

# Jungle Battles

by Edgar Rice Burroughs *from Tarzan of the Apes*

*Tarzan of the Apes is a story about a boy raised by apes. Tarzan's English parents had been stranded in a jungle of West Africa. It is there that Tarzan was born. When he was very young both of his parents died. He was adopted by a female ape named Kala who had just lost her own infant. Because he was just a baby when his human parents died, he remembered nothing about his life with them. In this passage, Tarzan, who is now ten years old, has discovered the cabin where he and his human parents lived. Kerchak and Tublat are other apes in the tribe of apes.*

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Among other things he found a sharp hunting knife, on the keen blade of which he immediately proceeded to cut his finger. Undaunted he continued his experiments, finding that he could hack and hew splinters of wood from the table and chairs with this new toy.

For a long time this amused him, but finally tiring he continued his explorations. In a cupboard filled with books he came across one with brightly colored pictures—it was a child' illustrated alphabet—

A is for Archer  
Who shoots  
with a bow.

B is for Boy,  
His first name  
is Joe.

The pictures interested him greatly.

There were many apes with faces similar to his own, and further over in the book he found, under "M," some little monkeys such as he saw daily flitting through the trees of his primeval forest. But nowhere was pictured any of his own people; in all the book was none that resembled Kerchak, or Tublat, or Kala.

At first he tried to pick the little figures from the leaves, but he soon saw that they were not real, though he knew not what they might be, nor had he any words to describe them.

The boats, and trains, and cows, and horses were quite meaningless to him, but not quite so baffling as the odd little figures which appeared beneath and between the colored pictures—some strange kind of bug he thought they might be, for many of them had legs though nowhere could he find one with eyes and a mouth. It was his first introduction to the letters of the alphabet, and he was over ten years old.

Of course he had never before seen print, or ever had spoken with any living thing which had the remotest idea that such a thing as a written language existed, nor ever had he seen anyone reading.

So what wonder that the little boy was quite at a loss to guess the meaning of these strange figures.

Near the middle of the book he found his old enemy, Sabor, the lioness, and further on, coiled Histah, the snake.

Oh, it was most engrossing! Never before in all his ten years had he enjoyed anything so much. So absorbed was he that he did not note the approaching dusk, until it was quite upon him and the figures were blurred.

**Questions**

1. Who are the “many apes with faces similar to his own” that Tarzan sees in the book?
2. What are the little bugs in the book?
3. What was one picture of an animal that Tarzan saw that was familiar to him?
4. The passage says, “But nowhere was pictured any of his own people.” Who are Tarzan’s people?

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**Vocabulary List**

Each of the vocabulary words below are used in the reading passage. As you read the passage, pay attention to context clues that suggest the word's meaning.

1. keen
2. proceeded
3. undaunted
4. hew
5. primeval
6. baffling
7. remotest
8. engrossing

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**Context Clues**

Using context clues from the sentences in the passage, underline the correct meaning of the word in boldface.

1) “a sharp hunting knife, on the **keen** blade of which he immediately proceeded to cut his finger”

a. metal    b. shiny or bright    c. dull; thick    d. sharp; razor-like

2) “a sharp hunting knife, on the keen blade of which he immediately **proceeded** to cut his finger”

a. tried or attempted    b. went on; continued    c. bent over    d. practiced; worked at

3) “**Undaunted** he continued his experiments,”

a. bored; uninterested    b. fearless or undismayed    c. quickly or hurriedly    d. uneasy; nervous

4) “he could hack and **hew** splinters of wood”

a. cut; chop    b. knit or join    c. eat; swallow    d. carve

5) “the trees of his **primeval** forest”

a. great ape; gorilla    b. wicked; bad    c. green; lush    d. untouched or primitive

6) “but not quite so **baffling** as the odd little figures which appeared beneath”

a. interesting    b. funny; amusing    c. confusing; mystifying    d. depressing; sad

7) “the **remotest** idea that such a thing as a written language existed”

- a. scary; bothersome    b. unlikely; slightest    c. unusual or unique    d. sharpest; finest

8) “Oh, it was most **engrossing**”

- a. silly or ridiculous    b. exhausting; tiring    c. interesting; fascinating    d. awful or disgusting