

Reading Comprehension

Vocabulary Development Series

Level 9



Reading Comprehension Workbook

Level 9

Series Designer

Philip J. Solimene

Editor

Sharon Diane Orlan

Reading Consultant

Sidney J. Rauch, Ed.D.

**Professor of Reading and Education
Hofstra University, New York**

EDCON

Story Authors
Sandra Fenichel Asher
Linda Bosson
Elenor Coleman
Geraldine DeSalvo
Camille Harper
William W. Hull
Naila Minai
Margaret Opsata
Deborah Tiersch-Allen

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The Quest

Learn the Key Words

absentee	(ab sən tē')	someone who is absent <i>The <u>absentee</u> landlord did not neglect his responsibilities.</i>
affliction	(ə flik' shən)	misfortune, distress or pain <i>When he became upset, his <u>affliction</u> was his inability to speak clearly.</i>
captivity	(kap tiv' ə tē)	being held against one's will <i>She had been held in <u>captivity</u> for more than a year.</i>
feudal	(fyü' dl)	relating to the economic and social systems during the middle ages <i>In <u>feudal</u> times, the lords owned the lands.</i>
smite	(smīt)	to strike a heavy blow so as to cause serious injury or death <i>The knight intended to <u>smite</u> the dragon the moment he saw it.</i>
smote	(smōt)	the past tense of 'smite' <i>The knight <u>smote</u> the dragon with one mighty blow.</i>

Preview:

1. Read the title.
2. Look at the picture.
3. Read the first two paragraphs of the selection.
4. Then answer the following question.

You learned from your preview that

- ___ a. the name of the restaurant was Merlin's Croquettery and Ale Room.
- ___ b. the census taker's speech was about the alarming number of shampoo commercials on television.
- ___ c. Rapunsel was being held captive by an absentee landlord.
- ___ d. the four knights were new in the kingdom.

Turn to the Comprehension Check on page 4 for the right answer.

Now read the selection.

Read to find out about some daring misadventures.

The Quest



When this unlikely foursome set out to rescue the latest damsel in distress, nothing could stand in their way.

Once upon a time, there were four knights: Sir Accourir, Sir Chance-a-lot, Lord Deaux-Deaux and Sir Solide. They were all charter members of a service club that met for luncheon every Tuesday at *King Arthur's Castle Restaurant* in the capitol of the kingdom. They usually used the round table in the banquet room where they would sit eating chicken croquettes and listen to speeches by Merlin or somebody equally important.

At one of their regular Tuesday meetings, the royal census taker gave a speech about the alarming number of fair damsels who were in captivity throughout the kingdom. There was a lot of that going around it seemed, and he was most upset by the plight of one damsel in particular. She was a lovely lady named Rapunsel who used to make a good salary appearing in shampoo commercials. Now she was in captivity, being held by an

absentee landlord in a tall tower somewhere in the country.

All of the knights were moved by the speech and each one reacted according to his own habit of doing things. Immediately after the meeting, the feudal knight, Sir Accourir, put on his armor, rounded up his faithful hunting hound, Phydeaux, and prepared for a quest. Calling his dog to him, Accourir bolted into the saddle of his war horse parked in the lot behind the restaurant and charged off into the forest to rescue the damsel.

Sir Accourir, who had smote many a dragon in his time, was a veteran of several damsel saves as well. Things had changed quite a bit since the early days of feudalism, but it didn't matter to him. He was always on the run and rarely, if ever, stopped to determine just where he was headed. He would never stop to get any facts. He would just lower his lance and, with a howl from

Phydeaux, gallop off in any direction. The Accourir family motto was simply "Run." He was firmly convinced that those weak-kneed modern knights who hesitated would never amount to anything.

"After all," he would say frequently to anyone who would listen, "everyone knows that the only way to quest properly is by being dressed in full armor on the back of a war horse going at full gallop!"

And with a hearty "Heigh Ho, Phydeaux!" he would be off. He hadn't the faintest notion of where the damsel might be. By five o'clock that afternoon, he was completely lost in the forest—charging trees and scaring the wildlife.

Sir Chance-a-lot was a different sort of knight. His affliction was gambling, but he always spread his bets. His first action was to borrow a quill from King Arthur and write a letter to the editor of the 'Camelot Gazette' about the

damsel-in-captivity problem, and he demanded money from the Health, Education and Welfare Department for knights, like himself, to support the cost of questing in behalf of the damsels. He then called for volunteers and organized several search parties, sending them off in many different directions and leaving at five minute intervals. He was gambling that if he sent out enough search parties and got the public stirred up, someone else might find the damsel and he would get the credit. Mounted on his charger, he led the last search party himself, but before he reached the edge of the forest, he was devoured by a fire-breathing dragon.

Lord Deaux-Deaux was a kind man and his affliction was that he was a bit deaf. He had never smote anything in anger, preferring more peaceful pursuits. He cornered the speaker after lunch and told him that all the Deaux-Deauxs, as far back as he could remember, were dedicated to saving endangered animals. Being the last of his line, he was extremely sensitive about such things. He assured the speaker, as he got out his checkbook, that he would be most happy to help save the poor "ramzel." He made a donation in behalf of the last pair of "ramzels" who were in such distress, roosting high in their "bower" wherever it was.

Sir Solide, a planner knight, being descended from the ancient English kings, sent his squire with a message for his staff to come to a meeting that evening. Knowing that before you can smite your foes you must find them, he hurried over to the library. After looking through an atlas, he made several photo copies of some maps. He then went to the local television station and requested several copies of Rapunsel's recent shampoo commercials.

At the meeting that evening, Sir Solide and his aides determined the location of all the towers in the kingdom and the last known whereabouts of dangerous dragons. They finally determined that the tower they were after was located in one of the slums of the kingdom and marked its location. They then made a list of the equipment they would probably need. Research had also shown that there was a deep moat in front of the tower. To prepare for this, he and his staff, after a trip to *Ye Olde Lumber Yard* and *Squire's Hardware Store*, spent the rest of the night constructing a portable bridge.

The next morning, Sir Solide and his staff set off for the tower with a wagonload of fire extinguishers (in case they encountered any fire-breathing dragons) and other essential equipment.

Their trip to the tower was uneventful, largely because of their careful planning beforehand and the easy-to-read Triptik provided by the Royal Travel Club. They encountered little resistance, except for an enraged squirrel who had been kept awake all night because Sir Accourir constantly kept smiting the trees with his sword. The squirrel peppered Sir Solide's party with nuts and some severe squirrel talk. But Sir Solide's armor was immune to this attack and except for a small rip in the aluminum foil of his shield, he came away unhurt, leaving his squire to fight a rear guard action.

When they reached the moat near the tower, it took them about an hour to erect their portable bridge, including time for a coffee break and painting the bridge. Upon reaching the other side, Sir Solide waved his lance and yelled to the landlord to open the front door, but the landlord was absent. Sir Solide had expected some sort of response like this from

an absentee landlord and was prepared. He had his aides bring over the supply wagon and, using a portable loud-speaker, he called to the fair damsel, who, at the moment, was at the top of the tower washing her hair.

After exchanging pleasantries, he requested politely, in the manner of chivalrous knights, for her to lower her long, lovely tresses down over the railing. After following his instruction and lowering her hair, they were all amazed to see that it reached almost to the ground.

The noble knight leaned over his saddle and using a pair of garden shears, snipped off as much of it as he could. Then, galloping off to the nearest village, he sold it to a wig maker. Using the money to rent a crane from *Ye Olde Rent A Crane Company*, the damsel was lifted to freedom and was home by nightfall.

Several morals can be drawn from this tale: 1) They're not making knights like they used to, 2) They're not making damsels like they used to, 3) They're not writing fables like they used to, or 4) A good knight's planning will get you where you want to go, any day!

The Quest

COMPREHENSION CHECK

Choose the best answer.

Preview Answer:

c. Rapunsel was being held captive by an absentee landlord.

1. The Accourir family motto was
 - a. "Smote."
 - b. "Quest."
 - c. "Dash."
 - d. "Run."

2. Lord Deaux-Deaux offered a donation for the preservation of "ramzels" because he
 - a. wanted to earn the respect of the honored speaker.
 - b. was a stupid man who had little common sense.
 - c. was a bit deaf and mistook "damsel" for "ramzel."
 - d. enjoyed playing jokes on his fellow knights.

3. According to the selection, which of the following techniques are not employed by the author?
 - a. Humor.
 - b. True Reporting.
 - c. Sarcasm.
 - d. Exaggeration.

4. Sir Chance-a-lot
 - a. made an honest effort to find the maiden himself.
 - b. assumed that the government would spend money foolishly.
 - c. was eager to give the public credit for their help.
 - d. knew for sure that people would not rally for a cause.

5. First, Sir Solide called to the damsel to let down her hair. Then, he snipped off a piece of her long locks. Next,
 - a. he sold it to a wig maker in the village.
 - b. he borrowed some money and rented a crane.
 - c. he used a loudspeaker to call the landlord.
 - d. he erected the portable bridge with his men.

6. Rapunsel was
 - a. not very upset about her situation.
 - b. a fresh girl who ran away.
 - c. dazed and confused in the tower.
 - d. crazy with worry about being rescued.

7. Sir Solide
 - a. planned and executed a perfect, sensible rescue.
 - b. had some definite limitations in judgement.
 - c. was a boring and dull kind of person.
 - d. was a scheming knight, disliked by all.

8. The four knights were members of
 - a. the king's court.
 - b. the restaurant association.
 - c. a service club.
 - d. the Round Table.

9. Another name for this selection could be
 - a. "Four to Free a Damsel."
 - b. "Ramzels in Need."
 - c. "The Search for Camelot."
 - d. "War of the Knights."

10. This selection is mainly about
 - a. crusades during the days of feudalism.
 - b. a humorous commentary of medieval and modern times.
 - c. a luncheon meeting at a fancy restaurant.
 - d. the enchanted forest of Canterbury.

11. *Develop your own sentences using any four key words found in the box on the following page.*

1	_____
2	_____
3	_____
4	_____

Check your answers with the key on page 53.

The Quest

VOCABULARY CHECK

absentee	affliction	captivity	feudal	smite	smote
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I. Fill in the blank in each sentence with the correct key word from the box above.

1. Bottle-nosed dolphins, the stars of water shows, can survive in _____.
2. Our class had only one _____ today when John stayed home sick.
3. _____ lords were often cruel tyrants.
4. The policeman _____ the killer as he fought with his newest victim.
5. His only _____ was his poor sense of worth.
6. To _____ a dragon was every knight's dream.

II. Draw a line from the key words in Column A to their definitions in Column B.

Column A

1. smote
2. captivity
3. feudal
4. absentee
5. smite
6. affliction

Column B

- a. being held against one's will
- b. someone who is absent
- c. to strike a heavy blow
- d. being in distress
- e. the past tense of "smite"
- f. economic and social systems in the middle ages

Check your answers with the key on page 55.