

The Raven

by Edgar Allan Poe

Pre-Reading Vocabulary Practice

Optional Post-Reading Quiz Included

Practice words: bust, clasp, ghastly, melancholy, ominous, rapping, rustling, tempest, token, vainly

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. A marble **bust** of the founder stood in the lobby.
 - A. a memorial name plaque
 - B. a head-and-shoulders carving
 - C. a raised tomb marker
2. He would **clasp** his daughter's hand at every crossing.
 - A. swing lightly
 - B. pat gently
 - C. hold tightly
3. A **ghastly** mask hung in the shop window.
 - A. strangely shaped
 - B. very old and worn
 - C. horrifying to look at
4. A **melancholy** tune drifted from the upstairs window.
 - A. oddly familiar
 - B. deeply sad
 - C. slightly off-key
5. An **ominous** silence fell over the crowd.
 - A. hinting at coming evil
 - B. showing deep respect
 - C. lasting only a moment
6. The kids kept **rapping** on the window to get my attention.
 - A. pressing with the palms
 - B. drawing with a finger
 - C. knocking with the knuckles
7. We heard a **rustling** in the leaves behind us.
 - A. a soft whispering sound
 - B. a low growling sound
 - C. a sharp cracking sound
8. The **tempest** destroyed three boats in the harbor.
 - A. a violent storm
 - B. a crashing wave
 - C. a burst of flame
9. She kept his letter as a **token** of their friendship.
 - A. a sign or reminder
 - B. a test or trial
 - C. a measure or gauge
10. She **vainly** tried to start the old engine.
 - A. with great care
 - B. without success
 - C. again and again

Reading Helpers

(Not quizzed — helpful for this text.)

surcease — An end, a stopping; surcease of sorrow means relief from grief.

Pallas — Pallas Athena, Greek goddess of wisdom; the bust is a sculpture of her head — so the bird settles on wisdom itself.

Plutonian — Of Pluto, Roman god of the underworld — Night's Plutonian shore is the shore of hell, where the narrator imagines the bird came from.

burden — Here, the refrain of a song — the line that returns at the end of every verse. Not a heavy load.

balm in Gilead — A biblical phrase (Jeremiah) for a healing ointment

ANSWER KEY

Vocabulary Preview

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

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 “While I nodded, nearly napping, suddenly there came a tapping,
As of some one gently rapping, rapping at my chamber door.”

As used in the passage, the word ‘rapping’ most nearly means...

- A. knocking lightly
- B. scratching faintly
- C. calling out quietly

2 “Eagerly I wished the morrow;—vainly I had sought to borrow
From my books surcease of sorrow—sorrow for the lost Lenore—”

According to the passage, the narrator’s search for comfort in his books...

- A. brought him no relief
- B. helped him fall asleep
- C. eased his grief a little

3 “And the silken sad uncertain rustling of each purple curtain
Thrilled me—filled me with fantastic terrors never felt before;”

It can reasonably be inferred from the excerpt that the narrator’s fear is...

- A. caused by a storm outside
- B. out of proportion to its cause
- C. a response to a real threat

4 “But, with mien of lord or lady, perched above my chamber door—
Perched upon a bust of Pallas just above my chamber door—
Perched, and sat, and nothing more.”

According to the passage, the Raven settled...

- A. on a hook above the door
- B. on a sculpture above the door
- C. on a shelf above the door

5 “Though thy crest be shorn and shaven, thou,” I said, “art sure no craven,
Ghastly grim and ancient Raven wandering from the Nightly shore—
Tell me what thy lordly name is on the Night’s Plutonian shore!”

In the excerpt, the speaker characterizes the Raven as...

- A. eerie and frightening
- B. timid and cowering
- C. cheerful and tame

6 “Doubtless,” said I, “what it utters is its only stock and store
Caught from some unhappy master ...
Till the dirges of his Hope that melancholy burden bore
Of ‘Never—nevermore.’”

The information in the excerpt primarily functions to...

- A. mock its mindless repetition
- B. trace its word to a grieving owner
- C. show it predicts the future

7 “... what this ominous bird of yore—
What this grim, ungainly, ghastly, gaunt, and ominous bird of yore
Meant in croaking ‘Nevermore.’”

As used in the passage, the word ‘ominous’ most nearly suggests that the narrator...

- A. feels the bird warns of evil to come
- B. expects the bird to fly off soon
- C. is struck only by its odd appearance

8 “‘Prophet!’ said I, ‘thing of evil!—prophet still, if bird or devil!—
Whether Tempter sent, or whether tempest tossed thee here ashore, ...”

The passage most strongly suggests that the narrator...

- A. is sure a storm carried the bird in
- B. is certain the bird is a devil
- C. cannot decide what sent the bird

9 “Tell this soul with sorrow laden if, within the distant Aidenn,
It shall clasp a sainted maiden whom the angels name Lenore—
... Quoth the Raven, ‘Nevermore.’”

It can reasonably be inferred from the raven’s reply that the narrator...

- A. will never know the bird’s name
- B. will never learn how Lenore died
- C. will not embrace Lenore even in heaven

10 “Leave no black plume as a token of that lie thy soul has spoken!”

According to the passage, a black plume left behind would stand as...

- A. a friendly parting gift
- B. payment owed for its stay
- C. a sign of the lie it spoke

ANSWER KEY

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#	KEY	NOTE
1	A	
2	A	
3	B	
4	B	The bust is of Pallas Athena, goddess of wisdom — Poe perches his bird of gloom, pointedly, on wisdom itself.
5	A	
6	B	'Burden' here is the old sense 'refrain of a song' — the master's songs all ended in 'nevermore.'
7	A	
8	C	Poe pairs 'Tempter' (the devil) with 'tempest' — a supernatural and a natural origin offered in one breath; the sound-echo is deliberate.
9	C	'Aidenn' is Poe's exotic spelling of Eden — the narrator is asking whether he and Lenore will reunite in paradise.
10	C	