

Name: _____ Date: _____

Go to Scope
Online to listen
to the words
and definitions
read aloud!

Vocabulary:

The Gift of the Magi

- afloat (uh-FLOHT)** *adjective*; *Afloat* simply means “floating on the surface of water.” You might set a rubber duck afloat in your bathtub or tread water to stay afloat in a pool.

The phrase “stay afloat” is often used figuratively to mean “have just enough money to pay what you owe.” If a bakery has hardly any money left after paying its bills each month and is struggling to stay in business, you could say the bakery is struggling to stay afloat.

- befit (bih-FIT)** *verb*; *Befit* means “to be suitable or appropriate for someone or something.” A statue honoring Dr. Seuss would need to be amusing and a bit bizarre to befit Dr. Seuss’s style.

- haggle (HAG-uhl)** *verb*; To haggle is to argue about the details of something—particularly the price of something—before reaching an agreement.

- sparse (SPAHRs)** *adjective*; Something that is sparse is present only in small amounts or is very spread out over an area. In the desert, plants and trees are sparse.

- threadbare (THRED-bair)** *adjective*; *Threadbare* is used to describe something made of fabric that it is old, shabby, and worn thin from use.

- tonic (TON-ik)** *noun*; A tonic is a liquid mixture that makes you feel better or restores you to health. Before we had the medicines we have today, people often used tonics to treat their ailments. Some tonics worked while others were useless or even dangerous.

The tonic mentioned in the play is a hair tonic: a liquid applied to the hair to make it shiny, fragrant, and healthy-looking. Hair tonics often claimed to make hair grow faster and thicker—though it’s unlikely that they did.

- unceremoniously (uhn-ser-uh-MOH-nee-uhs-lee)** *adverb*; A ceremony is a formal event held for a special occasion. At ceremonies, people’s behavior is ceremonious (ser-uh-MOH-nee-uhs)—people behave in a polite and formal way that shows their respect for the occasion.

Something that is done ceremoniously is done in a ceremonious manner. Something that is done *unceremoniously* is done roughly and without any formality or courtesy. If you leave a birthday party unceremoniously, you leave suddenly without saying your goodbyes and thank yous.

“What Do You Get From Giving?”

8. agonize (AG-uh-nahyz) *verb*; Agony (AG-uh-nee) is intense physical or mental pain. To agonize is to spend a long time thinking or worrying about something. Your older sister might agonize over which college she should attend next fall.

9. incandescent (in-kehr-DES-uhnt) *adjective*; If something is incandescent, it glows with intense heat. Molten lava, lightbulbs, and red-hot burners on a stove are incandescent.

Incandescent can also mean “brilliant or passionate.” If Rob has an incandescent smile, it’s like he shines or glows from within. If the drama department put on an incandescent performance, the performance was impressive and moving.

10. neurochemical (noor-oh-KEM-i-kuhl) *noun*; A neurochemical carries information or messages between your brain and body. For example, let’s say you’re about to bite into an apple. A neurochemical will tell your jaw to chomp down.

11. reap (reep) *verb*; *Reap* means “to harvest a crop.” Farmers reap corn from their fields at the end of a growing season. *Reap* can also have the similar meaning of “to gain something as a result of one’s actions or the actions of others,” as in, “Sam worked on his note-taking skills this semester and reaped the benefits at exam time.”

Directions: Below and on the back of this page, list any other words from the play or article whose definitions you are not sure about. For each word, use context clues to try to figure out the meaning. Then look up the word in a few different dictionaries. Discuss the meaning of the word with your teacher or another adult. Then write a definition for the word and one example sentence.

Vocabulary Practice

The Gift of the Magi

Directions: Rewrite each sentence using a form of one of the words in the box. There is one word you will not use.

unceremoniously incandescent haggle sparse reap

1. My dad negotiated with the car dealership for days to get a better deal on his new car.

2. The pop star was dropped from his record label suddenly and with no explanation.

3. Edward enjoyed the rewards of the efforts he'd made to improve his jumpshot.

4. There was little traffic on the highway this morning.

Directions: Underline the boldfaced word in each pair that best completes the sentence.

5. A life jacket will keep you **afloat/incandescent** in the water.

6. In the movie "Cinderella," Cinderella's animal friends help her make a dress that **benefits/reaps** a royal ball.

7. After exercising, the brain releases a **neurochemical/tonic** that makes you feel happier.

8. Mia sewed patches on the knees of her **threadbare/afloat** jeans.

9. Dave spent all month **agonizing/reaping** over what his Halloween costume should be.

10. As they heated up, the coals in the campfire grew more **threadbare/incandescent**.

11. My grandma made a **tonic/neurochemical** of lemon juice, honey, and vinegar to soothe my sore throat.