

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Class \_\_\_\_\_

# 10 *Silent Spring*

—Rachel Carson

## Synopsis

*Silent Spring* is a nonfiction text that explores the impact of humans, and their products, on the environment. Written over 30 years ago, this text was an early attempt to develop environmental awareness among the general public. Rachel Carson, the author, was a biologist who studied the effects of pesticides on the environment. She conducted her research during the 1950s, a time when the use of pesticides was a relatively new process. The scientific community knew little about the long-term effects such products would have on the Earth. The general public knew even less. Pesticides were used without caution and in great quantities because the benefit of pest eradication seemed to be the only consideration.

As a scientist, Carson became concerned by the attempt of humans to control nature. Her research indicated that most manmade chemicals adversely affected the balance of nature. Pesticides were reducing populations, including humans, that were never intended to be targets. Armed with the results of her research, she became an unofficial spokesperson for the natural world. She wrote *Silent Spring* to counteract the prevailing idea of the time that “nature exists for the convenience of man.” Her text attempts to help people develop respect for the natural world and encourage the realization that the naive or reckless use of chemicals in this world will ultimately destroy the users.

## Student Focus

In order to obtain the fullest understanding of this work, you must take note of the sequence of events that Rachel Carson describes within the text. You should recognize that the scientific community, as well as the general public, knew very little about the side effects of many pesticides that had been developed. You should also focus on the cause-and-effect relationships between pesticides and the natural world that are described by Carson. You should appreciate that many of the relationships were only inferred at the time the novel was written. However, in the decades since *Silent Spring* was published, many of Carson’s premises have, unfortunately, proved to be tragically prophetic.

## Correlation to Subject Matter

Plants, Bacteria, Pollution, Cancer, Mutations, and Food Chains