

Edgar Rice Burroughs. Tarzan of the Apes – From Chapter 5, “The White Ape”

His [Tarzan’s] life among these fierce apes had been happy; for his recollection held no other life, nor did he know that there existed within the universe aught else than his little forest and the wild jungle animals with which he was familiar.

He was nearly ten before he commenced to realize that a great difference existed between himself and his fellows. His little body, burned brown by exposure, suddenly caused him feelings of intense shame, for he realized that it was entirely hairless, like some low snake, or other reptile.

He attempted to obviate this by plastering himself from head to foot with mud, but this dried and fell off. Besides it felt so uncomfortable that he quickly decided that he preferred the shame to the discomfort.

In the higher land which his tribe frequented was a little lake, and it was here that Tarzan first saw his face in the clear, still waters of its bosom. It was on a sultry day of the dry season that he and one of his cousins had gone down to the bank to drink. As they leaned over, both little faces were mirrored on the placid pool; the fierce and terrible features of the ape beside those of the aristocratic scion of an old English house.

Tarzan was appalled. It had been bad enough to be hairless, but to own such a countenance! He wondered that the other apes could look at him at all.

That tiny slit of a mouth and those puny white teeth! How they looked beside the mighty lips and powerful fangs of his more fortunate brothers!

And the little pinched nose of his; so thin was it that it looked half starved. He turned red as he compared it with the beautiful broad nostrils of his companion. Such a generous nose! Why it spread half across his face! It certainly must be fine to be so handsome, thought poor little Tarzan.

But when he saw his own eyes; ah, that was the final blow—a brown spot, a gray circle and then blank whiteness! Frightful! Not even the snakes had such hideous eyes as he.

So intent was he upon this personal appraisal of his features that he did not hear the parting of the tall grass behind him as a great body pushed itself stealthily through the jungle; nor did his companion, the ape, hear either, for he was drinking and the noise of his sucking lips and gurgles of satisfaction drowned the quiet approach of the intruder.

Define Each Word

obviate: _____

sultry: _____

placid: _____

scion: _____

gurgle: _____

Write the Correct Word from the Vocabulary

1. Paris Hilton, a _____ of the prominent Hilton family of hotel fame, had her own reality show.
2. Teaching children good work and study habits early in elementary school may _____ the need for remedial classes later on.
3. After eating lunch, the baby _____ with delight as her father rocked her on his shoulder.
4. Before the invention of air conditioning, the _____ nature of Miami’s weather discouraged people from living there.
5. On weekends, jet skies and powerboats upset the calm, _____ surface of Biscayne Bay.

Comprehension and Discussion: Answer Each Question in Complete Sentences

1. Why does Tarzan cover himself with mud “from head to foot”?

2. What attitude does Tarzan have about his physical features? What descriptive words express this attitude?
