

The Key

by Eudora Welty

Pre-Reading Vocabulary Practice

Optional Post-Reading Quiz Included

Contents & Printing Notes

Unlike our most popular resources, this one's auto-selected.
Review before use, or edit the DOCX from the Resources menu.

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Pages are ordered for double-sided printing.

About the Pre-Reading Activity

Open-dictionary; ungraded or completion grade. Students preview 20 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. The same words appear in excerpts from the text.

Practice words: afflict, agony, bravado, compassion, comprehend, conspiracy, despise, disheveled, dissipate, endure, enormity, intuition, obstinate, postpone, reproach, resignation, reticent, solemn, tantalize, tenuous



More Vocabulary Printables

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ANSWER KEY

Vocabulary Preview

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#	KEY
1	C
2	C
3	B
4	B
5	A
6	C
7	C
8	A
9	C
10	B
11	B
12	B
13	B
14	B
15	B
16	C
17	B
18	A
19	C
20	A

Vocabulary Preview

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Name _____ Date _____ Period _____

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

1. She has been **afflicted** with migraines since childhood.
 - A. worried about
 - B. surprised by
 - C. made to suffer
2. She cried out in **agony**.
 - A. sudden surprise
 - B. intense anger
 - C. intense suffering
3. His confident speech was mostly **bravado**; he was nervous before the debate.
 - A. quiet act of kindness
 - B. false show of courage
 - C. careful use of facts
4. It is not enough to be **compassionate**. We must act. It is not enough to act. We must act with intelligence.
 - A. lucky
 - B. sympathetic
 - C. talented
5. Washington fails to **comprehend** the change in China's strategy.
 - A. fully understand
 - B. regard respectfully
 - C. respond adequately to
6. She is inclined to believe **conspiracy** theories.
 - A. unproven
 - B. scientific
 - C. secret plot
7. She **despises** his lifestyle.
 - A. admires
 - B. wants
 - C. hates
8. After running through the rain, she arrived with **disheveled** hair and muddy shoes.
 - A. messy
 - B. stylish
 - C. expensive
9. Everyone is frightened right now, but the fear will eventually **dissipate**.
 - A. transform
 - B. increase
 - C. gradually disappear
10. As a soldier, she was prepared to endure hardship and even to sacrifice her life for others.
 - A. risk
 - B. suffer through
 - C. cause
11. The photographs depict the **enormity** of the crime.
 - A. gradual destruction (of something previously established) -- such as a government, rule, or belief
 - B. extreme wickedness
 - C. a system of government with a ruler who has absolute power -- especially one who abuses that power
12. **Intuitively**, I knew not to trust her.
 - A. logically
 - B. instinctively
 - C. conclusively

13. He is **obstinate** as a mule and refuses to change his mind.
- A. cheerful
 - B. stubborn
 - C. graceful
14. The school decided to **postpone** the exam until next week.
- A. cancel completely
 - B. delay or reschedule
 - C. rush forward
15. Don't **reproach** yourself for things beyond your control.
- A. congratulate
 - B. criticize
 - C. accept honor for
16. She was **resigned** to being embarrassed by her younger brother.
- A. putting a stop
 - B. resistant
 - C. with acceptance
17. Even among friends, Lena was **reticent** about her plans.
- A. eager to argue
 - B. not willing to talk
 - C. ready to celebrate
18. Everyone was **solemn** at the funeral.
- A. serious and dignified
 - B. teary eyed
 - C. dressed in dark colors
19. The previews are **tantalizing**.
- A. misleading
 - B. causing disappointment
 - C. arousing interest
20. The theory sounded impressive, but the evidence behind it was **tenuous**
- A. weak
 - B. detailed
 - C. groundbreaking

Vocabulary in Context

The Key

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Name _____ Date _____ Period _____ Score _____ / 20

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

- 1 You could hear their **embroidering** movements in the weeds outside, which somehow gave the effect of some **tenuous** voice in the night, telling a story.
 - A. weak, flimsy, or uncertain
 - B. the quality of disagreeing
 - C. able to meet and talk with
- 2 ...she sat there ... as if to **endure** some nameless apprehension rising and overflowing within her at the thought of travel.
 - A. call -- typically to come nearer by using a hand gesture or a nod
 - B. suffer through
 - C. communication through gestures and body movements (without words)
- 3 Her face worked and broke into strained, hardening lines, as if there had been a death--that too-explicit evidence of **agony** in the desire to communicate.
 - A. size or dimension
 - B. circular movement
 - C. intense suffering
- 4 Every now and then, as though he perceived some minute thing, a sudden alert, **tantalized** look would creep over the little man's face, and he would gaze slowly around him, quite slyly.
 - A. not made different; or shown to be different
 - B. not changed directly from a solid to a vapor
 - C. made someone excited about getting something
- 5 There was an excess of energy about him that separated him from everyone else, but in the motion of his hands there was, instead of the craving for communication, something of **reticence**, even of secrecy, as the key rose and fell.
 - A. the act of stopping a battle or fight
 - B. reluctance -- usually to speak freely
 - C. a short part of a longer written work
- 6 Little walls of **reproach** went up about them all.
 - A. move into position to work; or start
 - B. a criticism; or to express criticism
 - C. to spread to other parts of the body
- 7 A flicker of amusement touched the young man's face as he observed the startled but controlled and **obstinately** blank faces which turned toward him for a moment and then away.
 - A. in an artificial manner to make an impression
 - B. stubbornly unyielding to the wishes of others
 - C. to almost be so, but not so strictly speaking
- 8 How intensified, magnified, really vain all attempt at expression becomes in the **afflicted**!
 - A. not judged in a negative way
 - B. told someone about something
 - C. suffering; or made to suffer
- 9 They were so intent, so very **solemn**, wanting to have their symbols perfectly understood!
 - A. very serious--possibly dignified
 - B. indicating approval or agreement
 - C. able to be taken on as one's own
- 10 He looked very strong and active; but there was a startling quality, a willingness to be forever distracted, even disturbed, in the very reassurance of his body, some alertness which made his strength fluid and **dissipated** instead of withheld and greedily beautiful.
 - A. emphasized (called attention to something)
 - B. not vaccinated (to protect from a disease)
 - C. gradually disappeared; or gradually wasted

- 11 His youth by now did not seem an important thing about him; it was a medium for his activity, no doubt, but as he stood there frowning and smoking you felt some apprehension that he would never express whatever might be the desire of his life in being young and strong, in standing apart in compassion, in making any **intuitive** present or sacrifice, or in any way of action at all—not because there was too much in the world demanding his strength, but because he was too deeply aware.
- the quality of being without boundaries or limits
 - known instinctively rather than through reasoning
 - suitability; or the degree of having been adapted
- 12 The woman looked **resigned** for a moment to hopelessness.
- to be or to become used to (adapted to and with an expectation of)
 - showed something -- such as demonstrated, expressed, or represented
 - as though she had accepted something undesired as unavoidable
- 13 But the little man you were startled by a look of **bravado** on his face.
- related to or causing dramatic change; of a supporter of the change
 - a bold manner or show of bravery -- often hiding fear or insecurity
 - a basic building block of matter that makes up protons and neutrons
- 14 It was the feeling of **conspiracy**.
- the best or most important
 - harsh and unfair treatment
 - a secret agreement or plot
- 15 But you wondered, seeing Albert, whom talking seemed rather to **dishevel**, whether it had not continued to be a rough and violent game which Ellie, as the older and stronger, had taught him to play with her.
- messy (untidy or disordered) -- especially of a person's clothes and hair
 - a rough calculation or guess of a value, quantity, or extent of something
 - add fuel or stir a fire to make it burn hotter; or make feelings stronger
- 16 But Ellie did not **comprehend** this.
- understand -- especially to understand it completely
 - to concentrate, look at; or the act of concentration
 - rug-like artwork -- often hung on a wall for display
- 17 To him it was always something **postponed**, like the paying off of the mortgage.
- gradually added or removed
 - delayed until a later time
 - limited or with boundaries
- 18 The key had materialized to show him the **enormity** of this venture.
- gradual destruction (of something previously established) -- such as a government, rule, or belief
 - extreme wickedness
- or more rarely (and considered incorrect by many): enormousness (largeness)
- a system of government with a ruler who has absolute power -- especially one who abuses that power
- 19 As he held the match close he gazed straight ahead, and in his eyes, all at once wild and searching, there was certainly, besides the simple **compassion** in his regard, a look both restless and weary, very much used to the comic.
- the taking on or adoption of power or responsibility
 - sympathy for another's suffering and wanting to help
 - the process of controlling (how something turns out)
- 20 You could see that he **despised** and saw the uselessness of the thing he had done.
- not good at concentrating on one thing
 - adjusted a lens to make an image clear
 - disliked strongly and looked down upon

ANSWER KEY

Vocabulary in Context

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#	KEY	WORD	NOTE
1	A	tenuous	Used about 2 times per 10 books in our high school library.
2	B	endure (<i>as in: endured the pain</i>)	Used about 21 times per 10 books in our high school library.
3	C	agony	Used about 14 times per 10 books in our high school library.
4	C	tantalize	Used about 2 times per 10 books in our high school library.
5	B	reticent	Used about 2 times per 10 books in our high school library.
6	B	reproach	Used 2 times in this story.
7	B	obstinate	Used about 3 times per 10 books in our high school library.
8	C	afflict	Used 3 times in this story.
9	A	solemn	Used about 17 times per 10 books in our high school library.
10	C	dissipate	Used about 5 times per 10 books in our high school library.
11	B	intuition	High-utility academic word
12	C	resignation (<i>as in: accepted it with resignation</i>)	Used 2 times in this story.
13	B	bravado	Used about 2 times per 10 books in our high school library.
14	C	conspiracy	Used about 8 times per 10 books in our high school library.
15	A	disheveled	Used about 3 times per 10 books in our high school library.
16	A	comprehend	High-utility academic word
17	B	postpone	Used about 4 times per 10 books in our high school library.
18	B	enormity (<i>as in: enormity of the crime</i>)	Used about 2 times per 10 books in our high school library.
19	B	compassion	Used 2 times in this story.
20	C	despise	Used about 13 times per 10 books in our high school library.