I will drain him dry as hay ... Weary seven-nights
nine times nine
Shall he dwindle, peak, and pine."

According to the passage, the witch intends to make the sailor...

- A. drown in a sudden shipwreck
- B. lose his mind and go mad
- C. waste away slowly over many weeks

4 "If you can look into the seeds of time,
And say which grain will grow, and which will not,
Speak then to me, who neither beg nor fear
Your favors nor your hate."

According to the passage, Banquo asks the witches to...

- A. plant seeds that are certain to grow
- B. say which possible futures will happen
- C. grant him favors in return for praise

5 "And oftentimes to win us to our harm,
The instruments of darkness tell us truths;
Win us with honest trifles, to betray's
In deepest consequence."

Banquo's words about 'honest trifles' primarily function to...

- A. warn that small truths can lead to ruin
- B. praise the witches for speaking truly
- C. urge Macbeth to trust the prophecy

6 "There's no art
To find the mind's construction in the face:
He was a gentleman on whom I built
An absolute trust."

As used in the passage, the word 'construction' most nearly means...

- A. inner character or disposition
- B. a person's outward appearance
- C. careful planning or scheming

7 "Hie thee hither,
That I may pour my spirits in thine ear
And chastise with the valor of my tongue
All that impedes thee from the golden round ..."

It can reasonably be inferred from 'all that impedes thee' that Lady Macbeth plans to...

- A. warn Macbeth against the witches
- B. raise an army to seize the crown
- C. scold away whatever holds Macbeth back

8 "Thy letters have transported me beyond
This ignorant present, and I feel now
The future in the instant."

As it is used in the passage, 'transported' most nearly suggests that Lady Macbeth...

- A. is carried beyond herself with joy
- B. has secretly journeyed to meet Macbeth
- C. is alarmed by what the letters promise

9 "We will proceed no further in this business:
He hath honoured me of late; and I have bought
Golden opinions from all sorts of people,
Which would be worn now in their newest gloss,
Not cast aside so soon."

The passage most strongly suggests that Macbeth backs out because he...

- A. prizes his fresh reputation too much
- B. doubts the witches' prophecy is true
- C. fears the murder will be discovered

10 "Will it not be received,
When we have marked with blood those sleepy two
Of his own chamber, and used their very daggers,
That they have done 't?"

According to the passage, Macbeth hopes people will believe that Duncan...

- A. was stabbed with Macbeth's own weapons
- B. was slain by his own chamber attendants
- C. died in his sleep of natural causes

ANSWER KEY

Vocabulary in Context

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#	KEY	NOTE
1	C	The sense is moral — evil, not merely dirty — and the witches' inversion of 'fair' and 'foul' announces the play's whole moral confusion.
2	B	
3	C	
4	B	
5	A	
6	A	A sense students will not have met: not building, but the mind's inner makeup — what Duncan says no skill can read from a face.
7	C	
8	A	
9	A	'Golden opinions... worn in their newest gloss' treats reputation as new clothing — the first thread of the play's running clothes metaphor.
10	B	'Received' here means believed, accepted as true — the sense in 'received wisdom'; students reliably read it as 'gotten'.

Teacher Context: Act I

Three witches meet on a heath and greet Macbeth with a prophecy that he will be king. Lady Macbeth learns of it by letter, and King Duncan arrives as a guest at Inverness.