

The Secret Life of Bees

Chapters 1–3

by Sue Monk Kidd

Pre-Reading Vocabulary Practice

Optional Post-Reading Quiz Included

Practice words: brazen, conjure, consternation, disjointed, elusive, gouged, oblivious, pious, presumptuous, unperturbed

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 · Chapters 1–3 · Lily's life on the peach farm

Section 2 · Chapters 4–6 · A new home in Tiburon

Section 3 · Chapters 7–9 · Summer life at the pink house

Section 4 · Chapters 10–12 · Trouble reaches the pink house

Section 5 · Chapters 13–14 · Learning about Lily's mother

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. The **brazen** thief robbed the store in broad daylight.

- A. nervous and clumsy
- B. skilled and careful
- C. boldly shameless

2. I tried to **conjure** the name of my old teacher.

- A. write down neatly
- B. say out loud
- C. bring to mind

3. A wave of **consternation** swept the room when the lights went out.

- A. curiosity and wonder
- B. alarm and dismay
- C. anger and blame

4. His **disjointed** speech was hard to follow.

- A. disconnected and jumbled
- B. long and boring
- C. loud and angry

5. The **elusive** fox slipped away before the hunters got close.

- A. fierce and bold
- B. hard to catch or find
- C. calm and gentle

6. The falling rock **gouged** the soft dirt of the trail.

- A. brushed lightly across
- B. pressed down firmly
- C. cut or scooped out roughly

7. She walked **oblivious** right past her friend.

- A. not noticing or aware
- B. in too much of a hurry
- C. deliberately ignoring her

8. The **pious** old woman prayed at church every single morning.

- A. kind and gentle
- B. deeply religious
- C. lonely and quiet

9. It was **presumptuous** of him to grade his own teacher's work.

- A. too bold and forward
- B. clever and well-prepared
- C. generous and thoughtful

10. She stayed **unperturbed** as the storm rattled the windows.

- A. calm and untroubled
- B. tired and sleepy
- C. annoyed and restless

Reading Helpers

(Not quizzed — helpful for this text.)

orneriness — a mean, stubborn, irritable disposition

highfalutin — pompous or pretentious, especially in a way that acts superior

blaspheme — to speak with irreverence about God or sacred things

ANSWER KEY

Vocabulary Preview

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#	KEY
1	C
2	C
3	B
4	A
5	B
6	C
7	A
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 “I know it is presumptuous to compare my small life to hers, but I have reason to believe she wouldn’t mind; I will get to that.”

As it is used in the passage, the word ‘presumptuous’ most nearly suggests that Lily’s comparison is...

- A. logical and well-supported
- B. modest and well-earned
- C. too bold and out of place

2 “I tried for a long time to conjure up an image of her before that, just a sliver of something ...”

The passage most strongly suggests that Lily...

- A. remembers almost nothing of her mother
- B. makes up stories about her mother
- C. easily pictures her mother’s face

3 “What is left lies in clear yet disjointed pieces in my head.”

Which statement is best supported by the passage?

- A. Her memory is completely gone
- B. Her memory is vague and dim
- C. Her memory is vivid but disconnected

4 “... when I’d lifted the gun, the sound had torn through the room and gouged out our hearts.”

The information in the excerpt primarily functions to...

- A. explain how the gun went off
- B. describe the gun’s loud sound
- C. show how deeply the loss wounded them

5 “Hallelujah, Jesus,’ Rosaleen was saying over there on her stool. Oblivious.”

The author most likely sets off ‘Oblivious’ as its own one-word sentence in order to...

- A. stress how unaware Rosaleen is
- B. highlight Rosaleen’s strong faith
- C. signal a change in time

6 “... he looked at Rosaleen sashaying along unperturbed, holding her white-lady fan ...”

In the passage, Rosaleen is characterized as...

- A. calm and unbothered
- B. angry and upset
- C. nervous and afraid

7 “A brazen feeling had broken loose in me, a daring something that had been locked up in my chest.”

Which choice best describes Lily’s attitude as she speaks to T. Ray here?

- A. emboldened to stand up to him
- B. ashamed of talking back
- C. afraid he will hurt her

8 “Pious people have always gotten on my nerves.”

It can reasonably be inferred that the people who irritate Lily are those who...

- A. quietly live out their faith
- B. make a show of being religious
- C. openly mock all religion

9 “New beekeepers are told that the way to find the elusive queen is by first locating her circle of attendants.”

In context, the word ‘elusive’ emphasizes that the queen bee is...

- A. rarely alone
- B. hard to find
- C. always moving fast

10 “He thought the tone of shock in my voice was really consternation.”

According to the passage, the storekeeper believes Lily’s tone expresses...

- A. amusement
- B. alarm or dismay
- C. boredom

ANSWER KEY

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#	KEY	NOTE
1	C	
2	A	
3	C	
4	C	Event comprehension.
5	A	Rosaleen is unaware of the white backlash the new Civil Rights Act will provoke.
6	A	
7	A	Character comprehension.
8	B	Character comprehension.
9	B	
10	B	The storekeeper misreads Lily's shock of recognition as dismay.

Teacher Context: Chapters 1–3

Fourteen-year-old Lily Owens lives on a South Carolina peach farm with her abusive father, T. Ray, haunted by the childhood memory of her mother's death. After her caregiver Rosaleen is jailed and beaten for trying to register to vote, Lily breaks her out and the two flee toward Tiburon, a town named on a honey label that belonged to Lily's mother. The break falls here because Chapter 4 shifts the setting entirely as the pair arrive in Tiburon.