

To Build a Fire

by Jack London

Pre-Reading Vocabulary Practice

Optional Post-Reading Quiz Included

Practice words: apathetically, apprehension, excruciating, frailty, imperative, imperceptible, intangible, poignant, significances, treacherous

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. He shrugged **apathetically** when asked if he wanted to join the game.

- A. with a polite smile
- B. without interest
- C. in a nervous rush

2. She waited outside the office with growing **apprehension**.

- A. restless impatience
- B. quiet boredom
- C. uneasy dread

3. The sprained ankle gave her **excruciating** pain with every step.

- A. dull and throbbing
- B. extremely intense
- C. sudden and surprising

4. Everyone worried about the **frailty** of the elderly champion.

- A. deep loneliness
- B. weakness and fragility
- C. growing forgetfulness

5. It is **imperative** that everyone evacuate before the storm hits.

- A. strongly recommended
- B. generally expected
- C. absolutely necessary

6. The dancer made an **imperceptible** shift in her weight before the leap.

- A. slight and unnoticed
- B. slow and graceful
- C. sudden and forceful

7. Trust is an **intangible** thing that holds a team together.

- A. not physical or touchable
- B. rare and very valuable
- C. fragile and easily broken

8. The old song carried a **poignant** memory of his childhood.

- A. confusing and unclear
- B. faint and distant
- C. deeply moving and sad

9. Historians still debate the **significances** of that ancient treaty.

- A. deeper meanings of things
- B. plain facts on the surface
- C. small details and dates

10. The hikers crossed a **treacherous** mountain pass at dawn.

- A. dangerous and risky
- B. narrow and winding
- C. steep and uphill

Reading Helpers

(Not quizzed — helpful for this text.)

smote — struck with great force

ANSWER KEY

Vocabulary Preview

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#	KEY
1	B
2	C
3	B
4	B
5	C
6	A
7	A
8	C
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 a clear day, and yet there seemed an intangible pall over the face of things, a subtle gloom that made the day dark, and that was due to the absence of sun.”

As it is used in the passage, the word “intangible” most nearly describes a gloom that is...

- A. a visible layer of mist
- B. felt but not physically there
- C. a shadow cast by clouds

2 “The trouble with him was that he was without imagination. He was quick and alert in the things of life, but only in the things, and not in the significances.”

In the passage, the man is characterized as someone who...

- A. ignores practical dangers
- B. notices facts but not their meaning
- C. cannot remember simple facts

3 “It did not lead him to meditate upon his frailty as a creature of temperature, and upon man’s frailty in general, able only to live within certain narrow limits of heat and cold ...”

The passage most strongly suggests that human beings...

- A. grow stronger in harsh cold
- B. can adapt to any temperature
- C. can survive only within narrow limits

4 “It experienced a vague but menacing apprehension that subdued it and made it slink along at the man’s heels ...”

The author most likely describes the dog’s apprehension in order to...

- A. show danger the man fails to sense
- B. explain why the dog obeys him
- C. prove the dog is naturally loyal

5 “... this would delay him an hour, for he would have to build a fire and dry out his foot-gear. This was imperative at that low temperature ...”

Which statement is best supported by the passage?

- A. Drying his feet was not optional
- B. Building a fire would simply save time
- C. He could safely keep walking while wet

6 “Each time he had pulled a twig he had communicated a slight agitation to the tree—an imperceptible agitation, so far as he was concerned, but an agitation sufficient to bring about the disaster.”

The “imperceptible agitation” primarily functions in the passage to...

- A. explain how the man built the fire
- B. show a tiny cause led to disaster
- C. describe the snowy tree’s beauty

7 “He made a new foundation for a fire, this time in the open; where no treacherous tree could blot it out.”

It can reasonably be inferred that the man calls the tree “treacherous” because...

- A. its branches were hard to break
- B. it was too small to give shelter
- C. it hid a danger that ruined his fire

8 “The faint tingling grew stronger till it evolved into a stinging ache that was excruciating, but which the man hailed with satisfaction.”

It can reasonably be inferred that the man welcomes the excruciating ache because...

- A. feeling is returning to his hand
- B. the pain is mild and brief
- C. the fire has finally caught

9 “The fire-provider had failed. As he looked apathetically about him, his eyes chanced on the dog, sitting across the ruins of the fire from him ...”

Which choice best describes the man’s mood as he looks at the dog?

- A. furious at the freezing cold
- B. alert and full of fresh hope
- C. drained of feeling and energy

10 “This fear quickly became poignant as he realized that it was no longer a mere matter of freezing his fingers and toes ...”

Which statement is best supported by the passage?

- A. his fear had become a dread of dying
- B. his fear was fading as he calmed
- C. his fear was only about losing fingers

ANSWER KEY

Vocabulary in Context

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#	KEY	NOTE
1	B	
2	B	
3	C	
4	A	Character comprehension. The dog's dread sets it against the man's dull confidence.
5	A	Event comprehension.
6	B	Event comprehension.
7	C	Event comprehension. The 'treacherous tree' recalls the spruce whose snow buried his first fire.
8	A	The man welcomes intense pain because it signals blood returning to his numbed hand.
9	C	
10	A	