

The Scarlet Ibis

by James Hurst

Pre-Reading Vocabulary Practice

Optional Post-Reading Quiz Included

Practice words: doggedness, evanesced, exotic, heresy, infallibility, invalid, mar, naught, precariously, sullenly

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.



More Short Works

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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. It was her sheer **doggedness** that carried her through months of difficult training.
 - A. cheerful willingness to keep trying
 - B. natural talent recognized by others
 - C. stubborn persistence despite difficulty
2. Her anger quickly **evanesced** once she understood the misunderstanding.
 - A. turned into something unexpected
 - B. grew stronger and more intense
 - C. faded away; vanished gradually
3. The market was full of **exotic** fruits that none of us had ever seen before.
 - A. spoiled and no longer fresh
 - B. expensive and difficult to obtain
 - C. strikingly unusual; from a distant place
4. To the villagers, tearing down the old church felt like **heresy**.
 - A. a violation of something held sacred
 - B. an insult directed at a specific person
 - C. a prediction based on little evidence
5. The surgeon's reputation for **infallibility** made it shocking when the operation failed.
 - A. the belief that one never makes a mistake
 - B. the feeling of being treated unfairly
 - C. the desire to compete with others
6. After the accident left him bedridden, he refused to think of himself as an **invalid**.
 - A. a person rejected by their community
 - B. a person who complains about hardship
 - C. a person weakened by illness or disability
7. One careless mistake can **mar** an otherwise perfect performance.
 - A. reveal the hidden meaning of
 - B. improve the overall impression of
 - C. damage the appearance or quality of
8. Despite months of preparation, their efforts came to **naught** when the event was canceled.
 - A. a sudden and unexpected end
 - B. nothing; zero result
 - C. an outcome worse than expected
9. She balanced **precariouly** on the narrow ledge, afraid to look down.
 - A. in an unsteady way; likely to fall or fail
 - B. in a careful and deliberate way
 - C. in a noticeable and dramatic way
10. When told he couldn't go to the party, he **sullenly** refused to speak the rest of the evening.
 - A. in a silently resentful, bad-tempered way
 - B. in a shy and nervous way
 - C. in a loud and openly angry way

Reading Helpers

(Not quizzed — helpful for this text.)

scarlet ibis — a rare bright red tropical bird; here, far from where it normally lives

clove of seasons — the brief in-between time between summer and fall

bleeding tree; five o'clocks — types of plants

grindstone — a heavy revolving stone used for grinding or sharpening; here, a metaphor for the turning of memory

go-cart — here, a small wheeled cart pulled by hand (not a motorized vehicle)

dog days — the hottest, most uncomfortable days of late summer

ANSWER KEY

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#	KEY
1	C
2	C
3	C
4	A
5	A
6	C
7	C
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 "It was bad enough having an invalid brother, but having one who possibly was not all there was unbearable."

As it is used in the excerpt, the word "invalid" most nearly suggests that the narrator's brother is...

- A. physically weak and disabled
- B. unimportant to the rest of the family
- C. unwilling to participate in activities

2 "I won't touch it," he said sullenly.

In the excerpt, Doodle is characterized as...

- A. shyly uncertain about what to do
- B. deeply terrified and helpless
- C. quietly resentful and defiant

3 "Once I had succeeded in teaching Doodle to walk, I began to believe in my own infallibility, and I prepared a terrific development program for him, unknown to Mama and Daddy, of course."

The author most likely includes the detail about the narrator's "infallibility" in order to...

- A. show the narrator's dedication to his brother
- B. prove the development program will succeed
- C. reveal the narrator's growing overconfidence

4 "The excitement of our program had now been gone for weeks, but still we kept on with a tired doggedness."

The passage most strongly suggests that the narrator continues the program because of...

- A. stubborn determination rather than enthusiasm
- B. eagerness to reach an exciting goal
- C. confidence that Doodle will succeed in time

5 "On the topmost branch a bird the size of a chicken, with scarlet feathers and long legs, was perched precariously."

According to the passage, the bird's position on the branch suggests it is...

- A. alert and preparing to take off
- B. resting securely after a long flight
- C. unsteady and at risk of falling

6 "Even death did not mar its grace, for it lay on the earth like a broken vase of red flowers, and we stood around it, awed by its exotic beauty."

According to the passage, the bird's death...

- A. makes it more impressive than when alive
- B. does not diminish its beauty or grace
- C. reveals a hidden flaw in its appearance

7 "Even death did not mar its grace, for it lay on the earth like a broken vase of red flowers, and we stood around it, awed by its exotic beauty."

The author most likely describes the bird's beauty as "exotic" in order to...

- A. stress how far the bird is from its natural home
- B. suggest the family has never seen any bird before
- C. show that the bird is too damaged to identify

8 "The knowledge that Doodle's and my plans had come to naught was bitter, and that streak of cruelty within me awakened."

It can reasonably be inferred that the narrator's cruelty awakens because...

- A. the complete failure of their plans frustrates him
- B. Doodle has deliberately refused to try harder
- C. the narrator realizes their plans never mattered

9 "I hadn't run too far before I became tired, and the flood of childish spite evanesced as well."

In context, the word "evanesced" emphasizes that the narrator's anger...

- A. grew more intense as the storm worsened
- B. dissolved quickly and naturally
- C. shifted into a different, stronger emotion

10 "For a long time, it seemed forever, I lay there crying, sheltering my fallen scarlet ibis from the heresy of rain."

By describing the rain as "heresy," the author elevates the significance of Doodle's death by...

- A. treating Doodle as sacred, making the rain's touch feel like a violation
- B. emphasizing that the storm was the direct cause of death
- C. showing the narrator's annoyance that the weather is ruining the moment

ANSWER KEY

Vocabulary in Context

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