

The Old Man and the Sea

by Ernest Hemingway

Pre-Reading Vocabulary Practice

Optional Post-Reading Quiz Included

Practice words: benevolent, contempt, endure, humility, imperceptible, interminable, mutilated, scavengers, skiff, treachery

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

The Old Man and the Sea

by Ernest Hemingway

Name _____ Date _____ Period _____

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

1. The **benevolent** old teacher always helped struggling students.

- A. famous and respected
- B. wise and experienced
- C. kindly and well-meaning

2. She looked at the cheater with open **contempt**.

- A. pity and sympathy
- B. shock and surprise
- C. scorn or disdain

3. Soldiers **endure** long marches and harsh cold.

- A. complain bitterly about
- B. prepare carefully for
- C. suffer through patiently

4. She faced her critics with surprising **humility**.

- A. modesty about oneself
- B. patience and calm
- C. courage and nerve

5. The clock's hands moved at an **imperceptible** pace.

- A. barely noticeable
- B. smooth and even
- C. strange and uneven

6. We sat through an **interminable** wait at the airport.

- A. seemingly endless
- B. poorly organized
- C. highly stressful

7. The statue had been **mutilated** by the violent storm.

- A. slightly shifted
- B. badly damaged
- C. completely buried

8. At night, **scavengers** crept into the camp searching for food.

- A. animals that live in groups
- B. animals that eat dead matter
- C. animals that hunt live prey

9. The **skiff** drifted slowly along the quiet shore.

- A. a tangle of fishing nets
- B. a small rowboat
- C. a clump of floating seaweed

10. The spy's **treachery** put his entire country in danger.

- A. betrayal of trust
- B. careless blunders
- C. sudden cowardice

Reading Helpers

(Not quizzed — helpful for this text.)

salao — Spanish for extremely unlucky—the worst form of bad luck

la mar — Spanish for “the sea,” in the feminine form; Santiago affectionately thinks of the sea as a woman, unlike younger fishermen who call it the masculine el mar

marlin — a large ocean fish with a long, spear-like upper jaw and a tall fin along its back—the great fish Santiago hooks

ANSWER KEY

Vocabulary Preview

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

Vocabulary in Context
The Old Man and the Sea
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Name _____ Date _____ Period _____ Score _____ / 10

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

1 *"He was an old man who fished alone in a skiff in the Gulf Stream and he had gone eighty-four days now without taking a fish."*

As it is used in the passage, the word "skiff" most nearly refers to...

- A. a wooden dock
- B. a fishing net
- C. a small boat

2 *"The brown blotches of the benevolent skin cancer the sun brings from its reflection on the tropic sea were on his cheeks."*

It can reasonably be inferred that the skin cancer on the old man's face...

- A. caused him no real harm
- B. came from an illness at sea
- C. was spreading dangerously

3 *"He was too simple to wonder when he had attained humility. But he knew he had attained it and he knew it was not disgraceful and it carried no loss of true pride."*

In the passage, the old man is characterized as...

- A. boastful of his skill
- B. modest yet quietly proud
- C. bitter about his poverty

4 *"He loved green turtles and hawk-bills with their elegance and speed and their great value and he had a friendly contempt for the huge, stupid loggerheads ..."*

Which choice best describes the old man's attitude toward the loggerhead turtles?

- A. open admiration
- B. amused scorn
- C. fearful respect

5 *"As it went down, slipping lightly through the old man's fingers, he still could feel the great weight, though the pressure of his thumb and finger were almost imperceptible."*

In context, the word "imperceptible" emphasizes...

- A. how fast the line slipped
- B. how heavy the fish felt
- C. how faint his touch was

6 *"When once, through my treachery, it had been necessary to him to make a choice, the old man thought."*

The passage most strongly suggests that the old man believes he...

- A. tricked the fish into danger
- B. lost the fish through error
- C. was betrayed by the fish

7 *"Although it is unjust, he thought. But I will show him what a man can do and what a man endures."*

The information in the excerpt primarily functions to...

- A. affirm a man's strength to bear pain
- B. explain why the fight is unfair
- C. predict the old man will fail

8 *"... started to pass the boat, long, deep, wide, silver and barred with purple and interminable in the water."*

The author most likely includes "interminable" in order to...

- A. stress the marlin's vast length
- B. show the fish is tiring
- C. describe the deep water

9 *"He did not like to look at the fish anymore since he had been mutilated."*

It can reasonably be inferred that the great fish had been...

- A. hidden under the skiff
- B. torn apart by the sharks
- C. lost beneath the waves

10 *"They were hateful sharks, bad smelling, scavengers as well as killers, and when they were hungry they would bite at an oar or the rudder of a boat."*

Which statement is best supported by the passage?

- A. The sharks hunted only live prey
- B. The sharks avoided the boats
- C. The sharks would eat nearly anything

ANSWER KEY

Vocabulary in Context

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#	KEY	NOTE
1	C	
2	A	'Benevolent' here means harmless (a benign growth), not its everyday sense of 'kindly.'
3	B	Character comprehension.
4	B	'Friendly contempt' is affectionate scorn — he looks down on the loggerheads but is fond of them.
5	C	
6	A	Event comprehension. The 'treachery' is Santiago's own — the hidden hook that forced the fish's choice.
7	A	Theme comprehension. The line voices the novel's central idea of endurance.
8	A	
9	B	Event comprehension.
10	C	