

The Minister's Black Veil

by Nathaniel Hawthorne

Pre-Reading Vocabulary Practice

Optional Post-Reading Quiz Included

Practice words: affliction, ambiguity, aspect, awful, deem, discharge, emblem, mortal, obscurity, pronounce

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.



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Vocabulary Preview

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Name _____ Date _____ Period _____

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

1. Years of drought were an **affliction** the village could not escape.

- A. a sign of coming bad luck
- B. a long period of waiting
- C. a cause of great suffering

2. The contract's **ambiguity** sent both sides back to their lawyers.

- A. unclearness of meaning
- B. high cost of the terms
- C. harshness of the terms

3. The abandoned house presented a grim **aspect** to the road.

- A. a single feature or detail
- B. a point of view or angle
- C. appearance or look

4. A storm of **awful** power moved slowly across the valley.

- A. strange and unfamiliar
- B. sudden and short-lived
- C. inspiring dread and awe

5. Many critics **deem** the new film a masterpiece.

- A. loudly praise as
- B. consider or judge to be
- C. strongly recommend as

6. He promised to **discharge** every task assigned to him.

- A. to carry out or perform
- B. to write down or record
- C. to hand off to another

7. Each club chose an **emblem** to stitch onto its banner.

- A. a motto or slogan
- B. a symbol or badge
- C. a nickname or title

8. The old myths remind us that even heroes are **mortal**.

- A. born of noble blood
- B. subject to death
- C. prone to mistakes

9. Fog rolled in, and the far shore faded into **obscurity**.

- A. dimness or darkness
- B. coldness and damp
- C. silence and stillness

10. The judge will **pronounce** sentence on Friday morning.

- A. to declare formally
- B. to explain in detail
- C. to reconsider or review

Reading Helpers

(Not quizzed — helpful for this text.)

crape — black crinkled silk worn as a sign of mourning

sensible — here, keenly aware of

involved — here, wrapped up and entangled in

indifferent — here, of no particular importance; ordinary and harmless

suffer — here, allow or permit

ANSWER KEY

Vocabulary Preview

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#	KEY
1	C
2	A
3	C
4	C
5	B
6	A
7	B
8	B
9	A
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 "On a nearer view it seemed to consist of two folds of crape, which entirely concealed his features, except the mouth and chin, but probably did not intercept his sight, further than to give a darkened aspect to all living and inanimate things."

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

- A. one feature of a subject
- B. a personal point of view
- C. appearance or look

2 "That mysterious emblem was never once withdrawn. It shook with his measured breath, as he gave out the psalm; it threw its obscurity between him and the holy page, as he read the Scriptures; and while he prayed, the veil lay heavily on his uplifted countenance."

According to the passage, as Mr. Hooper read the Scriptures, the veil...

- A. slipped aside from his face
- B. cast darkness between him and the page
- C. muffled his measured breathing

3 "The people trembled, though they but darkly understood him when he prayed that they, and himself, and all of mortal race, might be ready, as he trusted this young maiden had been, for the dreadful hour that should snatch the veil from their faces."

It can reasonably be inferred that the 'dreadful hour' awaiting 'all of mortal race' is...

- A. the moment of death
- B. the removal of Mr. Hooper's veil
- C. an hour of public confession

4 "Never did an embassy so ill discharge its duties. The minister received them with friendly courtesy, but became silent, after they were seated, leaving to his visitors the whole burden of introducing their important business."

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

- A. to carry out or perform
- B. to fire or shoot off
- C. to release or set free

5 "What grievous affliction hath befallen you," she earnestly inquired, "that you should thus darken your eyes forever?"

It can reasonably be inferred that the speaker assumes her listener has...

- A. committed a hidden sin
- B. sworn a solemn religious vow
- C. suffered some crushing sorrow

6 "But, even amid his grief, Mr. Hooper smiled to think that only a material emblem had separated him from happiness, though the horrors, which it shadowed forth, must be drawn darkly between the fondest of lovers."

The passage most strongly suggests that what truly separated Mr. Hooper from happiness was...

- A. the piece of crape itself
- B. the hidden truths the veil stood for
- C. the villagers' cruel gossip

7 "Thus, from beneath the black veil, there rolled a cloud into the sunshine, an ambiguity of sin or sorrow, which enveloped the poor minister, so that love or sympathy could never reach him."

According to the passage, love and sympathy could never reach the minister because of...

- A. his refusal to accept any comfort
- B. the villagers' fear of his black veil
- C. doubt whether guilt or grief lay beneath

8 "By the aid of his mysterious emblem—for there was no other apparent cause—he became a man of awful power over souls that were in agony for sin."

As it is used in the passage, the word 'awful' most nearly suggests that...

- A. his power worked through holy dread
- B. he had grown proud of his power
- C. his influence had become harmful

9 "And is it fitting," resumed the Reverend Mr. Clark, "that a man so given to prayer, of such a blameless example, holy in deed and thought, so far as mortal judgment may pronounce; is it fitting that a father in the church should leave a shadow on his memory, that may seem to blacken a life so pure?"

Mr. Clark most likely adds 'so far as mortal judgment may pronounce' in order to...

- A. admit that human judgment has limits
- B. question whether Hooper's life was pure
- C. hint that Hooper could barely speak

10 "When the friend shows his inmost heart to his friend; the lover to his best beloved; when man does not vainly shrink from the eye of his Creator, loathsomely treasuring up the secret of his sin; then deem me a monster, for the symbol beneath which I have lived, and die!"

In saying 'then deem me a monster,' the speaker most strongly suggests that...

- A. he alone bears a monstrous secret
- B. no one alive is fit to judge him
- C. he finally regrets wearing the veil

ANSWER KEY

Vocabulary in Context

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#	KEY	NOTE
1	C	
2	B	The literal sense here — a darkness the veil casts — is the one Hawthorne's later figurative uses build on ('this miserable obscurity').
3	A	The prayer's figure makes every face veiled; the 'dreadful hour' that snatches the veil is death itself, not any act of Mr. Hooper's.
4	A	
5	C	Her wording does the work: an affliction 'befalls' — something suffered, not something done — which is what rules out sin or a vow.
6	B	
7	C	This sentence is the parable's thesis: the 'ambiguity of sin or sorrow' names the doubt the story never resolves.
8	A	'Awful' here keeps its older, literal weight — full of awe, dread-inspiring — the sense modern usage has flattened into 'very bad'.
9	A	'Pronounce' is judicial here — to declare a judgment, not to articulate; the hedge is conventional pulpit humility, not doubt.
10	B	The when-clauses name conditions no one meets, so the 'then' never arrives — his point is universal concealment, not confession.