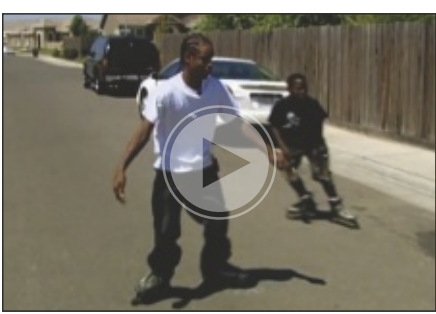
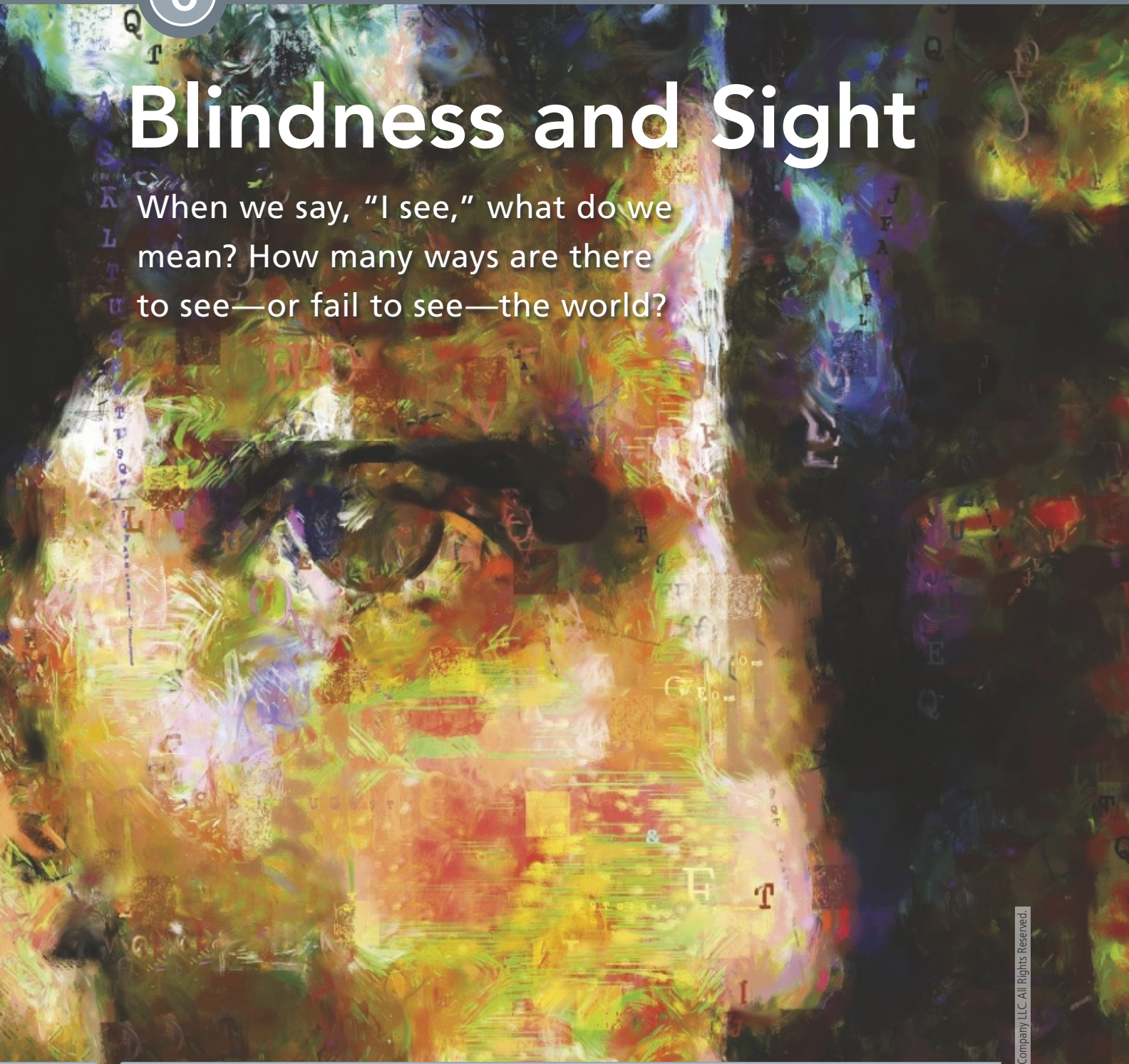


Blindness and Sight

When we say, "I see," what do we mean? How many ways are there to see—or fail to see—the world?



Blind Teen Ben Underwood

Discuss It How do Ben's experiences and attitudes redefine what it means to have vision?









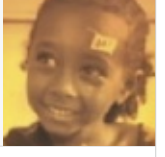
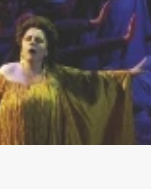
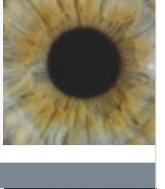


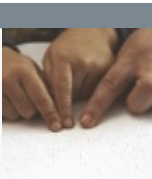
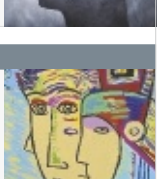
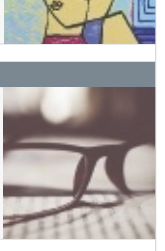
Write your response before sharing your ideas.

ESSENTIAL QUESTION:

What does it mean to see?

LAUNCH TEXT
NONFICTION NARRATIVE
Just Six Dots



 WHOLE-CLASS LEARNING	 SMALL-GROUP LEARNING	 INDEPENDENT LEARNING
LITERATURE AND CULTURE	LETTER	NOVEL EXCERPT
<p>Historical Context Oedipus the King</p> 	<p>View From the Empire State Building <i>Helen Keller</i></p> 	<p><i>from Blindness</i> <i>José Saramago, translated by Giovanni Pontiero</i></p> 
ANCHOR TEXT: DRAMA	POETRY COLLECTION	MEDIA: NEWSCAST
<p>Oedipus the King, Part I <i>Sophocles, translated by Nicholas Rudall</i></p> 	<p>Blind <i>Fatima Naoot, translated by Kees Nijland</i></p> 	<p>Dr. Geoffrey Tabin Helps Blind Ethiopians Gain Sight ABC News</p> 
ANCHOR TEXT: DRAMA	SHORT STORY	MEDIA: INFORMATIONAL GRAPHIC
<p>Oedipus the King, Part II <i>Sophocles, translated by Nicholas Rudall</i></p>  <p>▶ MEDIA CONNECTION: Oedipus the King</p>	<p>On His Blindness <i>Jorge Luis Borges, translated by Robert Mezey</i></p>	<p>How Your Eyes Trick Your Mind <i>Melissa Hogenboom</i></p> 
	<p>The Country of the Blind <i>H. G. Wells</i></p> 	SCIENCE ARTICLE Blind, Yet Seeing: The Brain's Subconscious Visual Sense <i>Benedict Carey</i> 
	MEMOIR The Neglected Senses <i>from For the Benefit of Those Who See</i> <i>Rosemary Mahoney</i> 	ORAL HISTORY Experience: I First Saw My Wife Ten Years After We Married <i>Shandar Herian</i> 
		SCIENCE ARTICLE Visual Neuroscience: Look and Learn <i>Apoorva Mandavilli</i> 
PERFORMANCE TASK WRITING FOCUS: Write a Nonfiction Narrative	PERFORMANCE TASK SPEAKING AND LISTENING FOCUS: Present an Oral Retelling	PERFORMANCE-BASED ASSESSMENT PREP Review Notes for a Nonfiction Narrative

PERFORMANCE-BASED ASSESSMENT

Narrative: Nonfiction Narrative and Storytelling Session

PROMPT:

Is there a difference between seeing and knowing?

Unit Goals

Throughout the unit, you will deepen your perspective of blindness and sight by reading, writing, speaking, listening, and presenting. These goals will help you succeed on the Unit Performance-Based Assessment.

Rate how well you meet these goals right now. You will revisit your ratings later when you reflect on your growth during this unit.

SCALE	1	2	3	4	5
	NOT AT ALL WELL	NOT VERY WELL	SOMEWHAT WELL	VERY WELL	EXTREMELY WELL
READING GOALS					
	1	2	3	4	5
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluate written narrative texts by analyzing how authors introduce and develop central ideas or themes. <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> Expand your knowledge and use of academic and concept vocabulary. <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> 				
WRITING AND RESEARCH GOALS					
	1	2	3	4	5
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Write a narrative in which you convey experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences. <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> Conduct research projects of various lengths to clarify meaning and to explore topics in greater depth. <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> 				
LANGUAGE GOALS					
	1	2	3	4	5
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Correctly use varied sentence structures to add interest to writing and presentations. <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> 				
SPEAKING AND LISTENING GOALS					
	1	2	3	4	5
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborate with your team to build on the ideas of others, develop consensus, and communicate. <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> Integrate audio, visuals, and text in presentations. <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> 				

STANDARDS

Language

Acquire and use accurately general academic and domain-specific words and phrases, sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression.

Academic Vocabulary: Nonfiction Narrative

Academic terms appear in all subjects and can help you read, write, and discuss with more precision. Here are five academic words that will be useful to you in this unit as you analyze and write nonfiction narratives.

Complete the chart.

1. Review each word, its root, and the mentor sentences.
2. Use the information and your own knowledge to predict the meaning of each word.
3. For each word, list at least two related words.
4. Refer to a dictionary or other resources if needed.

TIP

FOLLOW THROUGH

Study the words in this chart, and mark them or their forms wherever they appear in the unit.

WORD	MENTOR SENTENCES	PREDICT MEANING	RELATED WORDS
integrate ROOT: -teg- "touch"	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. If your day is too busy for a long workout, try to <i>integrate</i> exercise a few minutes at a time. 2. I like how you <i>integrate</i> comic details into an otherwise sad story. 		<i>integration; integral</i>
delineate ROOT: -lin- "line"	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. On the map, the red lines <i>delineate</i> national borders and the blue lines indicate bodies of water. 2. With only a few brush strokes, the artist was able to <i>delineate</i> her subject's features clearly. 		
volition ROOT: -vol- "wish"; "will"	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Did you do that of your own <i>volition</i> or did someone pressure you into it? 2. Pearl made the decision instinctively, without conscious thought or <i>volition</i>. 		
vivid ROOT: -viv- "live"	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Even though it happened long ago, my memory of that day is incredibly precise and <i>vivid</i>. 2. Henri Matisse is a French painter who was known for his <i>vivid</i> use of color. 		
altercation ROOT: -alter- "other"	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In our school, there is zero tolerance for fighting or any type of <i>altercation</i>. 2. Sam and Rick got into a disagreement that nearly became an <i>altercation</i>. 		

LAUNCH TEXT | NONFICTION NARRATIVE

This selection is an example of a **nonfiction narrative**, a type of writing in which an author tells a true story. This is the type of writing you will develop in the Performance-Based Assessment at the end of the unit.

As you read, think about how the writer communicates information. Mark the text to help you answer the question: How does the writer help the reader understand the sequence of events and the complexity of the topic?



Just Six Dots

The Story of Braille

NOTES

- 1 **A** system of just six raised dots can tell any story. Six dots can spin out tales of romance or relate accounts of historic events. They can even tell the story of the man who invented them: Louis Braille.
- 2 As a young boy, Louis loved to observe his father, a leather worker, in his workshop near Paris. Louis would gaze with eager attention as Simon-René Braille transformed unfinished leather into fine harnesses for horses. One day when he was three, Louis grabbed an awl and a strip of leather. He jabbed the sharp tool down, hoping to copy his father's masterful movements and punch the strip with a perfect hole. Instead, the awl slipped and pierced his right eye. The injury and resulting infection left Louis completely blind by the age of five.
- 3 Simon-René was determined not to let Louis's blindness end his education. Returning to the workshop, he pounded nails into wooden strips, arranging them to form letters. Soon, Louis attended the local school, where he excelled. However, his parents realized that he needed specialized instruction to truly succeed. At the age of ten, Louis went to Paris to study at the world's only school for the blind.
- 4 There, Louis met the founder of the school, Valentin Haüy, a sighted man who was deeply committed to educating the blind. Recognizing the importance of independence in learning, he developed a new way of printing books with thickly embossed letters. The system worked, but the books were heavy and slow to read. On top of that, it took both sight and skill to make them.
- 5 When Louis was eleven, army captain Charles Barbier visited the school. He had devised a different system, which he called "night

writing,” that allowed soldiers to read orders in the dark. It used raised dots in sets of twelve. Barbier’s code inspired Louis to create his own, easier and faster system.

- 6 Louis worked on his code for years. By the time he was fifteen, he had perfected the code that would bear his name. Unlike Barbier’s code, braille uses cells of just six dots. By arranging six dots in two parallel rows with three dots in each, he created a cell that can be instantly sensed by one fingertip. With sixty-four possible combinations of dots, each cell names a letter, number, punctuation mark, or word.
- 7 The director of Louis’s school was so impressed with the invention that he encouraged all of the students to learn it. Louis published the first braille book in 1829. Blind students could now read with ease. They could also write, using a pointed tool called a dot stylus.
- 8 However, braille did not gain wider acceptance right away. The school’s next director, Pierre-Armand Dufau, was opposed to braille code. He worried that once blind people could read there would be no need for sighted teachers, so he banned the use of braille. Dufau’s assistant, Joseph Gaudet, did not agree. After many years, he convinced Dufau to accept Braille’s system. They decided to introduce the new invention when the school moved into a new building.
- 9 At the dedication ceremony on February 22, 1844, Gaudet read aloud a 15-page book that told the crowd about Louis Braille’s accomplishment. Then, he sent one student out of the room and asked another to use the code to write down a poem. The first student came back into the room and read the poem perfectly. The crowd was amazed, and some suspected a trick. One man guessed that the first student had memorized the poem before the ceremony. He took a theater ticket out of his pocket and challenged the students to repeat the demonstration with information from that paper. When they performed the task one more time, even he was convinced.
- 10 On that day, the world accepted what Louis Braille already knew: Just six raised dots can contain the passion and power of language. 🐼

NOTES

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🏠 WORD NETWORK FOR BLINDNESS AND SIGHT

Vocabulary A Word Network is a collection of words related to a topic. As you read the selections in this unit, identify interesting words related to the ideas of blindness and sight, and add them to your Word Network. For example, you might begin by adding words from the Launch Text such as *sensed*, *observe*, and *gaze*. Continue to add words as you complete this unit.

Tool Kit
Word Network Model

Summary

Write a summary of “Just Six Dots.” A **summary** is a concise, complete, and accurate overview of a text. It should not include a statement of your opinion or an analysis.

Launch Activity

Conduct a Four-Corner Debate Consider this statement: **Seeing is believing.**

- Record your position on the statement, and explain your thinking.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

- Form a group of like-minded students in one corner of the classroom. Discuss questions such as “What details from the text or your own experience lead you to take this position?”
- After your discussion, have a representative deliver a two- to three-minute summary of your group’s position.
- After all groups have presented, move into the four corners again. If you change your corner, be prepared to explain why.

QuickWrite

Consider class discussions, presentations, the video, and the Launch Text as you think about the prompt. Record your first thoughts here.

PROMPT: **Is there a difference between seeing and knowing?**

Handwriting practice lines for the QuickWrite section.

EVIDENCE LOG FOR BLINDNESS AND SIGHT

Review your QuickWrite. Summarize your thoughts in one sentence to record in your Evidence Log. Then, record textual details or evidence from “Just Six Dots” that support your thinking.

Prepare for the Performance-Based Assessment at the end of the unit by completing the Evidence Log after each selection.

 **Tool Kit**
Evidence Log Model

Title of Text: _____		Date: _____
CONNECTION TO PROMPT	TEXT EVIDENCE/DETAILS	ADDITIONAL NOTES/IDEAS
How does this text change or add to my thinking?		Date: _____



ESSENTIAL QUESTION:

What does it mean to see?

We can see a beautiful sight, but we can also see the truth in something. When we say, “I see,” do we really mean “I understand”? You will work with your whole class to explore the concepts of blindness and sight. The play you are going to read presents insights into the many ways we can see—or not see—ourselves and the world around us.

Whole-Class Learning Strategies

Throughout your life, in school, in your community, and in your career, you will continue to learn and work in large-group environments.

Review these strategies and the actions you can take to practice them as you work with your whole class. Add ideas of your own for each step. Get ready to use these strategies during Whole-Class Learning.

STRATEGY	ACTION PLAN
Listen actively	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Eliminate distractions. For example, put your cell phone away.• Keep your eyes on the speaker.•
Clarify by asking questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• If you're confused, other people probably are, too. Ask a question to help your whole class.• If you see that you are guessing, ask a question instead.•
Monitor understanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Notice what information you already know and be ready to build on it.• Ask for help if you are struggling.•
Interact and share ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Share your ideas and answer questions, even if you are unsure.• Build on the ideas of others by adding details or making a connection.•

CONTENTS

LITERATURE AND CULTURE

Historical Context

Oedipus the King

What is it about Greek mythology and culture that has fascinated people throughout history?



ANCHOR TEXT: DRAMA

Oedipus the King, Part I

Sophocles, translated by Nicholas Rudall

Can Oedipus, a good king who loves his people, save them from a terrible plague?



ANCHOR TEXT: DRAMA

Oedipus the King, Part II

Sophocles, translated by Nicholas Rudall

Do the king's own choices destroy him, or is his fate inevitable?

▶ MEDIA CONNECTION: Oedipus the King

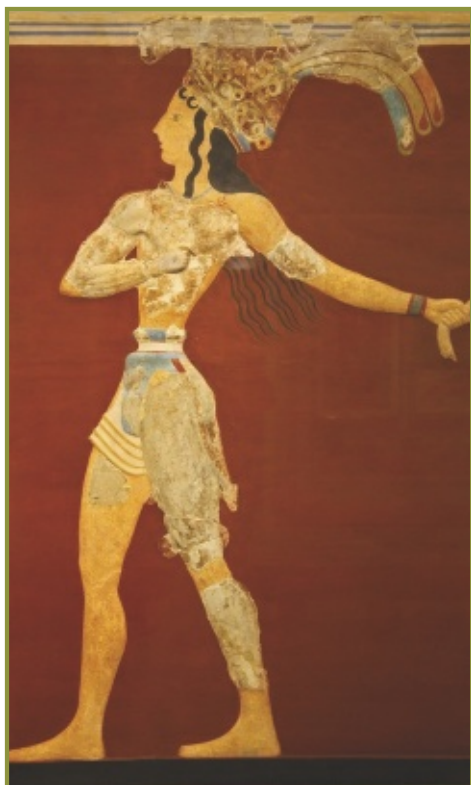


PERFORMANCE TASK

WRITING FOCUS

Write a Nonfiction Narrative

The Whole-Class reading and its related media tell the story of a great king who learns to see the truth about himself. After reading and listening, you will write a nonfiction narrative that develops a central idea about sight and self-knowledge.



^ This fresco depicting the Prince of Lilies is a beautiful example of Minoan art. It appears on a wall in the Minoan Palace of Knossos on the Greek island of Crete.

Historical Context

Ancient Greece

The cultural and political influence of ancient Greece extended throughout the Mediterranean and into central Asia.

The Earliest Greeks More than one thousand years before the birth of Sophocles, the playwright who wrote *Oedipus the King*, a people that we call the Mycenaeans (my suh NEE uhnz) began to settle throughout the Greek mainland, which juts down from Europe into the Mediterranean Sea. They established strongholds in Thebes, Pylos, Athens, Mycenae, and elsewhere, building thick-walled palaces decorated with bronze metalwork. From the Minoans (mih NOH uhnz), a sophisticated people who lived on the southern Greek island of Crete, they learned about writing, and they recorded palace business and other transactions on clay tablets. Many of these tablets have survived. The writings reveal a complex society that included administrative officials, priests, slaves, tradesmen, craftsmen and artisans, and an active warrior class. At the top of the social pyramid in each stronghold was a wanax, or king.

In about 1450 B.C., Minoan civilization collapsed, and the Mycenaeans became the dominant culture on Crete. Their influence spread throughout the Mediterranean islands and into western Asia Minor, or present-day Asian Turkey. On one of their most famous military ventures, the Mycenaeans successfully attacked the city of Troy in northern Asia Minor. We know that conflict as the Trojan War, which later became the subject of Homer's epic poems the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. It was among the last of the Mycenaean military successes. Soon afterward, Mycenaean civilization collapsed into a period called the Greek Dark Ages. The art of writing was lost, and the kingdoms broke down into small tribal units.

Reemerging From Darkness In about 850 B.C., a vibrant Greek culture began to reemerge, spurred by flourishing trade throughout the Mediterranean. Along with the economic boom came a resurgence of arts and learning capped by

Homer’s masterful epics. Although Homer composed in the oral tradition, the Greeks soon began writing again, this time adapting the Phoenician writing system into the first true alphabet. They also began regrouping into city-states, or cities that functioned independently, just as countries do. By 500 B.C., the two most powerful city-states were Sparta, on Greece’s Peloponnesian (pehl uh puh NEE shuhn) peninsula, and Athens, which stood east of Sparta in an area called Attica. Sparta was a monarchy with a powerful ruling council and a strong military tradition. Athens developed a government in which decision-making was shared by all adult males (other than slaves). It was, in short, the world’s first democracy.

The Rise and Fall of Athens From 490 to 479 B.C., Athens and Sparta fought as allies in the Persian Wars, when the powerful Persian Empire (present-day Iran) twice tried to invade Greece. Despite Sparta’s military prowess, it was Athens that led two important victories: the Battle of Marathon in the beginning and the Battle of Salamis later. These victories helped usher in a Golden Age of prosperity and achievement for Athens. Led by the statesman Pericles (PEHR uh kleez), Athens became a great intellectual center, attracting artists, poets, scientists, and philosophers. Impressive new buildings were constructed, and civic festivals grew more splendid. Among those who contributed greatly to this cultural flowering was Sophocles: playwright, government official, and—briefly—general in the Athenian military.

Unfortunately, Pericles’ foreign policy aroused the resentment of other Greek city-states. In 432 B.C., Sparta and its allies joined against Athens and its allies in what became known as the Peloponnesian War. Athens was defeated, and for a time, Sparta, and later Thebes, exerted control over the Greek world. In the end, however, it was Philip of Macedon, a monarch from a kingdom to the north of Greece, who rose to ascendancy. Philip’s son Alexander would embark on an amazing series of military conquests that would spread Greek influence all the way into central Asia. His exploits would earn him the title by which he is still known today: Alexander the Great.

QUICK INSIGHT

According to legend, after the Battle of Marathon, an Athenian soldier raced 26 miles back to Athens to share news of the victory. He then collapsed and died. The 26-mile race known as a marathon originated in his honor.

- ✓ The Parthenon, a temple dedicated to the goddess Athena, appears in the foreground of this photo of the Acropolis in Athens. The temple is among the most important surviving structures from Greece’s Golden Age.





Ancient Greek Theater

An art form rooted in religious ritual gave rise to plays of enduring power.

Religious Foundations Greek theater was rooted in Greek religion, which was based on a belief in many gods. Each god was associated with one or more aspects of nature or human behavior. Poseidon (puh SY duhn), for example, was the god of the seas, while Apollo was the god of light. Athena (uh THEE nuh) was the goddess of wisdom, while Aphrodite (af ruh DY tee) was the goddess of love. Zeus (zoos) ruled over all the gods, yet even he was not all-powerful. Like human beings and lesser gods, Zeus could not alter fate.

The gods are key characters in Greek mythology, the set of stories the Greeks told to explain the world around them. In these myths, the gods often behave like human beings at our worst—they are angry, jealous, and petty. They are even deceitful and often vengeful. They are especially quick to punish human beings guilty of hubris (HYOO brihs), or excessive pride.

From Ritual to Art Theater in ancient Greece originated at annual festivals called Dionysia (dy uh NY see uh), which were dedicated to Dionysus, the god of wine. At these festivals, a **chorus**, or group of singers, honored Dionysus by chanting hymns called dithyrambs (DIHTH uh ramz). According to legend, at one festival a poet named Thespis stepped away from the chorus. He began a dialogue with the chorus leader while role-playing figures from the Greek myths. Thus, drama was born. The playwright Aeschylus developed the dramatic form further by adding a second actor, and the playwright Sophocles later introduced a third player to the stage.

By the time Sophocles was writing, plays had become great spectacles performed in a large outdoor amphitheater with thousands in attendance. The amphitheater was built on a slope with seating that rose in a semicircle from the performing area, or **orchestra**. There was no curtain, but painted scenery could be hung at the back. Performers wore large masks that allowed the same actor to perform different roles.

At the Dionysia, prizes were awarded to the best playwright. By 501 B.C., the three-day festival featured work by three competitors. Each playwright presented a **tetralogy**, or group of four plays, on a different day. The plays usually included a bawdy drama called a **satyr** (SAYT uhr) **play**, as well as three tragedies. About fifteen years later, a separate competition for comedies was added.

Dramatic Structure Greek plays are verse drama, in which the dialogue takes the form of poetry. Typically, the plays follow a consistent format. They open with a **prologue**, or exposition, that presents the background of the conflict. The chorus then performs a **parados** (PAR uhd uhs), or opening song. This is followed by the first scene. Additional songs, called **odes**, divide scenes, as a curtain does



^ This mask depicts Dionysus, the god of wine, adorned with full beard and a grapevine crown.

QUICK INSIGHT

From the name of Thespis, the first actor, comes the English word *thespian*, an elegant term for an actor. The Greek word for an actor, however, was *hypokrites*, meaning “someone acting a part.” That term, of course, is the origin of our word *hypocrite*.

in most modern theater. At the end of a tragedy, the chorus performs a **paean** (PEE uhn) of thanksgiving to Dionysus. The tragedy then concludes with an **exodus** (EHKS uh duhs), or final scene.

The chorus is central to the production, providing key background information and commentary on the action. Chorus recitals often divide into a **strophe** (STROH fee) and an answering **antistrophe** (an TIHS truh fee). During the strophe, the chorus sings while twisting or dancing from right to left. During the antistrophe, the chorus moves in the opposite direction. Some odes have a concluding stanza, or **epode** (EHP ohd), when the chorus may have stood still. To help propel the plot, the chorus leader, or **choragos** (koh RAY guhs; also spelled *choragus*), often exchanges thoughts with the rest of the chorus as well as with the actors.

QUICK INSIGHT

Strophe is Greek for “twist.” Originally, a catastrophe was simply the ending, or final plot twist, of a play. Because the endings of Greek tragedies involved disastrous events, the word has come to have its current meaning of a disastrous outcome.

The Theater of Dionysus in Athens

The earliest dramas were likely performed in the Agora, or marketplace, in Athens. Later, the Theater of Dionysus (shown here as it appears today) was built on the slope of the Acropolis, the upper part of the city where other important buildings also stood. Stone seating was not used at first; instead, theater-goers probably sat on wooden benches.





^ This Roman bust of Aristotle is based on a fourth-century B.C. Greek bronze.

Aristotle and Greek Tragedy

In *Poetics*, Aristotle examined the mechanisms that make tragedy so compelling for audiences. His work remains the most influential discussion of drama the world has seen.

Fundamentals of Tragedy In his landmark work *Poetics*, the Greek philosopher Aristotle (ar ih STOT uhl; 384–322 B.C.) provides a famous examination of tragedy. He describes a *tragedy* as a serious play recounting related events in the life of a person of high rank or importance who is brought low and often meets his or her doom. The main character, called the *tragic hero* or *protagonist*, experiences this reversal of fortune as a result of what the Greeks called *hamartia* (hah mah TEE uh), a *tragic flaw* or profound error in judgment. When a tragic flaw is involved, it usually takes form as *hubris*, or excessive pride. Fate, too, plays a decisive role in ensuring the tragic hero's downfall. In addition, the protagonist may face an *antagonist*, a rival character whose opposition contributes to his or her downfall.

Although the plot and its outcome are central to a tragedy, the events come as no surprise to most audience members. Greek audiences knew the myths upon which the plays were based; they knew what would happen. Nevertheless—according to Aristotle—the audience becomes caught up in the action because the play arouses their feelings of pity and fear. At the end of the play, explains Aristotle, the audience experiences a *catharsis* (kuh THAHR sihs), a cleansing or release of these emotions. Aristotle believed that the best plays engender fear and pity through the story and characters, not through the spectacle of the production itself.

Three Masters Three playwrights are considered the grand masters of Greek tragedy: Aeschylus (EHS kih luhs; c. 525–456 B.C.), Sophocles (SOF uh kleez; 496–406 B.C.), and Euripides (yoo RIHP uh deez; 480–406 B.C.). Between them, the three won first prize forty-two times in the annual drama competitions at Athens. Aeschylus, the pioneer of tragedy, is praised especially for his poetic language. Sophocles is most famous for his character development and insight into human nature. Euripides is noted for his efforts to address social concerns and humanitarian themes in his plays.

Sophocles (496–406 B.C.) Although he lived and wrote more than two thousand years ago, Sophocles is still considered one of the finest and most influential playwrights who ever lived. He won first prize at the annual Dionysia in Athens twenty-four times; never once did he place below second.

QUICK INSIGHT

Aristotle was the pupil of another famous Greek philosopher, Plato (PLAYT oh; c. 427–c. 347 B.C.), who himself studied under yet another famous Greek philosopher, Socrates (SOK ruh tee; c. 470–399 B.C.). Aristotle had a famous pupil too—Alexander the Great, whose conquests spread Greek culture throughout Europe, North Africa, and much of Asia.

A Golden Time to Live Sophocles grew up in a prosperous family in Colonus, near Athens. At sixteen, he was one of the young men chosen to perform in a choral ode celebrating the Athenian victory over the Persians at Salamis, the event that marks the beginning of Athens's golden age. Throughout his long life, he remained a leading figure of that era. Admired for his good looks and athleticism, he was also a talented musician and a frequent contributor to Athenian public life. He served for a time as a city treasurer and also as a general in the conflict with Samos, an island that revolted against Athens in 441 B.C. Late in life, he was elected to a special committee to investigate the disastrous failure of the Athenian military expedition to Sicily.

A Leading Light It was in theater, however, that Sophocles truly shone. His career as a dramatist began in 468 B.C., when he entered the annual Dionysia and beat the celebrated dramatist Aeschylus to take first prize. Over the next 62 years he wrote more than 120 plays, seven of which have survived. Among the most celebrated are *Oedipus the King*, the tragedy Aristotle considered the best example of the form, and *Antigone*, the story of Oedipus' daughter. Sophocles is known for strong female characters and for his insight into human nature. He is credited with introducing a third actor to drama and also with the practice of using painted scenery. He died two years before Athens surrendered to Sparta in the Peloponnesian War, the event that marks the end of Athens's Golden Age.



◀ This painting by the nineteenth-century French artist Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres depicts Aeschylus (with scroll) Sophocles, and Euripides. The work is a study for a much larger work entitled *The Apotheosis of Homer*.



About the Playwright



Sophocles (496–406 B.C.) was one of three Classical Athenian playwrights who together created the basic theatrical conventions of Greek tragedy, the foundation of drama in Western civilization. The other two were Aeschylus and Euripides. Before these three great dramatists, Greek theater consisted of static recitations performed by a chorus and a single actor. Aeschylus added a second actor, creating the possibility of true dialogue. When Sophocles added a third actor, complex relationships emerged in Greek drama.

Tool Kit

First-Read Guide and Model Annotation

STANDARDS

Reading Literature

By the end of grade 10, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, at the high end of the grades 9–10 text complexity band independently and proficiently.

Oedipus the King, Part I

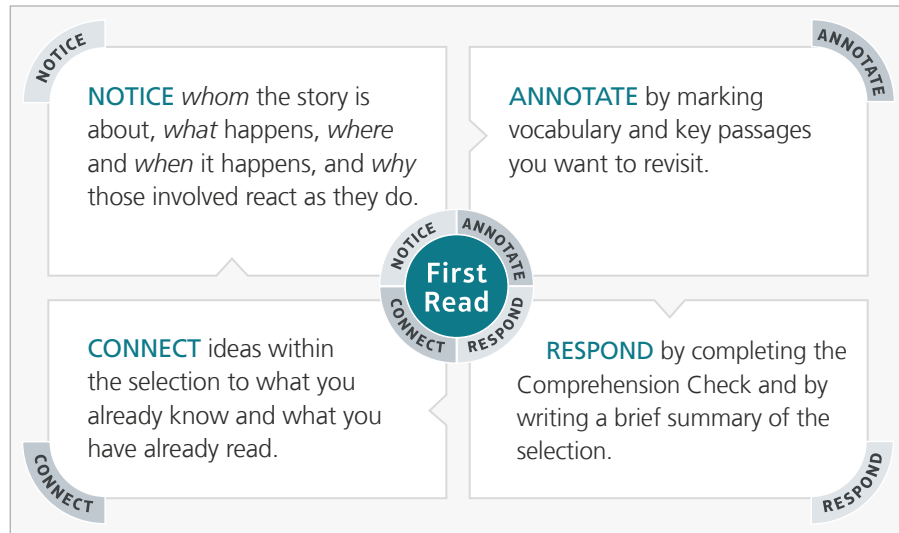
You will encounter the following words as you read *Oedipus the King*, Part I. Before reading, note how familiar you are with each word. Then, rank the words in order from most familiar (1) to least familiar (3).

WORD	YOUR RANKING
proclamation	
decree	
edicts	

After completing the first read, come back to the concept vocabulary and review your rankings. Mark changes to your original rankings as needed.

First Read DRAMA

Apply these strategies as you conduct your first read. You will have an opportunity to complete the close-read notes after your first read.



BACKGROUND FOR THE PLAY

The Theban Plays *Oedipus the King* (or *Oedipus Rex*) is one of three surviving plays by Sophocles centering on the Greek myth of Oedipus (EHD ih puhs), king of Thebes; the other two are *Oedipus at Colonus* and *Antigone*. Known as the Theban plays, they are now often published as a chronological trilogy, with *Antigone* last. However, Sophocles did not write the plays for the same Dionysia, and he apparently wrote *Antigone* first.

The Oedipus Myth The myth of Oedipus was well known to Greek audiences; in fact, Aeschylus wrote several earlier plays about it, although only his *Seven Against Thebes* has survived. In the myth, a prophecy informs Laius (LAY uhs; also spelled *Laïos*), king of Thebes, and his wife Jocasta (yoh KOS tuh; also spelled *Iocaste*) that their son will grow up to kill his father and marry his mother. Horrified, they send the infant off to be destroyed, but he is instead saved and adopted by a couple from Corinth. When the child, called Oedipus, grows up, he learns of the prophecy. Believing the warning refers to his adoptive parents, he flees in order to protect them. At a crossroads, he quarrels with and kills a stranger. Then, on the road to Thebes, he discovers the city is being plagued by a monstrous sphinx. In Greek mythology, the sphinx is a creature with a lion's body, bird's wings, and a woman's head. Waiting near the entrance to the city, the sphinx poses a riddle to all those who approach and eats anyone who cannot answer. The sphinx refuses to abandon its hold on the city until someone can solve the riddle. Oedipus does so, thereby saving the city and becoming a hero. As compensation, the recently widowed queen marries him, and he becomes king. It is several years after this point in the larger story that the play *Oedipus the King* begins.

QUICK INSIGHT

The famous riddle that Oedipus answered was “What has four legs in the morning, two at noon, and three in the evening?” The answer is a human being—crawling as a child, walking upright as an adult, and using a cane in old age.



Oedipus the King

Sophocles

translated by Nicholas Rudall

CHARACTERS

Oedipus

Priest of Zeus

Creon, brother of the queen

Teiresias, a prophet

Jocasta, the queen

Messenger

Shepherd of Laius

Second Messenger

Chorus of Theban elders

Antigone, daughter of Oedipus

Ismene, daughter of Oedipus

Boy

Oedipus. My children, you who live in the heart of this our city, living sons of ancient Cadmus,¹ why have you come to these sacred altars? Why do you bring garlands² and kneel in supplication³ to the gods?

- 5 The city is laced with the breath of incense.
The air quivers with lamentation and with prayer.
My children, I did not want to hear your desires from messengers.
Therefore I have come in person to hear you speak—I, Oedipus your king.
- 10 *(to a Priest)* You there, since you are the eldest, speak on their behalf.
Tell me what is troubling you. Do you come in fear?
Do you seek a blessing from the gods?
Tell me. Never doubt that I will help you in every way I can.
- 15 I am moved and touched to find you suppliant here.

Priest. Oedipus, great king of Thebes! You see before you clinging to the altar's steps men of all ages. Here are boys too young to be alone. Here are priests weighed down with time, priests of Zeus⁴—as I am. Here are young men as yet unmarried.

- 20 And thousands more, olive wreaths in their hair, throng the public squares. They huddle before the two shrines of Athena⁵ and at Apollo's⁶ temple where the god speaks in the glowing embers of his fire. Your eyes see the truth: Thebes is drowning in a deadly sea, is sinking beneath the waves of death.
- 25 There is a blight that eats the budding fruits of the earth.
Our cattle die. Women give birth to stillborn children. A deadly plague consumes our city, strikes like bolts of lightning, burns our flesh, and ravages the house of Cadmus. My lord, we are plunged into darkness. Death alone grows fat upon our agony.
- 30 We have come to you to offer our prayers.
We know you are no god.
But of all men you are the most wise in the ways of god.
You saved us from the Sphinx,⁷ who sang her doom from the stone of her breast.
- 35 You saved us from her plague. You knew no more than we, we could not teach you.
But you saved us when a god touched your mind.
Therefore, great King of Thebes, we turn to you.
Save us. Heal us. Listen to the gods. Listen to the minds of mortals.
- 40 Your wisdom saved us long ago.
It can save us now when troubles seethe again.
You are the pinnacle of nobility, give us back our lives.
Remember that we call you the Liberator.
Remember that we love you for your courage long ago. Let not
- 45 the world remember you as the king who once was great but then fell from greatness.

NOTES

- 1. Cadmus** (KAD muhs) mythical founder of Thebes, the city Oedipus rules.
- 2. garlands** (GAHR luhndz) *n.* chains of flowers, branches, and leaves. In ancient Greece, garlands were offered to the gods by those asking favors from them.
- 3. supplication** (suhp luh KAY shuhn) *n.* humble prayer or request.
- 4. Zeus** (zoos) Greek god of the sky, king of the gods and ruler of the world.
- 5. Athena** (uh THEE nuh) Greek goddess of wisdom, war, and crafts.
- 6. Apollo** (uh POL oh) Greek god of the sun, prophecy, and disease.
- 7. Sphinx** (sfihngks) monster in Thebes with the head of a woman, the wings of a bird, and the body of a lion that killed any traveler that could not solve her riddle. Prior to the events of this play, Oedipus defeated the Sphinx by solving her riddle and became king of Thebes for doing so.

8. **Menoceus** (meh NIH see uhs)
Theban statesman and soldier
of renown.

9. **laurel** (LAWR uhl) *n.* leaves
of the laurel tree, used to
show honor.

Save the ship of state from the storm.

Once, years ago, you turned our unhappiness to joy.

You can do it once more.

50 You rule this land. No man disputes your power.

But rule over the living, not the dead.

When no men throng the streets, the city walls are nothing and
our proud ships mere empty shells.

Oedipus. Oh my poor children. I understand the passions that

55 brought you here.

I know that you are plagued with sickness. Yet sick as you are,
not as sick as I.

What each of you suffers is your own pain, no one else's.

But I suffer for you, for my city, and for myself.

60 I was not asleep. You are not waking me.

I have been weeping for a long time.

I have paced my restless room thinking, thinking.

In the end I found a remedy and I have put it to work:

I have sent Creon, son of Menoecus,⁸ brother of the queen, to

65 Delphi. There at Apollo's oracle he will learn, if he can, what

I must do or promise to do to save the city.

I have been counting the days and I am troubled. For he should
have returned.

What can be keeping him? This is the day! He should be here.

70 But whenever he returns I will do what the god orders.

Priest. Your promise is given in good time. They say that Creon
is here.

Oedipus. Oh Lord Apollo, may his news shine as bright as the
hope on his face.

75 **Priest.** The news must be good. He is crowned with laurel,⁹ a
wreath thick with berries.

Oedipus. We shall soon know. See where he comes.

(Creon enters)

Oedipus. Oh brother, Prince of Thebes, what answer do you
bring us from Apollo?

80 **Creon.** A powerful answer. Our deep agonies will be healed if
they are treated right.

Oedipus. What did the oracle say? Your words are ambiguous. I
still hover between hope and fear.

85 **Creon.** Do you wish me to speak in public in front of all these
men? I will of course. But should we not go inside?

Oedipus. Let them hear. For I suffer for them more than for myself.

Creon. Then I will tell you what I heard. In plain words, the
oracle commands us to expel from Thebes an old pollution. We
are sheltering a thing that is killing us and is beyond cure.

90 We cannot let it feed upon us any longer.

- Oedipus.** What pollution? How are we to expel it from our midst?
- Creon.** By exile or by death. Blood must answer for blood.
A murder blew the deadly plague breath on our city.
- Oedipus.** A murder? Whose? Did the god not name the man?
- 95 **Creon.** My lord, Laius once was our king before you came to rule over us.
- Oedipus.** I know. I never saw the man, but others told me of him.
- Creon.** He was murdered. Apollo demands that we take revenge upon the man who killed him.
- 100 **Oedipus.** Where are the killers? How, after so many years, can we find a clue to solve the crime?
- Creon.** Apollo said the killer is amongst us. We must search and be aware of everything.
- Oedipus.** Where was he killed? In the palace or outside the city or in some other country?
- 105 **Creon.** He told us that he was going to the shrine of a god. He never came home again.
- Oedipus.** Was there no witness . . . some attendant to tell what happened?
- 110 **Creon.** They were all killed. Except for one.
He escaped, but his terror made him forget all but one thing.
- Oedipus.** What was that? That one thing may be the key that unlocks this whole mystery.
- Creon.** He said a band of highwaymen¹⁰ attacked them.
- 115 They were outnumbered and the king was killed.
- Oedipus.** Strange that highwaymen should be so bold . . . unless they were bribed by some faction from the city.
- Creon.** We considered that. But when Laius was killed the city was besieged with other troubles. There was no time for
- 120 vengeance.
- Oedipus.** What troubles could have stopped you from finding the killer of your king?
- Creon.** The Sphinx. Her riddles stopped our ears and brought destruction.
- 125 **Oedipus.** Once again I must bring the darkness into the light.
Apollo is right to show, as you do, this concern for the dead.
I will obey his command. I will stand by your side. I will avenge this country's loss.
It is my duty. I do it not for some unknown friend but for myself.
- 130 We must expel this evil.
Whoever killed King Laius might be the death of me—who knows?
It might happen even now.
It is in my own interest to avenge your slaughtered king.

NOTES

CLOSE READ

ANNOTATE: In line 93, mark the words Creon uses to describe how the murder affected the city.

QUESTION: Why does the playwright use a metaphor, or imaginative comparison, to describe the arrival of the plague?

CONCLUDE: What is the effect of Creon's describing the plague in this way?

10. highwaymen *n.* robbers.



My children, leave the altar's steps. Raise the olive branches to
 135 the sun.
 Call the elders of Thebes to gather here. Tell them I will do all
 that is in my power.
 With the god's help we will be saved. Without it we are lost.

Priest. Rise up, my children. We came to hear just this. And our
 140 king has given his word.
 Apollo has sent us an oracle.
 May he walk among us and heal us and drive this plague from
 our city.
(all exit)

Chorus. Oh sweet voice of Apollo
 145 You bring the truth of Zeus
 To Thebes from your shrine of gold.
 What do you say to us?
 My heart trembles with fear.
 Apollo, God of Healing, hear us!
 150 Do you cast upon us a grief unknown before
 Or in the circle of time awaken a remembered doom?
 Immortal voice, golden child of Hope, speak to us.
 We pray to Athena. Daughter of Zeus, defend us.
 We pray to Artemis¹¹ of Thebes, her sister.
 155 Come to us now, throned on high above your people.
 We pray to Apollo, distant archer.
 Once, when we were in the jaws of death,
 You drove the burning plague from us.
 Come to us now, defend us.
 160 You three powers of heaven,
 Descend and save us.
 Ah what griefs uncountable are ours.
 Our people are sick and dying.
 No man has the will to fight the god of death.
 165 The gentle earth lies barren.
 Women in labor groan in vain.
 Body falls upon body
 Swifter than the flight of birds
 Swifter than the wave of fire
 170 Racing to the shores of Night.
 Corpses litter the city streets.
 Death feeds upon death.
 Infection breeds,¹² and there is
 No time to mourn the uncountable dead.
 175 Old gray women flock to the altars,
 Weep, and rend the air with prayers
 And cries of grief:
 Apollo, heal us!

NOTES

11. Artemis (AHR tuh mihs) Greek goddess of the moon and the hunt, twin sister of Apollo.

12. Infection breeds disease multiplies and spreads.

13. **Dionysus** (dy uh NY suhs) Greek god of ecstasy, the theater, and wine.

proclamation (prok luh MAY shuhn) *n.* official announcement

Athena, golden child of Zeus,
 180 Turn your shining face upon our pain.
 The War god stalks our streets,
 No sword in hand and yet we die.
 Fire encircles our screams.
 Send him to the Ocean's depths
 185 Into the waves that kill the flames.
 What life survives the night
 Dies in tomorrow's sun.
 Zeus turn your fire upon him,
 With lightning strike the god of War.
 190 Apollo, stretch tight your golden bow
 Loose your arrows in our defense.
 Artemis, race across our hills
 In a blaze of saving light.
 Dionysus,¹³ God of Thebes,
 195 Come to us with your shock of golden curls,
 Flushed with wine in the whirlwind
 Ecstasy of your followers.
 Destroy the loathsome god of Death
 In the conflagration of your joy.
 (*enter Oedipus*)
 200 **Oedipus.** I hear your prayer. Listen to me and I will teach you
 how to heal.
 You will find comfort and relief.
 I knew nothing of this story of Laius's death, knew nothing of
 the deed itself.
 205 How could I therefore solve a crime alone?
 But now, since I became a citizen after the murder, I make this
proclamation to all my fellow Thebans: If anyone knows the
 man who killed King Laius, I order him to tell me everything.
 He must not be afraid for his long silence. No, I promise that he
 210 will not be punished with death but may leave this land in
 safety. If any man knows that the killer was a foreigner, let him
 speak out at once.
 He shall have my thanks and a rich reward. But if you remain
 silent and attempt to protect yourself or a friend and ignore my
 215 commands, hear what I will do:
 I forbid the people of this country, where I am king, ever to
 harbor the killer or speak to him. Give him no place at your
 prayers or sacrifices. Hound him from your homes. For he it is
 who defiles our city. This the oracle has shown to me.
 220 And I hereby join with the god as champion of our murdered king.
 I lay this curse upon the killer, whether he acted alone or with
 accomplices:
 May your life be a searing agony!

This curse I even turn upon myself. For if it turns out that the
225 killer breaks my bread and shares my hearth,¹⁴ I too must suffer.
This is my command. Obey it for my sake, for Apollo, and for
our country, which lies barren and diseased through the anger
of heaven.

Let us suppose the oracle had not spoken.

230 Should the murder of your king, your noble king, go unavenged?
This pollution had to be purged clean.

And now that I sit upon that great man's throne, possess his
wife, his bed, fathering children as would he if he had lived,
I will be his avenger. For had not fate cut him down he might

235 have produced a son, a brother to my children.

I now will become that son, as though in truth I were, and I will
hunt the killer down.

Vengeance for Laius, son of Labdacus, descendant of great
Cadmus and King Agenor!¹⁵

240 If any men disobey my commands, may the gods make their
crops wither in the fields, may they never see the fruit of their
loins, may they rot on earth. But to you who are loyal to me and
approve what I have done, I pray that Justice and all the gods
look kindly upon you forever more.

245 **Chorus.** I swear to you my lord that I accept your commands.
I did not kill the king nor do I know who did.
My advice is this . . . Apollo posed the question . . . he should
give the answer and tell us who the murderer is.

Oedipus. Your advice is well taken. But no man can force the
250 gods to speak against their will.

Chorus. May I then suggest a second plan.

Oedipus. And a third if need be.

Chorus. My lord, if any man can speak with the god it is
Teiresias. He might bring us to the light.

255 **Oedipus.** I have already done it. Creon suggested it. And I have
sent for him. I am surprised he is not here.

Chorus. My mind is stirring now. Rumors from long ago. Mere
gossip.

Oedipus. Tell me. I want to know everything.

260 **Chorus.** It was said that he was killed by travelers.

Oedipus. That is what I heard. But no one knows the man who
saw him die.

Chorus. Well, if he knows what fear is, he will run in terror of
your curse.

265 **Oedipus.** A man who can do a thing like that is not afraid of
words.

NOTES

14. hearth (hahrth) *n.* home.

15. King Agenor (uh GEE nawr)
mythical king of Phoenicia,
believed to have trained the
Greek hero Achilles.

CLOSE READ

ANNOTATE: Mark the
punctuation that suggests
hesitation in lines 245–248.

QUESTION: Why does the
playwright, or translator,
indicate that these words
should be spoken with
hesitation?

CONCLUDE: What effect
do these lines have on
the reader? On a viewing
audience?

This eighteenth-century drawing depicts the blind seer Teiresias being led by a boy.

NOTES



Chorus. But here comes one who can capture him.
Here is Teiresias, whose mind is fired by the god and in whom
truth lives and breathes.

(enter Teiresias, led by a boy)

270 **Oedipus.** Teiresias our prophet, you understand all things—the
hidden mysteries of the wise, the high things of heaven, and the
low things of the earth.

Though your eyes cannot see, you know of this plague that
infects our city.

275 We turn to you—our one defense—our shield.

No doubt the messengers told you what Apollo said in his reply to us:

One course alone can free us from this plague . . . we must find the murderers of King Laius.

280 We must execute them or expel them from this land.

Therefore give us freely of your gift of prophecy.

Save yourself, your country, and your king.

Save all the people from this pollution of spilled blood. We are in your hands.

285 There is no greater honor than for a man to serve his fellow men.

Teiresias. Alas! It is a miserable thing to be wise when wisdom brings no reward. I had forgotten that ancient truth. Otherwise I would not be here.

Oedipus. What is wrong? Why this melancholy mood?

290 **Teiresias.** Let me go home. Do not keep me here. It would be best if you bear your burden and I mine.

Oedipus. For shame!

No true-born Theban would withhold his gift of prophecy from the country that he loves.

295 **Teiresias.** Your words, my king, lie far from the truth. I am afraid that I, like you, will not speak true.

Oedipus. Oh speak! Hold nothing back. I order you to tell us what you know.

We are your suppliants.

300 **Teiresias.** Yes . . . but you do not know what you are asking me. I will never reveal my miseries . . . or yours.

Oedipus. What!! You know something but will not speak? Will you betray us and destroy the state?

305 **Teiresias.** I will not hurt myself or you. Why ask from me what I will never tell?

Oedipus. You are a wicked man. Your silence would anger a lifeless stone.

Will nothing loosen your tongue, melt your heart, shake you out of this implacable silence?

310 **Teiresias.** You blame me but you do not see yourself. In your anger you turn on me.

Oedipus. Who could be calm when he heard you scorn the desperation of our city?

Teiresias. Well, whether I will speak or not, what will be will be.

315 **Oedipus.** That is true. And your duty is to tell me.

Teiresias. I have nothing more to say. You can rage to your heart's content.

decree (dih KREE) *n.* decision made by an authority

CLOSE READ

ANNOTATE: Mark the repeated word in lines 339 and 340.

QUESTION: Why does the playwright repeat this word?

CONCLUDE: What effect does this repetition have?

Oedipus. Yes, I am angry and *I* will not be silent! I will speak what is on my mind.

320 I think it was you, yes you, who planned the murder.
Yes—and did it all—except the actual killing.
And if you were not blind you would have done that too.

Teiresias. Is that so? Then hear me! I call upon you to obey the words of your own **decree**.

325 From this day on do not speak to me or to these citizens.
You are the killer. *You* bring the pollution upon Thebes.

Oedipus. Hold your slanderous tongue.

You taunt me and think because you are a prophet you will go scot-free.

330 **Teiresias.** I *am* free. For my strength lies in the truth.

Oedipus. Who made you say this? You didn't find this accusation through your art.

Teiresias. You made me speak. You provoked me against my will.

335 **Oedipus.** I made you speak?? Then speak again. Make clear your charges.

Teiresias. Did you not understand the first time? Will you provoke me yet again?

Oedipus. I half understood your meaning. Speak again.

340 **Teiresias.** I say you are the murderer of the man whose murderer you seek.

Oedipus. You will regret repeating so foul a slander.

Teiresias. Must I go on and inflame your anger even more?

Oedipus. You can say all you want. It will be a waste of breath.

345 **Teiresias.** I say that you are living in darkest shame with the closest of your family.
And you know nothing of your sin.

Oedipus. Do you think that you can keep on spewing out your filth and get away with it?

Teiresias. Yes, if there is strength in truth and truth does not die.

350 **Oedipus.** Truth lives in other men but not in you.
For you, in ear, in mind, in eye, in everything are blind.

Teiresias. Poor fool! You lay words upon me which soon all men will lay upon you.

355 **Oedipus.** You are a child of endless darkness, and you have no power over me or any man who can see the light of the sun.

Teiresias. True, I have no such power over you. Your fate is in the hands of Apollo.

Oedipus. Is this plot yours alone or was it Creon's idea?

Teiresias. Not Creon. You bring destruction upon yourself.

360 **Oedipus.** Wealth! Power! The art of being a ruler!
Kingship! The admiration of one's subjects!
What envy these things breed—if Creon, Creon whom I trusted,
who was my friend, seeks in secret to overthrow me.
All for this position of majesty which the city gave to me though
365 I did not seek it.
He has bought the services of this charlatan, this fraud, this
scheming beggar-priest.
With *money* in his hands his eyes can see. But his art is stone blind.
You there! Tell me! When did you ever prove that you were a
370 true prophet? When the Sphinx was destroying the city with her
riddles, why could you not save these people?
The riddle could not be solved by guessing.
It needed the true art of prophecy. And you were found wanting.
Neither the birds of the air nor the configurations of the stars¹⁶
375 could help you.
It was I, I who came here, Oedipus, an ordinary simple man.
I stopped the mouth of the Sphinx. I did not need omens.
I needed only my native wit. And you seek to overthrow me?

NOTES

16. the birds . . . the stars Augury, the study of the flights of birds, and astrology, the study of the movements of stars and planets, were believed to tell the future to those who practiced them.



In a 1945 stage production, Oedipus, played by Laurence Olivier, accuses the prophet Teiresias. The chorus watches in the background.

17. **Cithaeron** (suh THEE ruh)n
mountain range in Greece.

- You hope to reign with Creon in my place?
- 380 You will regret it, you and your friend Creon.
If it weren't for your age you would feel the pain that your treachery deserves.
- Chorus.** You both are angry. But now is not the time for fury.
We must decide how we can best obey the oracle.
- 385 **Teiresias.** You are the king. But I have the right to speak my mind freely.
In this I too am a king. I have no master but Apollo. I am his servant.
You cannot accuse me of being allied with Creon.
- 390 This is my answer: since you mocked my blindness, know that though you have eyes you cannot see how low you have fallen. You do not know in whose house you live, no, nor with whom. Who is your father, who is your mother? You do not know. In ignorance you live as an enemy to the living and the dead.
- 395 But the curse of your parents one day will drive you wounded from this land.
Those eyes that now see clear day will be covered with darkest night.
Your cries will echo on every hill. Cithaeron¹⁷ will ring with
- 400 your moans. For you will know that the marriage hymns that welcomed you to Thebes were a dirge of mourning for your ill-fated return.
All this will come to pass—and more—before you find your children and yourself.
- 405 Curse me then. Curse Creon. No mortal will be punished more horribly than you.
- Oedipus.** Must I endure his insolence? Damnation fall upon you! Get out of my sight!
Never set foot in my house again!
- 410 **Teiresias.** I would never have come if you had not ordered it.
- Oedipus.** I did not know you would play the fool.
Otherwise you would have waited a long time to be called.
- Teiresias.** The fool? Ha! Your parents thought me wise enough.
- Oedipus.** My parents? Who were they? Speak.
- 415 **Teiresias.** This day will give you a father and lead you to your grave.
Oedipus. You know only how to speak in the darkness of riddles.
Teiresias. I thought you were the man who could unlock a riddle's secret.
- 420 **Oedipus.** Yes! Mock me for the skill that made me great.
Teiresias. A greatness that will be your ruin.
Oedipus. I saved this city!

Teiresias. It is time to leave. Come boy.

Oedipus. Yes, take him away. Leave me in peace.

425 Your presence here disturbs my world.

Teiresias. I go. But first I will tell you why I came. I am not afraid of you.

You cannot do me harm.

Hear me: the man you seek with your **edicts** warrants and

430 decrees—the man who killed the king—that man is here.

You think of him as foreign-born. But he is a Theban.

His good fortune will turn to sorrow. Though he has eyes, he will be blind.

Though he wear purple,¹⁸ he will wear beggar's rags.

435 Leaning upon his staff, he will tap the earth that leads him into exile.

To his children he will be both brother and father.

To her who gave him birth both son and husband.

And to his father he will be both killer and the man who shared

440 his bed.

Go in now and think upon my words.

If you find that I have not spoken truth, then you can say I have no gift for prophecy.

(exit Oedipus, Teiresias, and Boy)

Chorus. The Oracle at Delphi has spoken.

445 But who is the man who took the blood of kings?

Who is this man of unspeakable darkness?

He must fly like the wind's swift steeds.

For on his heels Apollo races

In the blinding light of his father's fire.

450 And ever on his track the Furies¹⁹ follow hard

Like hounds scenting blood.

Parnassus!²⁰ Blinding peak of snow!

You flash to earth the icy will of the gods.

Find the killer. Find the man who roams

455 Like a bull in the forest's shadow,

Raging in the haunting dark as his doom hovers,

Ready to strike.

There is nowhere to hide from the light

Of Apollo's shrine,

460 When voices divine hunt him down.

The man skilled in the beating of the wings of birds

Troubles me deeply. Is there truth in his art?

I am lost. I have no words. I can see neither

Past nor future. I am adrift on the wind.

465 There was no quarrel ever that I knew

Between our royal house and Polybus, father of our king.

There is no proof. How then can I question his honor

NOTES

edicts (EE dihkts) *n.* commands from a public authority

18. purple color worn by the rich and important, especially royalty.

19. the Furies feared Greek goddesses of vengeance; punishers of the guilty.

20. Parnassus (pah NAS uhs) sacred mountain within sight of the oracle at Delphi.

And in a feud of blood pursue this untracked murder?
Zeus and Apollo know all things,

470 Know the ways of mortal men.
But that a prophet knows more than I,
What proof is there? One man may possess
More wisdom than another. So how can I—
Without the truth before my eyes—cast blame
475 Upon my king?

He saved our city from the Sphinx
Was tested hard and shone like gold.
To my mind he is wise and guilt-free.

(enter Creon)

Creon. My fellow citizens, I have come here to lodge a protest.
480 I have heard that Oedipus has accused me of a grievous charge.
If he thinks that I have harmed him—by my actions or in
words—in this present crisis then I put no value on my life in
face of this dishonor. For I am not being accused of some minor
private mistake.

485 I am charged with being a traitor to the state and to you, my
friends.

Chorus. The king was angry. His words were rash. He was not
thinking when he spoke.

Creon. Did anyone dare to suggest that I had urged the seer to
490 bring false charges?

Chorus. Such things were mentioned. I do not know why.

Creon. How did he look? Surely he must have been
out of his senses when he made this hideous accusation?

Chorus. I do not know. It is not for me to judge the behavior of
495 my king.

(enter Oedipus)

Oedipus. You there! What are you doing here?
Do you have the gall to come near my palace?
There is no doubt in my mind that you planned to kill me and
usurp the throne.

500 Tell me, did you think I was a fool or a coward?
Is that why you hatched this plot against me?
Did you think I was too stupid to see your slithering
treachery—too frightened not to fight back?
You are the fool if you think you can get the crown without the
505 support of friends.

A crown must be fought for or bought.

Creon. Now you listen to me. You have spoken. It is your turn
to hear me.

Oedipus. Oh yes, you have a silver tongue.

510 But how can I learn anything from my deadliest enemy?

Creon. First, I would prove that those words are not true.

Oedipus. That you are not my enemy?

Creon. You are headstrong and stubborn. Change your ways.

Oedipus. And you are a fool if you think a man can betray his
515 family and get away with it.

Creon. That is a fair statement. But what betrayal are you talking about?

Oedipus. Did you or did you not advise me to summon Teiresias?

Creon. I did. I would do it again.

520 **Oedipus.** How long has it been since Laius . . .

Creon. Laius . . . ? What are you talking about?

Oedipus. . . . since Laius left this earth in bloody violence?

Creon. I don't know . . . It was many years ago.

Oedipus. Was Teiresias the city's prophet at the time?

525 **Creon.** Yes. Skilled then as now, and deserving his reputation.

Oedipus. Did he speak of me then in any way?

Creon. Not to my knowledge. No.

Oedipus. Was there no search, no formal inquiry?

Creon. Of course. But nothing was discovered.

530 **Oedipus.** Why did our prophet not tell his story then?

Creon. I do not know. And since I don't, I will hold my tongue.

Oedipus. There is one thing you know and could speak of.

Creon. What is that? I will tell you everything.

Oedipus. That it was *you* who made Teiresias accuse me of
535 Laius's death.

Creon. If he accused you, you are the only one who knows of it. But let me question you now.

Oedipus. Proceed. Prove me a killer if you can.

Creon. You married my sister. Is that correct?

540 **Oedipus.** Why would I deny it?

Creon. And as your wife and queen, she shares the throne?

Oedipus. She has all her heart's desires.

Creon. And with the two of you I have a third share of power?

Oedipus. Yes. And it is that which makes you a traitor.


545 **Creon.** Not true. Now begin to reason logically as I have. Would any man choose the troubles, the anxiety of power if he had that power but without the responsibility? I certainly would not. I have no longing for the *name* of king. I prefer to *live* like one.

CLOSE READ

ANNOTATE: Mark the italicized words in lines 545–550.

QUESTION: Why does the playwright, or translator, emphasize these words?

CONCLUDE: What is the effect of this emphasis, especially in clarifying Creon's reasoning?



This 2002 stage production of the play presents another vision of the Chorus.

NOTES

Any sensible man would feel the same way. All my needs, all
550 that I want, *you* provide.
I have nothing to fear.
But if I were king I would have to do things which I did not want.
So why should I seek the crown rather than the pleasant,
untroubled life I now lead?
555 I am not mad. I need no greater honors than I have now.
I am welcome everywhere . . . people greet me everywhere.
Those who want a favor from you are kind to me.
I know how to get what they ask of me.
So should I exchange this comfortable life for one like yours?
560 That would be insane. And I am not mad.
Nor was I ever tempted by the thought or shared in any intrigue.
If you doubt me, go to Delphi, learn if what I have said is true.
The god will speak the truth.
If you find that I conspired with Teiresias, then condemn me to
565 death.
I will join with you in my own condemnation.
But do not find me guilty on mere suspicion, without appeal.
You cannot on a whim judge a good man bad, a bad man good.
A man should offer up his precious life rather than betray a
570 friend.
In time you will know the truth. Time alone unlocks the secrets
of true justice.
A wicked man is discovered in the passing light of a single day.
Chorus. His words are carefully chosen. This demands discretion.
575 There should be no rush to judgment.



Oedipus. But he . . . did he not rush into his schemes, his plots?
I must be as quick to counter him. If I do nothing, he will
overthrow me.

Creon. So what is your intent . . . to send me into exile?

580 **Oedipus.** Exile? *No!* I want you dead.
I want the world to see the punishment that treason brings.

Creon. You still resist the truth? You will not believe me?

Oedipus. Why should I?

Creon. Then you are a fool.

585 **Oedipus.** For protecting myself?

Creon. In the name of justice, believe me!

Oedipus. You are a wicked, evil man.

Creon. What if you are wrong?

Oedipus. I must still be king.

590 **Creon.** Even if you are wrong?

Oedipus. Oh my city, my city.

Creon. It is my city too!

Chorus. My lords, keep your peace. I see the queen.
Jocasta is coming from her chambers. It is time, oh it is time.

595 For she alone can resolve this quarrel.

(enter Jocasta)

Jocasta. You are fools! Why do you shout in anger like this?

NOTES

Do you have no shame? The city is dying, and here you fight like petulant children.

(to Oedipus) Come into the house.

600 And you, Creon . . . go now.

No more of this quarreling over nothing!

Creon. Over nothing? You are wrong, my sister.

Your husband will send me into exile or to my death.

605 **Oedipus.** That is what I will do. For I have caught him, caught him plotting against my life.

Creon. *No!* Let me die amongst the damned if I ever wished you harm!

Jocasta. Oh believe him, Oedipus!

In the name of the gods, believe him when he swears.

610 For my sake and for these our citizens.

Chorus. Listen to her, my lord. I beg you listen to her.

Oedipus. What do you want me to do?

Chorus. Trust Creon. He has never spoken like a fool.

And now he has sworn before the gods.

615 **Oedipus.** Do you know what you are asking of me?

Chorus. I do.

Oedipus. Then speak on.

Chorus. Creon has been your friend. He has sworn an oath.

You should not mistrust his words.

620 You should not seem to be blinded by malice toward him.

Oedipus. You understand that what you say means death or exile for me . . . ?

Chorus. *No! No!* I swear by Apollo, may I die alone and cursed by the gods if ever meant that!

625 My heart is dying, withering fast when I hear your anger, hear your hate.

Oedipus. Then let him go.

And let me die if that is what must be . . . or wander into exile in shame, leaving this Thebes that I love. You, you citizens, you

630 move me to this change of heart. Not he . . . for wherever he goes he will be hated.

Creon. You make peace, but your words are full of hate.

Your anger still seethes within your heart.

It will come back, this anger, to haunt you.

635 **Oedipus.** Leave me in peace. Go now.

Creon. I go. You misjudged me—these men did not.

(exit)

Chorus. Lady, take your husband into the palace.

Jocasta. Tell me first, what started this quarrel?

Chorus. There were rumors. And lies breed anger.

640 **Jocasta.** Were both to blame?

Chorus. Both.

Jocasta. What was said?

Chorus. Ask me no more. Thebes is dying.
Let sleeping griefs lie in their beds.

645 **Oedipus.** That is strange advice, my friend. I know you are
thinking of me.

But why would you try to stop me from doing what I must do?

Chorus. My king, I will say this once more.

I would be called a fool if I abandoned you now. You made this
650 country great.

And when the winds lashed our city, you brought our ship of
state into safe harbor.

There is no one but you . . . no one who can save us.

Jocasta. I must ask you, my husband and my king, what made
655 you so violently angry?

Oedipus. I love you . . . love you more than all these citizens. So
I will tell you.

Your brother Creon conspired against me.

Jocasta. Why? Why? What was the cause?

660 **Oedipus.** He accuses me of murdering Laius.

Jocasta. Does he know this or is it some rumor?

Oedipus. He is too clever to accuse himself.

He speaks through the mouth of a prophet . . . one that he has
bought.

665 **Jocasta.** Then let your conscience rest. Hear me. I have no belief
in the prophetic art.

I know. I *know*.

Let me tell you. Once long ago word came to Laius from the
Oracle at Delphi—I will not say it was from the god himself . . .

670 probably from his priests.

The word was that Laius would die at the hand of his own
son . . . my child and his.

Laius . . . at least this was the story . . . was killed by
highwaymen in broad daylight.

675 He was killed where three roads meet.

We had a son, but when he was only three days old Laius
pierced his ankles, left him on a hill to die. He gave the child to
others, of course, to do this. We knew then that Apollo had
changed the course of fate.

CLOSE READ

ANNOTATE: Mark the word Jocasta repeats in line 659. Mark the sentence she repeats in line 667.

QUESTION: Why does the playwright have her repeat this word and phrase?

CONCLUDE: How does this repetition relate to one of the play's key ideas?

Laurence Olivier as Oedipus and Sybil Thorndike as Jocasta in a famous 1945 stage production.

NOTES



- 680 The son would never kill his father.
The terror of the prophecy would die there on the hills.
That is what the prophet said, my king.
Pay it no mind. God alone shows us the truth.
- Oedipus.** A shadow crossed my mind as you spoke. And the
685 shadow chilled my mind.
- Jocasta.** What was it that touched you?
- Oedipus.** You said that Laius was killed where three roads meet.
- Jocasta.** That was what we were told at the time.
- Oedipus.** Where?
- 690 **Jocasta.** Phocis . . . that is the name of the town . . .
It is where the road to Thebes divides, and you can go to Delphi
or Daulia.
- Oedipus.** When?
- Jocasta.** We heard about it just before you came. Just before you
695 won this kingdom.
- Oedipus.** Oh what a net of death have the gods been weaving
for me!

Jocasta. Oedipus, why are you so troubled?

Oedipus. Do not ask me. Not yet. Tell me about Laius—how old
700 was he?

Jocasta. He was tall. His hair was becoming gray. He was about
your height.

Oedipus. I feel that my own curse now begins to descend on me.

Jocasta. I am afraid. When I look on you I am afraid.

705 **Oedipus.** Perhaps the seer who has no eyes can see the truth.
But tell me, tell me all you know.

Jocasta. I will tell you everything. But now fear grips my soul.

Oedipus. Was the king accompanied by many men—as befitting
his office or . . . ?

710 **Jocasta.** There were just five men. One was a messenger. There
was a single chariot.
He was driving.

Oedipus. Aaagh, that is enough, enough.
Who told you what happened?

715 **Jocasta.** A servant. He was the only one to escape.

Oedipus. Is he still one of ours?

Jocasta. No. When he came back here and found that you were
now our king . . . he came to me. He touched my hand . . . he
begged me to send him to the countryside where the shepherds
720 tend their flocks. Far from here, he said. I granted him his wish.
He was a slave, but he had earned this simple gift.

Oedipus. Can you get him back here quickly?

Jocasta. Of course. But why?

Oedipus. I have been too much alone. I have asked too few
725 questions. I need to talk to him.

Jocasta. Then he will be here. But you must talk to me too . . .
tell me of your fears.

Oedipus. I owe you that—oh I owe you that. For I have climbed
a mountain of fear.

730 And I need to talk to someone. I need to talk to you.
Polybus of Corinth²¹ is my father. My mother is Merope. I grew
up in Corinth.
I was a prince.

One day a strange thing happened . . . it affected me deeply . . .
735 perhaps it should not.

There was a feast.

A man got drunk and shouted to the world that I was not my
father's son.

I kept quiet that night . . . though it hurt. And I was angry.

21. **Corinth** (KAWR ihnth) city-state
in ancient Greece.

740 The next day I went to see my father and my mother. I asked
 them about this.
 They too were very angry. They said it was the mindless ranting
 of a drunken fool.
 I found peace in that. But the suspicion lay there. Always. In my
 745 mind.
 I knew that people talked. I could not be still. I had to leave.
 I said nothing to my parents. I went straight to Delphi, to the
 oracle. I questioned him.
 The god was silent. He answered not a word. But then he spoke.
 750 He spoke of other things.
 His words were sometimes as clear as the burning sun, full of
 terror, pain, and things unbearable.
 He said that I would bed my own mother, that I would breed
 children from that womb, and that the world would turn away
 755 in horror.
 He said that I would kill my own father.
 I listened. And I fled.
 From that day Corinth was but a distant land touched by the
 Western stars.
 760 I moved onward, ever onward.
 I never wanted to set eyes upon the horror spoken by the god.
 And I came here . . . here where Laius was killed.
 I will tell you all that happened.
 There were three roads that met where I was traveling. A herald
 765 came toward me.
 There was a chariot, horses, and a man who looked like the man
 you described.
 He was seated there within it.
 The groom—who was leading the horses by the reins—forced
 770 me off the road.
 The man in the chariot ordered him to do so.
 As the man lurched toward me I struck him. I was angry.
 The old man saw this and hit me hard with his scepter.
 I hit him back! Oh I hit him back! I knocked him out of the chariot.
 775 He rolled on the ground. I beat him to death. I killed them all!
 Now if that man . . . if Laius were part of my family . . . where
 then can I hide . . . escape from my misery? The gods must hate
 me. No citizen here must shelter me. No man must speak to me.
 I am anathema.²²
 780 I have cursed my pitiful self.
 Oh think, oh think . . . I have touched you with these hands . . .
 these hands that killed your husband!
 I am polluted. I am the embodiment of evil.
 So I must run . . . run from this city of Thebes.
 785 But I can never go home to the land that I love . . . never see
 Corinth again.

22. anathema (uh NATH uh muh)
adj. detested or cursed.

I live in terror of killing my father and lying with my mother.
Ah, this was my destiny when I was born. The gods are cruel,
savage in their anger.

790 You gods, pity me. You are all powerful. But let me never see
that day. Oh let me vanish without trace from this earth rather
than know the fate that makes me loathed amongst mankind.

Chorus. We feel your anguish, my lord.

But until you have questioned the survivor, keep your hopes alive.

795 **Oedipus.** My hopes are dying, but they will await the coming of
this shepherd.

Jocasta. What do you expect from him when he comes?

Oedipus. Only this: if his account matches yours, I am cleared.

Jocasta. What was it I said that you find important?

800 **Oedipus.** You used the word “highwaymen.” He said that
highwaymen had killed the king.

If he still speaks of several killers, then I was not the murderer.

I was alone.

There was no one else. But if he says there was only one, my

805 guilt is inescapable.

Jocasta. Then take heart. For this is indeed what he said. He
cannot change his tune now.

I heard it from his mouth as did the rest of Thebes.

But even if his story were to change, he cannot make the death

810 of Laius conform with the oracle.

Apollo said explicitly that Laius would die at the hands of my son.

But he, poor child, never shed any blood. He died too soon.

No, from now on I will give not a second’s thought to the words
of the oracles.

815 **Oedipus.** You may indeed be right. But send for the shepherd
right away.

Jocasta. It is as good as done. Let us go in. I wish only to
please you.

(exit Oedipus and Jocasta)

Comprehension Check

Complete the following items after you finish your first read.

1. As the play opens, what disaster has befallen Thebes?

2. How did Oedipus become king of Thebes?

3. According to the Oracle, what is the solution to the problems Thebes faces?

4. What does Oedipus accuse Creon of doing?

5.  **Notebook** Confirm your understanding of the text by writing a summary.

Research

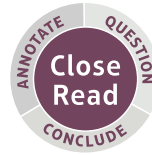
Research to Clarify Choose at least one unfamiliar detail from the text. Briefly research that detail. In what way does the information you learned shed light on an aspect of the play?

Research to Explore Research some of the places mentioned in the play (Corinth, Cithaeron, Thebes, etc.). You may want to share what you learn with the class.



Close Read the Text

Reread lines 347–351 in the argument between Teiresias and Oedipus. Mark the nouns. What word is repeated? What is the effect of that repetition?



OEDIPUS THE KING, PART I

Analyze the Text

CITE TEXTUAL EVIDENCE to support your answers.

Notebook Respond to these questions.

- (a) Why does Oedipus feel he is the person most affected by the plague that has stricken Thebes? (b) **Interpret** How does this fact affect Oedipus' reception of Creon when Creon returns from Apollo's oracle?
- (a) **Interpret** Why have the leaders of Thebes failed to pursue Laius' killers? (b) **Connect** How does this fact strengthen Oedipus' belief that he can find the murderers? (c) **Analyze** Why does the chorus appeal to Apollo after Oedipus promises to avenge Laius?
- (a) **Classify** Which details in Teiresias' speech in lines 385–406 refer to darkness, vision, and insight? (b) **Compare and Contrast** At the end of Part I, in what different ways are Oedipus and Teiresias both blind? In what ways can both see?
- (a) In lines 665–683, what reasons does Jocasta give for not having faith in prophecy? (b) **Compare and Contrast** At this point in the play, what do both Jocasta and Oedipus seem to believe about their abilities to control their own fates? Explain.

LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

Concept Vocabulary

proclamation decree edicts

Why These Words? The three concept vocabulary words relate to official pronouncements. Find other words in Part I that relate to this concept.

Practice

Notebook To demonstrate your understanding of the concept vocabulary words, write a definition for each one. Then, list one or two synonyms for each word. Refer to a dictionary or a thesaurus as needed.

Word Study

Notebook **Latin Root: -dict-** The word *edicts* is formed from the Latin root *-dict-*, meaning “say” or “speak.”

Record three other words that are formed from the root *-dict-*. Write a definition for each word. Then, explain how the root *-dict-* contributes to each word's meaning.

WORD NETWORK

Add words related to blindness and sight from the text to your Word Network.

STANDARDS

- Language**
- Identify and correctly use patterns of word changes that indicate different meanings or parts of speech.
 - Consult general and specialized reference materials, both print and digital, to find the pronunciation of a word or determine or clarify its precise meaning, its part of speech, or its etymology.



OEDIPUS THE KING, PART I

Analyze Craft and Structure

Structure of Greek Plays Greek plays are **verse drama**, in which the dialogue takes the form of poetry. Greek tragedies follow a consistent format. Note that some modern translations deviate from strict classical form, observing some—but not all—these conventions.

- They open with a **prologue** that presents background information and describes the conflict.
- The **chorus**, a group of performers who speak and move together as they comment on the play, then enters and performs a **parados**, or opening song.
- The parados is followed by the first scene, which is called an **episode** and contains dialogue among characters.
- Additional songs, called **odes**, are presented at the end of each scene. They serve a function similar to that of the curtain coming down at the ends of scenes in modern theatrical productions.
- Before the final scene, the chorus performs a **paean**, or song of thanksgiving, to Dionysus, the Greek god at whose festivals classical drama originated.
- The tragedy concludes with an **exodos**, or final scene.

Practice

CITE TEXTUAL EVIDENCE
to support your answers.

Notebook Respond to these questions.

1. Scan or reread Part I of *Oedipus the King*. Then, use the chart to record information that is provided or action that takes place in each section listed.

SECTION OF PLAY	INFORMATION AND/OR ACTION
prologue, lines 1–143	
parados, lines 144–199	
episode, lines 200–443	
ode, lines 444–478	

2. In addition to singing odes, the chorus may interact with the characters. (a) Reread lines 479–596. How does the chorus intervene in the dialogue between Oedipus and Creon? (b) Review the remainder of the scene that concludes Part I. What is different about the chorus’s words after Jocasta arrives? (c) In what ways does the chorus heighten the dramatic tension?

Author's Style

The Greek Chorus The chorus (a group of performers who speak and move together as they comment on the play) is central to Greek drama. Between each scene or episode of dialogue among characters, the chorus provides key background information and commentary on the action. The chorus's recitals, or odes, often divide into two parts—a **strophe** and an answering **antistrophe**.

- During the strophe, the chorus expresses an initial position on the play's action. The chorus sings while twisting and dancing from right to left.
- During the antistrophe, the chorus responds to the message of the strophe while moving in the opposite direction.
- Some odes have a concluding stanza, or **epode**, when the chorus stands still.
- To help propel the plot, the chorus leader, or **choragos** (also spelled *choragus*), often exchanges thoughts with the rest of the chorus, as well as with the actors. In ancient Greece, the choragos was often a patron who helped pay the costs of producing a play.

Read It


Reread the ode that begins with line 444. Then, answer the questions.

1. Record your answers in the chart. (a) Which lines make up the strophe? Which lines make up the antistrophe? (b) In the strophe, what main idea does the chorus express about the king's killer? (c) What main idea does the chorus express in the antistrophe?

STROPHE	ANTISTROPHE
Lines:	Lines:
Main Idea:	Main Idea:

2. In which character does the chorus decide to put its faith—Oedipus or Teiresias? Why?

Write It

 **Notebook** Write a paragraph in which you describe how this ode offers “commentary” on the action of the play.

EVIDENCE LOG

Before moving on to a new selection, go to your Evidence Log and record what you learned from *Oedipus the King*, Part I.

STANDARDS

Reading Literature
Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure a text, order events within it, and manipulate time create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise.



Playwright



Sophocles

Oedipus the King, Part II

Concept Vocabulary

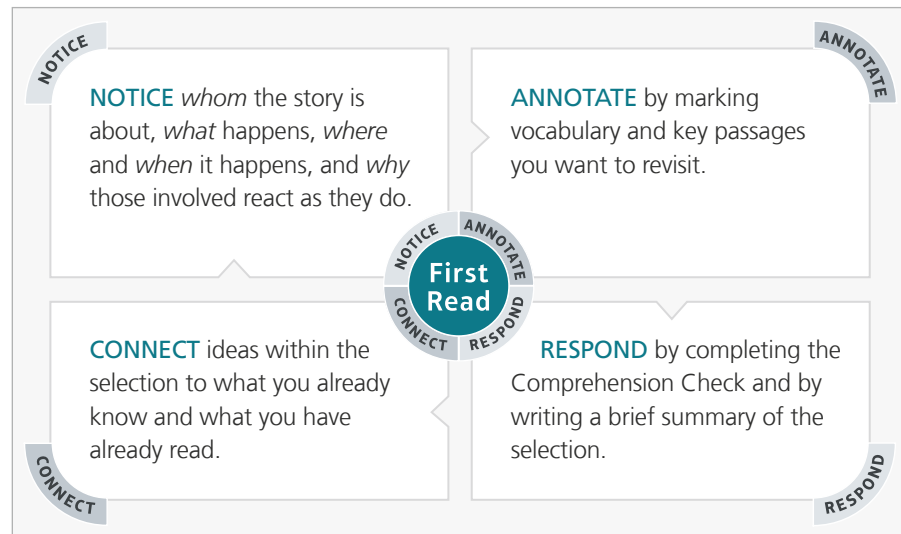
You will encounter the following words as you read *Oedipus the King*, Part II. Before reading, note how familiar you are with each word. Then, rank the words in order from most familiar (1) to least familiar (3).

WORD	YOUR RANKING
oracles	
prophecy	
inexorable	

After completing the first read, come back to the concept vocabulary and review your rankings. Mark changes to your original rankings as needed.

First Read DRAMA

Apply these strategies as you conduct your first read. You will have an opportunity to complete the close-read notes after your first read.



STANDARDS

Reading Literature

By the end of grade 10, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, at the high end of the grades 9–10 text complexity band independently and proficiently.

Oedipus the King

PART II

Sophocles • translated by Nicholas Rudall

Chorus. Let me walk humble in the paths of righteousness.
 Let my life be simple and full of awe for things divine.
 Let my tongue be free of arrogance.
 Let me never seek too much.

5 For the gods live high in their imperial grace.
 We alone are frail and mortal.
 They live forever. Oblivion¹ will not cloud
 Their everlasting power.
 A tyrant is born from a womb of arrogance.

10 And insolence grows fat,
 Fed by empty riches.
 He scales the dizzying cliffs and grasps the crown.
 But then his foot falters, falters,
 And he will fall, fall and lie crumpled in the dust.

15 May the gods protect the man
 Who loves his country,
 Burns with the flame
 Of his love for the state.
 God is my eternal hope.

20 In god I trust. In god I wait for death.
 But the proud man,
 The man who spits in the face of justice,
 The man who scorns the altars of the gods,
 That man will lose his empty dreams in the whirlwind of god's fire.

25 Greed will cut him down.

NOTES

1. **Oblivion** (uh BLIHV ee uhn) *n.*
 condition of being entirely
 forgotten, especially in death.

CLOSE READ

ANNOTATE: In lines 1–14, mark details related to humility. Mark other details related to excessive pride.

QUESTION: Why does the playwright include these reminders of divine power and human frailty?

CONCLUDE: How do the concepts presented in this speech set up a context for the rest of the play's action?

2. **Elis** (EE lih) renowned Greek city-state.

3. **Olympus** (uh LIHM puh) Greek mountain believed to be the throne of the gods and the location of their palaces.

4. **helmsman** (HEHLMZ muhn) *n.* person who steers a boat.

For he will never freely touch the divine
With hands that are sullied with money.
God's lightning will strike,
Strike the arrogant, strike the sinner.

30 In cities where there is no chorus
That will sing god's truth,
Fools will ever honor the wicked.

No more will I seek the mystery
Buried in the earth's deep core.

35 No more will I respect Delphi, Elis,² or Olympus³
If god's truth is not fulfilled on earth.

O Zeus, reveal your power!
O king, O lord of all, if that be true,
Reveal your eternal power to us!

40 The prophecies of Laius wither
And they die. Apollo is forsaken.
Faith and reverence are no more.

(enter Jocasta)

Jocasta. My lords of Thebes, I have come here with wreaths and incense to visit the shrines of the gods.

45 Oedipus is deeply troubled, haunted by images of terror.
He will not trust his reason as before. The new prophecies frighten him as did the old.

He listens to anyone who speaks of disaster for our house.
Nothing I say will comfort him, and so I turn to you, Lord

50 Apollo, since you are closest to our grief.
I bring my prayers and petitions to you. Grant us deliverance from this curse.

We are like sailors in a storm when they see their helmsman's⁴ terror.

55 Oh help us, lord!

(enter Messenger)

Messenger. Friends, can you direct me to the palace of the king, or better yet to the king himself?

Chorus. This is his palace. The king is inside. This is his wife, the mother of his children.

60 **Messenger.** May the gods bless her and all her house and bring happiness to everyone.

Jocasta. Greetings to you! Your kind words deserve a kind reply. Why have you come? What is your news?

Messenger. It is good both for the king and the royal house.

65 **Jocasta.** Then speak. Who sent you?

Messenger. I come from Corinth. The words I bring may bring you joy . . . though they are not without some pain.

- Jocasta.** What is it? How can there be both joy and pain?
- Messenger.** The people of Corinth have resolved to make
70 Oedipus their king.
- Jocasta.** Is not the aged Polybus still king?
- Messenger.** No, my lady, he is dead and in his grave.
- Jocasta.** The father of Oedipus is dead?
- Messenger.** If I tell a lie may I die myself.
- 75 **Jocasta.** Quick! Take this news to my lord.
You **oracles** of the gods, where are you now?
Oedipus spent his life running from his father. He was in terror
that he would kill him.
And now not his son's hand but the hand of fate has cut him down.
(*enter Oedipus*)
- 80 **Oedipus.** My queen, Jocasta, why have you summoned me from
the palace?
- Jocasta.** Hear this man, and as he speaks think of what has
become of the solemn prophecies!
- Oedipus.** Who is he? What is his news?
- 85 **Jocasta.** He has come from Corinth, and his news is this: Your
father, Polybus, is dead.
- Oedipus.** What? Let me hear it, stranger, from your mouth.
- Messenger.** It cannot be said more plainly. Polybus is dead.
- Oedipus.** Did he die by treachery or from disease?
- 90 **Messenger.** It takes so little to send an old man to his rest.
- Oedipus.** Then the poor man died of sickness.
- Messenger.** Yes. He had lived a long life.
- Oedipus.** Ha! Oh my wife, where are the oracles now?
Why believe in the screams of whirling birds?
- 95 The Delphic god⁵ had sworn that I would kill my father.
But he is dead and in his grave! And here I stand, I never drew
my sword.
Perhaps they might argue that he died of grief for his long
absent son.
- 100 But only in that sense could I have killed him. But no . . . the
oracles are dead.
Like Polybus, their words are turned to dust.
- Jocasta.** Did I not say that this is how it would be?
- Oedipus.** You did. But my own fear betrayed me.
- 105 **Jocasta.** Then never think on it again!
- Oedipus.** But yet . . . I am afraid of my mother's bed.
- Jocasta.** You are a mere man . . . the plaything of fate. You
cannot know the future.

NOTES

oracles (AWR uh kuhlz)
n. people who deliver
messages from the gods

5. Delphic (DEHL fihk) **god** Apollo,
whose temple was in the
Greek city of Delphi.

- So why be afraid? Live your life from day to day. Have no more
 110 cares.
 Do not fear this marriage with your mother.
 How many times have men lain with their mother in their dreams!
 If you have sense in that head of yours, you will not be troubled
 by such thoughts.
- 115 **Oedipus.** I want to be as confident as you. But my mother is still
 alive.
 And so I harbor still some fear.
- Jocasta.** But your father’s death is filled with light.
- Oedipus.** Yes. But I am afraid of the living.
- 120 **Messenger.** Who is this woman that you fear?
Oedipus. Merope, Polybus’s wife.
Messenger. Why should you fear her?
Oedipus. An oracle from the gods filled with terror.
Messenger. It is a secret or may a stranger hear of it?
- 125 **Oedipus.** It is no secret.
 Apollo once prophesied that I would lie with my own mother
 and with these hands kill my father.
 That is why for all these years I have stayed away from Corinth.
 I traveled far but always longed to see my parents’ faces.
- 130 **Messenger.** This was the fear that turned you into an exile?
Oedipus. And the fear of killing my own father.
Messenger. Well, since I came to bring you pleasure, why
 should I not free you from this fear?
Oedipus. You would be well rewarded.
- 135 **Messenger.** I confess I hoped to profit when you returned to
 Corinth.
Oedipus. I will never go near my parents’ home.
Messenger. Then, my son, you do not know what you are doing.
Oedipus. How so, old man? Tell me all you know.
- 140 **Messenger.** Is this why you are afraid to come home?
Oedipus. Yes. In case the word of the gods comes true.
Messenger. You are afraid that you will be cursed through your
 parents?
Oedipus. I fear it now—I have feared it always.
- 145 **Messenger.** My son, your fears are baseless.
Oedipus. How baseless?
Messenger. Polybus had no blood ties to you.
Oedipus. Are you saying that Polybus was not my father?
Messenger. No more your father than I am.

CLOSE READ

ANNOTATE: Mark the questions in lines 138–153.

QUESTION: Why does the playwright include so many questions in this section of dialogue?

CONCLUDE: What is the effect of this dialogue, especially in reflecting Oedipus’ perspective?

- 150 **Oedipus.** But you are nothing to me.
Messenger. Nor was he.
Oedipus. Why then did he call me his son?
Messenger. Long ago I gave you to him as a gift.
Oedipus. What! But he loved me like a son.
- 155 **Messenger.** He had no children of his own. You touched his heart.
Oedipus. Was I a foundling⁶ . . . did you buy me?
Messenger. I found you in the woods of Cithaeron.
Oedipus. What were you doing there?
Messenger. I was a shepherd. I tended the mountain flocks.
- 160 **Oedipus.** A wandering shepherd . . . a hired hand?
Messenger. Yes—but the man who saved your life.
Oedipus. Saved my life? How? From what?
Messenger. Your ankles will tell the story.
Oedipus. Why remind me of my childhood pain?
- 165 **Messenger.** I removed the pin that bolted your feet⁷ together.
Oedipus. Yes . . . from my earliest memory I have had that mark.
Messenger. That is why you were given your name.
Oedipus. Who did it? My father, my mother? Tell me.
Messenger. I do not know. The man who gave you to me may
170 know more.
Oedipus. I thought it was you who had found me.
Messenger. No, another shepherd gave you to me.
Oedipus. Who was he? Can you tell me who he was?
Messenger. He was one of Laius's household.
- 175 **Oedipus.** The man who was once the king?
Messenger. Yes. He was a herdsman for King Laius.
Oedipus. Do you know if he is still alive?
Messenger. These Thebans here could better answer that.
Oedipus. Does any one of you know this shepherd?
- 180 Have you seen him in the fields or in the city? Answer me
right away.
It is time to clear this matter up.
Chorus. I think he is talking about the very man that we have
sent for.
- 185 But Queen Jocasta would know better than I.
Oedipus. Do you know this man we sent for? Is this the man the
stranger speaks of?
Jocasta. What man? Why does it matter? Leave it alone.

NOTES

6. foundling (FOWND lihng)
n. baby or small child
found deserted.

7. pin that bolted your feet
Laius pierced his baby's
feet and put a metal pin
through them before
sending him to be left
on a mountainside to
die. The name *Oedipus*
means "swollen foot."

8. **baseness** (BAYS nihs) *n.*
inferiority; lowness.

9. **Hermes** (HUR meez) of **Cylene**
Greek god who acted as
the messenger of the gods
to humanity.

It is a waste of time to worry about such trivial things.

190 **Oedipus.** Trivial? I cannot find out the secret of my birth!

Jocasta. If you care for your life . . . stop now. No more! My pain is hard enough.

Oedipus. You need not worry.

Even if my mother were a slave and the daughter of slaves, my
195 baseness⁸ cannot touch you.

Jocasta. Oh listen to me. I am begging you. Seek no further.

Oedipus. I must go on. I must find the truth.

Jocasta. I am only thinking of your own good.

Oedipus. This breaks my patience!

200 **Jocasta.** May you never learn who you are!

Oedipus. Bring the man to me. Let her ever boast of her royal name.

Jocasta. I pity you. Pity is the only word I know. The rest is nothing.

(exit Jocasta)

205 **Chorus.** Oedipus, why has the queen left in such anguish? I am afraid of this silence.

There is something terrifying hanging over us.

Oedipus. Let it hang there. I have made up my mind.

I will find out who my parents were even if they were slaves.

210 Perhaps, with her woman's pride, the queen scorns my parentage.

But I cannot be dishonored. Fortune is my mother.

As the moons change, so do my fortunes.

If I am her child, why should I fear to trace my birth.

I am who I am.

215 **Chorus.** If I am a prophet, if wisdom lives in me,
Then in all reverence I proclaim that you,
Mount Cithaeron—you are the nurse and mother
Of our king!

Before the next full moon we will worship you,

220 Cithaeron! We will dance in your honor,

Protector of our royal house.

Apollo, Lord, join in the dance!

Who gave birth to you, child?

Who of the immortals was your mother?

225 Pan, roaming god of the hills . . . was he your father?

Or Apollo who haunts the woodland meadows?

Or was it Hermes of Cylene?⁹ Or Dionysus

Who lives among the mountain peaks?

Did he take you from the arms of one

230 Of his dancing worshipers

And smile the smile of a god?



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Oedipus, beginning to see the truth

(enter Shepherd and Servants)

Oedipus. You elders of Thebes, though I have never seen him, I would guess that this is the man we have been waiting for. His age matches well with the messenger there.

235 **And I recognize the men who are bringing him as my servants. But you perhaps have seen him before and know him. I yield to you.**

Chorus. I recognize him. He is one of Laius's servants . . . a simple herdsman but honest.

240 **Oedipus.** Let me ask you . . . you from Corinth . . . is this the man you meant?

Messenger. It is.

Oedipus. Now . . . old man . . . look into my eyes and answer me all that I ask.

245 **Were you once a servant here?**

Shepherd. I was. A slave . . . not bought but born on the estate.

Oedipus. What was your occupation . . . your livelihood?

Shepherd. For the best part of my life I tended sheep.

Oedipus. What pastures did you use the most?

250 **Shepherd.** Cithaeron and neighboring hills.

Oedipus. There you must have known this man.

Shepherd. Why would I . . . Which man??

Oedipus. This man here . . . since you met him years ago.

Shepherd. Offhand I . . . I can't remember.

255 **Messenger.** My king, I'm not surprised . . . but I will awaken his memory.

I'm sure he remembers when we both herded our flocks on Cithaeron.

He had two flocks, I one. Three long summers we were friends.

260 **Then when winter came I drove my flock home, and he drove his to Laius's folds.**

Isn't that what happened?

Shepherd. It was a long time ago, but that is all true.

265 **Messenger.** Then do you remember giving me a child to bring up as my own?

Shepherd. Why do you ask me this question?

Messenger. Because this man who stands before you was that child.

Shepherd. Damnation take you! Hold your tongue!

270 **Oedipus.** Old man! Do not curse him.

What *you* said deserved our displeasure far more than he.

CLOSE READ

ANNOTATE: In lines 251–266, mark the questions the Shepherd asks.

QUESTION: What do the questions suggest about the Shepherd's knowledge and fears?

CONCLUDE: What is the effect of these questions?

- Shepherd.** Oh my king . . . what did I say that was wrong?
- Oedipus.** You refused to answer about the child.
- Shepherd.** He made no sense!!! He talks like a fool.
- 275 **Oedipus.** If you won't do it voluntarily, I'll *make* you talk.
- Shepherd.** I beg you . . . do not treat an old man like this.
- Oedipus.** Arrest this man. Seize him and put him in irons.
- Shepherd.** Alas . . . what have I done? What is it you want to know?
- 280 **Oedipus.** Did you give this man the child?
- Shepherd.** I did. And I wish I had died that very day.
- Oedipus.** And die you will unless you tell the truth.
- Shepherd.** If I tell the truth, I lose twice over.
- Oedipus.** This wicked man is still being evasive.
- 285 **Shepherd.** *No!* I have confessed I gave him the child a long time ago.
- Oedipus.** Whose child was it? Was it yours, or was it given to you?
- Shepherd.** Not mine . . . it was given to me.
- Oedipus.** Which of our citizens gave it, and from what family?
- 290 **Shepherd.** Oh for god's sake, master, ask no more!
- Oedipus.** If I have to question you again . . . you are finished.
- Shepherd.** Well then . . . it was a child of the house Laius.
- Oedipus.** Was he born of a slave or one of Laius's own children?
- Shepherd.** *Ahhh,* I stand upon the razor's edge. What must I say?
- 295 **Oedipus.** What must I hear? . . . But hear I must.
- Shepherd.** Know that the . . . the child . . . so people said . . . was his.
But the lady in the palace, your wife, she could tell you best.
- Oedipus.** What? She . . . she gave it to you?
- 300 **Shepherd.** My king, she did.
- Oedipus.** For what reason?
- Shepherd.** To put it to death.
- Oedipus.** The child's own mother?
- Shepherd.** She was afraid of a terrible **prophecy**.
- 305 **Oedipus.** What prophecy?
- Shepherd.** It was said that he would kill his father.
- Oedipus.** Did you then give it to this old man?
- Shepherd.** I felt such pity for the child. I thought he'd take it to the safety of the country.
- 310 **But he saved it for the worst of griefs.**

prophecy (PROF uh see) *n.*
prediction about the future

10. **abased** (uh BAYST) *adj.* brought down or lowered.

11. **house of Labdacus** (LAB duh kuhz) the family that includes Laius, Jocasta, and their descendants, including Oedipus and his children.

For if you are indeed who this man says . . . god have mercy on you.

You were born into a life of misery.

Oedipus. Aaah, all has come to pass. All is true!

315 Light of the sun, let me never look on you again. I stand here, the most cursed of men.

Cursed in my birth. Cursed in an incestuous marriage.

Cursed in the murder of my father.

(exit Oedipus)

Chorus. Oh you generations of men,

320 Your life is as nothing.

A man is bathed in Fortune's light

And then he fades, fades, and fades into the dark.

Your fate I pity, Oedipus, your sad fall,

Your birth, your very birth into this world.

325 Oh Zeus! His was the greatest mind of all.

He defeated the riddling sharp-clawed Sphinx

And won glory, happiness, and power.

He saved us, was our tower and strength.

We made him our lord, our King of Thebes.

330 Now who is more abased,¹⁰ more lost than he?

Whose life more desolate, whose grief more deep?

Oh Oedipus! In the same safe bed

You were both son and father!

How could the palace walls have so long kept their silence?

335 Time, that sees all things, has found you Oedipus,

Condemned the incest and the guilt.

Oh son of Laius! I wish that I had never

Looked on you. On you I pour my grief

As on the dead. From you I found new life.

340 In you I close my eyes in grief.

(enter Second Messenger)

Second Messenger. Oh you mighty lords of Thebes!

Oh! What you must now hear, now see!

Oh! How you will mourn if still you respect this house of

Labdacus.¹¹

345 No river could wash the bloodstains from this house. What now

lies dark will soon be brought to light—anguish inflicted—all

with full intent! Self-inflicted wounds cut deepest of all.

Chorus. Our past pains were deep enough. What more can you bring?

350 **Second Messenger.** My story is quickly told and quickly heard.

Our queen Jocasta is dead.

Chorus. Alas! Poor lady, how did she die?

Second Messenger. By her own hand. I was not there to see the horror taking place.

- 355 But I will tell you, as best I can, of the wretched lady's suffering. She ran into the forecourt of the palace. She was in a frenzy. Then she raced towards her bridal chamber. She was tearing her hair with both hands. Once she was in the room, she slammed the huge doors shut.
- 360 Laius! Oh Laius! she cried, called on her husband dead so long ago. She cast her mind upon the child that he had fathered . . . the child that had cut him down . . . the child who lay with his own mother and fathered the most monstrous brood. She cursed the bed that had fathered a husband by a husband and children
- 365 by a child. What happened after that I cannot tell. For Oedipus burst in on us screaming loud. All of us fixed our gaze upon him as he ran about in all directions. We did not witness the last agony of her life.
- 370 For he ran up to us and demanded a sword, called on the wife that was no wife . . . the mother of his children and of his cursed self. Some god must have entered him then in his madness. It surely was no mortal . . . not one of us . . .
- 375 With a terrifying scream . . . as though someone called him from the other side . . . he hurled himself against the doors of her chamber. The hinges buckled, snapped—and he rushed inside. That's when we saw her.
- 380 She was hanging there with a noose around her neck. When he saw her he roared like a mad man and unhooked the noose. Her poor body lay there on the ground and then, oh then . . . oh the terror . . . he tore the brooches from her robe and raised
- 385 them and plunged them into the sockets of his eyes. He shouted aloud, "No longer shall these eyes see such agony as this! No longer see the things that I have done . . . the things that I have suffered. Those whom you should never have seen will
- 390 now be shrouded in darkness, nor will you know those whom you love." And as he cried these words . . . not once but many times . . . he stabbed his eyes until the blood ran down his cheeks and matted his beard . . . Aahhh, not drop by drop but in a stream of black rain.
- 395 This is the horror that has struck them both, man and wife alike. Till now this house was blessed with fortune. But from this day—Grief, ruin, death, and shame . . . all ills that have a name . . . all are theirs.

Chorus. Is there no respite from his pain?

400 **Second Messenger.** He cries aloud to unlock the doors and let all Thebes look upon him—his father’s killer—his mother’s . . . I cannot speak the word. He swears that he will exile himself from this land.

He will not stay to bring upon the house the curse he himself
405 pronounced.

But his strength has left him. He has no one to guide him.

The torture that he suffers is more than any man can bear.

He will show himself to you. Even now they are opening the palace gates.

410 And you will see a sight that would provoke his bitterest enemy to tears.

Chorus. Oh pitiful, pitiful!! Never have these eyes seen such a terrible sight.

Sir, what madness descended on you?

415 What god has cursed you with this ungodly fate . . . you who were the most blessed of men?

Oh wretched, wretched Oedipus, I cannot look upon you.

Though I yearn to question and to learn, I must turn my eyes away in horror.

(enter Oedipus)

420 **Oedipus.** Ahhhh. Ahhhhhh. Pity me, pity me!

Where upon this earth am I to go in my pain?

Where will my voice be carried on the wind?

Oh god, where will it end?

Chorus. A place too terrible to tell, too dark to see.

425 **Oedipus.** Yes, even now the dark holds me in its grip.

Inexorable, unspeakable, eternal darkness.

The pain . . . yet again the pain. I am racked with spasms, tormented by memory.

Chorus. The past weighs heavy on the present.

430 **Oedipus.** My true and constant friend!

You are still beside me. You do not forget me nor spurn my blindness.

In my private dark I still know your voice.

Chorus. You have done terrible things. But why did you put out
435 your eyes?

What demon set you on?

Oedipus. It was Apollo, my friends, Apollo.

He did this to me. He buried me in this pain.

But it was this hand, no other’s, that struck my eyes.

440 For why should I have eyes when there is nothing that I yearn to see?

Chorus. It is all that you say. It is true.

inexorable (ihn EHK suhr uh buhl) *adj.* impossible to prevent or stop

Oedipus. What could I look on to delight my heart?
What hear or touch to bring me joy?

445 Now take me from this place!

My friends, do not delay.

I am, of all men, the most accursed, most hated by the gods.

Chorus. I hear the depths of your despair but wish I had never
looked upon your face.

450 **Oedipus.** I curse the man who pulled the bolt from my feet.

He saved my life but should have left me on the hills to die.

This heavy grief would not now lie upon me and those I love.

Chorus. I share your sad wish.

Oedipus. Then I would never have killed my father

455 Nor married the woman who gave me birth.

But now my name will live on as the child unholy,

The child who defiled his mother's womb.

Was ever man more doomed than Oedipus?

Chorus. You have chosen a painful path.

460 It were better to be no more than live in darkness.

Oedipus. No! What I have done is right. You cannot change
my mind.

If I had eyes . . . how could I look upon my father down below?

How look upon my mother? I have sinned against them both.

465 To hang myself would not wash clean that sin.

You might say that the sight of children warms the heart.

But children born as mine were born?

My heart could not feel joy to look on them . . . nor on the walls
and temple statues of great Thebes.

470 No! Once I was its king—now I am nothing. I have condemned
myself to this my fate.

I have put the brand of murderer upon my own head.

How could I have looked my people in the face?

No . . . if I had known how to stop the spring of listening, I

475 would have done so.

I would have made this body a prison bereft of sight and sound.

Happiness lives only where sorrow cannot reach.

Cithaeron, why did you keep me safe . . . why did you not kill me?

Then I would never have had to bare my shame unto the world.

480 Polybus! Corinth! Oh my home!

For that is what I called you then . . . home of my ancestors,

home to my infant innocence.

Now all is turned to filth and evil.

Oh place where three roads meet, oh hidden pathway of doom!

485 You drank my blood!

Drank the blood that these hands shed . . . my father's blood!

You were the silent witnesses to my crime. You drove me here to
save the city.

CLOSE READ

ANNOTATE: In lines 476–491, mark the places that Oedipus addresses directly.

QUESTION: Why would the playwright have Oedipus speak to these places instead of to the chorus?

CONCLUDE: What is the effect of this use of direct address?



The blinded Oedipus

- Oh marriage, fatal marriage . . . you gave me birth, and having
 490 spawned you sowed the seed again and placed upon this earth
 for all to see the mingled blood of fathers, brothers, children,
 brides, wives, and mothers.
 These horrors are the worst that mankind can ever know! Take
 me then . . . for to speak of them is living death . . . Take me from
 495 here with all speed—I beg you by the gods. Hide me in the
 earth. Kill me.
 Hurl me to the bottom of the sea . . . anywhere so long as you
 never see my face again.
 Come to me. Do not fear to touch this wretched body. Please . . .
 500 do not be afraid.
 I must bear the burden of my guilt alone.
 (*enter Creon*)
- Chorus.** Here is Creon. He alone can grant your wishes.
 He is now sole ruler and guardian of the state.
- Oedipus.** Ahh! what words can I find to speak? Why should he
 505 trust me?
 I have treated him like a bitter enemy.
- Creon.** I have not come here to mock you, Oedipus, nor to
 reproach you for what happened in the past.
 (*he speaks to the Chorus*) You should feel nothing but shame.
 If you have no sense of human decency, at least show your
 510 respect for the Sun, the god that gives us light and gives us life.
 Do not let this man stand here when the heavens and the earth
 cannot bear the sight of him.
 Take him to the palace. Only his family should see the pain.
- Oedipus.** Hear me . . . please, Creon. You are here, and it fills
 515 my heart with hope.
 You are so noble—I so low. I ask of you one thing . . . not for me
 but for you.
- Creon.** What is it?
- Oedipus.** Send me into exile now!
 520 Put me in some desert where I will never again hear a
 human voice.
- Creon.** This I had already decided. But first I had to consult
 the god.
- Oedipus.** The decision was made . . . death to the father-killer,
 525 the murderer. I am he.
- Creon.** Yes, that is what Apollo decreed.
 But now, in our sudden present grief, we should consult him again.
- Oedipus.** How can you ask him about such a man as I?
- Creon.** I can. For even you would believe him now.
- 530 **Oedipus.** Yes. I am humbled now. But I ask you this one thing:

Grace the woman who lies within with a burial that only you can command.
 You are her brother, touch her with your love.
 For me . . . Oh never let this city—this Thebes—be cursed with
 535 my living body.
 No! Let me live in the hills . . . on Cithaeron. For that is where my name will ever live.
 Cithaeron was to be my tomb. My father and my mother wished to bury me there.
 540 Now let me find my death upon her slopes. For that is what they wished.
 This much I know . . . disease will not cut me down, nor any common accident.
 I was saved from death so I might die in grief beyond all mortal
 545 knowing.
 So be it. I care no longer how fate treats me.
 But my children. Oh Creon . . . for my sons I have less concern. They are men, and they will survive.
 But my daughters . . . two sweet innocents . . . ohhhh . . .
 550 I can see them now . . . stealing a little of my food, sipping my wine. Laughing.
 Oh look after them.
 And one last request . . . let me hold them in my arms once more. Let me touch them and let me weep.
 555 Oh Creon, let your noble heart break.
 I have no eyes. But I have hands. Let me touch them, let me feel what once I saw.
(enter Antigone and Ismene)
Oedipus. I have no words! I touch you . . . I touch you my pretty ones.
 560 I hear your tears. Can this be . . . can Creon have given you to me?
Creon. I have. I know how much you loved them.
Oedipus. God bless you . . . may the fates shine warm upon you for your kindness.
 Not like me! Oh my children, where are you? Let me take you in
 565 my arms.
 I am your brother and your father.
 Ahh, these hands that touch you now took the light from my eyes. These hands touched the mother that was both yours and mine!
 I cannot see you, but my eyes still weep. My life to come will be
 570 a path of pain.
 For you there will be only grief.
 At festivals, at feasts you will skulk in the shadows. You will burst into sudden tears. And when you are ready to marry—oh god, no man will woo you, no man will brook the shame. For
 575 this shame will cling forever to our house. It will never die.
 Their father killed his father, spewed the seed where he himself



< Oedipus, played by the French tragic actor Jean Mounet-Sully, with his daughters, Antigone and Ismene.

NOTES

found life, and was the father of these children here . . . That is what they will say.

So no one will marry you . . . no one . . . you will be alone forever.

580 Creon, I turn to you now. You must be their father.

We who gave them life are dead. They are your family. . . .

Do not let them wander forever.

They are young. Pity them. Let them live in peace as I wander on the earth.

585 You must be their father now.

Do not let them be orphans of the dark . . . unmarried, beggar children. Oh pity them.

They are so young. And now they have nothing. Oh touch my hand, Lord Creon.

590 Swear pity.

My children, my heart is breaking.

Give me your word, Creon.


Oh my children, I wanted to talk to you.

- But you are so young . . . so young.
- 595 My last words . . . find a home, find happiness, and be more fortunate than I.
- Creon.** Weep no more . . . go inside.
- Oedipus.** I will—but the pain lies heavy.
- Creon.** Weep no more. Time comes. Time comes.
- 600 **Oedipus.** I go but I have a last request.
- Creon.** Tell me.
- Oedipus.** Exile me, oh send me from this land!
- Creon.** That is what the gods will choose—not I.
- Oedipus.** But the gods loathe my very being!
- 605 **Creon.** Then they will grant your wish.
- Oedipus.** Take me from this place. I am ready.
- Creon.** Come. But you must let your children go.
- Oedipus.** Ohhhh, do not take my children from me!!!
- Creon.** You have nothing now. The power that made you great
- 610 was your destruction.
- Chorus.** Look on this man, you citizens of Thebes. . . . Mankind look hard.
- This is and was Oedipus.
The man who defeated the Sphinx . . .
- 615 The man who became our great and brilliant king,
We envied him, we loved him, we admired him.
Now he is drowned in a sea of eternal pain.
Count no man happy till he dies.
Then, free from pain and sorrow—he may lie in peace.

MEDIA CONNECTION




Oedipus the King

 **Discuss It** How does listening to this audio performance, by L. A. Theatre Works, enhance your understanding of the characters and events featured in *Oedipus the King*?

Write your response before sharing your ideas.

Comprehension Check

Complete the following items after you finish your first read.

1. What news does the messenger bring Oedipus from Corinth?
2. What fear drove Jocasta to give her child to the shepherd?
3. What is the literal meaning of Oedipus' name? How does this name connect him to his past?
4. Why does Oedipus curse the man who saved him when he was an infant?
5. What injury does Oedipus inflict upon himself after he sees Jocasta dead?
6.  **Notebook** Confirm your understanding of the text by writing a summary.

RESEARCH

Research to Clarify Choose at least one unfamiliar detail from the text. Briefly research that detail. In what way does the information you learned shed light on an aspect of the play?

Research to Explore Conduct research on the way various artists have portrayed Oedipus over the centuries. You may want to share what you learn with the class.



OEDIPUS THE KING, PART II

Tool Kit

Close-Read Guide and Model Annotation

Close Read the Text

1. This model, from lines 146–153, shows two sample annotations, along with questions and conclusions. Close read the passage, and find another detail to annotate. Then, write a question and your conclusion.

ANNOTATE: Oedipus does not understand what the messenger is saying.

QUESTION: Why is Oedipus so confused?

CONCLUDE: Everything he understands about his life is being challenged.

ANNOTATE:
The messenger turns out to be a person from Oedipus' past.

QUESTION:
Why didn't the messenger identify himself earlier?

CONCLUDE: The delay suggests that the messenger is afraid to reveal this information.

Messenger. Polybus had no blood ties to you.

Oedipus. Are you saying that Polybus was not my father?

Messenger. No more your father than I am.

Oedipus. But you are nothing to me.

Messenger. Nor was he.

Oedipus. Why then did he call me his son?

Messenger. Long ago I gave you to him as a gift.

2. For more practice, go back into the play, and complete the close-read notes.
3. Revisit a section of the play you found important during your first read. Read this section closely, and **annotate** what you notice. Ask yourself **questions** such as “Why did the author make this choice?” What can you **conclude**?

Analyze the Text

CITE TEXTUAL EVIDENCE to support your answers.

Notebook Respond to these questions.

1. (a) What facts does Oedipus establish by questioning the old shepherd?
(b) **Draw Conclusions** Why might this scene be considered the **climax**, or point of highest tension, in the tragedy? Explain.
2. (a) Why do you think Oedipus continues his investigation despite Jocasta's strong objections? (b) **Extend** What might the playwright be saying about the importance of knowing oneself?
3. (a) At the end of the play, what does Oedipus want Creon to do?
(b) **Analyze** Why does Oedipus insist that he should remain blind and living rather than dead? (c) **Make a Judgment** At the end of the play, is Oedipus ennobled by his suffering? Explain.
4. **Essential Question: What does it mean to see?** What have you learned about seeing and knowing from reading this play?

STANDARDS

Reading Literature

Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure a text, order events within it, and manipulate time create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise.

Analyze Craft and Structure

Elements of Greek Tragedy In *Poetics*, the Greek philosopher Aristotle describes a **tragedy** as a serious play recounting related events in the life of a renowned and prosperous person who experiences a downfall. The main character, called the **tragic hero** or **protagonist**, undergoes this reversal of fortune as a result of **hamartia**, which is often translated as “a tragic flaw.” This flaw may be an innate character weakness. However, it may simply be a terrible mistake, an error in judgment, or the result of incomplete knowledge or ignorance. In addition, the protagonist may face an **antagonist**, a rival character or a force that is in conflict with the protagonist and contributes to his or her downfall.

The events in Greek tragedies came as no surprise to their first audiences. Greek audiences knew the myths on which the plays were based. The result was **dramatic irony**, a contradiction between what a character thinks and what the audience knows to be true. Dramatic irony engages an audience emotionally. Tension and suspense build as the audience waits for the characters to realize the truth. Dramatic irony helps produce the result that Aristotle said defines a tragedy: inspiring fear and pity in the audience.

CITE TEXTUAL EVIDENCE
to support your answers.

Practice

 **Notebook** Respond to these questions.

1. In what ways does Oedipus fit the definition of a tragic hero?
2. Is there an antagonist in the play? If so, who or what is it? Use the chart to explore the possibilities. Then, write a paragraph making an argument for your choice.

	CREON	TEIRESIAS	FATE
Whom or what does Oedipus struggle against most strongly?			
Who or what causes Oedipus the most harm?			
Who or what eventually destroys Oedipus?			

3. How does the dramatic irony of the play build as Oedipus learns about his past?
4. Some scholars have stated that Oedipus’ tragic flaw is anger, whereas others suggest it is excessive pride. Do you think Oedipus has a tragic flaw? If so, explain whether you believe it to be anger, excessive pride, or another quality. If you do not think he has a specific tragic flaw, explain your reasoning. Support your answer with text evidence.



OEDIPUS THE KING, PART II

WORD NETWORK

Add words related to blindness and sight from the text to your Word Network.

STANDARDS**Reading Literature**

- Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure a text, order events within it, and manipulate time create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise.

Language

- Use parallel structure.
- Consult general and specialized reference materials, both print and digital, to find the pronunciation of a word or determine or clarify its precise meaning, its part of speech, or its etymology.
- Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.
- Analyze nuances in the meaning of words with similar denotations.

Concept Vocabulary

oracle prophecy inexorable

Why These Words? These concept vocabulary words relate to predicting and experiencing the future. For example, when the ancient Greeks wanted to know what the gods had planned for them, they consulted an *oracle*, a religious figure who spoke for the gods. In *Oedipus the King*, the Oracle at Delphi issues a *prophecy*, or prediction about the future, that sets the events of the play in motion.

1. How does the concept vocabulary sharpen a reader's understanding of the role that predictions played in Greek culture?

2. What other words from *Oedipus the King* relate to this concept?

Practice

Notebook The concept words appear in *Oedipus the King*, Part II.

1. Use each concept word in a sentence that demonstrates your understanding of the word's meaning. Then, write a sentence about Oedipus using all three words.
2. Use a dictionary or etymology reference to compare the origins of the words *oracle* and *inexorable*. What do the words have in common?

Word Study

Denotation and Connotation A word's **denotation** is its dictionary meaning, independent of any associations the word may have. Synonyms have nearly identical denotations. A word's **connotation** is the idea or emotion associated with the word. Often, words have positive or negative connotations that affect how people respond to them in both writing and speech. Synonyms often have different connotations. For example, the concept vocabulary word *inexorable* means "impossible to stop or prevent." A synonym would be *unstoppable*. In most contexts, *inexorable* has negative connotations, while *unstoppable* has positive connotations.

1. Using a thesaurus, find other synonyms for *inexorable*. Write down three synonyms that have positive connotations and three that have negative connotations.
2. Choose three of the synonyms you found, and use each one in a separate sentence. Make the context of each sentence fit the connotation of the synonym.

Author's Style

Rhetorical Devices: Anaphora In *Oedipus the King*, the translator uses a variety of rhetorical devices, or patterns of language, to create dramatic effects. One of these rhetorical devices is **anaphora**, the repetition of a word or group of words at the beginning of two or more successive clauses or sentences. This is an ancient literary device that makes longer passages easier to remember, emphasizes key ideas, and adds emotional intensity. For example, consider the effect of anaphora when Oedipus expresses his grief and fear:


Oedipus. Where upon this earth am I to go in my pain?
Where will my voice be carried on the wind?

Read It

Read aloud the passages from Part II of *Oedipus the King* to get a sense of the sound of each example of anaphora. Mark the repeated wording in each passage. Then, note the effect of the anaphora. Consider, for example, how it establishes a rhythm, lends dialogue a certain majesty, emphasizes certain ideas, or creates a combination of these effects.

PASSAGE	EFFECT
<p>Chorus.</p> <p>Let me walk humble in the paths of righteousness. Let my life be simple and full of awe for things divine. Let my tongue be free of arrogance. Let me never seek too much.</p>	
<p>Chorus.</p> <p>The man who spits in the face of justice, The man who scorns the altars of the gods, That man will lose his empty dreams in the whirlwind of god's fire.</p>	
<p>Oedipus.</p> <p>. . . I stand here, the most cursed of men. Cursed in my birth. Cursed in an incestuous marriage. Cursed in the murder of my father.</p>	

Write It

 **Notebook** Write a paragraph in which you describe a scene from *Oedipus the King*. Use anaphora in your paragraph.



OEDIPUS THE KING, PART II

Writing to Sources

Plays differ from other forms of fiction because they are made almost entirely of **dialogue**, the conversation between or among characters. Along with stage directions, dialogue advances the action of the plot and reveals character traits and relationships. In a play, the name of the character who is speaking precedes each passage of dialogue.

Assignment

Write a **dialogue** that might have taken place among members of the Theban community after the events of the play. The characters in the dialogue should explain what they think and feel about the events, including answers to these questions:

- Was Oedipus a good king?
- Does he deserve his punishment?
- What does it mean that Oedipus solved the riddle of the Sphinx but suspected nothing of his own true origins?

Vocabulary Connection Consider including several of the concept vocabulary words in your dialogue.

oracle prophecy inexorable

Reflect on Your Writing

After you have written your dialogue, answer these questions.

1. How did writing your dialogue help you understand Oedipus' dilemma?
2. What advice would you give to another student writing a dialogue?
3. **Why These Words?** The words you choose make a difference in your writing. Which words did you specifically choose to add power or clarity to your dialogue?

STANDARDS

Writing

- Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.
- Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, description, reflection, and multiple plot lines, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.
- Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

Speaking and Listening

Assignment

In the audio performance included with Part II of the play, the prophet Teiresias speaks with Oedipus. Listen to the performance, and consider the quality of the production and how well it interprets the text. Then, write a brief **critique** of the performance.

- Analyze the Performance** As you listen, consider elements of the production listed in the chart. Take notes about your observations. Include specific references and details as evidence.

PRODUCTION ELEMENTS	NOTES
Actors' Delivery: <i>Do the actors use their voices well? (Consider the tempo, or speed, at which they speak; variations in pitch; clarity of pronunciations; and uses of pauses or silences.)</i>	
Interpretation of the Text: <i>Does the production clarify the story, show it in a new way, or obscure it? Do actors' choices emphasize or mute qualities in the characters?</i>	
Production Values: <i>Do sound effects and music contribute to the power of the production or distract from it?</i>	

- Write Your Critique** Include a general claim, or statement of your position, on the quality of the production. Then, support your position with references to specific performance elements.
- Share and Discuss** When you have finished writing, exchange critiques with a partner, and discuss similarities and differences in your points of view. Then, consider how well you each met the criteria for the assignment. Share your feedback about what worked well, and suggest ways to strengthen any weaknesses. Use the evaluation guide to organize your thoughts.

EVALUATION GUIDE

Rate each statement on a scale of 1 (not demonstrated) to 6 (demonstrated).

- 1. The critique demonstrates careful listening and thought.
- 2. The critique states a clear claim, or position.
- 3. The critique takes into account the actors' deliveries, the interpretation of the text, and the production values.
- 4. The critique cites specific examples to support ideas.

EVIDENCE LOG

Before moving on to a new selection, go to your Evidence Log and record what you learned from *Oedipus the King*, Part II.

STANDARDS

Reading Literature

Analyze the representation of a subject or a key scene in two different artistic mediums, including what is emphasized or absent in each treatment.

Writing

- Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.
- Apply *grades 9–10 Reading standards* to literature.

Speaking and Listening

Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives, summarize points of agreement and disagreement, and, when warranted, qualify or justify their own views and understanding and make new connections in light of the evidence and reasoning presented.



WRITING TO SOURCES

- OEDIPUS THE KING, PART I
- OEDIPUS THE KING, PART II

Write a Nonfiction Narrative

You have read *Oedipus the King*, a classic exploration of the explosive power and dangers of self-knowledge—of seeing oneself and the world truly. Now, you will use your ideas and reflections on the subject of seeing oneself clearly to write a nonfiction narrative.

Assignment

Using information you have gathered through reading and your own life experiences, consider the differences between how people see themselves and how they are perceived by others. Write a **nonfiction narrative** about a time when one person’s self-perception was unclear or incomplete, but someone else saw him or her clearly. Tell a true story that suggests an answer to the following question:

Can we see ourselves as clearly as others see us?

Elements of a Nonfiction Narrative

A **nonfiction narrative** describes a real experience in story form. A well-written nonfiction narrative has the ability to inform, instruct, persuade, or entertain.

Effective narrative nonfiction includes storytelling elements like those found in fiction:

- details that establish a setting, or clear time and place
- a well-developed point of view and descriptions of people
- a problem or situation that is introduced, developed, and resolved
- a clearly delineated sequence of events that make up the action of the story
- use of varied narrative techniques to develop experiences, events, and/or characters
- a concluding message or reflection on the meaning of the story

Model Nonfiction Narrative For a model of a well-crafted nonfiction narrative, see the Launch Text, “Just Six Dots.”

Note that nonfiction narratives can take many forms. You may have read a memoir in which an author tells a true story about his or her life. Some types of journalism include the reporter’s actions and viewpoint as part of the story. The Launch Text, “Just Six Dots,” is a biographical account of Louis Braille. You will have an opportunity to review storytelling elements as you prepare to write your own nonfiction narrative.



Tool Kit

Student Model of a Nonfiction Narrative

ACADEMIC VOCABULARY

As you craft your nonfiction narrative, consider using some of the academic vocabulary you learned in the beginning of this unit.

- integrate
- delineate
- volition
- vivid
- altercation

STANDARDS

Writing

- Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.
- Write routinely over extended time frames and shorter time frames for a range of tasks, audiences, and purposes.

Prewriting/Planning

Choose a Situation to Explore Your nonfiction narrative should relate a true and meaningful story in which someone's self-perception differs from how others see him or her. The event may have been instructive and positive, revealing strengths the person did not know he or she possessed. You may choose to write about yourself, someone you know, or someone you have observed or read about. Jot down some situations.

Situations: _____

Develop the Situation Think about the people you will describe in your narrative. Consider what the reader needs to know about each person's character, distinguishing traits, and relationships. Then, use both **direct** and **indirect characterization** to provide that information: *Tell* readers what people are like, and *show* readers what people are like through descriptive details and dialogue.

Plan the Sequence of Events Structure your narrative so that individual events build on one another and create a logical sequence. Consider using narrative techniques that add interest. For example, a **flashback** is a scene that interrupts the chronological flow of a story to present an event from the past. A flashback can take the form of a memory, or even a dream. It can provide information that explains a situation in an interesting way. If you choose to use a flashback, make a timeline to clarify the order of events as they occurred in real life. Then, make an outline that includes the flashback and ensures that switches from present to past and back again do not cause confusion.

Gather Evidence Before you draft, collect ideas for descriptions you want to include in your narrative:

- **sensory details**, words that appeal to the senses of sight, smell, taste, touch, and hearing
- words and phrases that express how different people look and speak
- precise language to convey actions and gestures
- natural-sounding dialogue that moves the narrative along

Using vivid details adds interest and depth to your writing. For example, the Launch Text uses sensory details about touch to give Braille's accident a sense of immediacy.

He jabbed the sharp tool down, hoping to copy his father's masterful movements and punch the strip with a perfect hole. Instead, the awl slipped and pierced his right eye. The injury and resulting infection left Louis completely blind by age five.

—“Just Six Dots”

EVIDENCE LOG

Review your Evidence Log and identify key details you may want to cite in your nonfiction narrative.

STANDARDS

Writing

- Engage and orient the reader by setting out a problem, situation, or observation and its significance, establishing one or multiple point(s) of view, and introducing a narrator and/or characters; create a smooth progression of experiences or events.
- Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, description, reflection, and multiple plot lines, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.
- Use a variety of techniques to sequence events so that they build on one another to create a coherent whole.



Drafting

Write With Purpose As the writer, you control the reader’s perceptions of the people, places, and events you present. Choose details that address what is most significant for your specific purpose and audience. Keep in mind the special insight or knowledge that you would like to convey to the reader by the end of the narrative.

Adopt a Style Use a natural style, and write in your own voice. Ask yourself: *What attitude toward the subject do I want to express?* Also, use caution when writing dialogue. Because this is nonfiction, any conversation that you attribute to a speaker must have actually taken place.

You may use **first-person point of view**, using pronouns such as *I* and *my* to tell the story from your own perspective. Alternatively, you may attempt **third-person point of view**, which uses pronouns such as *he*, *she*, and *they* to describe all the people in a story from a more objective or neutral viewpoint.

Organize Your Narrative Narratives can be more interesting if they deviate from a strict chronological sequence. Consider pulling in elements that add useful complexity. This might involve describing events that happen at the same time as other events or adding commentary from a later point in time. Think about the story you are telling. Then, use the chart to consider ways you might add interest with a second plot line or commentary.

Meanwhile	Earlier that month	At the same time, in another room
Later, I discovered		

STANDARDS

Writing

- Engage and orient the reader by setting out a problem, situation, or observation, establishing one or multiple point(s) of view, and introducing a narrator and/or characters; create a smooth progression of experiences or events.
- Use precise words and phrases, telling details, and sensory language to convey a vivid picture of the experiences, events, setting, and/or characters.
- Provide a conclusion that follows from and reflects on what is experienced, observed, or resolved over the course of the narrative.

Write a First Draft Refer to your notes as you write a first draft.

Remember to use descriptive details to paint word pictures that help readers see settings and people. Once you feel you have told the story vividly and well, reflect on its deeper meaning. Add a conclusion in which you share your reflection with readers.

LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT: CONVENTIONS

Add Variety: Sentence Structure

As you draft and revise your narrative, add precision and liveliness to your writing by varying your **sentence structure**. The structure of a sentence is defined by the number of independent and dependent clauses it contains. There are four basic sentence structures: simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex.

- A **simple sentence** consists of a single independent clause.
- A **compound sentence** consists of two or more independent clauses.
- A **complex sentence** consists of one independent clause and one or more dependent clauses.
- A **compound-complex sentence** consists of two or more independent clauses and one or more dependent clauses.

The structure of a sentence conveys specific meaning to your audience. For instance, a compound sentence indicates that the ideas you are expressing are related and of equal importance. In a complex sentence, the subordinating conjunction you choose shows the specific logical relationship between your ideas.

Varying your sentence structure not only improves clarity but also adds interest to your writing. For instance, following a long, richly detailed compound-complex sentence with a short simple sentence may create a sense of urgency, excitement, or conviction.

Read It

The author of the Launch Text makes use of all four sentence structures.

- *Louis would gaze with eager attention as Simon-René Braille transformed unfinished leather into fine harnesses for horses.* (complex)
- *The crowd was amazed, and some suspected a trick.* (compound)
- *He worried that once blind people could read there would be no need for sighted teachers, so he banned the use of braille.* (compound-complex)
- *Dufau’s assistant, Joseph Gaudet, did not agree.* (simple)

Write It

As you draft and revise your narrative, choose sentence structures that convey specific meanings, and vary them for effect.

TIP

PUNCTUATION

When punctuating a compound sentence, separate the independent clauses either with a comma and a coordinating conjunction or with a semicolon.

STANDARDS

Language

- Use various types of phrases and clauses to convey specific meanings and add variety and interest to writing or presentations.
- Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.
- Use a semicolon to link two or more closely related independent clauses.



Revising

Evaluating Your Draft

Use the following checklist to evaluate the effectiveness of your draft. Then, use your evaluation and the instruction on this page to guide your revision.

FOCUS AND ORGANIZATION	DEVELOPMENT OF IDEAS/ ELABORATION	CONVENTIONS
<input type="checkbox"/> Provides an introduction that establishes a clear setting and point of view. <input type="checkbox"/> Presents a coherent sequence of events. <input type="checkbox"/> Provides a conclusion that follows from and reflects on the events and experiences in the narrative.	<input type="checkbox"/> Effectively uses narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, and description. <input type="checkbox"/> Uses descriptive details, sensory language, and precise words and phrases.	<input type="checkbox"/> Attends to the norms and conventions of the discipline, especially the correct use and punctuation of phrases and clauses. <input type="checkbox"/> Consulted a dictionary to check correct spelling and meaning. <input type="checkbox"/> Consulted a thesaurus to find effective language.

Revising for Focus and Organization

Clarify Insights Review your draft to make sure that you have clearly communicated the importance of the events developed in your narrative. Mark sentences that show the reader what you, or the people in your story, have learned. If necessary, add more of those sentences to better explain your insights. Make sure your conclusion follows from those insights and leaves readers with a lasting impression.

Revising for Evidence and Elaboration

Use Precise Language In order to craft a strong narrative that engages readers, choose words and phrases that are vivid, precise, and lively. Review your draft, identifying vague, imprecise, or weak language.

Vague: They went into the clear water.

Precise: They dove into the crystalline water.

Consider using a thesaurus to broaden your word choices. However, make sure to take into account subtle differences in the meanings of synonyms. Those differences can alter your meaning significantly. To prevent errors, double-check the definitions and consider the connotations of any replacement word choices you find in a thesaurus.

WORD NETWORK

Include interesting words from your Word Network in your narrative.

STANDARDS

Writing

Provide a conclusion that follows from and reflects on what is experienced, observed, or resolved over the course of the narrative.

Language

- Spell correctly.
- Consult general and specialized reference materials, both print and digital, to find the pronunciation of a word or determine or clarify its precise meaning, its part of speech, or its etymology.

PEER REVIEW

Exchange narratives with a classmate. Use the checklist to evaluate your classmate's narrative and provide supportive feedback.

1. Is the problem or situation clearly introduced and developed?
 yes no If no, explain what details could be added.
2. Are the people and events developed through dialogue and description?
 yes no If no, point out what is missing.
3. Does the narrative follow a well-structured sequence of events?
 yes no If no, write a brief note explaining what you thought was missing.
4. What is the strongest part of your classmate's narrative? Why?

Editing and Proofreading

Edit for Conventions Reread your draft for accuracy and consistency. Correct errors in grammar and word usage. Consider adding subordinate clauses to vary structure, add interest, or include relevant details. Consult a grammar handbook or online tools if you need support.

Proofread for Accuracy Read your draft carefully, looking for errors in spelling and punctuation. Check the punctuation of all compound, complex, and compound-complex sentences.

Publishing and Presenting

Create a final version of your nonfiction narrative. Share it with your class so that your classmates can read it and make comments. In turn, review and comment on your classmates' work. Consider the ways in which other students' narratives are both similar to and different from your own. Always maintain a polite and respectful tone when commenting.

Reflecting

Think about what you learned by writing your narrative. What could you do differently the next time you need to write a narrative to make the writing experience easier and to make your final product stronger? For example, you might read your narrative aloud and annotate passages that are especially difficult to follow.

STANDARDS

Writing

Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience.



ESSENTIAL QUESTION:

What does it mean to see?

Through sight, touch, taste, smell, and hearing, people discover and learn about their surroundings. When one or more of those senses is missing, does our knowledge or understanding of the world change? You will read selections that examine lives experienced without physical sight. You will work in a group to continue your exploration of blindness and sight.

Small-Group Learning Strategies

Throughout your life, in school, in your community, and in your career, you will continue to learn and work with others.

Review these strategies and the actions you can take to practice them as you work in teams. Add ideas of your own for each step. Use these strategies during Small-Group Learning.

STRATEGY	ACTION PLAN
Prepare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete your assignments so that you are prepared for group work. • Organize your thinking so you can contribute to your group’s discussions. •
Participate fully	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make eye contact to signal that you are listening and taking in what is being said. • Use text evidence when making a point. •
Support others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build off ideas from others in your group. • Invite others who have not yet spoken to do so. •
Clarify	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paraphrase the ideas of others to ensure that your understanding is correct. • Ask follow-up questions. •

LETTER

View From the Empire State Building

Helen Keller

Famously blind and deaf since early childhood, this author can still describe the breathtaking view from one of the world's tallest buildings.



POETRY COLLECTION

Blind *Fatima Naoot, translated by Kees Nijland*

The Blind Seer of Ambon *W. S. Merwin*

On His Blindness *Jorge Luis Borges, translated by Robert Mezey*

What can we see in the darkness?



SHORT STORY

The Country of the Blind

H. G. Wells

In a land where everyone is blind, is a sighted man destined to succeed—or to fail?



MEMOIR

The Neglected Senses

from For the Benefit of Those Who See

Rosemary Mahoney

At a Tibetan school for the blind, a journalist makes some surprising discoveries.



PERFORMANCE TASK

SPEAKING AND LISTENING FOCUS

Present an Oral Retelling

The Small-Group readings feature people who do not have the physical ability to see but who perhaps “see” in other ways. After reading, your group will plan and deliver an oral retelling about vision and sight.



Working as a Team

1. **Take a Position** In your group, discuss the following question:

Which of our senses is most important?

As you take turns sharing your ideas, be sure to provide reasons that support them. After all group members have shared, discuss some of the ways in which our senses help us understand or—perhaps—misunderstand our world.

2. **List Your Rules** As a group, decide on the rules that you will follow as you work together. Samples are provided; add two more of your own. You may add or revise rules based on your experience together.

- Everyone should participate in group discussions.
- People should not interrupt.

- _____

- _____

3. **Apply the Rules** Practice working as a group. Share what you have learned about blindness and sight. Make sure each person in the group contributes. Take notes, and be prepared to share with the class one thing that you heard from another member of your group.

4. **Name Your Group** Choose a name that reflects the unit topic.

Our group's name: _____

5. **Create a Communication Plan** Decide how you want to communicate with one another. For example, you might use online collaboration tools, email, or instant messaging.

Our group's decision: _____

Making a Schedule

First, find out the due dates for the small-group activities. Then, preview the texts and activities with your group, and make a schedule for completing the tasks.

SELECTION	ACTIVITIES	DUE DATE
View From the Empire State Building		
Blind The Blind Seer of Ambon On His Blindness		
The Country of the Blind		
The Neglected Senses		

Working on Group Projects

As your group works together, you'll find it more effective if each person has a specific role. Different projects require different roles. Before beginning a project, discuss the necessary roles, and choose one for each group member. Here are some possible roles; add your own ideas.

Project Manager: monitors the schedule and keeps everyone on task

Researcher: organizes research activities

Recorder: takes notes during group meetings



About the Author



When she was nineteen months old, **Helen Keller** (1880–1968) became seriously ill with an infection that left her blind and deaf. Limited to hand signals that only the immediate members of her household understood, Keller lived for six years in a world without language. Finally, with the help of Anne Sullivan, her teacher and friend, Keller broke through the barriers of blindness and deafness to learn language and communicate with others. Eventually, she became an accomplished author, social activist, and campaigner for women’s rights. Her amazing journey is documented in the award-winning play and movie *The Miracle Worker*.

STANDARDS

Reading Informational Text
By the end of grade 10, read and comprehend literary nonfiction at the high end of the grades 9–10 text complexity band independently and proficiently.

Language

- Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on *grades 9–10 reading and content*, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.
- Identify and correctly use patterns of word changes that indicate different meanings or parts of speech.

View From the Empire State Building

Concept Vocabulary

As you perform your first read of the letter, you will encounter these words.

unconquerable indomitable dominating

Familiar Word Parts When determining the meaning of an unfamiliar word, look for word parts—such as roots, prefixes, and suffixes—that you know. Doing so can help you unlock meaning. Here are two examples of using the strategy.

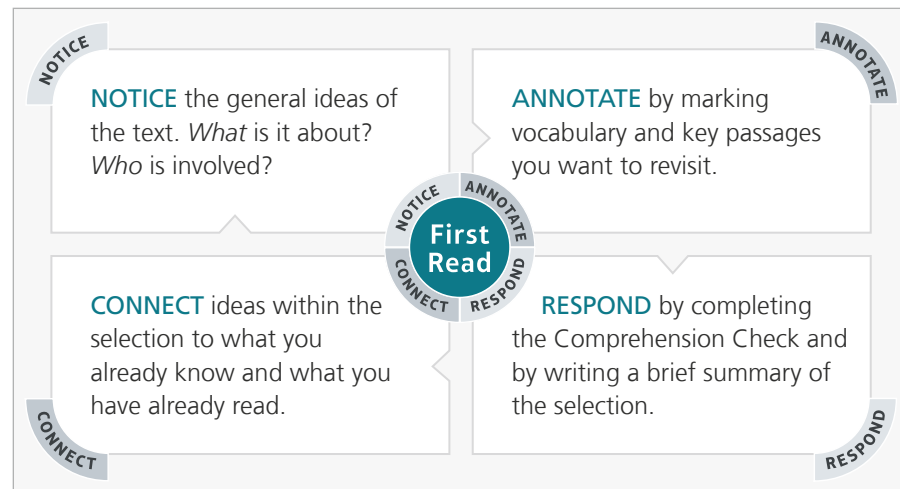
Familiar Roots: If the word *luminary* is unfamiliar to you, notice that it contains the root *-lum-*, meaning “light,” which you may recognize from words such as *illuminate* or *luminous*. The definition of *luminary* probably has something to do with light.

Familiar Suffixes: If the word *meteoric* is unfamiliar to you, notice that it ends with the suffix *-ic*, meaning “having the characteristics of,” which you may recognize from such words as *romantic* and *fantastic*. Something *meteoric* probably has the characteristics of a meteor—perhaps it is huge, is impressive, or makes a big impact.

Apply your knowledge of familiar word parts and other vocabulary strategies to determine the meanings of unfamiliar words you encounter during your first read.

First Read NONFICTION

Apply these strategies as you conduct your first read. You will have an opportunity to complete a close read after your first read.



View From the Empire State Building

Helen Keller

BACKGROUND

When the Empire State Building was completed in 1931, it stood as the tallest skyscraper in the world. Helen Keller visited the building shortly after its opening, and images of her were captured by the *New York Times*. Fascinated by the photographs, Dr. John Finley wrote to Keller, who was both blind and deaf, asking her what she “saw” from so high up. Keller’s response follows.

- 1 January 13, 1932
- 2 Dear Dr. Finley:
- 3 After many days and many tribulations which are inseparable from existence here below, I sit down to the pleasure of writing to you and answering your delightful question, “What Did You Think ‘of the Sight’ When You Were on the Top of the Empire Building?”
- 4 Frankly, I was so entranced “seeing” that I did not think about the sight. If there was a subconscious thought of it, it was in the nature of gratitude to God for having given the blind seeing minds. As I now recall the view I had from the Empire Tower, I am convinced that, until we have looked into darkness, we cannot know what a divine thing vision is.
- 5 Perhaps I beheld a brighter prospect than my companions with two good eyes. Anyway, a blind friend gave me the best description I had of the Empire Building until I saw it myself.
- 6 Do I hear you reply, “I suppose to you it is a reasonable thesis that the universe is all a dream, and that the blind only are awake?” Yes—no doubt I shall be left at the Last Day on the other bank defending the incredible prodigies of the unseen world, and, more incredible still, the strange grass and skies the blind behold are greener grass and bluer skies than ordinary eyes see. I will concede that my guides saw a thousand things that escaped me from the top of the Empire

NOTES

Building, but I am not envious. For imagination creates distances and horizons that reach to the end of the world. It is as easy for the mind to think in stars as in cobblestones. Sightless Milton¹ dreamed visions no one else could see. Radiant with an inward light, he sent forth rays by which mankind beholds the realms of Paradise.

- 7 But what of the Empire Building? It was a thrilling experience to be whizzed in a “lift” a quarter of a mile heavenward, and to see New York spread out like a marvelous tapestry beneath us.
- 8 There was the Hudson—more like the flash of a sword-blade than a noble river. The little island of Manhattan, set like a jewel in its nest of rainbow waters, stared up into my face, and the solar system circled about my head! Why, I thought, the sun and the stars are suburbs of New York, and I never knew it! I had a sort of wild desire to invest in a bit of real estate on one of the planets. All sense of depression and hard times vanished, I felt like being frivolous with the stars. But that was only for a moment. I am too static to feel quite natural in a Star View cottage on the Milky Way, which must be something of a merry-go-round even on quiet days.
- 9 I was pleasantly surprised to find the Empire Building so poetical. From every one except my blind friend I had received an impression of sordid² materialism—the piling up of one steel honeycomb upon another with no real purpose but to satisfy the American craving for the superlative in everything. A Frenchman has said, in his exalted moments the American fancies himself a demigod, nay, a god; for only gods never tire of the prodigious. The highest, the largest, the most costly is the breath of his vanity.
- 10 Well, I see in the Empire Building something else—passionate skill, arduous and fearless idealism. The tallest building is a victory of imagination. Instead of crouching close to earth like a beast, the spirit of man soars to higher regions, and from this new point of vantage he looks upon the impossible with fortified courage and dreams yet more magnificent enterprises.
- 11 What did I “see and hear” from the Empire Tower? As I stood there ‘twixt earth and sky, I saw a romantic structure wrought by human brains and hands that is to the burning eye of the sun a rival luminary.³ I saw it stand erect and serene in the midst of storm and the tumult of elemental commotion. I heard the hammer of Thor⁴ ring when the shaft began to rise upward. I saw the **unconquerable** steel, the flash of testing flames, the sword-like rivets. I heard the steam drills in pandemonium. I saw countless skilled workers welding together that mighty symmetry. I looked upon the marvel of frail, yet **indomitable** hands that lifted the tower to its **dominating** height.

Mark familiar word parts or indicate another strategy you used that helped you determine meaning.

unconquerable (uhn KONG kuh uh buhl) *adj.*

MEANING:

indomitable (ihn DOM uh tuh buhl) *adj.*

MEANING:

dominating (DOM uh nay ting) *adj.*

MEANING:

- Sightless Milton** Seventeenth-century poet John Milton went blind in the 1650s, years before completing some of his greatest works.
- sordid** (SAWR dihd) *adj.* distasteful; dishonorable.
- luminary** (LOO muh nehr ee) *n.* something that gives light.
- hammer of Thor** Thor, the Norse god of thunder, carried a hammer that could crush mountains.


- 12 Let cynics and supersensitive souls say what they will about American materialism and machine civilization. Beneath the surface are poetry, mysticism, and inspiration that the Empire Building somehow symbolizes. In that giant shaft I see a groping toward beauty and spiritual vision. I am one of those who see and yet believe.
- 13 I hope I have not wearied you with my “screed”⁵ about sight and seeing. The length of this letter is a sign of long, long thoughts that bring me happiness. I am, with every good wish for the New Year,
- 14 Sincerely yours,
- 15 Helen Keller

5. **screed** (skreed) *n.* long piece of writing.

NOTES

Comprehension Check

Complete the following items after you finish your first read. Review and clarify details with your group.

1. What question is Helen Keller answering in her letter?
2. Who accompanies Keller to the top of the Empire State Building?
3. According to Keller, how does a Frenchman describe the way Americans imagine themselves?
4. What symbolic meaning does Keller find in the Empire State Building?
5.  **Notebook** Write a summary of the letter.

RESEARCH

Research to Clarify Choose at least one unfamiliar detail from the text. Briefly research that detail. In what way does the information you learned shed light on an aspect of the letter?



VIEW FROM THE EMPIRE STATE BUILDING

TIP

GROUP DISCUSSION

Keep in mind that personal interests can affect how a reader perceives details in a text. For some, the letter’s imagery or references to New York City sights may be of interest. For others, it may be the writer’s personal history. Be supportive and respectful of others as your group discusses the letter.

WORD NETWORK

Add words related to blindness and sight from the text to your Word Network.

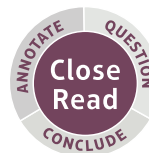
STANDARDS

Language

- Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on *grades 9–10 reading and content*, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.
- Identify and correctly use patterns of word changes that indicate different meanings or parts of speech.

Close Read the Text

With your group, revisit sections of the letter you marked during your first read. **Annotate** details that you notice. What **questions** do you have? What can you **conclude**?



Analyze the Text

CITE TEXTUAL EVIDENCE to support your answers

Notebook Complete the activities.

- Review and Clarify** With your group, reread paragraph 6 of “View From the Empire State Building.” How does Helen Keller describe the way blind people see such things as grass and sky? How do you interpret Keller’s description of grass and sky? Does she mean her remark literally? Explain.
- Present and Discuss** Now, work with your group to share passages from the selection that you found especially important. Take turns presenting your passages. Discuss what details you noticed, what questions you asked, and what conclusions you reached.
- Essential Question: *What does it mean to see?*** What has this selection taught you about ways in which people see?

LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

Concept Vocabulary

unconquerable indomitable dominating

Why These Words? The three concept vocabulary words are related. With your group, determine what the words have in common. Write your ideas, and add another word that fits the category.

Practice

Notebook Use a print or online dictionary to confirm the definitions for the three concept vocabulary words. Write a sentence using each of the words. How did the concept vocabulary words contribute to the clarity and meaning of the sentences you wrote? Discuss.

Word Study

Latin Root: -dom- The Latin root *-dom-* means “house,” “home,” or “master of the house.” The word *indomitable*, for example, is an adjective that means “unable to be ruled or defeated.” Find several other words that contain the root *-dom-*. Record the words and their meanings.

Analyze Craft and Structure

Author’s Choices: Word Choice Any language that is not meant to be understood literally is **figurative language**. Figurative language includes figures of speech such as metaphors, similes, hyperbole, and personification.

A **metaphor** directly compares two unlike items, thus demonstrating a surprising similarity.

Example: The sun is a red-hot coal blazing down on us.

A **simile** uses an explicit comparison word such as *like* or *as* to compare two unlike items.

Example: The sun is like a red-hot coal in the sky.

Hyperbole is the deliberate use of exaggeration to express heightened emotion or add humor.

Example: My anger burned hotter than the light of ten thousand suns.

Personification gives a non-human thing the characteristics of a person.

Example: The red-hot eye of the sun stares down on us.

In addition to figurative language, writers also use precise, vivid words and phrases to provide accurate and engaging descriptions for their readers.

TIP

GROUP DISCUSSION

Keep in mind that members of your group might have different impressions of the effects of word choice and figurative language. There’s no right impression or conclusion, but discussing opinions and the reasons for them will help you clarify your thoughts and learn from one another.

Practice

CITE TEXTUAL EVIDENCE
to support your answers.

Work on your own to complete the chart. Identify examples of figurative language and precise word choice in Keller’s letter. Then, discuss your choices with your group, and consider how each example adds to the vividness, beauty, or clarity of Keller’s writing.

TYPE OF LANGUAGE	EXAMPLE FROM THE SELECTION
Simile	<i>The little island of Manhattan, set like a jewel in its nest of rainbow waters, . . .</i> (paragraph 8)

STANDARDS

- Reading Informational Text**
- Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone.
- Language**
- Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.
 - Interpret figures of speech in context and analyze their role in the text.



VIEW FROM THE EMPIRE STATE BUILDING

Conventions

Types of Phrases Writers use various types of phrases, such as prepositional phrases, to convey specific meanings. A **prepositional phrase** consists of a preposition, the object of the preposition, and any modifiers of the object. An **adverbial phrase** is any prepositional phrase that acts as an adverb in a sentence, by modifying a verb, an adjective, or another adverb. Adverbial phrases tell *where*, *why*, *when*, *in what way*, or *to what extent*.

The chart shows examples of adverbial phrases. The prepositions are italicized, the adverbial phrases are highlighted, and the words they modify are underlined. Note that more than one adverbial phrase may modify a single word.

SENTENCE	FUNCTION(S) OF ADVERBIAL PHRASE(S)
One speaker <u>drove</u> for ninety miles to reach the conference.	tells <i>to what extent</i>
With apparent reluctance , he <u>approached</u> the podium.	tells <i>in what way</i>
After his speech , he <u>retreated</u> to the auditorium's rearmost row .	tell <i>when</i> and <i>where</i>

Read It

- Working individually, read these passages from “View From the Empire State Building.” Mark each adverbial phrase, and write whether it tells *where*, *why*, *when*, *in what way*, or *to what extent*. Then, discuss your answers with your group.
 - A Frenchman has said, in his exalted moments the American fancies himself a demigod. . . .
 - Well, I see in the Empire Building something else—passionate skill, arduous and fearless idealism.
- Working individually, read this passage from paragraph 10 of “View From the Empire State Building.” Identify the word that each underlined adverbial phrase is modifying. Recall that more than one adverbial phrase may modify a single word.

. . . *crouching close to earth like a beast*, the spirit of man soars *to higher regions*, and *from this new point of vantage* he looks *upon the impossible with fortified courage* and dreams yet more magnificent enterprises.

Write It

Notebook Write a paragraph that summarizes Keller’s account of her experience at the top of the Empire State Building. Use at least three adverbial phrases in your paragraph, and mark them.

STANDARDS

Language

- Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.
- Use various types of phrases and clauses to convey specific meanings and add variety and interest to writing or presentations.



Research

Assignment

With your group, research, prepare, and deliver a **group presentation**. Choose one of these options:

- Create a **photo essay** on the construction of the Empire State Building. Include photos or illustrations that show the building in all of its stages of construction, from planning to completion. Add captions quoting primary sources, including Keller's letter. Consider the following questions:
 - Who was the building's architect? How was the project financed? How did the designers of the building describe the project?
 - What was it like for workers to stand on narrow girders 1,000 feet from the ground? How did the workers prepare to work at that height?
- An **allusion** is an unexplained reference within a text to a well-known person, place, event, art work, or literary work. The writer assumes readers know what the reference means. Select an allusion from Keller's letter, and create a **digital presentation** explaining it. Include images or audio clips to help your audience understand the allusion. Consider these questions:
 - To whom or what is the allusion referring?
 - In what way does the allusion reinforce Keller's message?
- The Empire State Building was constructed during the Great Depression, a period of prolonged economic hardship. Role-play a **radio interview** with Helen Keller about what the construction of the building meant to Americans living at that time. Record the interview, and publish it to your class as a podcast. Research to answer these questions:
 - What did the typical American family experience during the Depression?
 - How did the unemployment rate climb?
 - What did the government do to help? How effective were these efforts?

Project Plan Before you begin, make a list of tasks that need to be completed for the research and presentation. Assign individual group members to each task.

Presentation Plan Before you begin the presentation, make decisions about the roles and responsibilities each group member will assume. Also, make decisions about technology and props you will use. After all groups have delivered their presentations, hold a class discussion. Compare the presentation your group gave with those of the other small groups in the class.

EVIDENCE LOG

Before moving on to a new selection, go to your Evidence Log and record what you learned from "View From the Empire State Building."

STANDARDS

Writing

- Use technology, including the Internet, to produce, publish, and update individual or shared writing products, taking advantage of technology's capacity to link to other information and to display information flexibly and dynamically.
- Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

Speaking and Listening

Integrate multiple sources of information presented in diverse media or formats evaluating the credibility and accuracy of each source.



POETRY COLLECTION

Blind

The Blind Seer of Ambon On His Blindness

Concept Vocabulary

As you perform your first read of these poems, you will encounter the following words.

transcend luminous elemental

Context Clues If these words are unfamiliar to you, try using context clues to help you determine their meanings. There are various types of context clues that may help you as you read.

Restatement, or Synonyms: Many **unfortunate** events, including two interceptions and three injuries, resulted in our unlucky loss in the state championships.

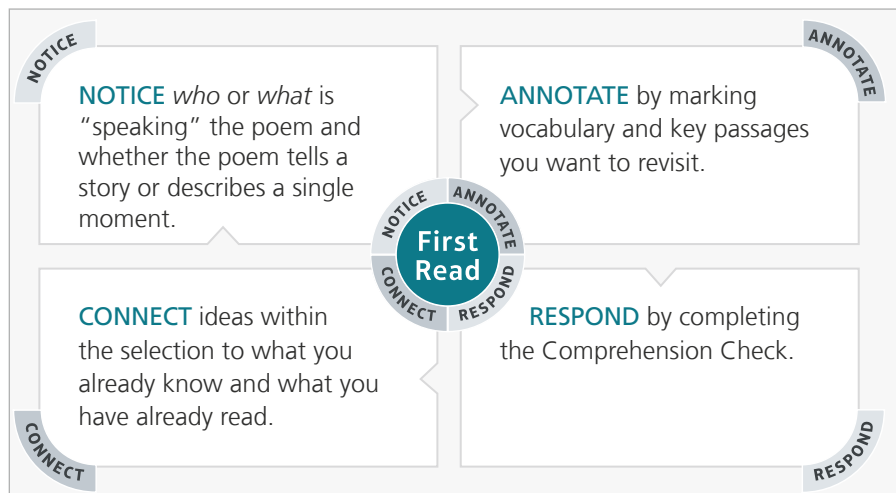
Elaborating Details: After a detailed article came out in the Health and Nutrition section of the newspaper, it became even more **evident** that exercise extends one's life.

Contrast of Ideas: The recent **shortage** of oil around the world has resulted in a sharp increase in gas prices in the United States.

Apply your knowledge of context clues and other vocabulary strategies to determine the meanings of unfamiliar words you encounter during your first read.

First Read POETRY

Apply these strategies as you conduct your first read. You will have an opportunity to complete a close read after your first read.



STANDARDS

Reading Literature

By the end of grade 10, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, at the high end of the grades 9–10 text complexity band independently and proficiently.

Language

- Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on *grades 9–10 reading and content*, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.
- Use context as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.

About the Poets



Fatima Naoot (b. 1964) was born in Cairo, Egypt, trained as an engineer, and became a writer after working as an architect for ten years. Naoot, who has published five books of poetry, and whose prize-winning work has been translated into seven different languages, was charged with “contempt of religion” in an Egyptian court in 2015 for a reference she made in one of her poems.



W. S. Merwin (b. 1927) has enjoyed a celebrated career in poetry for more than seven decades. Merwin has won almost every honor that a poet can receive, including the Bollingen Prize, two Pulitzer Prizes, and the Aiken Taylor Award. He has twice served as the Poet Laureate of the United States.



Jorge Luis Borges (1899–1986) is one of the giants of world literature. Born in Argentina, Borges helped establish the literary style known as magical realism. Borges’s work is considered essential in universities and literary circles around the world. His unique style and point of view have inspired dozens of prominent authors, including Nobel Prize winners Gabriel García Márquez and J. M. Coetzee.

Backgrounds

Blind

Childhood blindness can occur for a number of reasons, including damage to the retina, a part of the eye that is sensitive to light, and cataracts, cloudy areas that form in the lens of the eye. For much of history, no form of blindness was curable. With today’s medical techniques, however, some cases can be cured—especially cataracts, which can be removed with a rapid, if delicate, surgery.

The Blind Seer of Ambon

This poem honors Georg Eberhard Rumphius, a botanist who devoted fifty years of his life to the study of the plants, animals, climate, geography, and native culture of Ambon, an island in present-day Indonesia. During his stay in Ambon, Rumphius was plagued with misfortunes—he lost his eyesight, his wife and daughter were killed in an earthquake, and much of his work was either lost or destroyed.

On His Blindness

The title of this poem alludes to a sonnet by the seventeenth-century poet John Milton—an autobiographical meditation on his lost eyesight. Though Milton had become completely blind by the mid-1650s, he wrote his greatest works, including the epic poem *Paradise Lost*, without his sight. In his version of “On His Blindness,” Borges reflects on his own experience of going blind.

Blind

Fatima Naoot

translated by Kees Nijland

All of a sudden she could see
After an intricate operation performed in a hurry
More in line with committing criminal poetry

A long time she had listened to dozens of books
5 Her empty eyes
Staring upwards
But
When she danced with Lama
On the hillside,
10 He told her that the soul can **transcend** earthly life
If freed from the retina.

She was illiterate
The pain on her face
While in trance
15 Spoilt the text
The pen bent
Before completing the story.

No way of return, now
Knowledge is coming
20 And ignorance is
A lost paradise

Therefore,
The thought of a drained memory
Stayed with her
25 Whenever her eye tried to see.
Silently
She poured out two shadows standing
In a breathless, dark hall,
Prepared for tea,
30 At the end of the show.

Two shadows,
One a lighting technician
And the other
Did his utmost to read
35 But
Utterly stunned
Could not complete the lesson.

Reading does not require eyes
So much was certain
40 When she suddenly regained sight
But did not find books

NOTES

Mark context clues or indicate another strategy you used that helped you determine meaning.

transcend (tran SEHND) *v.*

MEANING:

The Blind Seer of Ambon

W. S. Merwin

NOTES

I always knew that I came from
another language

and now even when I can no longer see
I continue to arrive at words

5 but the leaves
and the shells were already here
and my fingers finding them echo
the untold light and depth

I was betrayed into my true calling
10 and denied in my advancement
I may have seemed somewhat strange
caring in my own time for living things
with no value that we know
languages wash over them one wave at a time

15 when the houses fell
in the earthquake
I lost my wife
and my daughter
it all roared and stood still
20 falling
where they were in the daylight

I named for my wife a flower
as though I could name a flower
my wife dark and **luminous**
25 and not there

I lost the drawings of the flowers
in fire

I lost the studies
of the flowers
30 my first six books in the sea

then I saw that the flowers themselves
were gone
they were indeed gone
I saw
35 that my wife was gone
then I saw that my daughter was gone
afterward my eyes themselves were gone

one day I was looking
at infinite small creatures
40 on the bright sand
and the next day is this
hearing after music
so this is the way I see now

I take a shell in my hand
45 new to itself and to me
I feel the thinness the warmth and the cold
I listen to the water
which is the story welling up
I remember the colors and their lives
50 everything takes me by surprise
it is all awake in the darkness

NOTES

Mark context clues or indicate another strategy you used that helped you determine meaning.

luminous (LOO muh nuhs) *adj.*

MEANING:



On His Blindness

Jorge Luis Borges
translated by Robert Mezey

NOTES

Mark context clues or indicate another strategy you used that helped you determine meaning.

elemental

(ehl uh MEHN tuhl) *adj.*

MEANING:

- In the fullness of the years, like it or not,
a luminous mist surrounds me, unvarying,
that breaks things down into a single thing,
colorless, formless. Almost into a thought.
- 5 The **elemental**, vast night and the day
teeming with people have become that fog
of constant, tentative light that does not flag,
and lies in wait at dawn. I longed to see
just once a human face. Unknown to me
- 10 the closed encyclopedia, the sweet play
in volumes I can do no more than hold,
the tiny soaring birds, the moons of gold.
Others have the world, for better or worse;
I have this half-dark, and the toil of verse.

Comprehension Check

Complete the following items after you finish your first read. Review and clarify details with your group.

BLIND

1. According to the speaker, how does the poem's main character ("she") gain the sense of sight?
2. After she regains her sight, what does she find missing from the world?

THE BLIND SEER OF AMBON

3. What happens to the speaker's houses?
4. Whom does the speaker lose?

ON HIS BLINDNESS

5. What does the speaker long to see just once?
6. Having lost sight, what does the speaker still have?

RESEARCH

Research to Clarify Choose at least one unfamiliar detail from one of the poems. Briefly research that detail. In what way does the information you found shed light on an aspect of the poem?



POETRY COLLECTION

TIP

GROUP DISCUSSION

Keep in mind that personal experience can affect how a reader perceives a poem. For some, the poem's imagery and context will seem familiar. Others will be less comfortable with the poem's approach. Be aware and supportive of the impressions of others as your group discusses the poetry.

WORD NETWORK

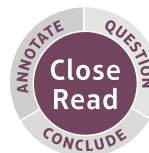
Add words related to blindness and sight from the texts to your Word Network.

STANDARDS

Language
Identify and correctly use patterns of word changes that indicate different meanings or parts of speech.

Close Read the Text

With your group, revisit sections of the text you marked during your first read. **Annotate** details that you notice. What **questions** do you have? What can you **conclude**?



Analyze the Text

CITE TEXTUAL EVIDENCE
to support your answers.

Notebook Complete the activities.

- Review and Clarify** With your group, reread the final stanza of "The Blind Seer of Ambon." What does the shell symbolize? Why is the shell so important to the speaker?
- Present and Discuss** Now, work with your group to share the passages from the poems that you found especially important. Take turns presenting your passages. Discuss what details you noticed, what questions you asked, and what conclusions you reached.
- Essential Question: *What does it mean to see?*** What has this selection taught you about the meaning of seeing? Discuss with your group.

LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

Concept Vocabulary

transcend luminous elemental

Why These Words? The three concept vocabulary words are related. With your group, determine what the words have in common. Write your ideas, and add another word that fits the category.

Practice

Notebook Use a print or online dictionary to confirm the definitions of the three concept vocabulary words. Write a sentence using each of the words. How did the concept vocabulary words contribute to the clarity and meaning of the sentences you wrote? Discuss.

Word Study

Latin Root: -lum- The speaker of "The Blind Seer of Ambon" refers to his wife as simultaneously "dark and luminous." This description may at first seem contradictory because the word *luminous* is formed from the Latin root *-lum-*, which means "light."

- Write a definition of *luminous* that demonstrates your understanding of the root *-lum-*.
- Identify two other words that are formed from the root *-lum-*. Record the words and their meanings.

Analyze Craft and Structure


Poet’s Choices: Figurative Language While writers in all genres use figurative language, poets rely on it because it allows them to express ideas with extra vividness and precision. **Figurative language** is language that carries meanings beyond a literal level. Often, figurative language involves unexpected comparisons. This is the case with analogy.

- An **analogy** is a comparison that shows similarities between two things that are otherwise not alike.
- Often, an analogy explains something unfamiliar by likening it to something familiar.

Clearing up confusion is one use of analogy. However, analogies also provide a new way of looking at a subject that you thought you understood. It is this fresh view of a topic that makes analogy so useful in poetry, which often seeks to reveal hidden truths. To appreciate this use of analogy in poetry, you have to determine what is being compared. Then, consider how seeing one thing in terms of another creates a fresh understanding or insight. Doing so can help you figure out the message, or **theme**, that the poet is using the analogy to develop.

Practice

CITE TEXTUAL EVIDENCE
to support your answers.

 **Notebook** Each of the poems in this collection is about loss of some sort, but also about gain. To arrive at an understanding of the poems and their themes, respond to the questions. Then, discuss your answers with the group.

1. (a) In the third stanza of “Blind,” what situation is compared to a pen being bent before a story is completed? (b) How does the woman described by the speaker expect this situation to change?
2. (a) In “Blind,” why is ignorance a “lost paradise”? (b) What has “she” lost by gaining sight?
3. (a) With what are the “leaves and shells” compared in the third stanza of “The Blind Seer of Ambon”? (b) In the final stanza, a different analogy involving a shell appears. What is being compared, and what does the shell represent to the speaker? (c) What message is the speaker conveying about what is lost and gained?
4. (a) In “On His Blindness,” to what is blindness compared? (b) How do the analogies illustrate the speaker’s attitude toward his blindness and his work? (c) What do the speaker’s feelings of longing mixed with acceptance suggest about the poem’s message?

STANDARDS

Reading Literature

- Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

- Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone.

Language

- Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.
- Interpret figures of speech in context and analyze their role in the text.



POETRY COLLECTION

Author's Style

Word Choice and Meaning It is a general rule that the best writing *shows* rather than *tells*. In other words, rather than merely stating a message, a writer leads readers through the experience of a story or poem. Sensory details, imagery, and surprising juxtaposition are some of the many tools writers use to do this.

- **Sensory details** are words and phrases that relate to the five senses of sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch.
- **Imagery** is the combining of sensory details to build word pictures in readers' minds.
- **Juxtaposition** involves the placement of ideas or details side by side. Often, juxtapositions involve surprising contrasts. For example, an **oxymoron** is a type of figurative language that expressly juxtaposes contrasting or contradictory ideas. The result is an expression that sheds new light on an idea. For example, a "deafening silence" is a stock, or common, oxymoron. It suggests a silence that is actually "loud" with unspoken meanings or feelings.


Sensory details, imagery, and surprising juxtapositions can be used in straightforward ways to describe a person or set a scene. However, they can also be used in imaginative ways to suggest deeper ideas.

Read It

1. Work individually. Find three examples of imagery in the poems. Explain the idea each image helps convey.
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
2. Explain in what way lines 23–24 from "Blind," shown here, are an example of an oxymoron.

The thought of a drained memory / Stayed with her

Write It

 **Notebook** Write a brief paragraph in which you describe a person or a scene. Use at least two images and one oxymoron.

STANDARDS

Reading Literature

- Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.
- Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone.

Language

- Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.
- Interpret figures of speech in context and analyze their role in the text.



Speaking and Listening

Assignment

Choose one of the options, and create an **oral presentation** with your group.

- Prepare and perform a **recitation** of one of the poems. After your recitation, conduct a class discussion in which you consider the following questions:
 - How does hearing the poem differ from simply reading it?
 - What poetic devices are most effective when read aloud? Why?
- With your group, **paraphrase** one of the poems, rewriting it in your own words. You need not follow poetic form. Then, read aloud both the original poem and the paraphrased version. Hold a discussion about the following questions:
 - How are the original poem and the paraphrase similar in meaning?
 - Is the theme more evident in one? If so, which one and why?
 - What does the absence of poetic devices in the paraphrase show you about the effects of those elements?
- Conduct a **round-table discussion** in which three students role-play the poets and answer questions about the themes and styles of their poems.
 - Have a discussion moderator pose questions to the “poets” about how they use imagery and juxtaposition to develop meaning in their poems.
 - The “poets” should respond by citing specific examples and evidence from their poems.

Project Plan Before you begin, make a list of the tasks you will need to accomplish to complete the project. Use this chart to plan.

GROUP MEMBER	ROLE	QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

Classroom Discussion While other groups are performing their presentations, pay close attention to the ideas expressed. Evaluate the use of evidence, and ask follow-up questions to clarify the speakers’ reasoning. Carry out a final classroom discussion in which you discuss the group presentations. Make sure that all group members get a chance to voice their views.

EVIDENCE LOG

Before moving on to a new selection, go to your Evidence Log and record what you learned from “Blind,” “The Blind Seer of Ambon,” and “On His Blindness.”

STANDARDS

Speaking and Listening

- Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions with diverse partners *on grades 9–10 topics, texts, and issues*, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
- Evaluate a speaker’s point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric, identifying any fallacious reasoning or exaggerated or distorted evidence.
- Present information, findings, and supporting evidence clearly, concisely, and logically such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and task.



About the Author



H. G. Wells (1866–1946) was an English novelist, journalist, sociologist, and historian. One of the founding writers of science fiction, Wells is remembered for such influential works as *The Time Machine*, *The War of the Worlds*, and *The First Men in the Moon*. His ideas helped shape popular conceptions of science and the colonization of space.

The Country of the Blind

Concept Vocabulary

As you perform your first read of “The Country of the Blind,” you will encounter these words.

incoherent **perplexity** **delusions**

Base Words If these words are unfamiliar to you, consider whether part of the word looks like a word you already know. Two or more words may have the same **base word**, with different prefixes and suffixes added. If you know one word, you may be able to determine the meaning of the other, even if the spellings vary. You can consult a dictionary to verify the word’s meaning.

Unfamiliar Word: *systematic*

Familiar Base Word: *system*, meaning “organized method of doing something”

Preliminary Determination: *Systematic* may mean “done according to a system, or organized method.”

Verification: The dictionary defines *systematic* as “methodical; done according to a plan.”

Apply your knowledge of base words and other vocabulary strategies to determine the meanings of unfamiliar words you encounter during your first read.

First Read FICTION

Apply these strategies as you conduct your first read. You will have an opportunity to complete a close read after your first read.

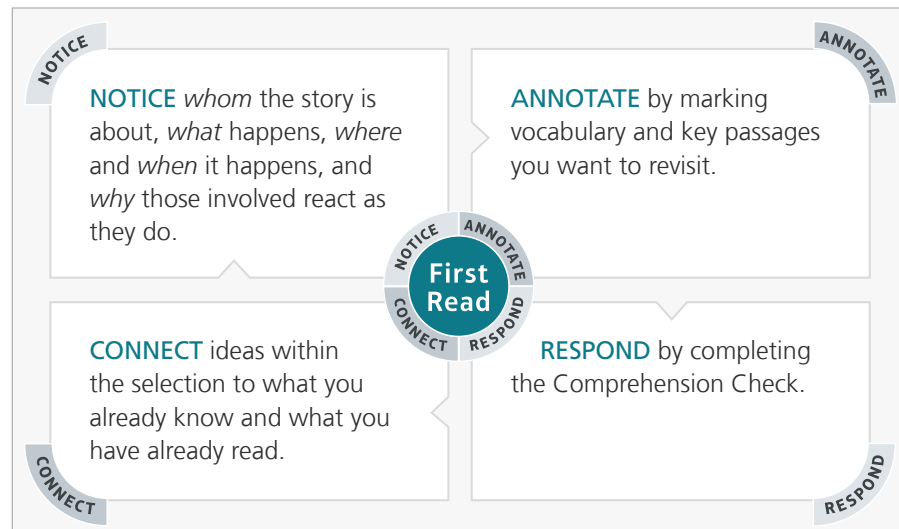
STANDARDS

Reading Literature

By the end of grade 10, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, at the high end of the grades 9–10 text complexity band independently and proficiently.

Language

- Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on *grades 9–10 reading and content*, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.
- Identify and correctly use patterns of word changes that indicate different meanings or parts of speech.
- Verify the preliminary determination of the meaning of a word or phrase.



The Country of The Blind

H. G. Wells



BACKGROUND

"The Country of the Blind" was first published in 1904 and became one of H. G. Wells's best-known short stories. It is one of a number of popular science-fiction stories from the early 1900s that feature a community of people cut off from the outside world. These stories describe extraordinary societies with unique qualities, and the main characters are often outsiders exploring these new worlds.

- 1 **T**hree hundred miles and more from Chimborazo, one hundred from the snows of Cotopaxi,¹ in the wildest wastes of Ecuador's Andes, there lies that mysterious mountain valley, cut off from the world of men, the Country of the Blind. Long years ago that valley lay so far open to the world that men might come at last through frightful gorges and over an icy pass into its equable meadows; and thither indeed men came, a family or so of Peruvians fleeing

1. **Chimborazo . . . Cotopaxi** names of particular peaks in the Andes Mountains, the world's longest mountain range, located in South America.

NOTES

from the lust and tyranny of an evil Spanish ruler. Then came the stupendous outbreak of Mindobamba, when it was night in Quito for seventeen days, and the water was boiling at Yaguachi and all the fish floating dying even as far as Guayaquil; everywhere along the Pacific slopes there were land-slips and swift thawings and sudden floods, and one whole side of the old Arauca crest slipped and came down in thunder, and cut off the Country of the Blind for ever from the exploring feet of men. But one of these early settlers had chanced to be on the hither side of the gorges when the world had so terribly shaken itself, and he perforce had to forget his wife and his child and all the friends and possessions he had left up there, and start life over again in the lower world. He started it again but ill, blindness overtook him, and he died of punishment in the mines; but the story he told begot a legend that lingers along the length of the Cordilleras of the Andes to this day.

- 2 He told of his reason for venturing back from that fastness, into which he had first been carried lashed to a llama, beside a vast bale of gear, when he was a child. The valley, he said, had in it all that the heart of man could desire—sweet water, pasture, and even climate, slopes of rich brown soil with tangles of a shrub that bore an excellent fruit, and on one side great hanging forests of pine that held the avalanches high. Far overhead, on three sides, vast cliffs of grey-green rock were capped by cliffs of ice; but the glacier stream came not to them but flowed away by the farther slopes, and only now and then huge ice masses fell on the valley side. In this valley it neither rained nor snowed, but the abundant springs gave a rich green pasture, that irrigation would spread over all the valley space. The settlers did well indeed there. Their beasts did well and multiplied, and but one thing marred their happiness. Yet it was enough to mar it greatly. A strange disease had come upon them, and had made all the children born to them there—and indeed, several older children also—blind. It was to seek some charm or antidote against this plague of blindness that he had with fatigue and danger and difficulty returned down the gorge. In those days, in such cases, men did not think of germs and infections but of sins; and it seemed to him that the reason of this affliction must lie in the negligence of these priestless immigrants to set up a shrine so soon as they entered the valley. He wanted a shrine—a handsome, cheap, effectual shrine—to be erected in the valley; he wanted relics and such-like potent things of faith, blessed objects and mysterious medals and prayers. In his wallet he had a bar of native silver for which he would not account; he insisted there was none in the valley with something of the insistence of an inexpert liar. They had all clubbed their money and ornaments together, having little need for such treasure up there, he said, to buy them holy help against their ill. I figure this dim-eyed young mountaineer, sunburnt, gaunt, and anxious, hat-brim clutched feverishly, a man all unused to the ways of the lower world, telling this story to some keen-

eyed, attentive priest before the great convulsion; I can picture him presently seeking to return with pious and infallible remedies against that trouble, and the infinite dismay with which he must have faced the tumbled vastness where the gorge had once come out. But the rest of his story of mischances is lost to me, save that I know of his evil death after several years. Poor stray from that remoteness! The stream that had once made the gorge now bursts from the mouth of a rocky cave, and the legend his poor, ill-told story set going developed into the legend of a race of blind men somewhere “over there” one may still hear today.

3 And amidst the little population of that now isolated and forgotten valley the disease ran its course. The old became groping and purblind,² the young saw but dimly, and the children that were born to them saw never at all. But life was very easy in that snow-rimmed basin, lost to all the world, with neither thorns nor briars, with no evil insects nor any beasts save the gentle breed of llamas they had lugged and thrust and followed up the beds of the shrunken rivers in the gorges up which they had come. The seeing had become purblind so gradually that they scarcely noted their loss. They guided the sightless youngsters hither and thither until they knew the whole Valley marvelously, and when at last sight died out among them the race lived on. They had even time to adapt themselves to the blind control of fire, which they made carefully in stoves of stone. They were a simple strain of people at the first, unlettered, only slightly touched with the Spanish civilization, but with something of a tradition of the arts of old Peru and of its lost philosophy. Generation followed generation. They forgot many things; they devised many things. Their tradition of the greater world they came from became mythical in color and uncertain. In all things save sight they were strong and able, and presently the chance of birth and heredity sent one who had an original mind and who could talk and persuade among them, and then afterwards another. These two passed, leaving their effects, and the little community grew in numbers and in understanding, and met and settled social and economic problems that arose. Generation followed generation. Generation followed generation. There came a time when a child was born who was fifteen generations from that ancestor who went out of the valley with a bar of silver to seek God’s aid, and who never returned. Thereabouts it chanced that a man came into this community from the outer world. And this is the story of that man.

4 He was a mountaineer from the country near Quito, a man who had been down to the sea and had seen the world, a reader of books in an original way, an acute and enterprising man, and he was taken on by a party of Englishmen who had come out to Ecuador to climb mountains, to replace one of their three Swiss guides who had fallen ill. He climbed here and he climbed there, and then came the attempt

2. **purblind** (PUR blynd) *adj.* partly blind.

on Parascotopetl, the Matterhorn of the Andes,³ in which he was lost to the outer world. The story of the accident has been written a dozen times. Pointer's narrative is the best. He tells how the little party worked their difficult and almost vertical way up to the very foot of the last and greatest precipice, and how they built a night shelter amidst the snow upon a little shelf of rock, and, with a touch of real dramatic power, how presently they found Nunez had gone from them. They shouted, and there was no reply; shouted and whistled, and for the rest of that night they slept no more.

5 As the morning broke they saw the traces of his fall. It seems impossible he could have uttered a sound. He had slipped eastward toward the unknown side of the mountain; far below he had struck a steep slope of snow, and ploughed his way down it in the midst of a snow avalanche. His track went straight to the edge of a frightful precipice, and beyond that everything was hidden. Far, far below, and hazy with distance, they could see trees rising out of a narrow, shut-in valley—the lost Country of the Blind. But they did not know it was the lost Country of the Blind, nor distinguish it in any way from any other narrow streak of upland valley. Unnerved by this disaster, they abandoned their attempt in the afternoon, and Pointer was called away to the war before he could make another attack. To this day Parascotopetl lifts an unconquered crest, and Pointer's shelter crumbles unvisited amidst the snows.

6 And the man who fell survived.

7 At the end of the slope he fell a thousand feet, and came down in the midst of a cloud of snow upon a snow slope even steeper than the one above. Down this he was whirled, stunned and insensible, but without a bone broken in his body; and then at last came to gentler slopes, and at last rolled out and lay still, buried amidst a softening heap of the white masses that had accompanied and saved him. He came to himself with a dim fancy that he was ill in bed; then realized his position with a mountaineer's intelligence, and worked himself loose and, after a rest or so, out until he saw the stars. He rested flat upon his chest for a space, wondering where he was and what had happened to him. He explored his limbs, and discovered that several of his buttons were gone and his coat turned over his head. His knife had gone from his pocket and his hat was lost, though he had tied it under his chin. He recalled that he had been looking for loose stones to raise his piece of the shelter wall. His ice-axe had disappeared.

8 He decided he must have fallen, and looked up to see, exaggerated by the ghastly light of the rising moon, the tremendous flight he had taken. For a while he lay, gazing blankly at that vast pale cliff towering above, rising moment by moment out of a subsiding tide of darkness. Its phantasmal, mysterious beauty held him for a space, and then he was seized with a paroxysm of sobbing laughter . . .

3. **Parascotopetl, the Matterhorn of the Andes** fictional mountain, which is compared to the most famous and iconic mountain in the Alps, the Matterhorn.

- 9 After a great interval of time he became aware that he was near the lower edge of the snow. Below, down what was now a moonlit and practicable slope, he saw the dark and broken appearance of rock-strewn turf. He struggled to his feet, aching in every joint and limb, got down painfully from the heaped loose snow about him, went downward until he was on the turf, and there dropped rather than lay beside a boulder, drank deep from the flask in his inner pocket, and instantly fell asleep . . .
- 10 He was awakened by the singing of birds in the trees far below.
- 11 He sat up and perceived he was on a little alp at the foot of a vast precipice, that was grooved by the gully down which he and his snow had come. Over against him another wall of rock reared itself against the sky. The gorge between these precipices ran east and west and was full of the morning sunlight, which lit to the westward the mass of fallen mountain that closed the descending gorge. Below him it seemed there was a precipice equally steep, but behind the snow in the gully he found a sort of chimney-cleft dripping with snow-water down which a desperate man might venture. He found it easier than it seemed, and came at last to another desolate alp, and then after a rock climb of no particular difficulty to a steep slope of trees. He took his bearings and turned his face up the gorge, for he saw it opened out above upon green meadows, among which he now glimpsed quite distinctly a cluster of stone huts of unfamiliar fashion. At times his progress was like clambering along the face of a wall, and after a time the rising sun ceased to strike along the gorge, the voices of the singing birds died away, and the air grew cold and dark about him. But the distant valley with its houses was all the brighter for that. He came presently to talus,⁴ and among the rocks he noted—for he was an observant man—an unfamiliar fern that seemed to clutch out of the crevices with intense green hands. He picked a frond or so and gnawed its stalk and found it helpful.
- 12 About midday he came at last out of the throat of the gorge into the plain and the sunlight. He was stiff and weary; he sat down in the shadow of a rock, filled up his flask with water from a spring and drank it down, and remained for a time resting before he went on to the houses.
- 13 They were very strange to his eyes, and indeed the whole aspect of that valley became, as he regarded it, queerer and more unfamiliar. The greater part of its surface was lush green meadow, starred with many beautiful flowers, irrigated with extraordinary care, and bearing evidence of systematic cropping piece by piece. High up and ringing the valley about was a wall, and what appeared to be a circumferential water-channel, from which the little trickles of water that fed the meadow plants came, and on the higher slopes above this flocks of llamas cropped the scanty herbage. Sheds, apparently shelters or feeding-places for the llamas, stood against the boundary wall here and there. The irrigation streams ran together into a main

4. **talus** (TAY luhs) *n.* slope made of rock fragments.

channel down the center of the valley, and this was enclosed on either side by a wall breast high. This gave a singularly urban quality to this secluded place, a quality that was greatly enhanced by the fact that a number of paths paved with black and white stones, and each with a curious little curb at the side, ran hither and thither in an orderly manner. The houses of the central village were quite unlike the casual and higgledy-piggledy agglomeration of the mountain villages he knew; they stood in a continuous row on either side of a central street of astonishing cleanness; here and there their particolored facade was pierced by a door, and not a solitary window broke their even frontage. They were particolored with extraordinary irregularity, smeared with a sort of plaster that was sometimes grey, sometimes drab, sometimes slate-colored or dark brown; and it was the sight of this wild plastering first brought the word "blind" into the thoughts of the explorer. "The good man who did that," he thought, "must have been as blind as a bat."

- 14 He descended a steep place, and so came to the wall and channel that ran about the valley, near where the latter spouted out its surplus contents into the deeps of the gorge in a thin and wavering thread of cascade. He could now see a number of men and women resting on piled heaps of grass, as if taking a siesta, in the remoter part of the meadow, and nearer the village a number of recumbent children, and



then nearer at hand three men carrying pails on yokes along a little path that ran from the encircling wall toward the houses. These latter were clad in garments of llama cloth and boots and belts of leather, and they wore caps of cloth with back and ear flaps. They followed one another in single file, walking slowly and yawning as they walked, like men who have been up all night. There was something so reassuringly prosperous and respectable in their bearing that after a moment's hesitation Nunez stood forward as conspicuously as possible upon his rock, and gave vent to a mighty shout that echoed round the valley.

- 15 The three men stopped, and moved their heads as though they were looking about them. They turned their faces this way and that, and Nunez gesticulated with freedom. But they did not appear to see him for all his gestures, and after a time, directing themselves toward the mountains far away to the right, they shouted as if in answer. Nunez bawled again, and then once more, and as he gestured ineffectually the word "blind" came up to the top of his thoughts. "The fools must be blind," he said.
- 16 When at last, after much shouting and wrath, Nunez crossed the stream by a little bridge, came through a gate in the wall, and approached them, he was sure that they were blind. He was sure that this was the Country of the Blind of which the legends told. Conviction had sprung upon him, and a sense of great and rather enviable adventure. The three stood side by side, not looking at him, but with their ears directed toward him, judging him by his unfamiliar steps. They stood close together like men a little afraid, and he could see their eyelids closed and sunken, as though the very balls beneath had shrunk away. There was an expression near awe on their faces.
- 17 "A man," one said, in hardly recognizable Spanish—"a man it is—a man or a spirit—coming down from the rocks."
- 18 But Nunez advanced with the confident steps of a youth who enters upon life. All the old stories of the lost valley and the Country of the Blind had come back to his mind, and through his thoughts ran this old proverb, as if it were a refrain—
- 19 "In the Country of the Blind the One-eyed Man is King."
20 "In the Country of the Blind the One-eyed Man is King."
21 And very civilly he gave them greeting. He talked to them and used his eyes.
- 22 "Where does he come from, brother Pedro?" asked one.
23 "Down out of the rocks."
24 "Over the mountains I come," said Nunez, "out of the country beyond there—where men can see. From near Bogota,⁵ where there are a hundred thousands of people, and where the city passes out of sight."
25 "Sight?" muttered Pedro. "Sight?"

5. **Bogota** (boh goh TAH) capital city of Colombia.

- 26 “He comes,” said the second blind man, “out of the rocks.”
- 27 The cloth of their coats Nunez saw was curiously fashioned, each with a different sort of stitching.
- 28 They startled him by a simultaneous movement toward him, each with a hand outstretched. He stepped back from the advance of these spread fingers.
- 29 “Come hither,” said the third blind man, following his motion and clutching him neatly.
- 30 And they held Nunez and felt him over, saying no word further until they had done so.
- 31 “Carefully,” he cried, with a finger in his eye, and found they thought that organ, with its fluttering lids, a queer thing in him. They went over it again.
- 32 “A strange creature, Correa,” said the one called Pedro. “Feel the coarseness of his hair. Like a llama’s hair.”
- 33 “Rough he is as the rocks that begot him,” said Correa, investigating Nunez’s unshaven chin with a soft and slightly moist hand. “Perhaps he will grow finer.” Nunez struggled a little under their examination, but they gripped him firm.
- 34 “Carefully,” he said again.
- 35 “He speaks,” said the third man. “Certainly he is a man.”
- 36 “Ugh!” said Pedro, at the roughness of his coat.
- 37 “And you have come into the world?” asked Pedro.
- 38 “Out of the world. Over mountains and glaciers; right over above there, half-way to the sun. Out of the great big world that goes down, twelve days’ journey to the sea.”
- 39 They scarcely seemed to heed him. “Our fathers have told us men may be made by the forces of Nature,” said Correa. “It is the warmth of things and moisture, and rottenness—rottenness.”
- 40 “Let us lead him to the elders,” said Pedro.
- 41 “Shout first,” said Correa, “lest the children be afraid . . . This is a marvelous occasion.”
- 42 So they shouted, and Pedro went first and took Nunez by the hand to lead him to the houses.
- 43 He drew his hand away. “I can see,” he said.
- 44 “See?” said Correa.
- 45 “Yes, see,” said Nunez, turning toward him, and stumbled against Pedro’s pail.
- 46 “His senses are still imperfect,” said the third blind man. “He stumbles, and talks unmeaning words. Lead him by the hand.”
- 48 “As you will,” said Nunez, and was led along, laughing.
- 49 It seemed they knew nothing of sight.
- 50 Well, all in good time he would teach them.
- 51 He heard people shouting, and saw a number of figures gathering together in the middle roadway of the village.
- 52 He found it tax his nerve and patience more than he had anticipated, that first encounter with the population of the Country of the Blind. The place seemed larger as he drew near to it, and the

smear plasterings queerer, and a crowd of children and men and women (the women and girls, he was pleased to note, had some of them quite sweet faces, for all that their eyes were shut and sunken) came about him, holding on to him, touching him with soft, sensitive hands, smelling at him, and listening at every word he spoke. Some of the maidens and children, however, kept aloof as if afraid, and indeed his voice seemed coarse and rude beside their softer notes. They mobbed him. His three guides kept close to him with an effect of proprietorship, and said again and again, "A wild man out of the rock."

53 "Bogota," he said. "Bogota. Over the mountain crests."

54 "A wild man—using wild words," said Pedro. "Did you hear that—*Bogota*? His mind is hardly formed yet. He has only the beginnings of speech."

56 A little boy nipped his hand. "Bogota!" he said mockingly.

57 "Ay! A city to your village. I come from the great world—where men have eyes and see."

58 "His name's Bogota," they said.

59 "He stumbled," said Correa, "stumbled twice as we came hither."

60 "Bring him to the elders."

61 And they thrust him suddenly through a doorway into a room as black as pitch, save at the end there faintly glowed a fire. The crowd closed in behind him and shut out all but the faintest glimmer of day, and before he could arrest himself he had fallen headlong over the feet of a seated man. His arm, outflung, struck the face of someone else as he went down; he felt the soft impact of features and heard a cry of anger, and for a moment he struggled against a number of hands that clutched him. It was a one-sided fight. An inkling of the situation came to him, and he lay quiet.

62 "I fell down," he said; "I couldn't see in this pitchy darkness."

63 There was a pause as if the unseen persons about him tried to understand his words. Then the voice of Correa said: "He is but newly formed. He stumbles as he walks and mingles words that mean nothing with his speech."

64 Others also said things about him that he heard or understood imperfectly.

65 "May I sit up?" he asked, in a pause. "I will not struggle against you again."

66 They consulted and let him rise.

67 The voice of an older man began to question him, and Nunez found himself trying to explain the great world out of which he had fallen, and the sky and mountains and sight and such-like marvels, to these elders who sat in darkness in the Country of the Blind. And they would believe and understand nothing whatever he told them, a thing quite outside his expectation. They would not even understand many of his words. For fourteen generations these people had been blind and cut off from all the seeing world; the names for all the things of sight had faded and changed; the story of the outer world

Mark base words or indicate another strategy you used that helped you determine meaning.

incoherent (ihn koh HIHR uhnt) *adj.*

MEANING:

was faded and changed to a child's story; and they had ceased to concern themselves with anything beyond the rocky slopes above their circling wall. Blind men of genius had arisen among them and questioned the shreds of belief and tradition they had brought with them from their seeing days, and had dismissed all these things as idle fancies, and replaced them with new and saner explanations. Much of their imagination had shriveled with their eyes, and they had made for themselves new imaginations with their ever more sensitive ears and finger-tips. Slowly Nunez realized this; that his expectation of wonder and reverence at his origin and his gifts was not to be borne out; and after his poor attempt to explain sight to them had been set aside as the confused version of a new-made being describing the marvels of his **incoherent** sensations, he subsided, a little dashed, into listening to their instruction. And the eldest of the blind men explained to him life and philosophy and religion, how that the world (meaning their valley) had been first an empty hollow in the rocks, and then had come, first, inanimate things without the gift of touch, and llamas and a few other creatures that had little sense, and then men, and at last angels, whom one could hear singing and making fluttering sounds, but whom no one could touch at all, which puzzled Nunez greatly until he thought of the birds.

68 He went on to tell Nunez how this time had been divided into the warm and the cold, which are the blind equivalents of day and night, and how it was good to sleep in the warm and work during the cold, so that now, but for his advent, the whole town of the blind would have been asleep. He said Nunez must have been specially created to learn and serve the wisdom they had acquired, and that for all his mental incoherency and stumbling behavior he must have courage, and do his best to learn, and at that all the people in the doorway murmured encouragingly. He said the night—for the blind call their day night—was now far gone, and it behooved every one to go back to sleep. He asked Nunez if he knew how to sleep, and Nunez said he did, but that before sleep he wanted food.

69 They brought him food—llama's milk in a bowl, and rough salted bread—and led him into a lonely place, to eat out of their hearing, and afterwards to slumber until the chill of the mountain evening roused them to begin their day again. But Nunez slumbered not at all.

70 Instead, he sat up in the place where they had left him, resting his limbs and turning the unanticipated circumstances of his arrival over and over in his mind.

71 Every now and then he laughed, sometimes with amusement, and sometimes with indignation.

72 "Unformed mind!" he said. "Got no senses yet! They little know they've been insulting their heaven-sent king and master. I see I must bring them to reason. Let me think—let me think."

73 He was still thinking when the sun set.

74 Nunez had an eye for all beautiful things, and it seemed to him that the glow upon the snowfields and glaciers that rose about the

valley on every side was the most beautiful thing he had ever seen. His eyes went from that inaccessible glory to the village and irrigated fields, fast sinking into the twilight, and suddenly a wave of emotion took him, and he thanked God from the bottom of his heart that the power of sight had been given him.

- 75 He heard a voice calling to him from out of the village. “Ya ho there, Bogota! Come hither!”
- 76 At that he stood up smiling. He would show these people once and for all what sight would do for a man. They would seek him, but not find him.
- 77 “You move not, Bogota,” said the voice.
- 78 He laughed noiselessly, and made two stealthy steps aside from the path.
- 79 “Trample not on the grass, Bogota; that is not allowed.”
- 80 Nunez had scarcely heard the sound he made himself. He stopped amazed.
- 81 The owner of the voice came running up the piebald⁶ path toward him.
- 82 He stepped back into the pathway. “Here I am,” he said.
- 83 “Why did you not come when I called you?” said the blind man. “Must you be led like a child? Cannot you hear the path as you walk?”
- 84 Nunez laughed. “I can see it,” he said.
- 85 “There is no such word as *see*,” said the blind man, after a pause. “Cease this folly, and follow the sound of my feet.”
- 86 Nunez followed, a little annoyed.
- 87 “My time will come,” he said.
- 88 “You’ll learn,” the blind man answered. “There is much to learn in the world.”
- 89 “Has no one told you, ‘In the Country of the Blind the One-eyed Man is King’?”
- 90 “What is blind?” asked the blind man carelessly over his shoulder.
- 91 Four days passed, and the fifth found the King of the Blind still incognito, as a clumsy and useless stranger among his subjects.
- 92 It was, he found, much more difficult to proclaim himself than he had supposed, and in the meantime, while he meditated his *coup d’état*,⁷ he did what he was told and learned the manners and customs of the Country of the Blind. He found working and going about at night a particularly irksome thing, and he decided that that should be the first thing he would change.
- 93 They led a simple, laborious life, these people, with all the elements of virtue and happiness, as these things can be understood by men. They toiled, but not oppressively; they had food and clothing sufficient for their needs; they had days and seasons of rest; they made much of music and singing, and there was love among them, and little children.

6. **piebald** (PY bawld) *adj.* covered with patches and spots.

7. **coup d’état** (KOO day TAH) *n.* sudden overthrow of a government by force.



94 It was marvelous with what confidence and precision they went about their ordered world. Everything, you see, had been made to fit their needs; each of the radiating paths of the valley area had a constant angle to the others, and was distinguished by a special notch upon its curbing; all obstacles and irregularities of path or meadow had long since been cleared away; all their methods and procedure arose naturally from their special needs. Their senses had become marvelously acute; they could hear and judge the slightest gesture of a man a dozen paces away—could hear the very beating of his heart. Intonation had long replaced expression with them, and touches gesture, and their work with hoe and spade and fork was as free and confident as garden work can be. Their sense of smell was extraordinarily fine; they could distinguish individual differences as readily as a dog can, and they went about the tending of the llamas, who lived among the rocks above and came to the wall for food and shelter, with ease and confidence. It was only when at last Nunez sought to assert himself that he found how easy and confident their movements could be.

95 He rebelled only after he had tried persuasion.

96 He tried at first on several occasions to tell them of sight. “Look you here, you people,” he said. “There are things you do not understand in me.”

97 Once or twice one or two of them attended to him; they sat with faces downcast and ears turned intelligently toward him, and he did his best to tell them what it was to see. Among his hearers was a girl, with eyelids less red and sunken than the others, so that



one could almost fancy she was hiding eyes, whom especially he hoped to persuade. He spoke of the beauties of sight, of watching the mountains, of the sky and the sunrise, and they heard him with amused incredulity that presently became condemnatory. They told him there were indeed no mountains at all, but that the end of the rocks where the llamas grazed was indeed the end of the world; thence sprang a cavernous roof of the universe, from which the dew and the avalanches fell; and when he maintained stoutly the world had neither end nor roof such as they supposed, they said his thoughts were wicked. So far as he could describe sky and clouds and stars to them it seemed to them a hideous void, a terrible blankness in the place of the smooth roof to things in which they believed—it was an article of faith with them that the cavern roof was exquisitely smooth to the touch. He saw that in some manner he shocked them, and gave up that aspect of the matter altogether, and tried to show them the practical value of sight. One morning he saw Pedro in the path called Seventeen and coming toward the central houses, but still too far off for hearing or scent, and he told them as much. “In a little while,” he prophesied, “Pedro will be here.” An old man remarked that Pedro had no business on path Seventeen, and then, as if in confirmation, that individual as he drew near turned and went transversely into path Ten, and so back with nimble paces toward the outer wall. They mocked Nunez when Pedro did not arrive, and afterwards, when he asked Pedro questions to clear his character, Pedro denied and outfaced him, and was afterwards hostile to him.

Mark base words or indicate another strategy you used that helped you determine meaning.

perplexity (puhr PLEHK suh tee) *n.*

MEANING:

- 98 Then he induced them to let him go a long way up the sloping meadows toward the wall with one complacent individual, and to him he promised to describe all that happened among the houses. He noted certain goings and comings, but the things that really seemed to signify to these people happened inside of or behind the windowless houses—the only things they took note of to test him by—and of these he could see or tell nothing; and it was after the failure of this attempt, and the ridicule they could not repress, that he resorted to force. He thought of seizing a spade and suddenly smiting one or two of them to earth, and so in fair combat showing the advantage of eyes. He went so far with that resolution as to seize his spade, and then he discovered a new thing about himself, and that was that it was impossible for him to hit a blind man in cold blood.
- 99 He hesitated, and found them all aware that he had snatched up the spade. They stood alert, with their heads on one side, and bent ears toward him for what he would do next.
- 100 “Put that spade down,” said one, and he felt a sort of helpless horror. He came near obedience.
- 101 Then he thrust one backwards against a house wall, and fled past him and out of the village.
- 102 He went athwart one of their meadows, leaving a track of trampled grass behind his feet, and presently sat down by the side of one of their ways. He felt something of the buoyancy that comes to all men in the beginning of a fight, but more **perplexity**. He began to realize that you cannot even fight happily with creatures who stand upon a different mental basis to yourself. Far away he saw a number of men carrying spades and sticks come out of the street of houses, and advance in a spreading line along the several paths toward him. They advanced slowly, speaking frequently to one another, and ever and again the whole cordon would halt and sniff the air and listen.
- 103 The first time they did this Nunez laughed. But afterwards he did not laugh.
- 104 One struck his trail in the meadow grass, and came stooping and feeling his way along it.
- 105 For five minutes he watched the slow extension of the cordon, and then his vague disposition to do something forthwith became frantic. He stood up, went a pace or so toward the circumferential wall, turned, and went back a little way. There they all stood in a crescent, still and listening.
- 106 He also stood still, gripping his spade very tightly in both hands. Should he charge them?
- 107 The pulse in his ears ran into the rhythm of “In the Country of the Blind the One-eyed Man is King!”
- 108 Should he charge them?
- 109 He looked back at the high and unclimbable wall behind— unclimbable because of its smooth plastering, but withal pierced with many little doors, and at the approaching line of seekers. Behind these others were now coming out of the street of houses.

- 110 Should he charge them?
- 111 "Bogota!" called one. "Bogota! where are you?"
- 112 He gripped his spade still tighter, and advanced down the meadows toward the place of habitations, and directly he moved they converged upon him. "I'll hit them if they touch me," he swore; "by Heaven, I will. I'll hit." He called aloud, "Look here, I'm going to do what I like in this valley. Do you hear? I'm going to do what I like and go where I like!"
- 113 They were moving in upon him quickly, groping, yet moving rapidly. It was like playing blind man's buff, with everyone blindfolded except one. "Get hold of him!" cried one. He found himself in the arc of a loose curve of pursuers. He felt suddenly he must be active and resolute.
- 114 "You don't understand," he cried in a voice that was meant to be great and resolute, and which broke. "You are blind, and I can see. Leave me alone!"
- 115 "Bogota! Put down that spade, and come off the grass!"
- 116 The last order, grotesque in its urban familiarity, produced a gust of anger.
- 117 "I'll hurt you," he said, sobbing with emotion. "By Heaven, I'll hurt you. Leave me alone!"
- 118 He began to run, not knowing clearly where to run. He ran from the nearest blind man, because it was a horror to hit him. He stopped, and then made a dash to escape from their closing ranks. He made for where a gap was wide, and the men on either side, with a quick perception of the approach of his paces, rushed in on one another. He sprang forward, and then saw he must be caught, and *swish!* the spade had struck. He felt the soft thud of hand and arm, and the man was down with a yell of pain, and he was through.
- 119 Through! And then he was close to the street of houses again, and blind men, whirling spades and stakes, were running with a sort of reasoned swiftness hither and thither.
- 120 He heard steps behind him just in time, and found a tall man rushing forward and swiping at the sound of him. He lost his nerve, hurled his spade a yard wide at his antagonist, and whirled about and fled, fairly yelling as he dodged another.
- 121 He was panic-stricken. He ran furiously to and fro, dodging when there was no need to dodge, and in his anxiety to see on every side of him at once, stumbling. For a moment he was down and they heard his fall. Far away in the circumferential wall a little doorway looked like heaven, and he set off in a wild rush for it. He did not even look round at his pursuers until it was gained, and he had stumbled across the bridge, clambered a little way among the rocks, to the surprise and dismay of a young llama, who went leaping out of sight, and lay down sobbing for breath.
- 122 And so his *coup d'état* came to an end.
- 123 He stayed outside the wall of the valley of the Blind for two nights and days without food or shelter, and meditated upon the

unexpected. During these meditations he repeated very frequently and always with a profounder note of derision the exploded proverb: "In the Country of the Blind the One-Eyed Man is King." He thought chiefly of ways of fighting and conquering these people, and it grew clear that for him no practicable way was possible. He had no weapons, and now it would be hard to get one.

124 The canker⁸ of civilization had got to him even in Bogota, and he could not find it in himself to go down and assassinate a blind man. Of course, if he did that, he might then dictate terms on the threat of assassinating them all. But—sooner or later he must sleep! . . .

125 He tried also to find food among the pine trees, to be comfortable under pine boughs while the frost fell at night, and—with less confidence—to catch a llama by artifice in order to try to kill it—perhaps by hammering it with a stone—and so finally, perhaps, to eat some of it. But the llamas had a doubt of him and regarded him with distrustful brown eyes, and spat when he drew near. Fear came on him the second day and fits of shivering. Finally he crawled down to the wall of the Country of the Blind and tried to make terms. He crawled along by the stream, shouting, until two blind men came out to the gate and talked to him.

126 "I was mad," he said. "But I was only newly made."

127 They said that was better.

128 He told them he was wiser now, and repented of all he had done.

129 Then he wept without intention, for he was very weak and ill now, and they took that as a favorable sign.

130 They asked him if he still thought he could "*see*."

131 "No," he said. "That was folly. The word means nothing—less than nothing!"

132 They asked him what was overhead.

133 "About ten times ten the height of a man there is a roof above the world—of rock—and very, very smooth." . . . He burst again into hysterical tears. "Before you ask me any more, give me some food or I shall die."

134 He expected dire punishments, but these blind people were capable of toleration. They regarded his rebellion as but one more proof of his general idiocy and inferiority; and after they had whipped him they appointed him to do the simplest and heaviest work they had for anyone to do, and he, seeing no other way of living, did submissively what he was told.

135 He was ill for some days, and they nursed him kindly. That refined his submission. But they insisted on his lying in the dark, and that was a great misery. And blind philosophers came and talked to him of the wicked levity of his mind, and reproved him so impressively for his doubts about the lid of rock that covered their cosmic casserole that he almost doubted whether indeed he was not the victim of hallucination in not seeing it overhead.

8. **canker** (KANG kuh) *n.* something that causes rot or decay.

136 So Nunez became a citizen of the Country of the Blind, and these people ceased to be a generalized people and became individualities and familiar to him, while the world beyond the mountains became more and more remote and unreal. There was Yacob, his master, a kindly man when not annoyed; there was Pedro, Yacob's nephew; and there was Medina-saroté, who was the youngest daughter of Yacob. She was little esteemed in the world of the blind, because she had a clear-cut face, and lacked that satisfying, glossy smoothness that is the blind man's ideal of feminine beauty; but Nunez thought her beautiful at first, and presently the most beautiful thing in the whole creation. Her closed eyelids were not sunken and red after the common way of the valley, but lay as though they might open again at any moment; and she had long eyelashes, which were considered a grave disfigurement. And her voice was strong, and did not satisfy the acute hearing of the valley swains.⁹ So that she had no lover.

137 There came a time when Nunez thought that, could he win her, he would be resigned to live in the valley for all the rest of his days.

138 He watched her; he sought opportunities of doing her little services, and presently he found that she observed him. Once at a rest-day gathering they sat side by side in the dim starlight, and the music was sweet. His hand came upon hers and he dared to clasp it. Then very tenderly she returned his pressure. And one day, as they were at their meal in the darkness, he felt her hand very softly seeking him, and as it chanced the fire leapt then and he saw the tenderness of her face.

139 He sought to speak to her.

140 He went to her one day when she was sitting in the summer moonlight spinning. The light made her a thing of silver and mystery. He sat down at her feet and told her he loved her, and told her how beautiful she seemed to him. He had a lover's voice, he spoke with a tender reverence that came near to awe, and she had never before been touched by adoration. She made him no definite answer, but it was clear his words pleased her.

141 After that he talked to her whenever he could take an opportunity. The valley became the world for him, and the world beyond the mountains where men lived in sunlight seemed no more than a fairy tale he would some day pour into her ears. Very tentatively and timidly he spoke to her of sight.

142 Sight seemed to her the most poetical of fancies, and she listened to his description of the stars and the mountains and her own sweet white-lit beauty as though it was a guilty indulgence. She did not believe, she could only half understand, but she was mysteriously delighted, and it seemed to him that she completely understood.

143 His love lost its awe and took courage. Presently he was for demanding her of Yacob and the elders in marriage, but she became fearful and delayed. And it was one of her elder sisters who first told Yacob that Medina-saroté and Nunez were in love.

9. **swains** (swaynz) *n.* males interested in seeking the affection of a woman.

Mark base words or indicate another strategy you used that helped you determine meaning.

delusions (dih LOO zhuhnz) *n.*

MEANING:

144 There was from the first very great opposition to the marriage of Nunez and Medina-saroté; not so much because they valued her as because they held him as a being apart, an idiot, incompetent thing below the permissible level of a man. Her sisters opposed it bitterly as bringing discredit on them all; and old Yacob, though he had formed a sort of liking for his clumsy, obedient serf, shook his head and said the thing could not be. The young men were all angry at the idea of corrupting the race, and one went so far as to revile and strike Nunez. He struck back. Then for the first time he found an advantage in seeing, even by twilight, and after that fight was over no one was disposed to raise a hand against him. But they still found his marriage impossible.

145 Old Yacob had a tenderness for his last little daughter, and was grieved to have her weep upon his shoulder.

146 “You see, my dear, he’s an idiot. He has **delusions**; he can’t do anything right.”

147 “I know,” wept Medina-saroté. “But he’s better than he was. He’s getting better. And he’s strong, dear father, and kind—stronger and kinder than any other man in the world. And he loves me—and, father, I love him.”

148 Old Yacob was greatly distressed to find her inconsolable, and, besides— what made it more distressing—he liked Nunez for many things. So he went and sat in the windowless council-chamber with the other elders and watched the trend of the talk, and said, at the proper time, “He’s better than he was. Very likely, some day, we shall find him as sane as ourselves.”

149 Then afterwards one of the elders, who thought deeply, had an idea. He was the great doctor among these people, their medicine-man, and he had a very philosophical and inventive mind, and the idea of curing Nunez of his peculiarities appealed to him. One day when Yacob was present he returned to the topic of Nunez.

150 “I have examined Bogota,” he said, “and the case is clearer to me. I think very probably he might be cured.”

151 “That is what I have always hoped,” said old Yacob.

152 “His brain is affected,” said the blind doctor.

153 The elders murmured assent.

154 “Now, *what* affects it?”

155 “Ah!” said old Yacob.

156 “*This*,” said the doctor, answering his own question. “Those queer things that are called the eyes, and which exist to make an agreeable soft depression in the face, are diseased, in the case of Bogota, in such a way as to affect his brain. They are greatly distended, he has eyelashes, and his eyelids move, and consequently his brain is in a state of constant irritation and distraction.”

157 “Yes?” said old Yacob. “Yes?”

158 “And I think I may say with reasonable certainty that, in order to cure him completely, all that we need do is a simple and easy surgical operation—namely, to remove these irritant bodies.”

159 “And then he will be sane?”

160 “Then he will be perfectly sane, and a quite admirable citizen.”

161 “Thank Heaven for science!” said old Yacob, and went forth at once to tell Nunez of his happy hopes.

162 But Nunez’s manner of receiving the good news struck him as being cold and disappointing.

163 “One might think,” he said, “from the tone you take, that you did not care for my daughter.”

164 It was Medina-saroté who persuaded Nunez to face the blind surgeons.

165 “You do not want me,” he said, “to lose my gift of sight?”

166 She shook her head.

167 “My world is sight.”

168 Her head drooped lower.

169 “There are the beautiful things, the beautiful little things—the flowers, the lichens among the rocks, the lightness and softness on a piece of fur, the far sky with its drifting down of clouds, the sunsets and the stars. And there is *you*. For you alone it is good to have sight, to see your sweet, serene face, your kindly lips, your dear, beautiful hands folded together . . . It is these eyes of mine you won, these eyes that hold me to you, that these idiots seek. Instead, I must touch you, hear you, and never see you again. I must come under that roof of



rock and stone and darkness, that horrible roof under which your imagination stoops . . . No; you would not have me do that?"

170 A disagreeable doubt had arisen in him. He stopped, and left the thing a question.

171 "I wish," she said, "sometimes——" She paused.

172 "Yes," said he, a little apprehensively.

173 "I wish sometimes—you would not talk like that."

174 "Like what?"

175 "I know it's pretty—it's your imagination. I love it, but now——"

176 He felt cold. "*Now?*" he said faintly.

177 She sat quite still.

178 "You mean—you think—I should be better, better perhaps——"

179 He was realizing things very swiftly. He felt anger, indeed, anger at the dull course of fate, but also sympathy for her lack of understanding—a sympathy near akin to pity.

180 "*Dear,*" he said, and he could see by her whiteness how intensely her spirit pressed against the things she could not say. He put his arms about her, he kissed her ear, and they sat for a time in silence.

181 "If I were to consent to this?" he said at last, in a voice that was very gentle.

182 She flung her arms about him, weeping wildly. "Oh, if you would," she sobbed, "if only you would!"

* * * * *

183 For a week before the operation that was to raise him from his servitude and inferiority to the level of a blind citizen, Nunez knew nothing of sleep, and all through the warm sunlit hours, while the others slumbered happily, he sat brooding or wandered aimlessly, trying to bring his mind to bear on his dilemma. He had given his answer, he had given his consent, and still he was not sure. And at last work-time was over, the sun rose in splendor over the golden crests, and his last day of vision began for him. He had a few minutes with Medina-saroté before she went apart to sleep.

184 "Tomorrow," he said, "I shall see no more."

185 "Dear heart!" she answered, and pressed his hands with all her strength.

186 "They will hurt you but little," she said; "and you are going through this pain—you are going through it, dear lover, for *me* . . . Dear, if a woman's heart and life can do it, I will repay you. My dearest one, my dearest with the tender voice, I will repay."

187 He was drenched in pity for himself and her.

188 He held her in his arms, and pressed his lips to hers, and looked on her sweet face for the last time. "Good-bye!" he whispered at that dear sight, "good-bye!"

189 And then in silence he turned away from her.

190 She could hear his slow retreating footsteps, and something in the rhythm of them threw her into a passion of weeping.

191 He had fully meant to go to a lonely place where the meadows were beautiful with white narcissus, and there remain until the hour of his sacrifice should come, but as he went he lifted up his eyes and saw the morning, the morning like an angel in golden armor, marching down the steeps . . .

192 It seemed to him that before this splendor he, and this blind world in the valley, and his love, and all, were no more than a pit of sin.

193 He did not turn aside as he had meant to do, but went on, and passed through the wall of the circumference and out upon the rocks, and his eyes were always upon the sunlit ice and snow.

194 He saw their infinite beauty, and his imagination soared over them to the things beyond he was now to resign forever.

195 He thought of that great free world he was parted from, the world that was his own, and he had a vision of those further slopes, distance beyond distance, with Bogota, a place of multitudinous stirring beauty, a glory by day, a luminous mystery by night, a place of palaces and fountains and statues and white houses, lying beautifully in the middle distance. He thought how for a day or so one might come down through passes, drawing ever nearer and nearer to its busy streets and ways. He thought of the river journey, day by day, from great Bogota to the still vaster world beyond, through towns and villages, forest and desert places, the rushing river day by day, until its banks receded and the big steamers came splashing by, and one had reached the sea—the limitless sea, with its thousand islands, its thousands of islands, and its ships seen dimly far away in their incessant journeyings round and about that greater world. And there, unpent by mountains, one saw the sky—the sky, not such a disc as one saw it here, but an arch of immeasurable blue, a deep of deeps in which the circling stars were floating . . .

196 His eyes scrutinized the great curtain of the mountains with a keener inquiry.

197 For example, if one went so, up that gully and to that chimney¹⁰ there, then one might come out high among those stunted pines that ran round in a sort of shelf and rose still higher and higher as it passed above the gorge. And then? That talus might be managed. Thence perhaps a climb might be found to take him up to the precipice that came below the snow; and if that chimney failed, then another farther to the east might serve his purpose better. And then? Then one would be out upon the amber-lit snow there, and halfway up to the crest of those beautiful desolations.


198 He glanced back at the village, then turned right round and regarded it steadfastly.

10. **chimney** (CHIHM nee) *n.* narrow column of rock.

- 199 He thought of Medina-saroté, and she had become small and remote.
- 200 He turned again towards the mountain wall, down which the day had come to him.
- 201 Then very circumspectly he began to climb.
- 202 When sunset came he was no longer climbing, but he was far and high. He had been higher, but he was still very high. His clothes were torn, his limbs were blood-stained, he was bruised in many places, but he lay as if he were at his ease, and there was a smile on his face.
- 203 From where he rested the valley seemed as if it were in a pit and nearly a mile below. Already it was dim with haze and shadow, though the mountain summits around him were things of light and fire. The mountain summits around him were things of light and fire, and the little details of the rocks near at hand were drenched with subtle beauty—a vein of green mineral piercing the grey, the flash of crystal faces here and there, a minute, minutely-beautiful orange lichen close beside his face. There were deep mysterious shadows in the gorge, blue deepening into purple, and purple into a luminous darkness, and overhead was the illimitable vastness of the sky. But he heeded these things no longer, but lay quite inactive there, smiling as if he were satisfied merely to have escaped from the valley of the Blind in which he had thought to be King.
- 204 The glow of the sunset passed, and the night came, and still he lay peacefully contented under the cold clear stars. ❁

Comprehension Check

Complete the following items after you finish your first read. Review and clarify details with your group.

1. How do the people who live in the Country of the Blind lose their sight?
2. How does Nunez end up in the Country of the Blind?
3. What unusual qualities does Nunez notice about the villagers' houses?
4. How do the villagers regard Nunez's ability to see, and what do they propose to do to him as a result?
5.  **Notebook** Confirm your understanding of the text by writing a timeline of events in the story.

RESEARCH

Research to Clarify Choose at least one unfamiliar detail from the text. Briefly research that detail. In what way does the information you learned shed light on an aspect of the story?

Research to Explore This story may spark your curiosity to learn more. Briefly research a topic that interests you. You may want to share what you discover with your group.



THE COUNTRY OF THE BLIND

TIP

GROUP DISCUSSION

Some group members may have very good contributions to make to the discussion but find it difficult to speak up. To make sure that you hear the best ideas, reach out to quieter group members by asking them questions.

WORD NETWORK

Add words related to blindness and sight from the text to your Word Network.

STANDARDS

Reading Literature

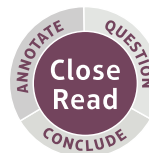
Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure a text, order events within it, and manipulate time create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise.

Language

- Identify and correctly use patterns of word changes that indicate different meanings or parts of speech.
- Consult general and specialized reference materials, both print and digital, to find the pronunciation of a word or determine or clarify its precise meaning, its part of speech, or its etymology.

Close Read the Text

With your group, revisit sections of the text you marked during your first read. **Annotate** details that you notice. What **questions** do you have? What can you **conclude**?



Analyze the Text

CITE TEXTUAL EVIDENCE to support your answers.

Notebook Complete the activities.

- 1. Review and Clarify** With your group, reread paragraph 63 of the selection. Discuss how the people in the hidden valley have gradually created a place and a society in which sight is unnecessary.
- 2. Present and Discuss** Now, work with your group to share passages from the selection that you found especially important. Take turns presenting your passages. Discuss what you noticed, what questions you asked, and what conclusions you reached.
- 3. Essential Question: *What does it mean to see?*** What has the story taught you about blindness and sight? Discuss with your group.

LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

Concept Vocabulary

incoherent perplexity delusions

Why These Words? The three concept vocabulary words are related. With your group, discuss the words, and determine what they have in common. Write another word related to this concept.

Practice

Notebook Confirm your understanding of these words by using them in sentences. Include context clues that hint at meaning.

Word Study

Notebook Latin Root: -lud- / -lus- In "The Country of the Blind," the father of a girl Nunez loves says, "He has delusions; he can't do anything right." The word *delusions* can be traced back to the Latin verb *ludere*, meaning "to play." English words derived from *ludere* contain the root *-lud-* or *-lus-* and tend to have meanings related to silliness, trickery, or deception. Explain how the root contributes to the meanings of *ludicrous* and *illusion*. Consult an etymological dictionary if needed.


Analyze Craft and Structure

Narrative Structure A **plot** is the sequence of related events in a story. All plots are driven by a **conflict**, or struggle between opposing forces. Likewise, every plot follows a basic sequence that involves how the conflict is introduced, developed, and resolved.

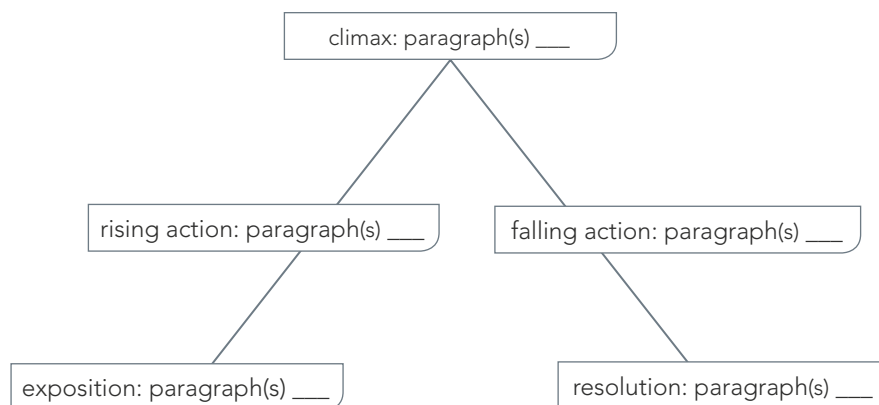
- **Exposition:** The characters, setting, and basic situation are introduced.
- **Rising action:** The central conflict is established and begins to intensify.
- **Climax:** The conflict reaches its highest point of drama or tension.
- **Falling action:** The tension in the story decreases.
- **Resolution:** The conflict ends, and any remaining issues are resolved.

Actions or external changes to a conflict or a character's situation are plot events. However, it is important to note that a character's change of feeling, new understanding, or realization can also be a plot event.

Practice

 **Notebook** Work together as a group to answer these questions.

1. Identify the distinct stages of the plot of "The Country of the Blind."
 - (a) What information does the exposition provide? At what point does the exposition end?
 - (b) What is the story's main conflict? At what point in the story is that conflict first introduced?
 - (c) Cite one event and one character that add complications to the story's main conflict. Explain your choices.
 - (d) At what point in the story does the conflict reach its point of greatest intensity? Explain, citing story details that support your choice.
 - (e) What happens during the story's falling action? How does the conflict resolve?
2. Using your answers to questions 1 (a)–(e), fill in the details of the plot diagram for this story.



CITE TEXTUAL EVIDENCE
to support your answers.



THE COUNTRY OF THE BLIND

Author's Style

Author's Choices: Narrative Pacing Authors choose to speed a story up or slow it down by controlling sentence length, adding description or dialogue, and changing the frequency of plot events. How quickly or slowly a story moves is called its **pace**.

A slow-paced section of a story may focus on descriptions of the setting, characters, and events. Long descriptive passages help readers visualize details and may contribute to a particular **mood**, or emotional atmosphere. A fast-paced section of a story usually has a lot of movement, with one action following another in rapid succession. This may have the effect of increasing tension and moving the plot forward. Fast-paced sections may feature short, punchy sentences. However, in writing of Wells's era, action-packed clauses can also be embedded in longer sentences.

Read It

Work individually. Read each passage in the chart, and describe its pacing. Make notes about the characteristics of the passage that contribute to its pacing. Discuss your responses with your group. During your discussion, support your ideas by including examples from other parts of the story, as well. One example has been done for you.

SELECTION PASSAGE	PACE	EFFECTS
<i>Three hundred miles and more from Chimborazo, one hundred from the snows of Cotopaxi, in the wildest wastes of Ecuador's Andes, there lies that mysterious mountain valley, cut off from the world of men, the Country of the Blind.</i> (paragraph 1)	slow	introduces the setting; long sentence with many clauses conveys the setting's majesty and remoteness
<i>"See?" said Correa. "Yes, see," said Nunez, turning toward him, and stumbled against Pedro's pail. "His senses are still imperfect," said the third blind man. "He stumbles, and talks unmeaning words. Lead him by the hand." "As you will," said Nunez, and was led along, laughing. It seemed they knew nothing of sight. Well, all in good time he would teach them.</i> (paragraphs 44–50)		
<i>He stopped, and then made a dash to escape from their closing ranks. He made for where a gap was wide, and the men on either side, with a quick perception of the approach of his paces, rushed in on one another. He sprang forward, and then saw he must be caught, and swish! the spade had struck.</i> (paragraph 118)		

STANDARDS

Reading Literature

Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure a text, order events within it, and manipulate time create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise.

Write It



Notebook Write two sections of a narrative. In one section, describe the setting. In the other, describe the action. Use techniques, such as longer or shorter sentences, to vary the pacing in the two sections. Then, explain how your choices created specific effects.



Writing to Sources

Assignment

Write a **response to the story**. Work together as a group to brainstorm for ideas and gather evidence, but work independently to write your own response. Choose from these options.

- Retelling** Rewrite a portion of the story as a flashback, as though it is a memory being recalled by Nunez or another character. Explain how the pace and mood of the story change with the manipulation of time.
- Character Description** Write a description of Nunez from another character's point of view. Include thoughts that this character has about Nunez at specific moments in the story. Cite lines of dialogue and other details from the story in your description.
- Dialogue** Write a dialogue in which Nunez describes his experiences in "The Country of the Blind" to an outsider. The dialogue should take place after all the events of the story, when Nunez has returned to his own culture. Include all the major plot points of the story.

Project Plan Before you begin, get together as a group and review the notes you have taken as you analyzed different aspects of the story. Decide which notes might be useful to the project option you have chosen, and determine an equitable way to share the information.

Clarifying Ideas Brainstorm for ideas or story elements you will include in your writing assignment. These may involve important characters, plot points, or key shifts in the pace of the narrative. Refer to the text to clarify your ideas. Use the chart to gather your notes.

STORY DETAIL	HOW I WILL USE IT

Present After you have completed your writing, present the finished work to your group. Take turns reading one another's work and offering constructive feedback. Explain what you think worked well and what might be improved. Using the feedback from your peers, revise your writing.

EVIDENCE LOG

Before moving on to a new selection, go to your Evidence Log and record what you learned from "The Country of the Blind."

STANDARDS

Writing

Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

Speaking and Listening

Come to discussions prepared, having read and researched material under study; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence from texts and other research on the topic or issue to stimulate a thoughtful, well-reasoned exchange of ideas.



About the Author



Rosemary Mahoney

(b. 1961) is a citizen of both Ireland and the United States. Her writing has appeared in the *Wall Street Journal*, *National Geographic Traveler*, the *London Observer*, and many other publications. Regarding her book *For the Benefit of Those Who See*, *Entertainment Weekly* writes that it is as if Mahoney has “turned on the lights in a dark room, revealing how the world appears to those who experience it with their other four senses.”

STANDARDS

Reading Informational Text
By the end of grade 10, read and comprehend literary nonfiction at the high end of the grades 9–10 text complexity band independently and proficiently.

Language

- Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on *grades 9–10 reading and content*, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.
- Use context as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.

The Neglected Senses

Concept Vocabulary

As you perform your first read of “The Neglected Senses,” you will encounter these words.

traversed periphery navigating

Context Clues If these words are unfamiliar to you, try using **context clues**—other words and phrases that appear nearby in a text—to help you determine their meanings. There are various types of context clues that you may help you as you read.

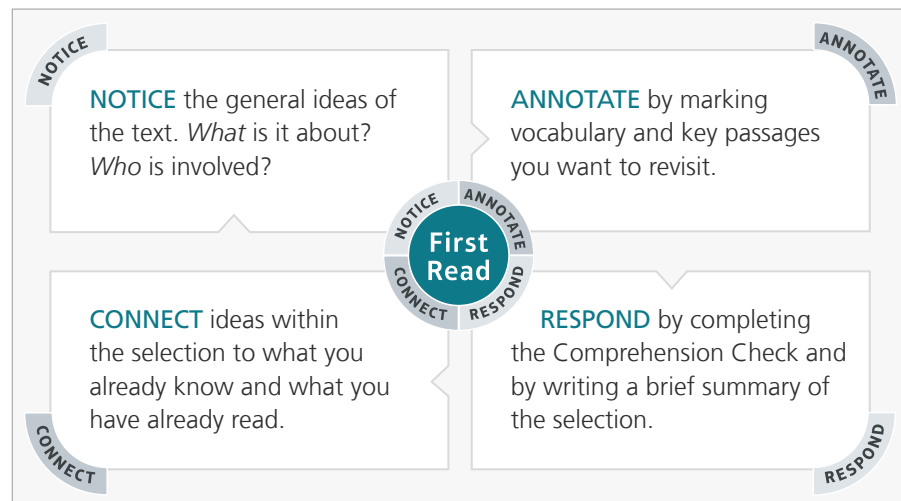
Restatement: The very tall teacher standing beside her tiny first graders was an **incongruous** sight indeed, a stark contrast that made the students’ parents grin.

Contrast of Ideas: The seemingly **relentless** blizzard brought such blinding snow and wind that it was hard to believe when it finally ended.

Apply your knowledge of context clues and other vocabulary strategies to determine the meanings of unfamiliar words you encounter during your first read.

First Read NONFICTION

Apply these strategies as you conduct your first read. You will have an opportunity to complete a close read after your first read.



The Neglected Senses

from For the Benefit of Those Who See

Rosemary Mahoney

BACKGROUND

Due to a punishing climate and lack of medical care, Tibet has an unusually high population of blind people—thirty thousand of the 2.5 million Tibetans are either completely blind or significantly sight-impaired. Beginning in the 1990s, Braille Without Borders, a charitable organization founded by Sabriye Tenberken and Paul Kronenberg in Lhasa, Tibet, has opened schools to help blind Tibetans integrate into society and gain valuable skills.

1 **A**t Braille Without Borders, you learn quickly not to stand idly in doorways or on staircases or in narrow hallways, for the consequence is that eventually somebody blind will slam into you. In settings familiar to the blind, the unobstructed navigability of transitional passageways is something they quite reasonably take for granted. A doorway exists solely to be passed through, a staircase solely to be ascended or descended, a hallway solely to be **traversed** on the way from one room to another. Unable to see that a two-hundred-pound man is sitting in the middle of a staircase, a pack of blind students will most likely fail to anticipate his anomalous presence and fall headlong over him as they attempt to skip down the stairs. The students at BWB race around their school, sprinting down the hallways, turning corners crisply at five miles per hour, skirting tables and chairs, opening doors without groping for the knobs, reaching for objects on shelves with surprising precision. They kick soccer balls, rearrange furniture, zip their own zippers, throw

NOTES

Mark context clues or indicate another strategy you used that helped you determine meaning.

traversed (truh VURST) v.

MEANING:

things and catch things (yes, sometimes they miss the catch and the things end up hitting them in the face), fill their own soup bowls, go for walks downtown alone, make purchases without getting shortchanged. They know their realm so well that after a few days at the school, I began to forget that they were blind and would not have been entirely surprised to find a blind child successfully juggling three apples or using the banister as a balance beam. I realized that those who had some vision actually moved more hesitantly than those who were completely blind. The slightly sighted, still depending on their weakened eyes, had to take time to make out what they were seeing—to locate a doorknob, for example—and sometimes they thought they could see where they were going but miscalculated and ended up crashing into tables or posts. Also, those who could see a bit were more distractible than those who couldn't see at all, and they occasionally tried to read their Braille with whatever sight they had left, holding the embossed pages an inch from their eyes, a habit that Paul and Sabriye adamantly discouraged, because it taxes whatever vision remains and because it is much less efficient than tactile reading.

- 2 I was surprised by the ease and harmony the blind students had with their physical realm and was eager enough to understand it that at Sabriye's suggestion I agreed to let myself be blindfolded and led through the streets of Lhasa by two blind teenage girls, Choden and Yangchen.
- 3 The girls and I set off from the school and as soon as we crossed the big boulevard, Chingdol Dong Lu, I took a blindfold out of my pocket. Yangchen and Choden stood on either side of me, waiting expectantly, holding their white canes before them, clearly amused by the challenge. Yangchen, a shy, round-faced, cross-eyed sixteen-year-old with her hair in a ponytail, was completely blind in one eye and saw only faint impressions of light with the other. She wore a baseball cap, clodhopper boots, a plaid flannel shirt buttoned up to the throat, denim trousers, and a jean jacket. Yangchen's perpetually crossed eyes gave her the appearance of slapstick confusion. I came to learn, however, that Yangchen was a level-headed, sober, practical girl and possessed of considerable poise. Choden, a year younger than Yangchen, was pink-cheeked and ever smiling. She too wore a ponytail, plaid flannel shirt, denim jacket and pants, baseball cap, and hiking boots. Side by side in their rough-and-ready attire, the girls brought to mind a pair of lumberjacks ready to chop their way through a forest. Choden's eyes were pinched shut most of the time, but her left eye occasionally opened and seemed to range around in its orbit taking in some light and color.
- 4 The girls' blindness, their white canes, and my foreign presence with them had drawn a group of onlookers on the city sidewalk. As I pulled the blindfold over my eyes, I said to the girls, "We have a lot of people looking at us."

- 5 Excited and embarrassed, they hooted “Heeoo!” into their fingertips.
- 6 “And,” I added, “one of the people looking at us is a tall Chinese policeman with a gun.”¹
- 7 To that dire piece of information they responded with a moment of shocked silence. And then they lowered their heads and muttered gravely, “Tchah!”
- 8 “But,” I said, “never mind the people. I have put the blindfold on and cannot see them anymore. I am now putting my sunglasses on over the blindfold so that I can see even less.”
- 9 “Good,” Yangchen said. “Now you are blind?”
- 10 My eyes were sufficiently bound that I could see nothing at all—no light, no forms, nothing. The bright and varied colors of the buildings of Lhasa had disappeared, and I was presented with nothing but the backs of my own eyelids onto which my heartbeat was projected in rhythmic flashes of orange. In the high altitude and resultant low atmospheric pressure of Lhasa, I was often aware that my heart was struggling to do its job. Nowhere else in the world had I been so conscious of my own pulse. At night when I lay in bed, my heart pounded in my chest, ears, and eyes and I felt short of breath to the point that I slept with my mouth open and occasionally woke up feeling that I might actually be suffocating, whereupon I had to get up and walk around my enormous hotel room. Sometimes I even had to stand by an open window and inhale deeply (which only gave me the comforting *illusion* that I was getting more air when of course the reality was that the atmospheric pressure outside the room was exactly the same as it was inside it) until the suffocating feeling passed.
- 11 “I can’t see a thing, I assure you,” I said. “Now, listen, girls, you won’t let me get lost in Lhasa, will you? You know I don’t speak Tibetan.”
- 12 With a hint of gloating pleasure Choden said, “Yah. We know it.” Then she took my hand and thrust her white cane into it.
- 13 “Oh, am I taking a cane too?”
- 14 Yangchen, the older of the two, interjected nervously, “Cane? Well, no. Maybe no cane. Choden must have her own cane. Otherwise she can lose her road.”
- 15 I passed the cane clumsily back to Choden. “Take your cane, Choden. God forbid you should lose your road while you’re leading me.”
- 16 The girls positioned themselves on either side of me, hooked their arms through mine, and we headed up the street. Immediately I had the sensation that the ground beneath my feet was tilting. Sound seemed to become louder, smells became stronger, and the breeze on my face felt more forceful and distracting. I tripped on a raised lip of pavement, and the girls quickly tightened their grip on my elbows to keep me from falling. The dragging clicking of one of the canes

1. **Chinese policeman with a gun** Tibet is currently under the control of China.

on the pavement sounded for all the world like the jittering ball in a spinning roulette wheel. I asked Choden if it was her cane that was making all that noise.

- 17 “Yah. Very nizey is my cane.” Compelled to imitate the gravelly sound of her cane, Choden said with relish, “Zaaaarrrrr!”
- 18 Sensing that I was nervous, Yangchen said, “Rose, how you are feeling?”
- 19 “Well, I’m not really afraid,” I said, “but I feel as though I’m in a boat that’s moving. You know that feeling when you’re in a boat and the water is moving beneath you and you’re a little bit unsteady on your feet?”
- 20 “Oh, yah, I know it! Funny,” Choden said. “You are a little bit nervous, is that right, Rose?”
- 21 I confessed that I was indeed a little bit nervous.
- 22 This seemed to please Choden. “Oh, ha!” she said, audibly smiling.
- 23 “Have you ever been in a boat?” I asked her.
- 24 “No, I never.”
- 25 “Well, then how can you say you know how it feels?”
- 26 “Oh, ha! You are right.”
- 27 “Tell me, girls, how do you feel? Does the ground feel steady to you?”
- 28 “Yah,” Yangchen said, “is always steady. No problem. And now we must turn left.”
- 29 “How do you know that?”
- 30 “Because the sound of many televisions.”
- 31 Until Yangchen mentioned it, I had not noticed the sound of many televisions. I had vaguely heard some background noise beyond us, an insignificant presence at the **periphery** of my attention, but distracted by my nervousness, I had not identified it. Now, focusing on it, I realized that the sound of many televisions was quite loud; riotous, in fact—it was that unmistakably tinny television sound, a counterfeit, thinner version of firsthand sound. What I was hearing was the many-times-multiplied voices of two people having a tense dialogue in Chinese; they spoke with the razor-sharp accent of Beijing. And then I heard rapid gunfire; filtered and squeezed through the many televisions, the gunfire sounded feeble and fake, like plastic popguns in a penny arcade. I was disturbed that I hadn’t noticed these sounds from a distance.
- 32 “That is men always selling televisions in a shop,” Yangchen said. “Sometimes it is war films. When we hear the televisions, we know we must turn left.”
- 33 It was a matter of familiarity, then, a recognizable constant in the girls’ journey into the city.
- 34 We carried on at an alarmingly brisk pace. I expected at any moment to crack my forehead on a lamppost or go plummeting into an open manhole. I felt terribly vulnerable and had to fight the impulse to lift the blindfold off my face. As I walked I realized that I was holding my chin much higher in the air than I normally would,

Mark context clues or indicate another strategy you used that helped you determine meaning.

periphery (puh RIHF uhr ee) *n.*

MEANING:

the way I do when I'm swimming and trying to keep my head dry, and each step I took had the same quality of awkward anticipation as those last few exploratory, drop-footed steps taken toward the bottom of a staircase one is descending in the pitch-dark. I couldn't help lifting my hands in front of me in self-defense, like a pathetic caricature of a blind person. Linked at the elbows with the two girls, I found it difficult to lift my hands; nevertheless, I kept trying to lift them, and Yangchen kept gently pressing them down to show me I had nothing to fear.

35 "I shouldn't lift my hands, Yangchen?" I said.

36 "Umm. Maybe it is better to trust," Yangchen said. She was much too patient and polite a girl to just come out and say *No, you shouldn't*.

37 "Girls," I said, "I wouldn't be able to do this alone."

38 "You would be afraid?" Choden said.

39 "I would be very afraid."

40 "Oh, ha," Choden said.

41 "Do not be afraid," Yangchen said. "We are watching you."

42 All the blind students spoke this way—*We are watching you. Nice to see you. See you again. Please let me see that book*. For them, the vocabulary of vision was metaphorical, a symbolic representation of human connection, interest, and concern.

43 The girls coaxed me forward with their slender arms, never breaking their stride. I heard passing voices speaking Tibetan and Chinese, the sound of a small spluttering engine like that of a generator or an idling motorbike, the distant shrieks of children, a horn that sounded like a loud fart, something metallic scraping briefly on the pavement behind us, someone sneezing richly nearby, and all the while Choden's noisy cane rattling along in front of us like a yapping little dog leading the way.

44 Yangchen had a habit of humming as she walked. Each time she spoke, she had to interrupt her own humming, putting it on hold until there was silence between us again, whereupon she would resume the tune approximately where she had left off. I asked the girls how long they had been blind; both said from a very young age. I asked them what they had been doing before they came to Braille Without Borders in Lhasa.

45 Yangchen said, "I was only at home. Just praying something and helping my mother."

46 Choden said, "I'm too home. Praying and helping."

47 "Were there any other blind kids where you lived?"

48 "My country don't have blind kids," Choden said. "Only me."

49 "Not my country either," Yangchen said.

50 I knew that what they meant by "my country" were the villages they had come from, small mountain hamlets with mud-brick houses, muttering flocks of chickens, some goats, shaggy yaks with matted hair, and little else but the biggest sky in the world, an all-engulfing sunlight, and a distant backdrop of seriously jagged snowcapped mountains.

51 Yangchen informed me out of the blue that her father died when she was young and that her mother was, at present, dying. I was so taken aback that I couldn't bring myself to ask what her mother was dying of. Prompted by the mention of parents, Choden said, "My mother was pregnant with me, and a cow kick her in the stomach one time, and so that is why I got blind."

52 I thought about the physics of this. "Are you sure that's why you're blind, Choden?" I said.

53 "Yah. Sure," she said cheerfully, and she gave my arm a little squeeze, as if to assure me that it really was quite all right to have the future of your eyesight mystically predetermined by a wayward, mud-encrusted cow's hoof even before you were born. Like most Tibetans, the blind students were deeply conscious of reincarnation and karmic retribution.² The widespread Tibetan impulse to go to the temple and pray was not just an effort to achieve a higher spirituality but also a warding-off of the malign and omnipresent supernatural forces believed to be pressing upon each individual's life and destiny.

54 I asked the girls if they still prayed now that they were in Lhasa. Yes, every morning at seven they went to the temple to pray. What exactly were they praying for? For the goodness, they said, and good things and to make up for sins.

55 What kind of sins?

56 There was a silence while they thought about this. "Mmm, sometimes we broke some things at school," Choden said.

57 What things?

58 "Everythings! Braille machines and desks and—"

59 "And windows," Yangchen interjected.

60 "Because we cannot see and we make an accident sometimes."

61 I pointed out that these were not sins but forgivable mistakes. They thought about it, then agreed with me. A long silence followed while they searched their souls for real and purposive sins. I knew that the silence was due not to their reluctance to tell me their sins but to their inability to find anything really worthy to confess.

62 "Okay," I said, "never mind the sins."

63 "And anyway now we go right," Yangchen said, gently steering me with her arm.

64 "How do you know that?"

65 "You feel the ground got different here under your feet?"

66 I had felt nothing. But now that Yangchen had brought it to my attention, I realized that the ground we were walking on was very uneven. When I told the girls that I had felt nothing different, that the ground had seemed to me to be always uneven, they stopped, turned me around, and took me back to the start of the street.

67 "Rose, now we show you. You must go and feel the street here." Yangchen tapped my shin firmly with her cane to indicate that I

2. **reincarnation and karmic retribution** belief that the spirit of a person who dies is born into a new body, and that a person's actions in this life affect his or her next life.



^ School for the blind in Lhasa, Tibet

should try the street out with my foot; the gesture was surprisingly authoritative. It was also intimate in the way the gestures of a good teacher often are. "You feel how it feels."

68 I smeared the soles of my shoes around. "It feels smooth, like concrete pavement."

69 "Yah, smooth. Now come and you walk." We walked ten paces on the smooth pavement and then, very abruptly, the pavement changed and became something like cobblestone or roughly hewn brick. The first time around, I hadn't registered the change, which astonished me, because the contrast was in fact sudden and marked. I had simply not been paying attention to what was under my feet. Why would I? When one is in the habit of anticipating the path ahead by sight, one rarely makes conscious note of or even actually *feels* in any lasting way the texture of that path.

70 "When we feel the ground coming different under our feet, we know where we find ourselves," Yangchen said.

71 "Do you know when a person is walking close to you?"

72 "Yes, because we can hear them. And also sometimes can smell them. And also our cane can describe to us whatever is near us."

73 I told the girls their English was quite good and asked them if they were continuing to study the language.

NOTES

- 74 “Yah. Now we are learning how to speak in a restaurant,” Yangchen said.
- 75 I wasn’t sure what she meant by that. By way of explanation, Choden said in the tone of an extremely nervous, extremely unctuous³ waitress, “Hello, madam. You are so very welcome. Good evening, can I help you, please? What would you like to please eat?”
- 76 In the voice of a customer who had memorized the entire menu and was bored stiff by it, Yangchen responded, “Yes, please. I would like to have please one yak s-t-e-a-k.”
- 77 “Oh, very fine,” Choden said. “Please, how would you like your yak s-t-e-a-k to be cooked?”
- 78 “I would like to have my yak steak to be cooked m-e-d-i-u-m rare, please.”
- 79 “What would you please like to drink, please? Would you like to drink some of coffee?”
- 80 “Please,” Yangchen said, “I would like a bottle of white w-i-n-d.”
- 81 “Yangchen,” I said, “w-i-n-d spells wind. A bottle of white wind would be something very rare, if not completely impossible.”
- 82 Yangchen stopped in her tracks and positively guffawed at her mistake. “Oh, ha-ha-ha! No! Please, a bottle of white wine, please, I mean.”
- 83 I told the girls that it was not necessary for them to use the word *please* every time they opened their mouths in a restaurant.
- 84 “No?”
- 85 “No. Once or twice is really enough. Otherwise you will become quite annoying.”
- 86 “What does it mean, *annoying*?” Yangchen asked.
- 87 I explained that being annoying meant that soon enough the person you were serving in the restaurant would have a strong desire to slap you. Immediately they understood. True to Tibetan form, the girls did not let the word *annoying* go by without asking me how to spell it.
- 88 We walked on, listening to the sounds passing by—hammering, a squeaky wheel, birds chattering, voices speaking in Chinese and Tibetan, a horn being blown—and suddenly at my right shoulder, Yangchen interrupted her humming to ask me, “Rose, what is your hoppy?”
- 89 This question always surprises me and makes me uneasy, perhaps because I never have a plausible-sounding answer to the question. If a hobby is something one pursues purely for pleasure, then reading the Greek-English dictionary and another excellent book called *600 Modern Greek Verbs: Fully Conjugated in All the Tenses* is my hobby. I can become engrossed in those books so deeply—one word leading to another—that I fail to notice an entire hour passing. But how to explain this in an offhand way to a person you don’t know well? As a hobby, it sounds not only pointless and dull but pretentious

3. **unctuous** (UHNGK choo uhs) *adj.* excessively and insincerely polite.

and pedantic as well. I have no desire to explain it. Anything I could truly claim as a hobby I am always reluctant to reveal. And the very concept of the hobby strikes me as too parochial, too specific, by definition too distinctly separate from life's main activities.

90 I told Yangchen that in general I liked rowing a boat, riding a bicycle, and making things out of wood—all the activities I liked that seemed to need no explanation or defense.

91 Yangchen said, "I like sing a song and learn some song and I also like rotten."

92 "Rotten? What's that?"

93 "Rotten. Rotten."

94 "Can you spell the word for me?"

95 "I cannot."

96 Choden tried to spell it for her. "Rot. R-o-t. R-o-t-e-n."

97 "Well, I hear what you're saying, but I'm not sure what you mean by it," I said. "Rotten is an adjective. It cannot be a hobby."

98 "Tchah! I am wrong." Yangchen tittered and laid the side of her face against my upper arm, half in embarrassment and half in apology.

99 I felt a soft breeze on my cheek. "Now it's a little windy," I said.

100 "Windy, yah."

101 "How come all of a sudden?" I guessed the answer. "Are we out of the closed street and in an open place?"

102 "You are right," Yangchen said. "We are in open and it is wind and there is a cloud."

103 "How do you know there's a cloud?"

104 "I do not feel the sun on my nose."

105 "I didn't notice that," I said.

106 "Oh, ha," Choden said.

107 By now I had learned that this was Choden's default response. When she didn't know what to say but wanted to maintain active participation in the conversation, she said encouragingly, *Oh, ha*.

108 I heard the sound of water splashing, like a hose or a downspout pouring onto a pavement. "Where is that splashing water coming from?" I said.

109 "Not water," Yangchen said. "That noise is frying of dumplings. Here is a small restaurant in the street."

110 Before long I heard the crashing sound of thunder.

111 "No," Choden said. "Not thunder. That is only the door of the marketplace. They are closing it. It makes a big noise."

112 The closing door sounded so much like thunder that I wanted to pull off my blindfold and look around to be sure that Choden wasn't tricking me. I asked Choden if she was sure it wasn't thunder.

113 "Yah, Rose, sure. Don't worry."

114 "Now I smell gasoline," I said.

115 "No. That is shoes smell."

116 "What?"

- 117 “Shoes smell. *Hongo*.” The two girls conferred in Tibetan, trying to figure out how to explain to me what I was smelling. “It is the smell of shoes. They are selling the shoes here in the street.”
- 118 I heard birdsong coming from somewhere behind us, a clear wandering whistle like that of a robin. I remarked on it, and Choden said, “No, it is not a bird. It is . . .” She said something to Yangchen in Tibetan, looking again for a word.
- 119 “Alarm. It is the alarm for a car in case a person tries to steal it.”
- 120 They knew everything about their city. They knew what everything was and where it was and how it sounded and smelled and felt. They knew it by heart and with their eyes closed. It seemed to me that they knew the city every bit as well as its sighted residents, and I was beginning to wonder whether I too couldn’t benefit from knowing my environment from this different perspective.
- 121 “Now the cloud went and the sun came shining,” Yangchen said, and as soon as she said it I felt the sun on my head.
- 122 “Now we turn left,” Choden said.
- 123 “How do you know we turn left?”
- 124 “We smell the incense. That smells very nice. It means we are nearly in Jokhang Temple.”
- 125 The moment Choden mentioned it, the air was full of the smell of incense. Again, I hadn’t noticed it until she alerted me to it. The girls were always one step ahead of me, maybe two. I had detected very little of what was taking place around me on this walk, perhaps because I was nervous and disoriented, but also because I was so used to **navigating** with my eyes that my other senses, relative to the senses of the blind girls, were atrophied. I stumbled along uncomfortably, feeling out of control and disliking that I was so slow in grasping and noticing what they noticed.
- 126 Sight is a slick and overbearing autocrat, trumpeting its prodigal knowledge and perceptions so forcefully that it drowns out the other, subtler senses. We go through our day semi-oblivious to a whole range of sensory information because we are distracted and enslaved by our eyes. Taste, touch, smell, and hearing can hardly get a word in edgewise to the brain. Those of us who have sight do not realize that our experience of life and the world is overpowered by our vision. In this sense, we too are handicapped. I began to envy Choden’s and Yangchen’s skills a little. In their presence, I saw that I had been missing a great deal of what was happening in my daily life, and I realized that it was not the blind person’s deficiency that was drawing me into this subject but the revelation of my own. 🐼


Mark context clues or indicate another strategy you used that helped you determine meaning.

navigating (NAV uh gayt ihng) *n*.

MEANING:

Comprehension Check

Complete the following items after you finish your first read. Review and clarify details with your group.

1. Where is the author, Mahoney, visiting?
2. What does Mahoney do to experience being blind?
3. What does Choden think caused her blindness?
4. What conclusion about her reliance on sight does Mahoney draw at the end of the excerpt?
5.  **Notebook** Confirm your understanding of the text by writing a summary.

RESEARCH

Research to Clarify Choose at least one unfamiliar detail from the text. Briefly research that detail. In what way does the information you learned shed light on an aspect of the memoir?

Research to Explore This memoir may spark your curiosity to learn more. Briefly research a topic that interests you. You may want to share what you discover with your group.



THE NEGLECTED SENSES

TIP

GROUP DISCUSSION

Keep in mind that group members will have different interpretations of the text. These different perspectives enable group members to learn from one another and to clarify their own thoughts. Very often there is no single interpretation or conclusion.

WORD NETWORK

Add words related to blindness and sight from the text to your Word Network.

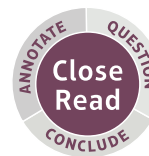
STANDARDS

Reading Informational Text
Analyze in detail how an author's ideas or claims are developed and refined by particular sentences, paragraphs, or larger portions of a text.

Language
Identify and correctly use patterns of word changes that indicate different meanings or parts of speech.

Close Read the Text

With your group, revisit sections of the text you marked during your first read. **Annotate** details that you notice. What **questions** do you have? What can you **conclude**?



Analyze the Text

CITE TEXTUAL EVIDENCE to support your answers.

Notebook Complete the activities.

- 1. Review and Clarify** With your group, discuss Mahoney's claim in paragraph 42 that for Yangchen and Choden the "vocabulary of vision was metaphorical." How do you interpret Mahoney's remark?
- 2. Present and Discuss** Now, work with your group to share the passages from the text that you found especially important. Take turns presenting your passages. Discuss what details you noticed, what questions you asked, and what conclusions you reached.
- 3. Essential Question: *What does it mean to see?*** What has this selection taught you about how the blind define seeing? Discuss with your group.

LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

Concept Vocabulary

traversed periphery navigating

Why These Words? The three concept vocabulary words are related. With your group, determine what the words have in common. Write your ideas, and add another word that fits the category.

Practice

Confirm your understanding of these words by using them in a brief conversation with your group members. Use each word at least once, in a way that demonstrates its meaning.

Word Study

Latin Root: -vers- / -vert- The Latin root *-vers-* or *-vert-* comes from a Latin verb meaning "to turn." Sometimes, it carries this meaning in English, as in the word *invert*. Other times, it indicates motion more generally, as in the word *traversed*. Find several other words that feature this root. Record the words and their meanings.

Analyze Craft and Structure

Development of Ideas Nonfiction is writing that is based in facts. It provides information, explains topics, or tells real-life stories. **Literary nonfiction** is writing that employs many of the same literary devices as fiction while still remaining factual. It may develop a plot, use sensory details, incorporate dialogue, and even use figurative language. A **memoir** is a type of literary nonfiction in which an author relates events from a specific period or about a specific aspect of his or her life. A form of autobiography, a memoir is usually written in the first-person point of view, using pronouns such as *I* and *my*. One unique aspect of a memoir is its **reflective standpoint**, or the way the author describes his or her thoughts or feelings in relation to past events. By looking back on events with fresh insight, the writer expresses an understanding of their deeper meaning. Literary elements help reveal that meaning.

TIP

CLOSE READING

Even though Mahoney’s text is a work of nonfiction, she uses literary techniques such as description and dialogue to engage readers. Consider the choices the author has made and discuss the effect they have on readers.

Practice

CITE TEXTUAL EVIDENCE
to support your answers.

Use the chart to analyze the use of literary elements in “The Neglected Senses.” Then, share and discuss your responses with your group.

LITERARY ELEMENT	EXPLANATION
Who is telling the story?	
What is the setting? How are different elements of the setting described?	
What conversations does the author capture in dialogue? What does her use of dialogue convey that explanations might not?	
How does the sequence of events lead to an insight? What is that insight?	
How do sensory details help bring events to life?	



THE NEGLECTED SENSES

Conventions

Types of Phrases Writers use various types of phrases to convey specific meanings. A **prepositional phrase** consists of a preposition, the object of the preposition, and any modifiers of the object. An **adjectival phrase** is any prepositional phrase that acts as an adjective in a sentence, by modifying a noun or a pronoun. Adjectival phrases tell *what kind* or *which one*.

The chart shows examples of adjectival phrases. The prepositions are italicized, the adjectival phrases are highlighted, and the words they modify are underlined.

SENTENCE	FUNCTION(S) OF ADJECTIVAL PHRASE(S)
The board members chose a <u>chairperson</u> <i>with great credentials</i> .	tells <i>what kind</i> of chairperson
I finally bought <u>tickets</u> <i>for our trip</i> <i>to San Salvador</i> .	one tells <i>what kind</i> of tickets; one tells <i>which</i> trip
The <u>statue</u> <i>of the rearing horse</i> <i>in the park</i> was huge.	both tell <i>which</i> statue

Read It

- Working individually, read these passages from “The Neglected Senses.” Mark each adjectival phrase, and write the word it modifies. Then, discuss your answers with your group.
 - Yangchen’s perpetually crossed eyes gave her the appearance of slapstick confusion.
 - Immediately I had the sensation that the ground beneath my feet was tilting.
 - Until Yangchen mentioned it, I had not noticed the sound of many televisions.
- Reread paragraph 33 of “The Neglected Senses.” Mark each adjectival phrase, and write the word it modifies.

Write It

Write a paragraph in which you explain what you have learned by reading this memoir, and identify a passage that was especially meaningful to you. Use at least one adjectival phrase in your paragraph.

STANDARDS

Language

- Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.
- Use various types of phrases and clauses to convey specific meanings and add variety and interest to writing or presentations.



Speaking and Listening

Assignment

With your group, prepare and deliver an **oral presentation**. Conduct brief Internet research for information and images to include in your presentation. Choose from the following options:

- Prepare an oral **summary** of what you have learned from “The Neglected Senses.” Consider the following questions: What did you learn about how people use their senses to experience the world? What surprised you most about the interaction between Yangchen and Choden and the author? Why?
- Imagine that Yangchen and Choden are on a book tour with the author, Rosemary Mahoney. Role-play a **question-and-answer session** in which journalists question the two teens. Write out the questions, and have students role-play to provide answers. Consider the following questions: What is your school like? What are some of your interests and hobbies? What did you learn from leading the author through the city of Lhasa?
- Use information from the selection and the Internet to create a map of the part of the city that the author and the girls visited. Give a **virtual tour**, pointing out different features on the map to the class. Include images such as photographs.

Presentation Plan Deliver the presentation as a group. Have different group members present different sections of your work. Be sure to refer to specific information from the memoir, as well as from other sources. End your presentation with a conclusion that your audience will remember.

Use the chart to help organize your presentation.

IDEA	INFORMATION FROM MEMOIR	INFORMATION FROM OUTSIDE SOURCE	IMAGE

EVIDENCE LOG

Before moving on to a new selection, go to your Evidence Log and record what you learned from “The Neglected Senses.”

STANDARDS

Speaking and Listening

- Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions with diverse partners on *grades 9–10 topics, texts, and issues*, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
- Present information, findings, and supporting evidence clearly, concisely, and logically such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and task.



SOURCES

- VIEW FROM THE EMPIRE STATE BUILDING
- BLIND
- THE BLIND SEER OF AMBON
- ON HIS BLINDNESS
- THE COUNTRY OF THE BLIND
- THE NEGLECTED SENSES

Present an Oral Retelling

Assignment

You have read about different ways of seeing the world with and without eyesight. Work with your group to develop and refine an **oral retelling** of one of the selections that attempts to answer the following question:

Can one have sight but no vision, or vision but no sight?

Plan With Your Group

Analyze the Texts With your group, discuss different ways in which the writers—or the people or characters they present—see the world in the selections from Small-Group Learning. Consider both physical and symbolic or metaphorical ways of seeing. Also, discuss nuances in the meanings of sight and vision. Use the chart to list your ideas.

TITLE	WAYS TO SEE THE WORLD
View from the Empire State Building	
Blind The Blind Seer of Ambon On His Blindness	
The Country of the Blind	
The Neglected Senses	
Differences and Similarities Between Sight and Vision	

Gather Evidence and Media Examples Scan the selections to record specific examples that support your group’s ideas. Then, brainstorm for ways that you can use the evidence to retell one of the selections from a point of view different from that of the original narrator or speaker. Remember to use a combination of dialogue, description, and reflection to present the experiences, events, and people or characters. Consider including photographs, illustrations, music, charts, graphs, or video clips to add interest and depth to your retelling. Allow each group member to make suggestions.

STANDARDS

Speaking and Listening

Present information, findings, and supporting evidence clearly, concisely, and logically such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and task.

Organize Your Ideas Use a graphic organizer like this one to organize the script for your oral retelling. Assign roles for each part of the retelling, and record what the presenter will say.

ORAL RETELLING SCRIPT		
	Role	Script
Presenter 1		
Presenter 2		
Presenter 3		

Rehearse With Your Group

Practice With Your Group Use this checklist to evaluate your group’s first run-through of your oral retelling. Then, use your evaluation and the instructions here to guide your revision.

CONTENT	USE OF MEDIA	PRESENTATION TECHNIQUES
<input type="checkbox"/> The retelling presents a clear point of view and answer to the question. <input type="checkbox"/> Events are organized in a clear chronological sequence and linked by logical transitions.	<input type="checkbox"/> The media support the oral retelling. <input type="checkbox"/> The media help communicate key ideas. <input type="checkbox"/> Media are used evenly throughout the presentation. <input type="checkbox"/> Equipment functions properly.	<input type="checkbox"/> Media are visible and audible. <input type="checkbox"/> Transitions between media segments are smooth. <input type="checkbox"/> The speaker varies pitch and tone to match meaning and mood.

Fine-Tune the Content To make your oral retelling stronger, use words and expressions that are consistent with the character of the narrator or speaker you have chosen. These details will be especially important in helping your audience understand your thoughts and ideas about sight and vision.

Improve Your Use of Media Practice shifting from spoken content to media elements. Plan what you will do and say if any piece of equipment fails.

Brush Up on Your Presentation Techniques If possible, rehearse your oral retelling in the room where it will take place. Check sight lines to make sure that your digital media will be visible to the entire audience. Do a sound check.

Present and Evaluate

When you present as a group, be sure that each member has taken into account each of the checklist items. As you watch other groups, evaluate how well they meet the checklist requirements.

STANDARDS

Speaking and Listening
 Make strategic use of digital media in presentations to enhance understanding of findings, reasoning, and evidence and to add interest.



ESSENTIAL QUESTION:

What does it mean to see?

The ability to see involves much more than our eyes; it involves our brains and our life experiences. In this section, you will complete your study of blindness and sight by exploring an additional selection related to the topic. You'll then share what you learn with classmates. To choose a text, follow these steps.

Look Back Think about the selections you have already studied. What more do you want to know about the topics of blindness and sight?

Look Ahead Preview the texts by reading the descriptions. Which one seems more interesting and appealing to you?

Look Inside Take a few minutes to scan the text you chose. Choose a different one if this text doesn't meet your needs.

Independent Learning Strategies

Throughout your life, in school, in your community, and in your career, you will need to rely on yourself to learn and work on your own. Review these strategies and the actions you can take to practice them during Independent Learning. Add ideas of your own to each category.

STRATEGY	ACTION PLAN
Create a schedule	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand your goals and deadlines. • Make a plan for what to do each day. •
Practice what you have learned	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use first-read and close-read strategies to deepen your understanding. • After you read, evaluate the usefulness of the evidence to help you understand the topic. • Consider the quality and reliability of the source. •
Take notes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Record important ideas and information. • Review your notes before preparing to share with a group. •

Choose one selection. Selections are available online only.

NOVEL EXCERPT

from **Blindness**

José Saramago, translated by Giovanni Pontiero

From sight to blindness in an instant, a man's life is transformed.



MEDIA: NEWSCAST

Dr. Geoffrey Tabin Helps Blind Ethiopians Gain Sight

ABC News

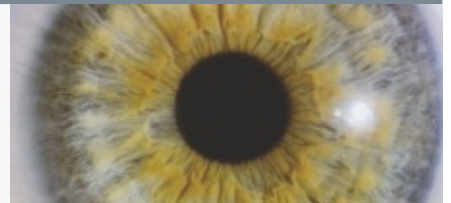


MEDIA: INFORMATIONAL GRAPHIC

How Your Eyes Trick Your Mind

Melissa Hogenboom

What is real and what is an illusion?



SCIENCE ARTICLE

Blind, Yet Seeing: The Brain's Subconscious Visual Sense *Benedict Carey*

Is it possible to see physical objects even if you are blind?



ORAL HISTORY

Experience: I First Saw My Wife Ten Years After We Married *Shandar Herian*

What would it be like to see after being blind for years?

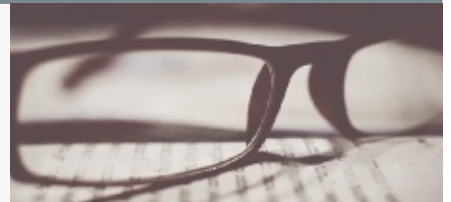


SCIENCE ARTICLE

Visual Neuroscience: Look and Learn

Apoorva Mandavilli

What advances in human understanding are helping people see?



PERFORMANCE-BASED ASSESSMENT PREP

Review Notes for a Nonfiction Narrative

Complete your Evidence Log for the unit by evaluating what you have learned and synthesizing the information you have recorded.



First-Read Guide



Tool Kit
First-Read Guide and
Model Annotation

Use this page to record your first-read ideas.

Selection Title: _____

NOTICE

NOTICE new information or ideas you learn about the unit topic as you first read this text.

ANNOTATE

ANNOTATE by marking vocabulary and key passages you want to revisit.



CONNECT ideas within the selection to other knowledge and the selections you have read.

RESPOND by writing a brief summary of the selection.

CONNECT

RESPOND

STANDARD

Reading Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.

Close-Read Guide

 **Tool Kit**
Close-Read Guide and
Model Annotation

Use this page to record your close-read ideas.

Selection Title: _____

Close Read the Text

Revisit sections of the text you marked during your first read. Read these sections closely and **annotate** what you notice. Ask yourself **questions** about the text. What can you **conclude**? Write down your ideas.



Analyze the Text

Think about the author's choices of patterns, structure, techniques, and ideas included in the text. Select one, and record your thoughts about what this choice conveys.

QuickWrite

Pick a paragraph from the text that grabbed your interest. Explain the power of this passage.

STANDARD

Reading Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.



EVIDENCE LOG

Go to your Evidence Log and record what you learned from the text you read.


Share Your Independent Learning

Prepare to Share

What does it mean to see?

Even when you read or learn something independently, you can continue to grow by sharing what you have learned with others. Reflect on the text you explored independently and write notes about its connection to the unit. In your notes, consider why this text belongs in this unit.

Learn From Your Classmates

 **Discuss It** Share your ideas about the text you explored on your own. As you talk with your classmates, jot down ideas that you learn from them.

Reflect

Review your notes, and mark the most important insight you gained from these writing and discussion activities. Explain how this idea adds to your understanding of the topics of blindness and sight.

STANDARDS

Speaking and Listening

Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions with diverse partners on *grades 9–10 topics, texts, and issues*, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.



Review Notes for a Nonfiction Narrative

At the beginning of this unit, you wrote an initial response to this question:

Is there a difference between seeing and knowing?

EVIDENCE LOG

Review your Evidence Log and your QuickWrite from the beginning of the unit. Have your ideas grown or changed?

<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
Identify at least three ideas or descriptions that changed your mind or added to your knowledge.	Identify at least three ideas or descriptions that reinforced your initial position.
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.

Which person or character that you read about had the greatest impact on your thinking? Explain, using text evidence.

Evaluate the Strength of Your Details Consider your nonfiction narrative. Do you have enough details to write a well-developed and engaging narrative about real-life events? Will you be able to tell a story that develops a theme related to the difference between seeing and knowing? If not, make a plan.

- Brainstorm for details to add
- Talk with classmates
- Reread a selection
- Ask an expert
- Other: _____

STANDARDS

Writing

Engage and orient the reader by setting out a problem, situation, or observation, establishing one or multiple point(s) of view, and introducing a narrator and/or characters; create a smooth progression of experiences or events.



SOURCES

- WHOLE-CLASS SELECTIONS
- SMALL-GROUP SELECTIONS
- INDEPENDENT-LEARNING SELECTION

PART 1

Writing to Sources: Nonfiction Narrative

In this unit, you read about various people and characters, real and fictional, who are unable to see in one way or another.

Assignment

Write a **nonfiction narrative** in which you tell a true story related to the following question:

Is there a difference between seeing and knowing?

In your narrative, present both clearly delineated characters—the people who are involved in the action of the story—and settings. Include a logically sequenced series of events that show the choices people make and their reasons for making them. As you write, use sensory language to convey events vividly. Engage the reader, build to a climax, and close your narrative with a reflective conclusion. Integrate ideas from the texts in this unit to develop details in your story.

Reread the Assignment Review the assignment to be sure you fully understand it. You may choose to write an autobiographical narrative about your own personal experiences. You may also choose to interview someone else and write a narrative based on that person’s experiences. The task may refer to some of the academic words presented at the beginning of the unit. Be sure you understand each of the words here in order to complete the assignment correctly.

Academic Vocabulary

integrate volition altercation
delineate vivid

Review the Elements of an Effective Nonfiction Narrative Before you begin writing, read the Nonfiction Narrative Rubric. Once you have completed your first draft, check it against the rubric. If one or more of the elements is missing or not as strong as it could be, revise your essay to add or strengthen that component.

WORD NETWORK

As you write and revise your nonfiction narrative, use your Word Network to help vary your word choices.

STANDARDS

Writing

- Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.
- Write routinely over extended time frames and shorter time frames for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.

Narrative Rubric

	Focus and Organization	Evidence and Elaboration	Language Conventions
4	<p>The introduction establishes a clear context and point of view.</p> <p>Events are presented in a clear sequence, building to a climax, and then moving toward the conclusion.</p> <p>The conclusion follows from and reflects on the events and experiences in the narrative and provides insightful reflection on the experiences related in the narrative.</p>	<p>Narrative techniques such as dialogue, pacing, and description are used effectively to develop people, events, and settings.</p> <p>Descriptive details, sensory language, and precise words and phrases are used effectively to convey the experiences in the narrative and to help the reader imagine the people and setting.</p> <p>Voice is established through word choice, sentence structure, and tone.</p>	<p>The narrative uses standard English conventions of usage and mechanics.</p> <p>Spelling and meaning are checked with the aid of a dictionary.</p> <p>Effective language is used with the aid of a thesaurus.</p>
3	<p>The introduction gives the reader some context and sets the point of view.</p> <p>Events are presented logically, though there are some jumps in time.</p> <p>The conclusion logically ends the story, but it only provides some reflection on the experiences related in the story.</p>	<p>Narrative techniques such as dialogue, pacing, and description are used occasionally.</p> <p>Descriptive details, sensory language, and precise words and phrases are used occasionally.</p> <p>Voice is established through word choice, sentence structure, and tone occasionally, though not evenly.</p>	<p>The narrative mostly uses standard English conventions of usage and mechanics, though there are some errors.</p> <p>Spelling and meaning are mostly checked with the aid of a dictionary, though there are a few errors.</p> <p>Effective language is mostly used with the aid of a thesaurus, though there are some lapses.</p>
2	<p>The introduction provides some description of a place. The point of view can be unclear at times.</p> <p>Transitions between events are occasionally unclear.</p> <p>The conclusion comes abruptly and provides only a small amount of reflection on the experiences related in the narrative.</p>	<p>Narrative techniques such as dialogue, pacing, and description are used sparingly.</p> <p>The story contains few examples of descriptive details and sensory language.</p> <p>People are not clearly distinguishable from one another.</p>	<p>The narrative contains some errors in standard English conventions of usage and mechanics.</p> <p>Some spelling and meaning errors appear throughout the narrative.</p> <p>The language appears basic.</p>
1	<p>The introduction does not introduce place and point of view.</p> <p>Events do not follow logically.</p> <p>The narrative lacks a conclusion.</p>	<p>The narrative is not developed with dialogue, pacing, and description.</p> <p>The narrative lacks descriptive details and sensory language.</p> <p>People speak in the same manner and do not have unique characteristics.</p>	<p>The narrative contains many errors in standard English conventions of usage and mechanics.</p> <p>Spelling and meaning errors appear throughout the narrative.</p> <p>The language appears basic and repetitive.</p>



PART 2

Speaking and Listening: Storytelling

Assignment

After completing the final draft of your nonfiction narrative, use it as the basis for a three- to five-minute **storytelling session**.

Instead of simply reading your narrative aloud, take the following steps to make your storytelling lively and engaging:

- Grab your audience’s attention by starting with an exciting scene or a vivid description of the people in your true story.
- Tell your story in a logical sequence that establishes a clear setting, describes characters, and sets up and develops the conflict.
- Vary the tone, pitch, and inflection of your voice to mirror the emotions and actions you describe.
- Use body language and gestures to add emphasis or to illustrate how characters behave or perform a particular action.
- Make eye contact with your audience.
- Use media, such as pictures and sound effects, to enhance your narrative.

Review the Rubric The criteria by which your storytelling will be evaluated appear in the rubric below. Review these criteria before presenting to ensure that you are prepared.

	Content	Use of Media	Presentation Techniques
3	Storyteller engages the audience by describing real people, a defined conflict, and a clear resolution.	Included media are appropriate and add interest.	The speaker’s word choice, volume, pitch, and eye contact are engaging and appropriate.
2	Storyteller describes real people, a conflict, and a resolution.	Included media are dull or only tangentially relevant.	The speaker’s word choice, volume, pitch, and eye contact are somewhat engaging and appropriate.
1	Storyteller does not clearly describe people or establish a defined conflict and resolution.	Included media are irrelevant or inappropriate to narrative.	The speaker’s word choice, volume, pitch, and eye contact are neither engaging nor appropriate.

STANDARDS

Speaking and Listening

- Make strategic use of digital media in presentations to enhance understanding of findings, reasoning, and evidence and to add interest.
- Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.


Reflect on the Unit

Now that you've completed the unit, take a few moments to reflect on your learning. Use the questions below to think about where you succeeded, what skills and strategies helped you, and where you can continue to grow in the future.

Reflect on the Unit Goals

Look back at the goals at the beginning of the unit. Use a different colored pen to rate yourself again. Think about readings and activities that contributed the most to the growth of your understanding. Record your thoughts.

Reflect on the Learning Strategies

 **Discuss It** Write a reflection on whether you were able to improve your learning based on your Action Plans. Think about what worked, what didn't, and what you might do to keep working on these strategies. Record your ideas before joining a class discussion.

Reflect on the Text

Choose a selection that you found challenging, and explain what made it difficult.

Describe something that surprised you about a text in the unit.

Which activity taught you the most about blindness and sight? What did you learn?

STANDARDS**Speaking and Listening**

- Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions with diverse partners on *grades 9–10 topics, texts, and issues*, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
- Come to discussions prepared, having read and researched material under study; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence from texts and other research on the topic or issue to stimulate a thoughtful, well-reasoned exchange of ideas.

from **Blindness**

José Saramago

translated by Giovanni Pontiero

About the Author



José Saramago (1922–2010) was born in Azinhaga, Portugal. He held a variety of jobs in Lisbon before publishing his first novel, *Land of Sin*, in 1947. Later, Saramago worked as a journalist, joined the Portuguese Communist Party, and became recognized for his work *Risen from the Ground* (1980). Saramago's writing focuses on politics and social commentary. In 1998, he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature.

BACKGROUND

An epidemic is the rapid spread of a disease to a large number of people. By definition, epidemics cause mass illness and, often, death—but those are not their only effects. The threat of epidemic can also lead to widespread chaos and fear. The Black Death in Europe in the 1300s, the smallpox epidemic in the New England colonies in the 1630s, the worldwide influenza epidemic of 1918–1919, and the AIDS epidemic of the 1980s are examples of historic epidemics.

NOTES

- 1 **T**he amber light came on. Two of the cars ahead accelerated before the red light appeared. At the pedestrian crossing the sign of a green man lit up. The people who were waiting began to cross the road, stepping on the white stripes painted on the black surface of the asphalt, there is nothing less like a zebra, however, that is what it is called. The motorists kept an impatient foot on the clutch, leaving their cars at the ready, advancing, retreating like nervous horses that can sense the whiplash about to be inflicted. The pedestrians have just finished crossing but the sign allowing the cars to go will be delayed for some seconds, some people maintain that this delay, while apparently so insignificant, has only to be multiplied by the thousands of traffic lights that

exist in the city and by the successive changes of their three colors to produce one of the most serious causes of traffic jams or bottlenecks, to use the more current term.

- 2 The green light came on at last, the cars moved off briskly, but then it became clear that not all of them were equally quick off the mark. The car at the head of the middle lane has stopped, there must be some mechanical fault, a loose accelerator pedal, a gear lever that has stuck, problem with the suspension, jammed brakes, breakdown in the electric circuit, unless he has simply run out of gas, it would not be the first time such a thing has happened. The next group of pedestrians to gather at the crossing see the driver of the stationary car wave his arms behind the windshield, while the cars behind him frantically sound their horns. Some drivers have already got out of their cars, prepared to push the stranded vehicle to a spot where it will not hold up the traffic, they beat furiously on the closed windows, the man inside turns his head in their direction, first to one side then the other, he is clearly shouting something, to judge by the movements of his mouth he appears to be repeating some words, not one word but three, as turns out to be the case when someone finally manages to open the door, I am blind.
- 3 Who would have believed it. Seen merely at a glance, the man's eyes seem healthy, the iris looks bright, luminous, the sclera white, as compact as porcelain. The eyes wide open, the wrinkled skin of the face, his eyebrows suddenly screwed up, all this, as anyone can see, signifies that he is distraught with anguish. With a rapid movement, what was in sight has disappeared behind the man's clenched fists, as if he were still trying to retain inside his mind the final image captured, a round red light at the traffic lights. I am blind, I am blind, he repeated in despair as they helped him to get out of the car, and the tears welling up made those eyes which he claimed were dead, shine even more. These things happen, it will pass you'll see, sometimes it's nerves, said a woman. The lights had already changed again, some inquisitive passersby had gathered around the group, and the drivers further back who did not know what was going on, protested at what they thought was some common accident, a smashed headlight, a dented fender, nothing to justify this upheaval, Call the police, they shouted and get that old wreck out of the way. The blind man pleaded, Please, will someone take me home. The woman who had suggested a case of nerves was of the opinion that an ambulance should be summoned to transport the poor man to the hospital, but the blind man refused to hear of it, quite unnecessary, all he wanted was that someone might accompany him to the entrance of the building where he lived. It's close by and you could do me no greater favor. And what about the car, asked someone. Another

voice replied, The key is in the ignition, drive the car on to the pavement. No need, intervened a third voice, I'll take charge of the car and accompany this man home. There were murmurs of approval. The blind man felt himself being taken by the arm, Come, come with me, the same voice was saying to him. They eased him into the front passenger seat, and secured the safety belt. I can't see, I can't see, he murmured, still weeping. Tell me where you live, the man asked him. Through the car windows voracious¹ faces spied, avid² for some news. The blind man raised his hands to his eyes and gestured, Nothing, it's as if I were caught in a mist or had fallen into a milky sea. But blindness isn't like that, said the other fellow, they say that blindness is black. Well I see everything white, That little woman was probably right, it could be a matter of nerves, nerves are the very devil, No need to talk to me about it, it's a disaster, yes a disaster, Tell me where you live please, and at the same time the engine started up. Faltering, as if his lack of sight had weakened his memory, the blind man gave his address, then he said, I have no words to thank you, and the other replied, Now then, don't give it another thought, today it's your turn, tomorrow it will be mine, we never know what might lie in store for us, You're right, who would have thought, when I left the house this morning, that something as dreadful as this was about to happen. He was puzzled that they should still be at a standstill, Why aren't we moving, he asked, The light is on red, replied the other. From now on he would no longer know when the light was red.

- 4 As the blind man had said, his home was nearby. But the pavements were crammed with vehicles, they could not find a space to park and were obliged to look for a spot in one of the side streets. There, because of the narrowness of the pavement, the door on the passenger's side would have been little more than a hand's-breadth from the wall, so in order to avoid the discomfort of dragging himself from one seat to the other with the brake and steering wheel in the way, the blind man had to get out before the car was parked. Abandoned in the middle of the road, feeling the ground shifting under his feet, he tried to suppress the sense of panic that welled up inside him. He waved his hands in front of his face, nervously, as if he were swimming in what he had described as a milky sea, but his mouth was already opening to let out a cry for help when at the last minute he felt the other's hand gently touch him on the arm, Calm down, I've got you. They proceeded very slowly, afraid of falling, the blind man dragged

1. **voracious** (vuh RAY shuhs) *adj.* very greedy or eager in some desire; unable to be satisfied.
 2. **avid** (AV ihd) *adj.* extremely eager; greedy.

his feet, but this caused him to stumble on the uneven pavement, Be patient, we're almost there, the other murmured, and a little further ahead, he asked, Is there anyone at home to look after you, and the blind man replied, I don't know, my wife won't be back from work yet, today it so happened that I left earlier only to have this hit me. You'll see, it isn't anything serious, I've never heard of anyone suddenly going blind, And to think I used to boast that I didn't even need glasses, Well it just goes to show. They had arrived at the entrance to the building, two women from the neighborhood looked on inquisitively at the sight of their neighbor being led by the arm but neither of them thought of asking, Have you got something in your eye, it never occurred to them nor would he have been able to reply, Yes, a milky sea. Once inside the building, the blind man said, Many thanks, I'm sorry for all the trouble I've caused you, I can manage on my own now, No need to apologize, I'll come up with you, I wouldn't be easy in my mind if I were to leave you here. They got into the narrow elevator with some difficulty, What floor do you live on, On the third, you cannot imagine how grateful I am, Don't thank me, today it's you, Yes, you're right, tomorrow it might be you. The elevator came to a halt, they stepped out on to the landing, Would you like me to help you open the door, Thanks, that's something I think I can do for myself. He took from his pocket a small bunch of keys, felt them one by one along the serrated³ edge, and said, It must be this one, and feeling for the keyhole with the fingertips of his left hand, he tried to open the door. It isn't this one, Let me have a look, I'll help you. The door opened at the third attempt. Then the blind man called inside, Are you there, no one replied, and he remarked, just as I was saying, she still hasn't come back. Stretching out his hands, he groped his way along the corridor, then he came back cautiously, turning his head in the direction where he calculated the other fellow would be, How can I thank you, he said, It was the least I could do, said the good Samaritan, no need to thank me, and added, Do you want me to help you to get settled and keep you company until your wife arrives. This zeal suddenly struck the blind man as being suspect, obviously he would not invite a complete stranger to come in who, after all, might well be plotting at that very moment how to overcome, tie up and gag the poor defenseless blind man, and then lay hands on anything of value. There's no need, please don't bother, he said, I'm fine, and as he slowly began closing the door, he repeated, There's no need, there's no need.

5 Hearing the sound of the elevator descending he gave a sigh of relief. With a mechanical gesture, forgetting the state in which he

3. **serrated** (SEHR ay tihd) *adj.* notched; having a jagged edge.

found himself, he drew back the lid of the peep-hole and looked outside. It was as if there were a white wall on the other side. He could feel the contact of the metallic frame on his eyebrow, his eyelashes brushed against the tiny lens, but he could not see out, an impenetrable⁴ whiteness covered everything. He knew he was in his own home, he recognized the smell, the atmosphere, the silence, he could make out the items of furniture and objects simply by touching them, lightly running his fingers over them, but at the same time it was as if all of this were already dissolving into a kind of strange dimension, without direction or reference points, with neither north nor south, below nor above. Like most people, he had often played as a child at pretending to be blind, and, after keeping his eyes closed for five minutes, he had reached the conclusion that blindness, undoubtedly a terrible affliction, might still be relatively bearable if the unfortunate victim had retained sufficient memory, not just of the colors, but also of forms and planes, surfaces and shapes, assuming of course, that this one was not born blind. He had even reached the point of thinking that the darkness in which the blind live was nothing other than the simple absence of light, that what we call blindness was something that simply covered the appearance of beings and things, leaving them intact behind their black veil. Now, on the contrary, here he was, plunged into a whiteness so luminous, so total, that it swallowed up rather than absorbed, not just the colors, but the very things and beings, thus making them twice as invisible.

- 6 As he moved in the direction of the sitting-room, despite the caution with which he advanced, running a hesitant hand along the wall and not anticipating any obstacles, he sent a vase of flowers crashing to the floor. He had forgotten about any such vase, or perhaps his wife had put it there when she left for work with the intention of later finding some more suitable place. He bent down to appraise the damage. The water had spread over the polished floor. He tried to gather up the flowers, never thinking of the broken glass, a long sharp splinter pricked his finger and, at the pain, childish tears of helplessness sprang to his eyes, blind with whiteness in the middle of his flat, which was turning dark as evening fell. Still clutching the flowers and feeling the blood running down, he twisted round to get the handkerchief from his pocket and wrapped it round his finger as best he could. Then, fumbling, stumbling, skirting the furniture, treading warily so as not to trip on the rugs, he reached the sofa where he and his wife watched television. He sat down, rested the flowers on his lap,

4. **impenetrable** (ihm PEHN uh truh buhl) *adj.* something that cannot be entered, pierced, or passed.

and, with the utmost care, unrolled the handkerchief. The blood, sticky to the touch, worried him, he thought it must be because he could not see it, his blood had turned into a viscous substance without color, into something rather alien which nevertheless belonged to him, but like a self-inflicted threat directed at himself. Very slowly, gently probing with his good hand, he tried to locate the splinter of glass, as sharp as a tiny dagger, and, by bringing the nails of his thumb and forefinger together, he managed to extract all of it. He wrapped the handkerchief round the injured finger once more, this time tightly to stop the bleeding, and, weak and exhausted, he leaned back on the sofa. A minute later, because of one of those all too common abdications⁵ of the body, that chooses to give up in certain moments of anguish or despair, when, if it were guided by logic alone, all its nerves should be alert and tense, a kind of weariness crept over him, more drowsiness than real fatigue, but just as heavy. He dreamt at once that he was pretending to be blind, he dreamt that he was forever closing and opening his eyes, and that, on each occasion, as if he were returning from a journey, he found waiting for him, firm and unaltered, all the forms and colors of the world as he knew it. Beneath this reassuring certainty, he perceived nevertheless, the dull nagging of uncertainty, perhaps it was a deceptive dream, a dream from which he would have to emerge sooner or later, without knowing at this moment what reality awaited him. Then, if such a word has any meaning when applied to a weariness that lasted for only a few seconds, and already in that semi-vigilant state that prepares one for awakening, he seriously considered that it was unwise to remain in this state of indecision, shall I wake up, shall I not wake up, shall I wake up, shall I not wake up, there always comes a moment when one has no option but to take a risk, What am I doing here with these flowers on my lap and my eyes closed as if I were afraid of opening them, What are you doing there, sleeping with those flowers on your lap, his wife was asking him.

- 7 She did not wait for a reply. Pointedly, she set about gathering up the fragments of the vase and drying the floor, muttering all the while with an irritation she made no attempt to disguise, You might have cleaned up this mess yourself, instead of settling down to sleep as if it were no concern of yours. He said nothing, protecting his eyes behind tightly closed lids, suddenly agitated by a thought, And if I were to open my eyes and see, he asked himself, gripped by anxious hope. The woman drew near, noticed the bloodstained handkerchief, her vexation gone in an instant, Poor man, how did this happen, she asked compassionately as

5. **abdications** (ab duh KAY shuhnz) *n.* acts of giving up powers or duties.

she undid the improvised bandage. Then he wanted with all his strength to see his wife kneeling at his feet, right there, where he knew she was, and then, certain that he would not see her, he opened his eyes, So you've wakened up at last, my sleepyhead, she said smiling. There was silence, and he said, I'm blind, I can't see. The woman lost her patience, Stop playing silly games, there are certain things we must not joke about, How I wish it were a joke, the truth is that I really am blind, I can't see anything, Please, don't frighten me, look at me, here, I'm here, the light is on, I know you're there, I can hear you, touch you, I can imagine you've switched on the light, but I am blind. She began to weep, clung to him, It isn't true, tell me that it isn't true. The flowers had slipped onto the floor, onto the bloodstained handkerchief, the blood had started to trickle again from the injured finger, and he, as if wanting to say with other words, That's the least of my worries, murmured, I see everything white, and he gave a sad smile. The woman sat down beside him, embraced him tightly, kissed him gently on the forehead, on the face, softly on the eyes, You'll see that this will pass, you haven't been ill, no one goes blind from one minute to the next, Perhaps, Tell me how it happened, what did you feel, when, where, no, not yet, wait, the first thing we must do is to consult an eye specialist, can you think of one, I'm afraid not, neither of us wears glasses, And if I were to take you to the hospital, There isn't likely to be any emergency service for eyes that cannot see, You're right, better that we should go straight to a doctor, I'll look in the telephone directory and locate a doctor who practices nearby. She got up, still questioning him, Do you notice any difference, None, he replied, Pay attention, I'm going to switch off the light and you can tell me, now, Nothing, What do you mean nothing, Nothing, I always see the same white, it's as if there were no night.

- 8 He could hear his wife rapidly leaf through the pages of the telephone directory, sniffing to hold back her tears, sighing, and finally saying, This one will do, let's hope he can see us. She dialed a number, asked if that was the surgery, if the doctor was there, if she could speak to him, No, no the doctor doesn't know me, the matter is extremely urgent, yes, please, I understand, then I'll explain the situation to you, but I beg of you to pass on what I have to say to the doctor, the fact is that my husband has suddenly gone blind, yes, yes, all of a sudden, no, no he is not one of the doctor's patients, my husband does not wear glasses and never has, yes, he has excellent eyesight, just like me, I also see perfectly well, ah, many thanks, I'll wait, I'll wait, yes, doctor, all of a sudden, he says he sees everything white, I have no idea what happened, I haven't had time to ask him, I've just arrived home

to find him in this state, would you like me to ask him, ah, I'm so grateful to you doctor, we'll come right away, right away. The blind man rose to his feet, Wait, his wife said, first let me attend to this finger, she disappeared for several moments, came back with a bottle of peroxide, another of iodine, cotton wool, a box of bandages. As she dressed the wound, she asked him, Where did you leave the car, and suddenly confronted him, But in your condition you couldn't have driven the car, or you were already at home when it happened, No, it was on the street when I was stationary at a red light, some person brought me home, the car was left in the next street, Fine, let's go down, wait at the door while I go to find it, where did you put the keys, I don't know, he never gave them back to me, Who's he, The man who brought me home, it was a man, He must have left them somewhere, I'll have a look round, It's pointless searching, he didn't enter the flat, But the keys have to be somewhere, Most likely he forgot, inadvertently took them with him, This was all we needed, Use your keys, then we'll sort it out, Right, let's go, take my hand. The blind man said, If I have to stay like this, I'd rather be dead, Please, don't talk nonsense, things are bad enough, I'm the one who's blind, not you, you cannot imagine what it's like, The doctor will come up with some remedy, you'll see, I shall see.

- 9 They left. Below, in the lobby, his wife switched on the light and whispered in his ear. Wait for me here, if any neighbors should appear speak to them naturally, say you're waiting for me, no one looking at you would ever suspect that you cannot see and besides we don't have to tell people all our business, Yes, but don't be long. His wife went rushing off. No neighbor entered or left. The blind man knew from experience that the stairway would only be lit so long as he could hear the mechanism of the automatic switch, therefore he went on pressing the button whenever there was silence. The light, this light, had been transformed into noise for him. He could not understand why his wife was taking so long to return, the street was nearby, some eighty or a hundred meters, If we delay any longer, the doctor will be gone, he thought to himself. He could not avoid a mechanical gesture, raising his left wrist and lowering his eyes to look at his watch. He pursed his lips as if in sudden pain, and felt deeply grateful that there were no neighbors around at that moment, for there and then, were anyone to have spoken to him, he would have burst into tears. A car stopped in the street, At last, he thought, but then realized that it was not the sound of his car engine, This is a diesel engine, it must be a taxi, he said, pressing once more on the button for the light. His wife came back, flustered and upset, that good Samaritan of yours, that good

soul, has taken our car, It isn't possible, you can't have looked properly, Of course I looked properly, there's nothing wrong with my eyesight, these last words came out inadvertently, You told me the car was in the next street, she corrected herself, and it isn't, unless they've left it in some other street, No, no, I'm certain it was left in this street, Well then it has disappeared, In that case, what about the keys, He took advantage of your confusion and distress and robbed us, And to think I didn't want him in the flat for fear he might steal something yet if he had kept me company until you arrived home, he could not have stolen our car, Let's go, we have a taxi waiting, I swear to you that I'd give a year of my life to see this rogue go blind as well. Don't speak so loud, And that they rob him of everything he possesses, He might turn up, Ah, so you think he'll knock on the door tomorrow and say he took the car in a moment of distraction, that he is sorry and inquire if you're feeling better.

10 They remained silent until they reached the doctor's surgery. She tried not to think about the stolen car, squeezed her husband's hand affectionately, while he, his head lowered so that the driver would not see his eyes through the rear-view mirror, could not stop asking himself how it was possible that such a terrible tragedy should have befallen him, Why me. He could hear the noise of the traffic, the odd loud voice whenever the taxi stopped, it often happens, we are still asleep and external sounds are already penetrating the veil of unconsciousness in which we are still wrapped up, as in a white sheet. As in a white sheet. He shook his head, sighing, his wife gently stroked his cheek, her way of saying, Keep calm, I'm here, and he leaned his head on her shoulder, indifferent to what the driver might think, If you were in my situation and unable to drive any more, he thought childishly, and oblivious of the absurdity of that remark, he congratulated himself amidst his despair that he was still capable of formulating a rational thought. On leaving the taxi, discreetly assisted by his wife, he seemed calm, but on entering the surgery where he was about to learn his fate, he asked his wife in a tremulous⁶ whisper, What will I be like when I get out of this place, and he shook his head as if he had given up all hope.

11 His wife informed the receptionist, I'm the person who rang half an hour ago because of my husband, and the receptionist showed them into a small room where other patients were waiting. There was an old man with a black patch over one eye, a young lad who looked cross-eyed, accompanied by a woman who must be his mother, a girl with dark glasses, two other people without any apparent distinguishing features, but no one

6. **tremulous** (TREHM yuh luhs) *adj.* trembling or vibrating.

who was blind, blind people do not consult an ophthalmologist. The woman guided her husband to an empty chair, and since all the other chairs were occupied, she remained standing beside him, We'll have to wait, she whispered in his ear. He realized why, he had heard the voices of those who were in the waiting room, now he was assailed by another worry, thinking that the longer the doctor took to examine him, the worse his blindness would become to the point of being incurable. He fidgeted in his chair, restless, he was about to confide his worries to his wife, but just then the door opened and the receptionist said, Will you both come this way, and turning to the other patients, Doctor's orders, this man is an urgent case. The mother of the cross-eyed boy protested that her right was her right, and that she was first and had been waiting for more than an hour. The other patients supported her in a low voice, but not one of them, nor the woman herself, thought it wise to carry on complaining, in case the doctor should take offense and repay their impertinence by making them wait even longer, as has occurred. The old man with the patch over one eye was magnanimous, Let the poor man go ahead, he's in a much worse state than we are. The blind man did not hear him, they were already going into the doctor's consulting room, and the wife was saying, Many thanks for being so kind, doctor, it's just that my husband, and that said, she paused, because frankly she did not know what had really happened, she only knew that her husband was blind and that their car had been stolen. The doctor said, Please, be seated, and he himself went to help the patient into the chair, and then, touching him on the hand, he spoke to him directly, Now then, tell me what is wrong. The blind man explained that he was in his car, waiting for the red light to change when suddenly he could no longer see, that several people had rushed to his assistance, that an elderly woman, judging from her voice, had said that it was probably a case of nerves, and then a man had accompanied him home because he could not manage on his own, I see everything white, doctor. He said nothing about the stolen car.

- 12 The doctor asked him, Has anything like this ever happened to you before, or something similar, No, doctor, I don't even use glasses. And you say it came on all of a sudden, Yes, doctor, Like a light going out, More like a light going on, During the last few days have you felt any difference in your eyesight, No, doctor, Is there, or has there ever been any case of blindness in your family, Among the relatives I've known or have heard discussed, no one, Do you suffer from diabetes, No, doctor, From syphilis, No, doctor. From hypertension of the arteries or the brain cells, I'm not sure about the brain cells, but none of these other things, we

have regular medical check-ups at work. Have you taken a sharp knock on the head, today or yesterday, No, doctor, How old are you, Thirty-eight, Fine, let's take a look at these eyes. The blind man opened them wide, as if to facilitate the examination, but the doctor took him by the arm and installed him behind a scanner which anyone with imagination might see as a new version of the confessional, eyes replacing words, and the confessor looking directly into the sinner's soul, Rest your chin here, he advised him, keep your eyes open, and don't move. The woman drew close to her husband, put her hand on his shoulder, and said, This will be sorted out, you'll see. The doctor raised and lowered the binocular system at his side, turned finely adjusted knobs, and began his examination. He could find nothing in the cornea, nothing in the sclera, nothing in the iris, nothing in the retina, nothing in the lens of the eye, nothing in the luteous macula, nothing in the optic nerve, nothing elsewhere. He pushed the apparatus aside, rubbed his eyes, then carried out a second examination from the start, without speaking, and when he had finished there was a puzzled expression on his face, I cannot find any lesion, your eyes are perfect. The woman joined her hands in a gesture of happiness and exclaimed, Didn't I tell you, didn't I tell you, this can be resolved. Ignoring her, the blind man asked, May I remove my chin, doctor, Of course, forgive me, If my eyes are perfect as you say, why am I blind, For the moment I cannot say, we shall have to carry out more detailed tests, analyses, an ecography, an encephalogram, Do you think it has anything to do with the brain, It's a possibility, but I doubt it. Yet you say you can find nothing wrong with my eyes, That's right, How strange, What I'm trying to say is that if, in fact, you are blind, your blindness at this moment defies explanation, Do you doubt that I am blind, Not at all, the problem is the unusual nature of your case, personally, in all my years in practice, I've never come across anything like it, and I daresay no such case has ever been known in the entire history of ophthalmology, Do you think there is a cure, In principle, since I cannot find lesions of any kind or any congenital malformations, my reply should be in the affirmative, But apparently it is not in the affirmative. Only out of caution, only because I do not want to build up hopes that may turn out to be unjustified, I understand, That's the situation, And is there any treatment I should follow, some remedy or other, For the moment I prefer not to prescribe anything, for it would be like prescribing in the dark. There's an apt⁷ expression, observed the blind man. The doctor pretended not to hear, got off the revolving stool on which he had been seated to carry out the examination, and,

7. **apt** (apt) *adj.* suitable; fitting.

standing up, he wrote out on his prescription pad the tests and analyses he judged to be necessary. He handed the sheet of paper to the wife, Take this and come back with your husband once you have the results, meanwhile if there should be any change in his condition, telephone me, How much do we owe you, doctor, Pay in reception. He accompanied them to the door, murmured words of reassurance, Let's wait and see, let's wait and see, you mustn't despair, and once they had gone he went into the small bathroom adjoining the consulting room and stared at length into the mirror, What can this be, he murmured. Then he returned to the consulting room, called out to the receptionist, Send in the next patient.

13 That night the blind man dreamt that he was blind. ❧

Dr. Geoffrey Tabin Helps Blind Ethiopians Gain Sight

ABC News



About ABC News

ABC News, founded in 1945, is the news division of the American Broadcasting Company (ABC). With headquarters in New York City, ABC News broadcasts worldwide. Its flagship program is the daily evening newscast *ABC World News Tonight*; other programs include morning news-talk show *Good Morning America*; *Nightline*; *Primetime*; and *20/20*.

BACKGROUND

Of the more than 39 million cases of unnecessary blindness worldwide, more than half are due to cataracts, which are fairly easy to treat. In 1995, two ophthalmologists, Dr Sanduk Ruit and Dr. Geoff Tabin, established the Himalayan Cataract Project to do just that. Their goal was to wipe out as much of the world's unnecessary blindness as possible through simple cataract surgery. They have gone into the most remote areas of the world and provided hospital-quality service to areas without clean water, electricity, or basic services. Over the years, the Project has expanded to include training and equipment for programs in Bhutan, India, and Myanmar, where cataract blindness occurs at a higher rate than in other parts of the world.

NOTES

How Your Eyes Trick Your Mind

Melissa Hogenboom



About the Author

Melissa Hogenboom is a multimedia science journalist who has contributed to live television shows, online news articles, and radio programs for the British Broadcasting Corporation, or BBC. Hogenboom is the recipient of the Ivan Noble scholarship in Science Reporting.

BACKGROUND

The brain has the ability to sort through a tremendous amount of visual information. Neurologists use the brain's response to optical illusions to find out more about how the human brain works, and how people perceive the world around them.

NOTES

Blind, Yet Seeing: The Brain's Subconscious Visual Sense

Benedict Carey



About the Author

For over two decades, **Benedict Carey** (b. 1960) has written for several publications about public health, the brain, psychology, and psychiatry, among other topics. He joined the *New York Times* as a staff writer in 2004. Carey is the author of three books about mathematics and science.

BACKGROUND

In 2008, Japanese scientists trained monkeys in an eye movement task for about three months. The monkeys had damage in their primary visual cortex, a part of the brain that receives signals from the eyes. Despite this, the monkeys were able to move their eyes toward the correct location of an object after the training exercise was complete. Their brains, not their eyes, saw what was around them.

NOTES

- 1 **T**he man, a doctor left blind by two successive¹ strokes, refused to take part in the experiment. He could not see anything, he said, and had no interest in navigating an obstacle course—a cluttered hallway—for the benefit of science. Why bother?
- 2 When he finally tried it, though, something remarkable happened. He zigzagged down the hall, sidestepping a garbage can, a tripod, a stack of paper and several boxes as if he could see everything clearly. A researcher shadowed him in case he stumbled.
- 3 “You just had to see it to believe it,” said Beatrice de Gelder, a neuroscientist at Harvard and Tilburg University in the Netherlands, who with an international team of brain researchers reported on the patient on Monday² in the journal *Current Biology*.

1. **successive** (suhk SEHS ihv) *adj.* following in order, one after another.
2. **Monday** this article was published on December 23, 2008.

- 4 The study, which included extensive³ brain imaging, is the most dramatic demonstration to date of so-called blindsight, the native ability to sense things using the brain’s primitive, subcortical—and entirely subconscious—visual system.
- 5 Scientists have previously reported cases of blindsight in people with partial damage to their visual lobes. The new report is the first to show it in a person whose visual lobes—one in each hemisphere, under the skull at the back of the head—were completely destroyed. The finding suggests that people with similar injuries may be able to recover some crude visual sense with practice.
- 6 “It’s a very rigorously⁴ done report and the first demonstration of this in someone with apparent total absence of a striate cortex, the visual processing region,” said Dr. Richard Held, an emeritus professor of cognitive⁵ and brain science at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, who with Ernst Pöppel and Douglas Frost wrote the first published account of blindsight in a person, in 1973.
- 7 The man in the new study, an African living in Switzerland at the time, suffered the two strokes in his 50s, weeks apart, and was profoundly blind by any of the usual measures. Unlike people suffering from eye injuries, or congenital⁶ blindness in which the visual system develops abnormally, his brain was otherwise healthy, as were his eyes, so he had the necessary tools to process subconscious vision. What he lacked were the circuits that cobble together a clear, conscious picture.
- 8 The research team took brain scans and magnetic resonance images to see the damage, finding no evidence of visual activity in the cortex. They also found no evidence that the patient was navigating by echolocation,⁷ the way that bats do. Both the patient, T.N., and the researcher shadowing him walked the course in silence.
- 9 The man himself was as dumbfounded as anyone that he was able to navigate the obstacle course.
- 10 “The more educated people are,” Dr. de Gelder said, “in my experience, the less likely they are to believe they have these resources that they are not aware of to avoid obstacles. And this was a very educated person.”
- 11 Scientists have long known that the brain digests what comes through the eyes using two sets of circuits. Cells in the retina project not only to the visual cortex—the destroyed regions in

3. **extensive** (ehk STEHN sihv) *adj.* far-reaching, affecting many things.

4. **rigorously** (RIHG uhr uhs lee) *adv.* done in a strict, harsh or intense way.

5. **cognitive** (KOG nuh tihv) *adj.* having to do with thinking or reasoning.

6. **congenital** (kuhn JEHN uh tuhl) *adj.* present from birth.

7. **echolocation** (ehk oh loh KAY shuhn) *n.* sensory, radar-like system in some animals in which sounds produced by them and their echoes are interpreted to determine direction and position of objects.

this man—but also to subcortical areas, which in T.N. were intact. These include the superior colliculus, which is crucial in eye movements and may have other sensory functions; and, probably, circuits running through the amygdala, which registers emotion.

- 12 In an earlier experiment, one of the authors of the new paper, Dr. Alan Pegna of Geneva University Hospitals, found that the same African doctor had emotional blindsight. When presented with images of fearful faces, he cringed subconsciously in the same way that almost everyone does, even though he could not consciously see the faces. The subcortical, primitive visual system apparently registers not only solid objects but also strong social signals.
- 13 Dr. Held, the M.I.T. neuroscientist, said that in lower mammals these midbrain systems appeared to play a much larger role in perception. In a study of rats published in the journal *Science* last Friday, researchers demonstrated that cells deep in the brain were in fact specialized to register certain qualities of the environment.
- 14 They include place cells, which fire when an animal passes a certain landmark, and headdirection cells, which track which way the face is pointing. But the new study also found strong evidence of what the scientists, from the Norwegian University of Science and Technology in Trondheim, called “border cells,” which fire when an animal is close to a wall or boundary of some kind.
- 15 All of these types of neurons, which exist in some form in humans, may too have assisted T.N. in his navigation of the obstacle course.
- 16 In time, and with practice, people with brain injuries may learn to lean more heavily on such subconscious or semiconscious systems, and perhaps even begin to construct some conscious vision from them.
- 17 “It’s not clear how sharp it would be,” Dr. Held said. “Probably a vague, lowresolution spatial⁸ sense. But it might allow them to move around more independently.”

8. **spatial** (SPAY shuhl) *adj.* happening or existing in space.

Experience: I First Saw My Wife Ten Years After We Married

Shander Herian



About the Author



After an allergic reaction to an over-the-counter medication, **Shander Herian** lost his sight at the age of ten. After studying at the Royal National College for the Blind in the United Kingdom, Herian worked as a computer programmer and later opened his own successful information technology company. At the age of 35, he underwent an experimental operation that restored sight to one of his eyes.

BACKGROUND

Advances in technology and brain research are changing the way we think about blindness. Today, people with certain kinds of eye conditions may be able to have their sight restored with the help of a computer chip implanted in their brains. Here's how it works: The blind person wears a pair of eyeglasses specially outfitted with a tiny video camera. The camera records everything in black and white and sends the images to a computer program that converts this information into signals. When the signals get to the implanted chip, the chip is able to build up a picture of what the camera is seeing.

- 1 **W**hen you are blind, you imagine how people look. Not by touching their face or gauging¹ their height, but by their voice, and the kind of person they are. That's what helps you form a picture. I realize now I can see that those pictures aren't always accurate. But when I first saw my wife, Gurjeet, ten years after we'd met, she was exactly as I'd imagined.
- 2 I lost my sight at school, Christmas 1972—I was ten and larking about² when I fell in some nettles and came up in a terrible rash. The doctor gave mum some tablets to clear it up but I

1. **gauging** (GAY jihng) v. measuring accurately.

2. **larking about** acting in a carefree, happy-go-lucky way.

NOTES

had an awful reaction to them—what’s called Stevens Johnson syndrome—and for a few weeks it was touch and go if I’d survive.

- 3 One of the effects of the SJS was my tear ducts³ stopped working; without tears, your corneas can’t work. They tried all sorts to fix the problem. Every two weeks when we went to hospital I’d buy comics—*The Beano*, *Dandy*, *The Beezer*—thinking I’d be able to read them on the way home, but I never could. My sight just kept getting worse, and by the time I was 14 it had gone.
- 4 I went to a special school in Birmingham, where you had to board⁴ Monday to Friday. I knew my mum and dad found it hard to leave me there, but they knew it was the best thing for me. The turning point was going to college in Hereford to study IT—the Royal National College for the Blind, where I am now a governor. I didn’t learn only academic and vocational stuff, but how to be independent: cooking, cleaning, doing sports, going out and about.
- 5 I used to ring my parents every day and tell them how I was doing. They were proud and, if I’m honest, surprised, too. A lot of people are surprised. They imagine that when you’re blind you “manage” rather than “achieve,” and that I must feel those years of being blind were wasted somehow. That’s simply not true. It was an amazing period of my life.
- 6 The best thing was meeting Gurjeet. It was an arranged marriage. I didn’t think anyone would want to marry me, but she said she did. She said it felt right. I sensed she was lovely and couldn’t believe my luck. Even on my wedding day my brother-in-law and I wondered if she’d turn up. But there she was, waiting for me. We have been shoulder to shoulder since.
- 7 After I married I started a business building computers. I could do all the programming myself through a Braille terminal but I remember the first one I built. Gurjeet and I worked through the night—she was my eyes while I was building it, orientating me around the circuit board. Then she’d drive me around the country so I could deliver the computers to clients, with our two daughters in the back. I bought a shop and it went from strength to strength. At our height we were one of the largest suppliers in the UK and turning over millions.
- 8 Being blind was just part of our married life. We didn’t talk about it, we just lived with it. I never thought it would be any different. Then one day—when we’d been married about ten years—an optician I knew came rushing into our office saying he’d read about a new technique he was sure could help me. Two weeks later I was at an eye hospital in Brighton and booked in for

3. **tear ducts** (TEER duhkts) passages through which tears pass from the lachrymal glands to the eye, or from the eye to the nose.

4. **board** (bawrd) v. stay in a school house rather than at home.

this new experimental operation. When they took off the bandages and cleaned up my eyes, it was like having Windolene cleaned off a window. I saw the doctor's tie, then his huge smile, and then everything was crystal clear. When Gurjeet and the girls walked into the room, they were just as I had pictured in my mind. So familiar. I will never forget that moment. "I can see you," I said to them. "I can see for miles."

- 9 The world seemed so bright—that's what struck me most. The colors of the 70s—the dark red curtains, brown lino,⁵ drab shopfronts and black Morris Minors and Austin 1100s that I had remembered from my childhood—were replaced by this array of bright shades. We all walked down to the seafront in Brighton. It was a beautiful day, and I was walking in front, holding the girls' hands, showing off a bit. I couldn't stop staring at everything. There was so much to take in. It was wonderful. I still have to pinch myself when I think about it today. 🐼

5. **lino** (LY noh) linoleum.

Visual Neuroscience: Look and Learn

Apoorva Mandavilli

About the Author

Science journalist **Apoorva Mandavilli** specializes in writing about infectious diseases, brain science, public health, and policy. Her work can be found in publications such as the *New Yorker* and *Popular Science*. Mandavilli heads an autism news website and a non-profit dedicated to enhancing diversity in science journalism.

BACKGROUND

India is home to the largest population of blind children in the world. As many as 700,000 Indian children are believed to be blind or visually impaired. An organization called Project Prakash has been working to screen, identify, and treat these children in villages all across India free of cost. In addition, by studying children who are just learning to see after a lifetime of blindness, Project researchers can gain valuable insight into fundamental questions regarding how the human brain learns to organize visual data.

NOTES

- 1 **P**revailing¹ wisdom says the adult brain cannot learn to see if it had no visual stimulation during childhood, but blind people in India seem to be breaking all the rules.
- 2 Doctors gave SK his first pair of glasses in July 2004. He had been too poor to afford a pair before—but then he was a 29-year-old blind man, what use were glasses to him? Had he been given glasses as a child they might have helped him overcome his congenital aphakia—an extremely rare condition in which the eyeball develops without a lens. Yet his chances of being diagnosed, let alone treated, in the poor Indian village in which he was born were slim. As a result, SK was living in a “hostel for

1. **prevailing** (prih VAY lihng) *adj.* currently accepted; widely existing.

the blind” with no running water when the doctors arrived from New Delhi.

- 3 SK’s doctors weren’t sure how much sight he would gain, or if he would comprehend what he saw. For the first year, he had only the most basic visual skills. He could recognize simple two-dimensional objects but anything three-dimensional, even an everyday object such as a ball, was beyond him. All this was consistent with the idea of a “critical period” in vision: that if you haven’t learned to see by a certain age, you never will.
- 4 But 18 months after getting his glasses, SK surprised everyone. He had begun to make sense of his world, building his visual vocabulary through experience and recognizing more complex objects with varying colors and brightness. In doing so, he turned one of the most fundamental concepts in neuroscience on its head.
- 5 “Twenty-nine years without any normal vision? I would have said that’s a life sentence,” says Ron Kalil, a visual neuroscientist at the University of Wisconsin in Madison. For Kalil and other experts, the impossible now seems possible. And while the scientists might be amazed by the brain’s adaptability, the real winners are the countless blind people—both children and adults—who had been considered untreatable.

Light Work

- 6 SK is the first success of Project Prakash (Sanskrit for “light”) launched in 2003 and run by Pawan Sinha, a neuroscientist at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Originally a humanitarian effort to help blind children in India, under Sinha’s guidance Project Prakash has blossomed into a chance to investigate how we learn to see.
- 7 The idea of a critical period for vision grew out of research in animals. In the 1970s, Torsen Wiesel and David Hubel at Harvard Medical School famously shut one eye of a week-old kitten. They found that closing the eye for only a few weeks caused the kitten’s visual cortex, the part of the brain that deals with sight, to develop abnormally. But similar experiments had little effect on adult cats.
- 8 After further work in monkeys, Wiesel and Hubel suggested that there is a critical period during the first few months of life when normal vision must develop. In 1981, they shared the Nobel Prize in Physiology² or Medicine for this and other work.
- 9 The notion of a fixed critical period has been crumbling steadily for the past few decades, and the brain is now seen as much more flexible—able to grow new nerve cells and to adapt long after childhood. For instance, Uri Polat and his colleagues at Tel Aviv University in Israel showed in 2004 that adults with a lazy eye

2. **physiology** (fihz ee OL uh jee) *n.* branch of biology dealing with the normal functions of living things or their parts.

can be trained to improve their vision—contrary to conventional expectations.

- 10 In the strictest sense, SK’s case does not contradict Wiesel and Hubel’s finding. Without glasses, his visual acuity³ was 20/900, far worse than the standard 20/20 for normal vision or even the World Health Organization’s definition of legal blindness at 20/400. Like others with aphakia, SK could sense light and movement, which arguably allowed his visual cortex to develop normally.
- 11 With his glasses, SK’s acuity jumped to 20/120, although he still saw objects as separate regions of color and brightness, and struggled to put them together as a whole. He saw a cow, for example, as patches of black and white, each a separate object, until the cow moved. As soon as there was movement, SK was able to recognize that the set of objects made up a cow. Over the next 18 months, his acuity remained stuck at 20/120, but he was able to stop relying on motion to integrate objects and learned to recognize them even when they were still.

Critical Point

- 12 Under conventional dogma,⁴ SK shouldn’t be able to do this, but where scientists went wrong, says Sinha, is in applying the notion of critical period too broadly. They assumed, incorrectly, that if the eye’s vision doesn’t improve, neither does the ability to interpret what you see. “What is so exciting about Sinha’s work is that he is showing that’s not the case,” says Lynne Kiorpes, a neuroscientist at New York University. “People can learn to use the vision they have.”
- 13 As well as being Sinha’s native home, India is a natural choice for studying blind children. One-third of the world’s 45 million blind people live in India, according to the non-profit organization Orbis International. Caught early, half of the cases of childhood blindness could be treated or prevented—but they aren’t.
- 14 Some parents see blindness as punishment for sins in a previous life. Most can’t afford the treatment. Born poor, and neglected in the broader struggle for survival, more than 60% of blind children in India die before reaching adulthood, according to Orbis. Those who survive tend to be shipped off to special schools or hostels, where they resign themselves to making candles or weaving baskets.
- 15 “The first thing that prompted me was seeing these numbers, the humanitarian goal was just so evident,” says Sinha. After touring villages in the summer of 2002, Sinha joined forces with Dr. Shroff’s Charitable Eye Hospital on the outskirts of New Delhi.

3. **acuity** (uh KYOO uh tee) *n.* sharpness; keenness.

4. **dogma** (DAWG muh) *n.* belief taught or held as true.

By Western standards the hospital is unassuming,⁵ but it is among the best equipped in the country.

16 With funding from international organizations, volunteers from Dr. Shroff's hospital head into under-served communities and screen hundreds of children for sight problems. In many cases, the children are beyond help. But if the condition seems reversible, the hospital offers to treat them, often for free. Many suffer from cataracts and, with only minor interventions, could well have normal vision.

17 With Project Prakash, volunteers from Dr. Shroff's hospital have begun visiting schools for the blind for the first time. The project aims to treat 15 "hopeless" cases from these schools each year, and to enroll them in further experiments. SK is the oldest by far: most are aged 7 to 11. Sinha plans to measure the children's visual abilities before and after treatment to learn how much vision is needed for recovery to be possible.

Alternative View

18 SK's case has already provided new ideas about how vision develops. Studies on individuals who recover sight late in life are rare, and researchers who have measured acuity found that, as with SK, it did not improve over time. Those scientists did not ask, as Sinha did, whether other visual skills might eventually improve.

19 "If they'd looked at it that way, then they probably would have found all sorts of things they weren't looking for," says Nigel Daw, a neurobiologist at Yale University. "This will lead people to do more experiments along those lines. It's ground-breaking work in that sense."

20 Sinha's work suggests that different visual abilities might have different critical periods. For example, detection of motion is one of the first abilities to develop, perhaps even hardwired at birth; understanding of color and full stereo vision develop later, and visual integration—the process that allows SK to resolve separate objects into a cow—might take even longer. "This project allows us to refine the very broad and vague idea of a critical period," Sinha says.

21 And it challenges the clinical notion that treating a blind child beyond the age of around eight is hopeless. Most children with reversible causes of blindness can sense light, and so may be able to recover. In fact, says Sinha, the complete blindness created in animal experiments is rarely, if ever, found.

22 Wiesel himself maintains that a critical period still exists, but that scientists should be more open-minded about how they interpret it for clinical use. "There is a critical period and we

5. **unassuming** (uhn uh SOO mihng) *adj.* not putting on airs; modest.

should try to help kids as soon as possible,” Wiesel says. “But if for some reason that’s not possible, and there’s some vision left, certainly recovery is possible.”

- 23 SK’s case has led Sinha to some interesting tangents.⁶ For example, children with autism also have trouble integrating different parts of an object into a whole—they literally can’t see the forest for the trees. It turns out that these children also have trouble with motion perception, which bolsters Sinha’s hypothesis. He is now studying visual skills in autistic children.
- 24 For Project Prakash, this is just the start. Soon after the project began visiting schools for the blind, Dr. Shroff’s hospital petitioned the Indian Supreme Court, demanding that at least those children who can be helped are given a chance. As a result, India’s Supreme Court has ruled that before being admitted to a blind school, every child must be examined by an ophthalmologist.
- 25 On the research front, Sinha plans to use imaging techniques—primarily functional magnetic resonance imaging—to study the brains of children and adults whose sight is restored later in life. He wants to see how much of the visual cortex in these people can be stimulated by light. Sinha also hopes to discover how much of the cortex has been taken over by other functions such as hearing or touch, and whether this change is reversible. “I think that is a very, very fundamental question,” he says.
- 26 Presumably, the children might also recover different skills to varying degrees. Such information might help doctors design rehabilitation programs and may offer clues to which visual abilities come prewired at birth and which develop over time. “Slowly but surely, the evidence is coming forward to indicate that the brain is much more adaptable than we suspected,” says Kalil. “Work such as Pawan’s should tell us to go looking for more.” 🐼

6. **tangents** (TAN juhntz) *n.* departures from a central topic.

