

Of Mice and Men

Chapters 1-2

by John Steinbeck

Pre-Reading Vocabulary Practice

Optional Post-Reading Quiz Included

Practice words: anguished, complacently, derogatory, fat of the land, gravity, lumbered, mollified, morosely, pugnacious, stake

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 1-2 · George and Lennie reach the river

Section 2 · Chapters 3-4 · Evening in the bunkhouse

Section 3 · Chapters 5-6 · A quiet afternoon in the barn

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



verbalworkout.com

(all resources free)

Vocabulary Preview

Of Mice and Men

Chapters 1-2

by John Steinbeck

Name _____ Date _____ Period _____

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

1. An **anguished** cry rang out when she heard the terrible news.

- A. full of sudden surprise
- B. full of bitter anger
- C. full of deep suffering

2. He smiled **complacently** when he heard he had won first place.

- A. with nervous shyness
- B. with smug satisfaction
- C. with genuine surprise

3. She made several **derogatory** remarks about her coworker's ideas.

- A. confusing and unclear
- B. doubtful and questioning
- C. insulting and disrespectful

4. After the harvest, they planned to live off the **fat of the land** all winter.

- A. live easily off the land
- B. sell their crops for profit
- C. store up food for hard times

5. The judge spoke with such **gravity** that the whole courtroom fell silent.

- A. dignified seriousness
- B. deep sorrow
- C. fierce anger

6. The huge bear **lumbered** across the road and into the trees.

- A. stumbled and tripped
- B. moved slowly and heavily
- C. crept along quietly

7. Her boss was **mollified** once she apologized for the mistake.

- A. calmed after being upset
- B. embarrassed by the mistake
- C. impressed by her honesty

8. He sat **morosely** in the corner, ignoring everyone at the party.

- A. in a nervous, jittery way
- B. in a gloomy, sullen way
- C. in a proud, distant way

9. He had a **pugnacious** way of dealing with anyone who disagreed with him.

- A. sly and scheming
- B. stubborn and unyielding
- C. eager to fight or quarrel

10. With the **stake** he saved from his summer job, he opened a small fruit stand.

- A. money saved to get started
- B. a useful skill he had learned
- C. a load of goods to sell

Reading Helpers

(Not quizzed — helpful for this text.)

bundle — a bundle of bedding and belongings carried by a migrant worker -- the bedroll George and Lennie haul

swamper — a ranch handyman who sweeps and does odd cleaning jobs -- Candy's role in the bunkhouse

skinner — a driver of a mule or horse team; Slim is a 'jerline skinner,' the lead teamster who guides many mules with one rein

ANSWER KEY

Vocabulary Preview

Of Mice and Men

Chapters 1-2

by John Steinbeck

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

Vocabulary in Context
Of Mice and Men
Chapters 1–2
by John Steinbeck

Name _____ Date _____ Period _____ Score _____ / 10

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

1 “George stared morosely at the water.”

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

- A. calm and content
- B. alert and hopeful
- C. gloomy and sullen

2 “Lennie lumbered to his feet and disappeared in the brush.”

In the passage, the word “lumbered” characterizes Lennie as...

- A. tense and fearful
- B. big and heavy-moving
- C. quick and nimble

3 “He looked across the fire at Lennie’s anguished face, and then he looked ashamedly at the flames.”

The passage most strongly suggests that Lennie’s anguished face shows he is...

- A. deeply hurt and suffering
- B. only mildly annoyed
- C. confused but calm

4 “They come to a ranch an’ work up a stake and then they go into town and blow their stake, and the first thing you know they’re poundin’ their tail on some other ranch.”

According to the passage, what do ranch hands do after they work up a stake?

- A. spend it all in town
- B. send it to family
- C. save it to buy land

5 “... we’re gonna have a little house and a couple of acres an’ a cow and some pigs and—”
“An’ live off the fatta the lan’,” Lennie shouted.”

The author most likely has Lennie shout “live off the fatta the lan’” in order to...

- A. describe the ranch’s real wealth
- B. show Lennie’s farming skill
- C. capture their dream of easy plenty

6 “Damn right he don’t,” said George, slightly mollified, “not if he wants to stay workin’ long.”

It can reasonably be inferred that, now “slightly mollified,” George is...

- A. completely at ease
- B. a bit less annoyed than before
- C. angrier than before

7 “His glance was at once calculating and pugnacious.”

In the passage, Curley is characterized as...

- A. eager to pick a fight
- B. shy and withdrawn
- C. friendly and easygoing

8 “He had drawn a derogatory statement from George.”

The author most likely notes George’s “derogatory statement” in order to show that...

- A. George admires Curley’s nerve
- B. George shares the swamper’s low view
- C. George defends the absent man

9 “There was a gravity in his manner and a quiet so profound that all talk stopped when he spoke.”

In context, the word “gravity” emphasizes Slim’s...

- A. physical size and weight
- B. gloomy, downcast mood
- C. dignified, serious manner

10 “Lennie, who had been following the conversation back and forth with his eyes, smiled complacently at the compliment.”

It can reasonably be inferred that Lennie smiled “complacently” because he felt...

- A. smug, self-satisfied pride
- B. worried he had failed
- C. embarrassed by the praise

ANSWER KEY

Vocabulary in Context

Of Mice and Men

Chapters 1-2

by John Steinbeck

#	KEY	NOTE
1	C	
2	B	
3	A	Event comprehension.
4	A	
5	C	Theme comprehension.
6	B	Event comprehension.
7	A	
8	B	Character comprehension.
9	C	Here 'gravity' means dignified seriousness, not the physical force students meet first.
10	A	

Teacher Context: Chapters 1-2

George and Lennie, two migrant ranch workers, camp by the Salinas River, where George reminds Lennie of their routine and their shared dream of owning a small farm. They arrive at the ranch and meet the boss, his aggressive son Curley, Curley's flirtatious wife, Slim, and the old swamper Candy. These two chapters form the first of Steinbeck's three two-chapter 'acts.'