

Name _____

“Why the Tortoise’s Shell Is Not Smooth” by Chinua Achebe

Vocabulary Warm-up Word Lists

Study these words from “Why the Tortoise’s Shell Is Not Smooth.” Then, complete the activities that follow.

Word List A

arrived [uh RYVD] *v.* reached a place

We arrived at the theater late, after the movie had already started.

compound [KAHM pownd] *n.* a group of buildings

Our house is one of the big ones in that compound over there.

custom [KUHS tuhms] *n.* habit; way of acting or doing things

Rick’s family had a custom of eating dinner early on Sundays.

grumbled [GRUHM buhd] *v.* complained; made a growling unhappy noise

The kids grumbled after finding out that the field trip was cancelled.

hosts [HOHSTS] *n.* people who are having guests over

The hosts said goodbye to everyone who had come to their house.

invitation [in vuh TAY shuhn] *n.* a request to do something

I’m not going to the party because I didn’t get an invitation.

preparations [prep uh RAY shuhnz] *n.* things a person does to get ready for something

The preparations were finished; we were ready to put on the show.

ungrateful [uhn GRAYT fuhl] *adj.* not thankful

Don’t be ungrateful; thank your aunt for the gift.

Word List B

cunning [KUHN ing] *n.* cleverness

The tricky fox used his cunning to sneak up on the chicken.

dye [DYE] *n.* liquid used to change the color of something

Soak your white shirt in dye to make it turn black.

famine [FAM in] *n.* shortage of food

During the famine, people traveled hundreds of miles to find food.

feast [FEEST] *n.* a huge meal; party with food

We always eat a big feast on Thanksgiving Day.

plumage [PLOO mij] *n.* the feathers on a bird’s body

Look at the feathers on that bird. What incredible plumage it has!

presented [pree ZENT id] *v.* shown, displayed, or offered

At the art show, Tim presented the paintings he had made.

tortoise [TAWR tis] *n.* type of turtle that lives on land

A tortoise has a round, dome-shaped shell.

yam [YAM] *n.* sweet potato-like vegetable

A yam tastes best when it is served with brown sugar.

Short Answer Write your responses to the questions in this section on the lines provided.

1. When you preview “Why the Tortoise’s Shell Is Not Smooth,” the title can help you set a purpose for reading. What purpose might you set? Explain.

2. As you preview “Why the Tortoise’s Shell Is Not Smooth,” you read this sentence: “Once upon a time . . . all the birds were invited to a feast in the sky.” What does this tell you about the kind of story you will read?

3. In the beginning of “Why the Tortoise’s Shell Is Not Smooth,” how is Tortoise personified? Use two examples from the selection.

4. When Tortoise asks the birds if he can go to the feast, they say no. But then they agree. What does the change show about Tortoise and about the birds? Use details from the story.

5. Tortoise is very eloquent when he gives a speech at the party. The birds are glad they brought him. Why might the birds have been glad? Base your answer on the definition of eloquent.

6. Tortoise is described as a great orator. How does he use this talent to get what he wants? Use the definition of orator in your answer.

7. At the feast in the sky, what human characteristic does Tortoise show when he begins to eat? Use details from the story.

8. As the birds watch Tortoise eat, what human quality do they show? Use details from the story.

9. What lesson is taught by “Why the Tortoise’s Shell Is Not Smooth”? Support your answer with details from the story.

10. Parrot’s actions show his human qualities in “Why the Tortoise’s Shell Is Not Smooth.” The first column shows Parrot’s actions. In the second column, write the characteristic he displays with each action. On the line below, explain whether you think Parrot’s actions were appropriate.

PARROT’S ACTIONS	HUMAN CHARACTERISTIC
Agrees to take message	
Changes message	
