

Of Mice and Men

Chapters 3–4

by John Steinbeck

Pre-Reading Vocabulary Practice

Optional Post-Reading Quiz Included

Practice words: aloof, arouse, averted, bemused, disarming, indignation, reprehensible, reverently, scornful, subdued

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

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Name _____ Date _____ Period _____

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

1. The new student stayed **aloof** during the whole party.

- A. distant and reserved
- B. anxious and fidgety
- C. rude and impatient

2. The referee's terrible call was bound to **arouse** the crowd.

- A. confuse or mislead
- B. stir up or provoke
- C. win over or please

3. Embarrassed, she **averted** her eyes when he looked at her.

- A. turned away
- B. opened wide
- C. rubbed nervously

4. She sat **bemused**, staring out the window long after the song ended.

- A. quietly amused
- B. tired and sleepy
- C. lost in thought; dazed

5. He greeted us with a **disarming** smile and an easy joke.

- A. charming; winning trust
- B. nervous and uncertain
- C. sly and mocking

6. He could barely hide his **indignation** as he listened to the speech.

- A. envy of another's success
- B. anger at something unjust
- C. boredom with the subject

7. The judge called the company's actions **reprehensible**.

- A. done in secret or hidden
- B. hasty and careless
- C. deserving blame or shame

8. The visitors spoke **reverently** inside the ancient temple.

- A. with quick, nervous haste
- B. with loud, eager excitement
- C. with deep respect and awe

9. He gave a **scornful** laugh at my old, broken bike.

- A. showing contempt
- B. showing surprise
- C. showing delight

10. She **subdued** the frightened puppy before it could bite anyone.

- A. fed a small treat
- B. brought under control
- C. lifted off the ground

Reading Helpers

(Not quizzed — helpful for this text.)

need no sense — need not be intelligent; here, used to say a person does not have to be smart to be kind

can — to fire or dismiss from a job (slang) -- 'they'll can me' means they will fire him from his job

string up — to hang someone, especially by lynching -- 'strung up on a tree' is a lynching threat

ANSWER KEY

Vocabulary Preview

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

Vocabulary in Context
Of Mice and Men
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Name _____ Date _____ Period _____ Score _____ / 10

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

1 “Slim gazed at him for a moment and then looked down at his hands; he subdued one hand with the other, and held it down.”

As it is used in the passage, the word “subdued” most nearly suggests that Slim

- A. hid one hand beneath the other
- B. forced his own restless hand still
- C. gently comforted a sore hand

2 “When Candy spoke they both jumped as though they had been caught doing something reprehensible.”

In context, the word “reprehensible” emphasizes

- A. their joy at sharing the plan
- B. their sudden guilty, caught-out feeling
- C. the loud way Candy interrupts them

3 “This thing they had never really believed in was coming true. George said reverently, “Jesus Christ! I bet we could swing her.”

Which choice best describes George’s attitude as he says “I bet we could swing her”?

- A. bitter, resigned doubt
- B. casual, offhand confidence
- C. awed, almost worshipful wonder

4 “They all sat still, all bemused by the beauty of the thing, each mind was popped into the future when this lovely thing should come about.”

The passage most strongly suggests that the three men are

- A. confused about what George means
- B. lost in a daydream of their future
- C. too tired to keep talking

5 “This room was swept and fairly neat, for Crooks was a proud, aloof man.”

In the passage, Crooks is characterized as

- A. anxious and unsure of himself
- B. bitter and openly hostile
- C. proud and distant from others

6 “Crooks scowled, but Lennie’s disarming smile defeated him.”

The author most likely includes Lennie’s “disarming smile” in order to

- A. melt Crooks’s hostility toward him
- B. reveal Lennie’s hidden anger
- C. frighten Crooks into silence

7 “Crooks was scornful. “I seen hunderds of men come by on the road an’ on the ranches, with their bindles on their back an’ that same damn thing in their heads.”

Which detail best supports the claim that Crooks feels “scornful” toward the men’s dream?

- A. men chase land but never get it
- B. he misses his boyhood ranch
- C. he’d work the new farm for free

8 “An’ a guy tol’ me he could put me in pitchers.... She was breathless with indignation.”

It can reasonably be inferred that Curley’s wife is

- A. angry at being underestimated
- B. frightened of what Curley will do
- C. amused by the men’s foolish talk

9 “Crooks had reduced himself to nothing. There was no personality, no ego—nothing to arouse either like or dislike.”

The author most likely uses the word “arouse” here in order to

- A. show the men have grown fond of him
- B. hint that he is plotting revenge
- C. stress that he provokes no reaction

10 “... but Crooks sat perfectly still, his eyes averted, everything that might be hurt drawn in.”

Which statement is best supported by the excerpt?

- A. Crooks turns his eyes away from her
- B. Crooks glares straight at her
- C. Crooks jumps up to confront her

ANSWER KEY

Vocabulary in Context

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#	KEY	NOTE
1	B	
2	B	
3	C	
4	B	Here 'bemused' carries its entranced, spellbound sense -- the men are lost in the dream, not puzzled.
5	C	
6	A	
7	A	Character comprehension. Crooks's scorn masks his own buried hope -- he later asks to join the dream himself.
8	A	
9	C	Here 'arouse' means to call forth or provoke a reaction, not its more common modern sense.
10	A	

Teacher Context: Chapters 3–4

In the bunkhouse George confides in Slim, Candy's old dog is shot, and Candy joins the farm dream with his savings, making it suddenly seem possible — before Curley picks a fight with Lennie. The action then moves to Crooks' room off the barn, where Crooks, Candy, and Lennie talk until Curley's wife intrudes. This middle 'act' pairs the two interior scenes and ends before the barn that follows.