

Star Trek / Enterprise¹

Instructions –

- **As you read, draw a box around any word for which you do not know the meaning and cannot deduce the meaning from the context of the sentence.**
- **In the vertical box on the right, make notations such as summarizing the main ideas, specific statistics, important people or definitions. Make note of any comments you support, or any rebuttal you may offer to the dialogue.**
 - ↳ (While you may highlight or underline the text itself, that is not sufficient for this; you are expected to write in the box)
- **Follow the instructions on the last pages**

Synopsis: The Starship Enterprise encounters the Valakian civilization, which is suffering from a plague that threatens them with extinction in a couple of hundred years. On their home planet there also lives another, less evolved, civilization called the Menk. Both species lives in a symbiosis of sorts where the Valakians (residing in the cities) look after the less intelligent Menk (residing in the forests). There is peace between the two species in the present. Now Doctor Phlox discovers that the Valakian plague is genetic and that the Menk are on the brink of an evolutionary breakthrough. But the Menk can't become the new dominant species if the Valakians survive. The Doctor and the Captain Archer meet to discuss what to do.

Archer: Any progress?

Phlox: The research has been challenging, to say the least. It appears the Valakian population decline has been going on for a thousand years, and dates to a reversal in and magnification of the planets magnetic poles. That the generations have persisted to the present day is remarkable, but the genetic degeneration is so pronounced that there are few generations left, possible as few as three. The Menk, curiously, seem to have been strengthened by this environmental shift.

Archer: A cure, Doctor. Have you found a cure?

Phlox: Even if I could find one, I'm not sure it would be ethical.

Archer: Ethical?

Phlox: We'd be interfering with an evolutionary process that has been going on for thousands of years.

Archer: Every time you treat an illness, you're interfering. That's what doctors do.

Phlox: You're forgetting about the Menk.

Archer: What about the Menk?

Phlox: I've been studying their genome as well, and I've seen evidence of increasing intelligence, motor skills, linguistic abilities... Unlike the Valakians they appear to be in the process of an evolutionary awakening. It may take millennia, but the Menk have the potential to become the dominant species on this planet.

Archer: And that won't happen as long as the Valakians are around.

Phlox: If the Menk are to flourish, they need an opportunity to survive on their own.

Archer: Well, what are you suggesting? We choose one species over the other?

Phlox: All I'm saying is that we let nature make the choice.

¹ This dialogue originally appeared in an episode of Star Trek: Enterprise. It has been adapted (some content removed, and some lines added, to magnify the moral dilemma.

Archer: The hell with nature.

Phlox: You seem to have seen similarities between the Valakian culture and yours. I fear you are not a dispassionate observer in this drama.

Archer: What does it say about our own humanity if we withhold medicine which could alleviate suffering? Sentient beings have consciousness, and are burdened by when we can do good but chose not to. How would we live with ourselves if we don't do what our primal instincts feel is right? What does this say about the values of our own species? Don't all beings have a certain inalienable rights, including the right to exist?

Phlox: At its most fundamental level, logically, each of these points can be built upon, but only so far. Your logic is fogged by your allusion to "humanity." That you view this through an ethnocentric lens is revealing. The very application of inalienable rights and human perspective to another species borders on racism.

Archer: The only thing that you can be reasonably sure about, is what is happening in the here and now. And withholding the cure would in all likelihood condemn the Valakians to great suffering and death. If that is not immoral then I don't know what is. You're a doctor. You have a moral obligation to help people who are suffering.

Phlox: I'm also a scientist, and I'm obligated to consider the larger issues. Thirty five thousand years ago, your species co-existed with other humanoids. Isn't that correct?

Archer: Go ahead...

Phlox: What if an alien race had interfered and given the Neanderthals an evolutionary advantage? We know they interbred with Homo sapiens, but suppose this advantage allows them to flourish and Homo sapiens to wither away and disappear. Fortunately for you and modern humanity, they didn't.

Archer: I appreciate your perspective on all of this, but we're talking about something that might – Might – happen, thousands of years from now. They've asked for our help today. I am not prepared to walk away based on a theory.

Phlox: Evolution is more than a theory. It is a fundamental scientific principle whose evidence is overwhelming.

Archer: Evolution is a principle of how species evolves, yes, and some eventually die out. It is, however, not a blueprint which can help you predict the future outcome for a certain species. It is random whether, how and when a species will change through adaptation or survival-of-the-fittest over time. There's no way of knowing beforehand how it will turn out. One cannot assert – at this moment – that the death of one species will invariably lead to the emergence of another on this planet. All it is, is pure conjecture about future evolutionary paths that *might* happen centuries or millennia from now

Phlox: That future development on the planet and therefore ultimately that evolutionary processes are a matter of coincidences, that is true. But it is also a reality that this species is undergoing a natural process rooted in their very genetic structure. Cellular degeneration on such a scale is a likely extinction event.

Archer: By withholding medicine, you are advocating genocide by wilful omission.

Phlox: Not at all, Captain. This degenerative illness is not like any other genocide recorded in any world. Have you considered how this would look had the Valakians been responsible for their misery themselves, through chemical or nuclear exposure or environmental degradation? Then we would not be discussing interfering with a natural process, would we?

Archer: You're splitting hairs with your cynical definition. What is really gnawing at you?

Phlox: Is it our place to infringe? Are we assuming the role of God in deciding the survivability of one species over the other? There is a stench of hypocrisy in this...are we so morally superior that we can make this decision?

Archer: Assuming that there is a God, how do we not know that God has brought us here to save them?

Phlox: Theology brings us down a slippery slope. Every culture has their own greatest conceivable being. Your God, my God, their God, and what if the Mink and Valakian believe in different Gods? Faith risks division and stubborn tendencies and assumptions. Faith does not lend itself to science.

Archer (in a soft reflective voice, to himself): In this universe there's a mathematical probability of three million Earth-type planets, and in the entire universe, three million-million galaxies like this, and in all that, and perhaps more, only one of each of us.

Phlox: Pardon me?

Archer (snapped out of his contemplation): Oh? Nothing...it's something I heard once at the Academy.

What are the odds, Doctor, that in the vastness of space we would come across this particular species with this particular situation when we have the technology to potentially provide a remedy? It's easy to get lost in the paradox of this all. More to the point, like it or not, we are confronted with a decision. This is unavoidable: Providing we can synthesize a cure, making a decision to provide a cure and choosing to not provide a cure are both choices in and of themselves. You're "playing God" regardless.

Phlox: Forgive me for saying so, but I believe your compassion for the Valakian's is affecting your judgment.

Archer: My compassion guides my judgment.

Phlox: Captain...

Archer: Can you find a cure? Doctor?

Phlox: I already have.

Name: _____

Period: _____ Date: _____

Précis Statement – write a summarizing statement (22-25 words) which summarized the main point argument of Captain Archer

Total number of words: _____

Support nr.1 – Identify the MOST SIGNIFICANT fact or assertion from the dialogue which would support Captain Archer’s position.

Support nr.2 – Identify the SECOND SIGNIFICANT fact or assertion from the dialogue which would support Captain Archer’s position.

Support nr.3 – Identify the THIRD SIGNIFICANT fact or assertion from the dialogue which would support Captain Archer’s position.

Précis Statement – write a summarizing statement (22-25 words) which summarized the main point argument of Doctor Phlox

Total number of words: _____

Support nr.1 – Identify the MOST SIGNIFICANT fact or assertion from the dialogue which would support Doctor Phlox’s position.

Support nr.2 – Identify the SECOND SIGNIFICANT fact or assertion from the dialogue which would support Doctor Phlox’s position.

Support nr.3 – Identify the THIRD SIGNIFICANT fact or assertion from the dialogue which would support Doctor Phlox’s position.

