

Of Mice and Men

Chapters 5–6

by John Steinbeck

Pre-Reading Vocabulary Practice

Optional Post-Reading Quiz Included

Practice words: belligerently, bewildered, contorted, discontent, eating, monotonous, mottled, muzzle, sullenly, writhed

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 5–6

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Name _____ Date _____ Period _____

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

1. He **belligerently** shoved his way to the front of the line.

- A. in a quick, eager way
- B. in a clumsy, awkward way
- C. in a hostile, aggressive way

2. The tourist looked **bewildered** by the maze of streets.

- A. amazed and delighted
- B. annoyed and impatient
- C. confused and puzzled

3. His face **contorted** when he heard the news.

- A. flushed bright red
- B. twisted out of shape
- C. turned pale with shock

4. A growing **discontent** spread among the workers.

- A. restless dissatisfaction
- B. sudden panic
- C. deep exhaustion

5. I could tell something was **eating** him all week.

- A. wearing him out
- B. distracting him constantly
- C. bothering or troubling him

6. The **monotonous** beat of the drum went on for hours.

- A. dull and unvarying
- B. loud and pounding
- C. fast and lively

7. The horse had a **mottled** gray coat.

- A. spotted with patches
- B. thick and shaggy
- C. smooth and glossy

8. The soldier pointed the **muzzle** of his rifle at the target.

- A. open end of the barrel
- B. trigger that fires it
- C. strap for carrying it

9. He **sullenly** kicked at the dirt after losing the game.

- A. in a shy, nervous way
- B. in a gloomy, sulky way
- C. in a careless, hurried way

10. The injured snake **writhed** on the hot pavement.

- A. coiled into a ball
- B. twisted and squirmed
- C. slithered quickly away

Reading Helpers

(Not quizzed — helpful for this text.)

natural — here, a born talent (Curley's wife's word for herself)

meanness — cruelty or spite; in George's defense, 'Lennie never done it in meanness'

Luger — a German semi-automatic pistol

ANSWER KEY

Vocabulary Preview

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#	KEY
1	C
2	C
3	B
4	A
5	C
6	A
7	A
8	A
9	B
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 *“He looked sullenly up at her.”*

As it is used in the passage, the word ‘sullenly’ most nearly suggests that Lennie looks at her...

- A. eagerly and warmly
- B. resentfully and gloomily
- C. fearfully and shyly

2 *“His face was contorted.”*

In the passage, Lennie is characterized as...

- A. weary and resigned
- B. cold and calculating
- C. frantic and distressed

3 *“Her feet battered on the hay and she writhed to be free; and from under Lennie’s hand came a muffled screaming.”*

As it is used in the passage, the word ‘writhed’ most nearly suggests that she...

- A. twisted and squirmed her body
- B. lay still and limp
- C. swung her fists wildly

4 *“For a moment he seemed bewildered.”*

It can reasonably be inferred that, in this moment, Lennie...

- A. does not grasp what he has done
- B. fears the men will catch him
- C. feels deep guilt and remorse

5 *“And the meanness and the plannings and the discontent and the ache for attention were all gone from her face.”*

The author most likely notes that her ‘discontent’ is now gone from her face in order to...

- A. show death freed her of restlessness
- B. imply she found contentment in life
- C. stress how cruel she had been

6 *“But by the pool among the mottled sycamores, a pleasant shade had fallen.”*

The description of the ‘mottled sycamores’ primarily functions to...

- A. stress the trees’ age and decay
- B. show the trees stripped bare
- C. evoke dappled light and shade

7 *“Now Lennie retorted belligerently, ‘He ain’t neither. George won’t do nothing like that.’”*

Which choice best describes Lennie’s attitude as he retorts here?

- A. calmly indifferent
- B. stubbornly defiant
- C. anxious and pleading

8 *“His voice was monotonous, had no emphasis.”*

In the passage, George’s manner is best described as...

- A. numb and grief-stricken
- B. cheerful and hopeful
- C. impatient and irritable

9 *“And George raised the gun and steadied it, and he brought the muzzle of it close to the back of Lennie’s head.”*

According to the passage, which part of the gun does George bring close to Lennie’s head?

- A. the safety catch
- B. the trigger and grip
- C. the open end of the barrel

10 *“And Carlson said, “Now what the hell ya suppose is eatin’ them two guys?”*

It can reasonably be inferred that Carlson’s closing question shows that he...

- A. thinks the two are hiding something
- B. cannot grasp why they are upset
- C. wonders what the men are eating

ANSWER KEY

Vocabulary in Context

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#	KEY	NOTE
1	B	
2	C	
3	A	
4	A	Event comprehension.
5	A	Character comprehension. One of the novel's famous lines: in death she is freed of the dissatisfaction that drove her.
6	C	
7	B	
8	A	Character comprehension.
9	C	
10	B	Character comprehension. The closing line; 'what's eatin' them' means what is troubling them, and Carlson's failure to understand the two men's grief is the novel's final irony.

Teacher Context: Chapters 5–6

In the barn Lennie's rough handling of his puppy leads to disaster with Curley's wife, and the ranch hands form a search party. The final chapter returns to the riverbank where the story opened, bringing the plot full circle. Section runs to the end of the novel.