

To Kill a Mockingbird

Chapters 16–21

by Harper Lee

Pre-Reading Vocabulary Practice

Optional Post-Reading Quiz Included

Practice words: advances, chronic, convicted, hounded, integrity, morbid, scrutiny, shriveled, stealthy, subtle

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 1–7 · The Finch children and the Radley place

Section 2 · Chapters 8–11 · An unusual winter comes to Maycomb

Section 3 · Chapters 12–15 · Calpurnia's church and Aunt Alexandra's arrival

Section 4 · Chapters 16–21 · The trial of Tom Robinson begins

Section 5 · Chapters 22–31 · Maycomb in the months after the trial

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 rejected his unwelcome **advances** at the party.

- A. romantic overtures
- B. pushy demands
- C. rude remarks

2. She lives with **chronic** pain in her knees.

- A. constant and long-lasting
- B. sudden and severe
- C. mild and harmless

3. The jury **convicted** the man of theft.

- A. strongly suspected of a crime
- B. formally accused of a crime
- C. found guilty of a crime

4. Reporters **hounded** the actor for weeks.

- A. relentlessly pursued
- B. constantly questioned
- C. harshly criticized

5. Voters respected the senator for her **integrity**.

- A. wealth and power
- B. charm and confidence
- C. honesty and strong morals

6. He had a **morbid** fascination with graveyards.

- A. odd but harmless
- B. deep and scholarly
- C. grimly focused on death

7. Every application went through months of **scrutiny**.

- A. close examination
- B. harsh judgment
- C. public debate

8. The plant's leaves had **shriveled** in the heat.

- A. grown thick and waxy
- B. shrunken and withered
- C. turned yellow and spotted

9. The cat made a **stealthy** approach toward the bird.

- A. bold and playful
- B. quiet and secretive
- C. swift and sudden

10. The **subtle** scent of coffee drifted through the house.

- A. warm and inviting
- B. faint and not obvious
- C. sharp and bitter

Reading Helpers

(Not quizzed — helpful for this text.)

chiffarobe — a tall cabinet combining a wardrobe and drawers

the back of its hand — a gesture of scorn; contemptuous rejection

take advantage of — here, to rape or sexually assault someone

a Black man feeling sorry for a white woman — seen as placing a Black man above a white woman in Maycomb's racist social order

circumstantial evidence — indirect evidence that suggests but does not prove

acquit — to find a defendant not guilty

ANSWER KEY

Vocabulary Preview

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#	KEY
1	A
2	A
3	C
4	A
5	C
6	C
7	A
8	B
9	B
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 “t’s morbid, watching a poor devil on trial for his life.”

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

- A. cruel and heartless
- B. grimly focused on death
- C. dull and tiresome

2 “The jury, thinking themselves under close scrutiny, paid attention; so did the witnesses, thinking likewise.”

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

- A. harsh judgment
- B. careful watching
- C. public pressure

3 “Apparently Mayella’s recital had given her confidence, but it was not her father’s brash kind: there was something stealthy about hers, like a steady-eyed cat with a twitchy tail.”

In the passage, Mayella is characterized as...

- A. timid and fragile
- B. loud and hot-tempered
- C. watchful and sly

4 “... the younger children had perpetual colds and suffered from chronic ground-itch ...”

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

- A. mild and harmless
- B. sudden and severe
- C. constant and long-lasting

5 “His left arm was fully twelve inches shorter than his right, and hung dead at his side. It ended in a small shriveled hand, and from as far away as the balcony I could see that it was no use to him.”

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

- A. shrunken and withered
- B. badly scarred
- C. swollen and red

6 “Did you resist her advances?”
‘Mr. Finch, I tried. I tried to ‘thout bein’ ugly to her. I didn’t wanta be ugly, I didn’t wanta push her or nothin’.”

It can reasonably be inferred that, in resisting her advances, the speaker mainly tried to...

- A. avoid treating her harshly
- B. hide his own wrongdoing
- C. win the woman’s sympathy

7 “Until my father explained it to me later, I did not understand the subtlety of Tom’s predicament: he would not have dared strike a white woman under any circumstances and expect to live long, so he took the first opportunity to run— a sure sign of guilt.”

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

- A. a fine point easily missed
- B. a hidden danger
- C. a clever trick

8 “She has committed no crime, she has merely broken a rigid and time-honored code of our society, a code so severe that whoever breaks it is hounded from our midst as unfit to live with.”

It can reasonably be inferred that whoever breaks the rigid social code will be...

- A. punished in the courts
- B. quietly forgiven in time
- C. driven out of the community

9 “I’m no idealist to believe firmly in the integrity of our courts and in the jury system— that is no ideal to me, it is a living, working reality.”

The information in the excerpt primarily functions to...

- A. admit the courts often fail
- B. affirm faith in fair courts
- C. explain how juries are chosen

10 “A jury never looks at a defendant it has convicted, and when this jury came in, not one of them looked at Tom Robinson.”

It can reasonably be inferred, from no juror looking at Tom Robinson, that they have...

- A. found him guilty
- B. not yet reached a verdict
- C. been won over by his defense

ANSWER KEY

Vocabulary in Context

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#	KEY	NOTE
1	B	
2	B	
3	C	
4	C	'Chronic' means long-lasting or recurring, the opposite of a sudden, one-time ('acute') condition — a distinction worth drawing out.
5	A	
6	A	Here 'advances' means unwanted romantic overtures, not the everyday sense of forward progress — a context-driven shift worth flagging.
7	A	
8	C	
9	B	
10	A	Scout reads the verdict before it is announced — a jury that will not meet the defendant's eyes has already convicted him.

Teacher Context: Chapters 16–21

The trial fills these chapters: the Ewells' testimony, Tom's account, Atticus's cross-examination and closing argument, and the jury's verdict. Chapters 16–21 are kept together so the trial is not split across two quizzes.