

The Scarlet Letter

Chapters 9–13

by Nathaniel Hawthorne

Pre-Reading Vocabulary Practice

Optional Post-Reading Quiz Included

Practice words: antipathy, emissary, expiation, impute, latent, malevolence, pith, semblance, signification, torpid

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.

Vocabulary Sections for this Book:

Section 1 · Introductory and Chapters 1–3 · Hester and the scarlet letter

Section 2 · Chapters 4–8 · Hester's needle and her child

Section 3 · Chapters 9–13 · The physician and the minister

Section 4 · Chapters 14–19 · Hester and the old physician

Section 5 · Chapters 20–24 · The minister returns to town

Bold = this section. Other sections are available at verbalworkout.com.



verbalworkout.com
(all resources free)

Vocabulary Preview

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Name _____ Date _____ Period _____

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

1. She felt a strong **antipathy** toward anyone who lied to her.

- A. a lingering suspicion
- B. a strong dislike
- C. a deep envy

2. The president chose a trusted **emissary** to deliver the message abroad.

- A. a scholar sent to study abroad
- B. a spy sent to gather secrets
- C. an agent sent to represent

3. He spent years in **expiation** for the harm he had caused others.

- A. silent regret
- B. bitter resentment
- C. making amends for guilt

4. It is unfair to **impute** dishonest motives without solid proof.

- A. attribute or assign
- B. harshly judge
- C. openly excuse

5. The virus stayed **latent** in his body for years before symptoms appeared.

- A. slowly weakening
- B. hidden and inactive
- C. weak but still alive

6. His eyes burned with **malevolence** as he plotted his revenge.

- A. a desire to do evil
- B. jealous longing
- C. fierce ambition

7. Her short answer captured the **pith** of the whole argument.

- A. the central core
- B. the weakest part
- C. the missing piece

8. He kept a **semblance** of calm even though he was terrified inside.

- A. a brief flash
- B. a faint trace
- C. an outward show

9. Scholars still debate the **signification** of the ancient symbol.

- A. the true age
- B. the underlying meaning
- C. the place of origin

10. The bear grew **torpid** as the long winter set in.

- A. sluggish and inactive
- B. thin and hungry
- C. shaggy and unkempt

Reading Helpers

(Not quizzed — helpful for this text.)

sexton — a church officer who maintains the building and digs the graves

pollution — here, figurative: a moral defilement or contaminating impurity —

Dimmesdale brands himself 'a pollution and a lie,' his hidden sin making his holy office a corrupting falsehood

ANSWER KEY

Vocabulary Preview

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#	KEY
1	B
2	C
3	C
4	A
5	B
6	A
7	A
8	C
9	B
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 "... haunted either by Satan himself or Satan's emissary, in the guise of old Roger Chillingworth."

As it is used in the passage, the word "emissary" most nearly suggests that Chillingworth...

- A. is Satan in disguise
- B. acts as Satan's agent
- C. opposes Satan's will

2 "Calm, gentle, passionless, as he appeared, there was yet, we fear, a quiet depth of malice, hitherto latent, but active now, in this unfortunate old man, which led him to imagine a more intimate revenge than any mortal had ever wreaked upon an enemy."

The passage most strongly suggests that Chillingworth's malice...

- A. had always been open
- B. had lain dormant until now
- C. was created by Dimmesdale

3 "His gestures, his gait, his grizzled beard, his slightest and most indifferent acts, the very fashion of his garments, were odious in the clergyman's sight; a token implicitly to be relied on of a deeper antipathy in the breast of the latter ..."

Which choice best describes the clergyman's attitude toward the physician?

- A. deep instinctive loathing
- B. amused tolerance
- C. respectful gratitude

4 "It is the unspeakable misery of a life so false as his, that it steals the pith and substance out of whatever realities there are around us ... To the untrue man, the whole universe is false—it is impalpable—it shrinks to nothing within his grasp."

It can reasonably be inferred that a life of falsehood...

- A. leaves the world unchanged
- B. sharpens one's grasp of truth
- C. drains reality of its essence

5 "And thus, while standing on the scaffold, in this vain show of expiation, Mr. Dimmesdale was overcome with a great horror of mind, as if the universe were gazing at a scarlet token on his naked breast, right over his heart."

By calling Dimmesdale's expiation, or atonement, a "vain show," the narrator suggests that it...

- A. fails to bring him relief
- B. wins him public forgiveness
- C. completes a church ceremony

6 "... there came what seemed a tumultuous rush of new life, other life than his own, pouring like a torrent into his heart, and hurrying through all his veins, as if the mother and the child were communicating their vital warmth to his half-torpid system. The three formed an electric chain."

The passage most strongly suggests that, before this moment, the minister's inner life was...

- A. restless and fearful
- B. numb and lifeless
- C. warm and contented

7 "We impute it, therefore, solely to the disease in his own eye and heart, that the minister, looking upward to the zenith, beheld there the appearance of an immense letter—the letter A—marked out in lines of dull red light."

The narrator most likely says he "imputes" the fiery letter to the minister's own eye in order to...

- A. praise the minister's eyesight
- B. confirm a true heavenly omen
- C. frame the vision as guilt-born

8 "... it might well be that the physician was not careful then, as at all other times, to hide the malevolence with which he looked upon his victim."

In the passage, Roger Chillingworth is characterized as...

- A. anxious for his patient
- B. coldly impartial in study
- C. bent on spiteful ill will

9 "Such helpfulness was found in her—so much power to do, and power to sympathise—that many people refused to interpret the scarlet A by its original signification. They said that it meant Abel, so strong was Hester Prynne, with a woman's strength."

Which statement is best supported by the passage?

- A. Many reread the letter's meaning.
- B. The letter never held real meaning.
- C. Hester rejected the letter herself.

10 "... had been continually by his side, under the semblance of a friend and helper ..."

According to the passage, Chillingworth stayed close to the minister by...

- A. posing as a trusted friend
- B. leaving him strictly alone
- C. openly declaring his hatred

ANSWER KEY

Vocabulary in Context

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#	KEY	NOTE
1	B	
2	B	
3	A	
4	C	
5	A	Event comprehension. The 'expiation' is a secret, midnight act on the empty scaffold, so the show of atonement brings no real relief.
6	B	
7	C	
8	C	Character comprehension. Earlier in the section Chillingworth poses as a devoted physician; here his hidden ill will toward his 'victim' breaks through.
9	A	
10	A	Character comprehension. The reader knows Chillingworth is secretly Dimmesdale's enemy, so the 'friend and helper' he appears to be is a false front.

Teacher Context: Chapters 9–13

Chillingworth, now lodging with the ailing Reverend Dimmesdale as his doctor, comes to suspect the minister's hidden guilt and torments him under the guise of care. Dimmesdale's self-loathing drives him to a midnight vigil on the scaffold, where Hester and Pearl join him. The break after Chapter 13 follows Hester's renewed resolve to free Dimmesdale from Chillingworth's grip, which sets up the next section.