

# Focus ON READING

*Vocabulary*

READING  
COMPREHENSION

The Pigman

Paul Zindel

**ACTIVATE PRIOR KNOWLEDGE**

**Reproducible Activities**



## Check Your Understanding

### Multiple Choice

Circle the letter of the best answer to each question.

- How many bombs did the Bathroom Bomber set off before deciding to stop?
  - two
  - twenty-three
  - thirty
- Who is the Cricket?
  - Lorraine's mother
  - Miss Reillen, the school librarian
  - Miss King, the English teacher
- What did Lorraine first notice about John?
  - his eyes
  - his hair
  - his smile
- How did John and Lorraine meet?
  - They sat next to each other in class at school.
  - Their friend Norton introduced them.
  - They sat next to each other and laughed on the bus to school one morning.
- What would Lorraine like to be one day?
  - a writer
  - a psychologist
  - a gourmet chef
- What would John like to be one day?
  - a detective
  - a professional burglar
  - an actor
- What "game" do John and Lorraine play twice a week?
  - the supercolossal fruit roll
  - making prank phone calls
  - skipping school
- What nickname does John call his father?
  - Bore
  - Jerk
  - Lunatic
- What does Dennis say to keep the old woman on the phone for over two hours?
  - He is her long lost grandson.
  - He is with the sweepstakes prize patrol.
  - He is about to die from a skin disease.
- Who picks out the Pigman's phone number from the phone book?
  - Dennis
  - John
  - Lorraine

## *Deepen Your Understanding*

Paul Zindel chose to write this book from both John and Lorraine's points of view by alternating between the two narrators for each chapter. As a reader, what are some of the benefits of having the story told by two different characters? What are the possible disadvantages of having multiple narrators? What other formats might the author have used to tell this same story?

## *Focus Your Reading*

### *Questions to Think About*

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The following questions will help you understand the meaning of what you read. You do not have to write out the answers to these questions. Instead, look at them before you begin reading, and think about them while you are reading.

1. Why do Norton and John hang out together if, as Lorraine says, they hate each other?
2. How does John manipulate Lorraine into going to Mr. Pignati's house?
3. If someone tells you to "make yourself at home," does that mean you should do whatever you want?
4. How important are laughter and fun in life?

## Check Your Understanding

### Multiple Choice

Circle the letter of the best answer to each question.

1. What is the name of the fake charity John and Lorraine make up?
  - a. The Howard Avenue Civic League
  - b. Save the Children
  - c. The L & J Fund
2. How much of a donation does Mr. Pignati agree to give?
  - a. ten dollars
  - b. twenty dollars
  - c. one hundred dollars
3. John wants the money to buy beer. How much does a six-pack of beer cost?
  - a. \$1.25
  - b. \$3.50
  - c. \$5.99
4. Why is John's father going to talk to John when he gets home from work?
  - a. John's father is upset about John's poor grades at school.
  - b. He wants John to get a job.
  - c. He is angry that John put glue in the phone lock.
5. What is the most striking thing about Mr. Pignati's appearance?
  - a. his beer stomach
  - b. his bald head
  - c. his smile
6. What does Mr. Pignati offer John and Lorraine when they first arrive at his house?
  - a. cookies
  - b. wine
  - c. coffee
7. About how long does Mr. Pignati say his wife has been out of town?
  - a. one week
  - b. one month
  - c. one year
8. How many items does Mr. Pignati teach John and Lorraine to memorize?
  - a. five
  - b. ten
  - c. twenty
9. Where does Mr. Pignati ask John and Lorraine to go with him?
  - a. to the zoo
  - b. to the grocery store
  - c. to the museum
10. What kind of collection does Mr. Pignati have?
  - a. war memorabilia
  - b. pig figurines
  - c. commemorative stamps

## *Deepen Your Understanding*

John keeps pushing Lorraine until he convinces her to visit Mr. Pignati and get the money. Has anyone ever tried to convince you to do something you didn't want to do or that you felt was wrong? How did you react? Did you go along with it or choose not to? What were the results of your actions? How did you feel about your choice afterwards? If that situation hasn't happened to you, how do you think you would react under similar circumstances?

## *Focus Your Reading*

### *Questions to Think About*

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The following questions will help you understand the meaning of what you read. You do not have to write out the answers to these questions. Instead, look at them before you begin reading, and think about them while you are reading.

1. How does the relationship between the young people and Mr. Pignati change after they go to the zoo?
2. Why does Mr. Pignati not tell the truth about his wife?
3. How will John and Lorraine react to knowing that Mr. Pignati lied?
4. Why do you think Mr. Pignati wants to buy John and Lorraine so many things?
5. Why does Lorraine call the three of them “three funny little monkeys”? How are they like the monkeys they see in the pet department? How are they like the monkeys they visit in the zoo?



*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. “He raised his voice, which is typical when he needs to delay a second because he’s at a loss for his next **distortion**.”  
distortion: \_\_\_\_\_
2. “Actually, I think her problems are so deep-rooted she’d need three years of intensive **psychoanalysis**.”  
psychoanalysis: \_\_\_\_\_
3. “The closest I ever came to having a pet was an old **mongrel** that used to hang around the neighborhood.”  
mongrel: \_\_\_\_\_
4. “I realize now there were plenty of bad **omens** within the next few minutes.”  
omens: \_\_\_\_\_
5. “I mean, that’s how **antagonistic** she was. A real devoted antagonist. You could tell she hated kids—just hated them.”  
antagonistic: \_\_\_\_\_
6. “. . . we went into the **nocturnal** room of the Mammal Building. The whole room is pretty dark so you can see these animals that only come out at night, like owls and pottos and cute little vampire bats.”  
nocturnal: \_\_\_\_\_
7. “If you let her, Lorraine would eat until she dropped, and if she keeps going at that rate, I’m afraid she’s going to be somewhat more than **voluptuous**. She could end up just plain fat.”  
voluptuous: \_\_\_\_\_
8. “Once I ran away from Lorraine and the others and hid in a part of the cemetery that didn’t have **perpetual** care. That’s the part where no one pays to keep the grass cut.”  
perpetual: \_\_\_\_\_
9. “Maybe one of the molecules of iron from the corpse’s **hemoglobin** is in the strand of grass next to my ear.”  
hemoglobin: \_\_\_\_\_
10. “Do you mean *real* whipped cream or that horrible, prepared-mix, fake whipped cream? Don’t give the **ingrate** anything.”  
ingrate: \_\_\_\_\_

## Check Your Understanding

### Short Answer

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Write a short answer for each question.

1. What specifically happened to Lorraine's father?
2. How does Lorraine's mother make extra money from Solvies? What else does she do that is dishonest?
3. What are the three "bad omens" at the zoo?
4. How does John's father react when John tells him he is going to be an actor? What does John's father want him to do with his life?
5. How does John discover that Mr. Pignati's wife is dead?
6. What is Lorraine's mother's attitude toward men?
7. Why does Lorraine refuse to let John go to Beekman's alone with Mr. Pignati?
8. What is the next bad omen Lorraine experiences?
9. How does John react when the floorwalker tells them not to feed the monkeys?
10. Lorraine feels torn over getting the roller skates. What are the two opposing ideas that are pulling at her?