

1 **A Fable For Tomorrow**
2 An Excerpt from *Silent Spring*
3 Rachel Carson
4 1962

5
6 There was once a town in the heart of America where all life seemed to live in
7 harmony with its surroundings. The town lay in the midst of a checkerboard of
8 prosperous farms, with fields of grain and hillsides of orchards where, in
9 spring, white clouds of bloom drifted above the green fields. In autumn, oak
10 and maple and birch set up a blaze of color that flamed and flickered across a
11 backdrop of pines. Then foxes barked in the hills and deer silently crossed the
12 fields, half hidden in the mists of the fall mornings.

13
14 Along the roads, laurel, viburnum and alder, great ferns and wildflowers
15 delighted the traveler's eye through much of the year. Even in winter the
16 roadsides were places of beauty, where countless birds came to feed on the
17 berries and on the seed heads of the dried weeds rising above the snow. The
18 countryside was, in fact, famous for the abundance and variety of its bird life,
19 and when the flood of migrants was pouring through in spring and fall people
20 traveled from great distances to observe them. Others came to fish the streams,
21 fish flowed clear and cold out of the hills and contained shady pools where
22 trout lay. So it had been from the days many years ago when the first settlers
23 raised their houses, sank their wells, and built their barns.

24
25 Then a strange blight crept over the area and everything began to change.
26 Some evil spell had settled on the community: mysterious maladies swept the
27 flocks of chickens; the cattle and sheep sickened and died. Everywhere was a
28 shadow of death. The farmers spoke of much illness among their families. In
29 the town the doctors had become more and more puzzled by new kinds of
30 sickness appearing among their patients. There had been several sudden and
31 unexplained deaths, not only among adults but even among children, who
32 would be stricken suddenly while at play and die within a few hours.

33
34 There was a strange stillness. The birds, for example—where had they gone?
35 Many people spoke of them, puzzled and disturbed. The feeding stations in the
36 backyards were deserted. The few birds seen anywhere were moribund; they
37 trembled violently and could not fly. It was spring without voices. On the
38 mornings that had once throbbed with the dawn chorus of robins, catbirds,
39 doves, jays, wrens, and scores of other bird voices there was now no sound;
40 only silence lay over the fields and woods and marsh.

41
42 On the farms the hens brooded, but no chicks hatched. The farmers complained
43 that they were unable to raise any pigs—the litters were small and the young
44 survived only a few days. The apple trees were coming into bloom but no bees
45 droned among the blossoms, so there was no pollination and there would be no
46 fruit.

47
48 The roadsides, once so attractive, were now lined with browned and withered
49 vegetation as though swept by fire. These, too, were silent, deserted by all

landscape with pattern

disease

about to die

sitting on eggs to hatch

50 living things. Even the streams were now lifeless. Anglers no longer visited
51 them, for all the fish had died.

52
53 In the gutters under the eaves and between the shingles of the roofs, a white
54 granular powder still showed a few patches; some weeks before it had fallen
55 like snow upon the roofs and the lawns, the fields and streams.

56
57 No witchcraft, no enemy action had silenced the birth of new life in this
58 stricken world. The people had done it themselves.

59
60 This town does not actually exist, but it might easily have a thousand
61 counterparts in America or elsewhere in the world. I know of no community
62 that has experienced all the misfortunes I describe. Yet every one of these
63 disasters has actually happened somewhere, and many real communities have
64 already suffered a substantial number of them. A grim specter has crept upon
65 us almost unnoticed, and this imagined tragedy may easily become a stark
66 reality we all shall know.

67
68 What has already silenced the voices of spring in countless towns in America?
69 This book is an attempt to explain.

fine, white, gritty dust

dangerous occurrence
severe/bare

Text-Dependent Question Creation Worksheet

Please print legibly.

Name of Text: Silent Springs by Rachel Carson

Question Composers: Johanna Sergott and Janet Roberts

Reason for teaching this document: It is a figurative introduction to the environmental movement, that uses a fairy tale format to explain the consequences of poor environmental stewardship.

Standards:

Common Core: RH.1, RH.2, RH.4, RH.5, RH.10, WHST.1, WHST.4, WHST.9, SL.1, SL.3, SL.4, L.1-6

Nevada State Standards: G8[9-12].1, G8.2, G8.3, H1.6

Text Dependent Questions

Teacher Notes and Possible

1. In the first two paragraphs of Carson's piece, she paints a picture of the "heart of America." What words/phrases does she use and what tone does this strike?

Possible Answers:

L7- live in harmony

L8-prosperous farms

L9- white clouds of bloom

L9- green fields

L11-deer silently crossed

L12- mists of fall normaly

L14-vegetation

L15-delighted the travelers eye

L15-16- roadsides places of beauty

L18-abudnace, variety

L21- water flowed clear

Tone: is idealistic, bucolic, nice, peaceful, pretty

Purpose of asking this question: sets up what America used to look like, provides contrast for the ensuing text

Text Dependent Questions

Teacher Notes and Possible

2. Using lines 22-23, identify when this America existed.

Possible answers:
L22 has existed for a long time, since the first settlers
Purpose: puts, into historical, chronological order of what America has been

3. In line 25 Carson says, “a strange blight crept over the area and things began to change.” Identify who or what fell under the “evil spell.”

Possible answers;
L27-chicken, cows, shee
L28, farmers, families, humans
L31: adults and kids
L34: birds
L43: pigs
L44-45 apple trees and bees
L48-49: road side vegetation

Purpose: shows how the “evil spell” affected everything and everyone

Text Dependent Questions

Teacher Notes and Possible

	Animals	Nature	Humans
<p>4. Make a T chart for the effects on the three groups impacted by the “evil spell”</p>	<p>L 26-27: chickens- mysterious maladies</p> <p>L 28:cattle and sheep- sickened and died</p> <p>L36, 37-39: birds- moribund, trembled violently, could not fly, Soundless</p> <p>L42:hens and chicks- chicks didn’t hatch</p> <p>L43-44:pigs- small litters and piglets only survived a few days</p> <p>L44-46:apple trees and bees- bees didn’t pollinate therefore no fruit</p> <p>L51: fish- died</p>	<p>L40: Fields, woods, marsh silent</p> <p>L42-45:Apple trees no fruit</p> <p>L48-49 brown and withered vegetation, vegetation swept up by fire</p> <p>L50: streams no lifeless</p>	<p>L28: farmers and families took ill</p> <p>L 29-30 doctors puzzled by new sicknesses</p> <p>L30-31: unexplained deaths amongst adults and children</p> <p>L32: Stricken suddenly and died within a few hours</p>
	<p>Purpose: categorization, illuminates the main point that everything was effected, clarifies the seriousness of the effect of the “evil spell”</p>		
<p>5. What do all these things have in common in the way they were affected by the evil spell?</p>	<p>Possible Answer: disease, death and destruction</p> <p>Purpose: requires synthesis of reading and inference</p>		

Text Dependent Questions

Teacher Notes and Possible

6. Although Carson mentions, “witchcraft, the grim spector, and evil spell,” what are the actual causes of the “maladies”?

Possible Answers:

L54: white granular powder

L58: people had done it themselves

Purpose:

Establish cause of all the problems and make meaning of the sentence structure

7. Why did Carson choose to create a fictional town?

Possible Answers:

L60-61: might easily have a counterpart in America or elsewhere in the world

L62-63: every one of these disasters has happened somewhere

L65-66: may easily become a stark reality we all shall know

Purpose: include different events occurring around the country, break down and analyze the fairy tale format, an amalgamation

8. Identify where and how the words “silent” and “spring” are used in the text.

Possible Answers:

Silent:

L11: dear silently crossed the field

L49: roadside silent

L57: no enemy action had silenced the birth of new life

L68: what has already silenced the voices of spring in countless towns in America

Spring:

L9: in spring white clouds of bloom drifted above the green fields

L19: the flood of migrants was pouring through in spring

L37: it was spring without voices

L68; what has already silenced the voices of spring in countless American towns

Purpose: using text as evidence to support the main idea of the writing prompt

Writing Prompt: Write a short informative essay describing the significance of what Rachel Carson refers to as, “the silent spring.”

Possible Answers:

L25-69: the silencing of spring (renewal, rebirth and life): animals, nature and humans

L37: season without noise- has no noise because of disease, death and destruction (L25-51)

L54: Death caused by white granular powder

L60-66: in this town, but all things have happened

L53-55: quick and drastic

L58: people had done it themselves

L6-23: no peace and harmony (this can be gleaned by contrasting the first two paragraphs with the rest of the piece)

Purpose:

Students analyze the piece as a whole after analyzing each component. Uses text as evidence to support an author’s claim. It issues dealing with the environment and the environmental movement of the mid-20th century. See writing standards.