Where the Crawdads Sing

Prologue and Chapters 1-11

by Delia Owens

Pre-Reading Vocabulary Practice

Optional Post-Reading Quiz Included

Practice words: beleaguered, careened, estuary, grotesquely, insolent, motley, poignant, profusion, smolder, tendrils

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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

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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 · Prologue and Chapters 1-11 · Kya's childhood in the marsh

Section 2 · Chapters 12-21 · Kya alone, watching for the fishing boy

Section 3 · Chapters 22-31 · Kya at nineteen on the beach

Section 4 · Chapters 32-45 · The investigation into Chase's death

Section 5 · Chapters 46-57 · Kya's life as a published author

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

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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. The **beleaguered** manager juggled complaints from every direction all day.

A. respected and admired
B. seasoned and senior
C. harassed and worn down

2. The boys **careened** down the sidewalk on their skateboards.

A. rushed and swerved wildly
B. tumbled and fell
C. raced straight ahead

3. Boats anchored in the wide **estuary** near the coast.

A. a deep sea trench
B. a tidal river mouth
C. a sandy ocean bay

4. The clown's face was painted **grotesquely** for the horror show.

A. in a distorted, ugly way
B. in a hasty, sloppy way
C. in a bright, flashy way

5. The **insolent** student rolled his eyes at the teacher's warning.

A. boldly disrespectful
B. bored and inattentive
C. anxious and fidgety

6. A **motley** crew of volunteers gathered in the town square.

A. large and noisy
B. tired and grumpy
C. varied and mismatched

7. The **poignant** farewell scene left half the audience in tears.

A. loud and showy
B. full of tension
C. deeply moving

8. The garden burst with a **profusion** of roses in early summer.

A. a large abundance
B. a rare variety
C. a neat arrangement

9. We left the coals to **smolder** in the fireplace overnight.

A. give off a sharp smell
B. burn slowly without flame
C. burn fast and bright

10. Delicate **tendrils** reached out from the climbing vine.

A. broad green leaves
B. slender curling threads
C. small white flowers

Reading Helpers

(Not quizzed — helpful for this text.)

palmetto — a low fan-leaved palm shrub of the southeastern U.S. coast
vixen — a female fox

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ANSWER KEY

Vocabulary Preview

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

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Vocabulary in Context

Where the Crawdads Sing

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Name _____ **Date** _____ **Period** _____ **Score** _____ / 10

Read each excerpt carefully. Then choose the best answer to each question.

1 *"… decays and reeks and returns to the rotted duff; a poignant wallow of death begetting life."*

As used in the passage, "poignant" suggests the cycle of decay and rebirth is…

A. swift and violent
B. sharp and foul-smelling
C. deeply moving and bittersweet

2 *"… freed slaves, penniless and beleaguered, who dispersed into the water-land because of scant options."*

It can reasonably be inferred that the freed slaves who settled in the marsh had been…

A. prosperous and secure
B. worn down by hardship
C. welcomed by townsfolk

3 *"Now they'd escaped as a motley flock, clucking far in the trees beyond."*

The author calls the escaped chickens a "motley flock" in order to emphasize that they were…

A. tame and orderly
B. ragtag and mismatched
C. unusually numerous

4 *"Kya sank onto the brick 'n' boards, watching Ma's watercolors of the marsh smolder into ash."*

The passage most strongly suggests that Ma's watercolors…

A. burned slowly down to ash
B. went up in a sudden blaze
C. were barely singed by the fire

5 *"The rotted legs of the old abandoned fire tower straddled the bog, which created its own tendrils of mist."*

The author most likely describes the mist as "tendrils" in order to…

A. picture it curling in thin wisps
B. show it was thick and heavy
C. suggest the bog was warm

6 *"There lay a man, flat on his back, his left leg turned grotesquely forward from the knee."*

As used in the passage, "grotesquely" most nearly means…

A. in a slow and painful way
B. in a stiff and rigid way
C. in an unnaturally twisted way

7 *"Insolent life thrumming on."*

Which choice best describes the narrator's attitude toward the life stirring over the corpse?

A. brazenly disrespectful of death
B. fearful and fleeing
C. solemn and mournful

8 *"Kya tooled along, a tiny speck of a girl in a boat, turning this way and that as endless estuaries branched and braided before her."*

Which statement about the water Kya travels is best supported by the passage?

A. It was one straight river
B. It split into many tidal channels
C. It was open, empty ocean

9 *"… as Kya careened down the sandy lane, her arms held straight out …"*

It can reasonably be inferred that Kya was moving down the lane…

A. slowly and carefully
B. stiffly, favoring a sore foot
C. fast and recklessly

10 *"… at the mud holes and swampy areas near the tower, a profusion of detailed stories revealed themselves …"*

Which detail best supports the idea that the mud near the tower held a profusion of stories?

A. tracks of a raccoon, bear, and turtle
B. smooth, untouched sand
C. a single set of footprints

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ANSWER KEY

Vocabulary in Context

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#	KEY	NOTE
1	C	'Poignant' is easily confused with 'pungent'; the smell distractor targets that error.
2	B	
3	B	
4	A	
5	A	
6	C	
7	A	Event comprehension. The line describes insects and birds over Chase's corpse; the narrator casts their indifference as 'insolence.'
8	B	
9	C	
10	A	Event comprehension. The surrounding lines list the many animal tracks the lawmen read in the mud.

Teacher Context: Prologue and Chapters 1-11

The prologue flashes forward to 1969, when two boys find Chase Andrews's body in the marsh; the story then returns to 1952 and six-year-old Kya, whose mother, siblings, and abusive father all abandon her to raise herself in the marsh shack. She survives by selling mussels to Jumpin' and meets Tate, the fishing boy who befriends her. The break falls mid-Part One at the end of Chapter 11 to keep the childhood arc in one teachable section.

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