Rachel Carson’s “A Fable for Tomorrow” Worksheet

Vocabulary Matching Section: Draw a line from the word to its correct definition.28

- Fable: tree from *Betula* genus
- Alder: being in the state of dying: approaching death
- Malady: something that impairs or destroys
- Migrant: shrubs or trees from honeysuckle family
- Viburnum: a narration intended to enforce a useful truth.
- Blight: a person or animal that moves regularly
- Birch: a disease or disorder of the body
- Moribund: temperate shrub or tree related to the birch

Starter Questions
Is this a real town?

When does the story shift? Think of how the author’s description changes.

What caused the destruction of nature and outbreak of sickness?

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**Directions:** In the table below, please write down key phrases or words from “A Fable for Tomorrow” that you think show the difference between the description of the town at the beginning of the story and how it changed by the end of the story. Place the first set of descriptions under the title “Town” and the second set under “Silent Spring Town.”

Example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Town</th>
<th>Silent Spring Town: After the Blight</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• white clouds of bloom</td>
<td>• a strange blight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• great ferns and wildflowers delighted the traveler’s eye</td>
<td>• browned and withered vegetation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Directions Continued:** Using the adjectives, nouns, and key phrases you have written in your table, draw and color two separate pictures reflecting how the town changed. The pictures don’t necessarily have to be of towns, but they should reflect Carson’s prose.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Town</th>
<th>Silent Spring Town: After the Blight</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What is DDT?       Name:  
Date: 

DDT (dichloro diphenyl trichlo) is a synthetic pesticide. Synthetics are artificially-crafted, meaning that they are produced by humans and not found in nature. A pesticide is a chemical used to kill pests, such as insects. At first, DDT was widely used to eliminate mosquitoes that carry the harmful disease, malaria, but later it was used on farms and in industrial processes to control agricultural pests, such as various potato beetles, codling moth, corn earworm, cotton bollworm, and tobacco budworms. Its purpose was to increase the amount of food produced on farms by killing the pests that were destroying crops. Yet, as Rachel Carson demonstrates in her book, *Silent Spring* there were dangerous and adverse effects to DDT.

DDT is insoluble in water. This means it cannot be dissolved in water, so it is difficult to remove from the environment or the tissues of living organisms. One group of animals most vulnerable to DDT is aquatic invertebrates. These include small insects and other creatures without backbones that live in water, such as clams and worms, which constitute a substantial portion of the food chain.

While DDT is insoluble in water, it is readily dissolvable in fats, including the fat tissues found in animals (and people). Because of DDT’s fat solubility, fats in animals can become storehouses for DDT accumulation. Therefore, DDT cannot be removed from water but is soaked up by fat. Its solubility and insolubility make DDT a persistent pollutant: a toxin that just won’t go away!

“One of the reasons why we worry about DDT is because it doesn't break down in the environment or in organisms.” - University of San Diego, Creators of Cruising Chemistry

How much DDT is bad for you? The answer to this depends on the amount of DDT that you are exposed to, how much DDT you carry in your body, and your weight. Nevertheless, even a small amount as low as six to ten milligrams of DDT per kilogram, can cause nausea, diarrhea, irritation, and excitability. One of the more severe symptoms is losing control of your muscles, either through erratic movements or paralysis. DDT also affects other animals. For example, it can disturb the reproductive processes of certain birds, such as the thinning of eggshells, or lead to imbalance of ions in cells that affects the nervous systems in some fish.

DDT started being more widely used on farms for pest control in the 1940s. From 1947 to 1960, the use of pesticides went from 1.24 to 6.37 million pounds, growing fivefold over a 13 year span. The

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dangerous effects of pesticides were not well known until Rachel Carson’s book *Silent Spring*, in which “A Fable for Tomorrow” illustrated DDT’s adverse effects. While DDT helped farmers to reduce crop damage and loss, Rachel Carson is known for conducting research and bringing attention to the damage it causes to other living systems. The book shocked and concerned so many Americans that then U.S. President John F. Kennedy ordered a scientific investigation on DDT. Later, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) decided that a process to remove its use in agriculture should begin immediately and a ban took place in the U.S. in 1972. Consequently, a worldwide ban was instituted in 2004 under the Stockholm Convention. The Convention, however, was limited and still allowed for developing countries to use DDT to counteract malaria; a full ban is now being sought, as well as the broader implementation of safer alternatives.

“Our aim should be to guide natural processes as cautiously as possible in the desired direction rather than to use brute force. . . Life is a miracle beyond our comprehension, and we should reverence it even when we have to struggle against it . . . Humbleness is in order; there is no excuse for scientific conceit here.” – Rachel Carson in *Silent Spring*  