

Focus ON READING

Vocabulary

READING
COMPREHENSION

Dacey's Song

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ACTIVATE PRIOR KNOWLEDGE

Reproducible Activities

Build Your Vocabulary

Read the sentences below. On the line, write your definition of the word in bold type. Then, on another sheet of paper, use that word in a new sentence of your own.

1. "There were still things to worry about here, but nothing **crucial**."
crucial: _____
2. "Sammy was out back, on the other side of the old farmhouse, spading up **fallow** land to increase the size of the vegetable garden."
fallow: _____
3. "So except for the children's bicycles, the overgrown tracks that led off from the front of the house, through a stand of pines and between two long **barren** fields to the road, were unmarked."
barren: _____
4. "When she got around back, Sammy had taken the extra bag with his **grubby** arms."
grubby: _____
5. "Yet all the Tillermans had **hazel** eyes."
hazel: _____
6. "Millie might be lazy, she might just be too tired (and Dicey guessed if she had to **tote** that body around every day, all day long, she'd get tired too), or she might just not care."
tote: _____
7. "Dicey stared at the woman, at the heavy **mottled** flesh of her face."
mottled: _____
8. "'You're a good butcher,' Dicey said, trying a little **flattery**. 'Gram says so.'"
flattery: _____
9. "'You see,' Dicey spoke urgently, 'my **theory** is that your business will get better, and so instead of costing you money, I'd be making you money.'"
theory: _____
10. "Gram's expression **resolved** itself into amusement."
resolved: _____

Check Your Understanding

Short Answer

Write a short answer for each question.

1. How would you describe Gram's house?
2. Why does Gram consider adopting her grandchildren?
3. Why does Gram decide to apply for welfare?
4. How does Gram feel about going on welfare?
5. Why can't Dicey's mother take care of her children?
6. What fairy-tale ending does Dicey doubt will come true for the Tillermans?
7. What does the sailboat mean to Dicey?
8. How does Dicey feel about her developing body?
9. What is Dicey's argument for why Millie should hire her?
10. Why is Dicey surprised that Maybeth's music teacher has asked for a conference?

Focus Your Reading

Vocabulary Words to Know

Study the following words and definitions. You will meet these words in your reading. Be sure to jot down in your word journal any other unknown words from the reading.

precision—exactness; clarity

conflict—a problem; a struggle

intrusion—something thrust in without invitation, permission, or welcome

unkempt—disorderly; not neat

methodically—done in an orderly way; following a certain method

tedious—tiresome; boring

chastened—corrected; scolded

sulky—moodily silent

engrossed—having one's full attention taken by something

saunter—to walk in an idle or a leisurely manner; to stroll

Things to Know

Here is some background information about this section of the book.

Dacey's Song was published in 1982. At that time, many schools assigned students to practical arts courses on the basis of gender: boys took shop or mechanical drawing; girls took home economics.

Dacey enjoys **diagramming**. This term refers to diagramming sentences, or representing the parts of a sentence graphically in a series of connecting lines. In this process, different sentence parts are placed in specific places on a linear diagram. This can help students to see the relationship among the different words in a sentence. Diagramming sentences is quite precise: There is only one correct way to diagram any sentence, and every word is accounted for.

Build Your Vocabulary

Read the sentences below. On the line, write your definition of the word in bold type. Then, on another sheet of paper, use that word in a new sentence of your own.

1. “Dicey was sorry the diagramming was finished. She liked the **precision** of it.”
precision: _____
2. “If we define **conflict** as requiring two opposing forces, what might we look for?” he asked the class.”
conflict: _____
3. “‘Between someone and himself,’ she said, not bothering to keep the anger at his **intrusion** out of her voice.”
intrusion: _____
4. “Dicey couldn’t mistake that high carriage of the chin, or the **unkempt** curly gray hair.”
unkempt: _____
5. “Often, as she **methodically** moved cans of soup off the shelf, washed down the bottom and sides and back, then replaced the cans, washing each one off with a damp sponge, Dicey heard someone come in and interrupt Millie at her work.”
methodically: _____
6. “From this **tedious** point of view, the twelve-foot boat didn’t look so little to Dicey.”
tedious: _____
7. “‘You know the lofts aren’t safe to play in.’ Sammy stepped out of the shadows behind an old stall. . . . He looked **chastened** and **sulky**.”
chastened: _____
sulky: _____
8. “When she felt someone standing beside her, she thought probably it was the teacher and didn’t look up, as if she was too **engrossed** to notice.”
engrossed: _____
9. “He’d call out to her, ‘Hey, Dicey.’ She would **saunter** over.”
saunter: _____

Check Your Understanding

Multiple Choice

Circle the letter of the best answer to each question.

1. What does Dicey like about diagramming sentences?
 - a. the precision of it
 - b. the ease of it
 - c. how little writing is involved
2. Which assignment in English class interests Dicey?
 - a. a paper about Pilgrims
 - b. a character sketch showing conflict
 - c. a book report about theme
3. Who used to get in fights at school?
 - a. Maybeth
 - b. James
 - c. Sammy
4. Who is Dicey's lab partner in science class?
 - a. no one
 - b. Mina
 - c. Jeff
5. What does Mina say is different about her and Dicey?
 - a. They don't care about the other kids in class.
 - b. They are both loners.
 - c. They are smarter than the other kids in class.
6. Who takes a paper route?
 - a. Dicey and Mina
 - b. James and Sammy
 - c. Gram and Maybeth
7. What does the letter from Boston say about Dicey's mother?
 - a. that she has died
 - b. that there is no change in her condition
 - c. that she does not want to see her children
8. What does Dicey think about James's essay?
 - a. that it is very interesting
 - b. that it is boring
 - c. that it will win the prize
9. Why doesn't Dicey say much about herself?
 - a. Knowledge gives people power over her.
 - b. She thinks people will pity her.
 - c. She is afraid people will want to come over to Gram's.
10. Why does Gram at first refuse Mr. Lingerle's suggestion that Maybeth have more lessons?
 - a. She doesn't trust Mr. Lingerle.
 - b. She doesn't have enough money to pay for them.
 - c. She doesn't want to spoil Maybeth.

Deepen Your Understanding

After moving in with Gram, things began to change for the Tillerman children. At the end of Chapter 2, Dicey decides:

It felt pretty good to be able to do things without worrying about the little kids. And if Sammy was going to be Gram's favorite, and James was going to do everything right, and Maybeth was going to get caught up in school, so everybody could be proud of her, and with piano lessons too, why should Dicey mind?

Do you think Dicey minds or not? Explain.

Focus Your Reading

Vocabulary Words to Know

Study the following words and definitions. You will meet these words in your reading. Be sure to jot down in your word journal any other unknown words from the reading.

tendency—a want or need to go in a certain direction, as if pushed or pulled by some force

scraggly—irregular in form or growth

confer—to discuss; to share opinions or advice

confidentially—privately; secretly

assured—gave confidence to

dawdling—wasting time; moving slowly or lazily

lecture—to speak in front of an audience or class, especially for instruction

droned—talked in a persistently dull or monotonous tone

quizzically—expressing puzzlement, curiosity, or disbelief

foreboding—a prediction of coming evil

Things to Know

Here is some background information about this section of the book.

There are two basic methods of teaching people to read English: the phonics method and the look/say method. The phonics method stresses the fact that in written English, letters and combinations of letters stand for sounds. Learning the letter/sound associations meant learning to read. The look/say method stresses the fact that mature readers do not sound out words letter by letter; they recognize whole words. Besides, for historical reasons, many English words are not spelled the way they sound. Therefore, beginning readers should learn to recognize whole words. Many educators now believe that a combination of methods works best, but the merits of the two methods were debated, often angrily, by teachers and parents for much of the twentieth century.

Build Your Vocabulary

Read the sentences below. On the line, write your definition of the word in bold type. Then, on another sheet of paper, use that word in a new sentence of your own.

1. “I’d forgotten that when you leave children alone they have a natural **tendency** to get into trouble.”
tendency: _____
2. “The bus entered the limits of the **scraggly** city.”
scraggly: _____
3. “We’ll **confer** with James when we get home . . .”
confer: _____
4. “I don’t know why they dress the way they do,’ the saleslady said to Gram, leaning **confidentially** over in an adult-to-adult position.”
confidentially: _____
5. “I think he did,’ James **assured** his grandmother.”
assured: _____
6. “Sammy worked like Dicey did, without hurrying, without **dawdling**.”
dawdling: _____
7. “Miss Eversleigh began to **lecture** about nutrition and food groups.”
lecture: _____
8. “Miss Eversleigh’s voice **droned** on.”
droned: _____
9. “He looked **quizzically** at her, as if there was something he wanted her to say, but when she didn’t he began to sing right away.”
quizzically: _____
10. “. . . she had the feeling he wasn’t going to do much to help Maybeth. . . . Her **foreboding** was correct.”
foreboding: _____

Check Your Understanding

Multiple Choice

Circle the letter of the best answer.

1. Why is Dicey nervous about leaving the other children alone?
 - a. She is afraid the others won't do their chores.
 - b. She is worried about giving James so much responsibility.
 - c. She is worried that Maybeth will be afraid.
2. Where do the others go while Gram and Dicey are at school?
 - a. the attic
 - b. Millie's store
 - c. Mr. Lingerle's house
3. What is everyone afraid of for Maybeth?
 - a. that she will be kept back a grade
 - b. that she will have to give up piano
 - c. that she is like Momma
4. Although he has great ideas, James is not great at
 - a. following through.
 - b. working hard.
 - c. paying attention.
5. What does Dicey like about transportation?
 - a. getting away from the little kids
 - b. going somewhere
 - c. driving fast
6. Who sits with the other children while Dicey and Gram go shopping?
 - a. Millie
 - b. Mr. Lingerle
 - c. Jeff
7. Why do Mina's friends tease her about befriending Dicey?
 - a. because Dicey is smart
 - b. because Dicey is poor
 - c. because Dicey is white
8. What event makes James very happy?
 - a. A friend invites him over.
 - b. He gets an A on his report.
 - c. He gets rid of his paper route.
9. Who takes over James's paper route?
 - a. Sammy
 - b. Dicey
 - c. Gram
10. What does Dicey realize about "holding on" to people?
 - a. It's fun.
 - b. It's time-consuming.
 - c. It's boring work.