



● Sentence Completion 2 (high-advanced GRE level)

Directions: Choose the best word(s) to complete each sentence.

1. Most cat species are known for their hunting _____; even a domesticated cat will demonstrate exceptional skills if a mouse enters its home.
A. astuteness
B. acumen
C. ineptitude
D. adroitness
E. prowess
2. The _____ “Miller’s Tale” elicits a shocking juxtaposition when compared to other stories of *The Canterbury Tales*, since most are prim, austere, and courtly romances.
A. feculent
B. vile
C. decorous
D. ribald
E. belletristic
3. The manager insisted on carrying out a team-building exercise; he believed his employees could achieve more by working _____ than they could by working independently.
A. in tandem
B. autonomously
C. in unison
D. agglomerated
E. successively
4. Many Muslims consider Salman Rushdie’s works to be obscene and offensive; nevertheless, these supposedly _____ books have proven quite popular.
A. reprehensible
B. chaste
C. scabrous
D. notorious
E. unorthodox
5. Perhaps the biggest flaw in the Articles of Confederation was its requirement that most decisions required _____; as a result, the Constitution that replaced it stipulated that only a two-thirds majority was required for most major decisions.
A. pluralism
B. a plenary
C. equanimity
D. unanimity
E. preponderance
6. Vice President Spiro Agnew never sounded humble in his speeches, but of course, reading his speechwriter’s esoteric and pompous writings could make anybody seem _____.
A. oratorical
B. rotund
C. sonorous
D. austere
E. didactic

Answers and Explanations

1) E

To figure out what the missing word is, try to predict its definition by using key words from the prompt. Here, the key word is “skills,” a word that, like the missing word, is modified by the adjectival “hunting.” Thus, the missing word must also mean skills. This means choice **(E)** is correct, since *prowess* is exceptional skill.

(A) is incorrect because *astuteness* is shrewdness or perceptiveness. There is a difference between mere perception and the active, aggressive “skills” that cats employ in hunting mice. Thus, choice (A) is not the strongest possible answer.

(B) is incorrect because *acumen* is shrewd insight or perception. There is a difference between mere being perception and the active, aggressive “skills” that cats employ in hunting mice. Thus, choice (B) is not the strongest possible answer.

(C) is incorrect because *ineptitude* is the quality of being without skills. Thus, this word has the opposite meaning of the missing word.

(D) is incorrect because *adroitness* is clever, resourceful skillfulness. The prompt does not directly state that cats use their wits or other resources to hunt. Instead, it merely notes that cats possess “hunting skills.” Because this answer is not fully supported, this is not the best possible answer.

2) D

To figure out what the missing word is, try to predict its definition by using key words from the prompt. Here, the key words are “prim” and “austere,” words that describe some of the stories in the collection. The missing word describes another story in the collection, but the prompt implies that it is the opposite of the other stories. Thus, the missing word must be the opposite of “prim” and “austere.” Therefore, choice **(D)** is correct, since *ribald* means vulgar or indecent, the very opposite of prim and austere.

(A) is incorrect because *feculent* means extremely dirty or, specifically, full of fecal matter. This word is too extreme and too specific to work in the context of the prompt.

(B) is incorrect because *vile* means highly offensive or disgusting. This word is too extreme to describe works that are merely the opposite of “prim” and “austere” ones.

(C) is incorrect because *decorous* means dignified or proper in manner. Thus, it could describe the other “courtly romances” in the prompt, but not “The Miller’s Tale,” which is “juxtaposed against” those tales.

(E) is incorrect because *belletristic* means characteristic of literature as high art. This word would not describe stories that are the opposite of “prim” and “austere.” Stories that are the opposite of these characteristics are not necessarily considered high art.

3) **A**

To figure out what the missing word is, try to predict its definition by using key words from the prompt. The key words in this prompt are “working independently,” which sets up an opposite relationship with another form of “working.” This second form is described by the missing word. The missing word must mean the opposite of independently, so it must mean collectively. Choice (A) is, therefore, correct, since *in tandem* means in association or partnership.

(B) is incorrect because *autonomously* means in a self-governing manner. This word would correctly describe “working independently,” but not the opposite of doing so, as the missing word describes. This word does not work in context because it does not set up the opposite relationship required by the prompt.

(C) is incorrect because *in unison* means together as one. The prompt does not specify that people need to be in complete harmony in order to achieve anything. Rather, it merely states that “working independently” has its limitations. This phrase is too extreme to work in context.

(D) is incorrect because *agglomerated* means gathered in a collective mass or cluster. This is slightly too specific for the prompt, as it would literally mean that employees needed to work together in a huddled mass.

(E) is incorrect because *successively* means one at a time or sequentially. This word does not have a strong relationship with “working independently” as either a synonym or an antonym. One can work alone or with others without regard to sequential order or time.

4) **C**

To figure out what the missing word is, try to predict its definition by using key words from the prompt. Here, the key word is “obscene,” a word that, like the missing word, describes what Rushdie’s books have been called. Thus, the missing word must also mean obscene. Choice (C) is the best answer: *scabrous* means risqué or obscene.

(A) is incorrect because *reprehensible* means deserving of blame or rebuke. This word could theoretically work in context. However, something deserving of rebuke is not necessarily “obscene.” It could have negative qualities other than obscenity. This answer choice is not as strong as choice (C).

(B) is incorrect because *chaste* means pure or free from obscenity. As such, this word has the opposite meaning of the missing word, since the missing word must mean “obscene.”

(D) is incorrect because *notorious* means widely and unfavorably known. Being notorious and being “obscene” are not necessarily synonymous. Something can be notorious without being obscene and vice versa.

(E) is incorrect because *unorthodox* means unconventional or not conforming to rules. Being unconventional and being “obscene” are not necessarily synonymous. Something can be unconventional without being obscene and vice versa.

5) **D**

To figure out what the missing word is, try to predict its definition by using key words from the prompt. In this prompt, the key words are “only a two-thirds majority was required.” This, the prompt explains, came “as a result” of the “biggest flaw” in the previous form of government. The missing word describes this flaw. The missing word must, therefore, have something to do with the number of people required to make a decision. Since the new form of government required “only” two thirds of the majority, the old form must have required more than two thirds. Therefore, the missing word probably means consensus without dissent. Choice **(D)** is right, since *unanimity* is full agreement.

(A) is incorrect because *pluralism* is an emphasis on diversity or the idea that there is more than one guiding principle in life. This does not work in context, as it has little to do with the “two-thirds majority” discussed in the prompt.

(B) is incorrect because a *plenary* is a meeting in which all qualified members participate. The prompt not only implies that all people had to participate, but that the participants also had to reach a full consensus. Thus, this word is not the strongest answer choice.

(C) is incorrect because *equanimity* is calmness. This word does not work in context, as the prompt only discusses the percentages of people needed to approve a decision, not their emotional states.

(E) is incorrect because a *preponderance* is a majority or superiority in weight or number. This would more accurately describe the type of support needed to pass a measure under the Constitution, not the Articles of Confederation.

6) **B**

To figure out what the missing word is, try to predict its definition by using key words from the prompt. Here, the key words are “esoteric” and “pompous,” words that are used to describe the writings of Agnew’s speechwriter. The missing word must also mean esoteric or pompous. Choice **(B)** is the best answer, since

orotund means pompous or bombastic when it is used to describe how one speaks.

(A) is incorrect because *oratorical* means given to oratory or public speaking. While Agnew may have been an excellent public speaker, the prompt only implies he sounded “esoteric and pompous.”

(C) is incorrect because *sonorous* means loud or deep-voiced. Though sonorous speeches can often come across as grandiloquent or pompous, this word does not work as well in context as would choice (B). A speechwriter does not make a reader seem loud. Only a reader’s voice can do that.

(D) is incorrect because *austere* means unadorned or without excess. As such, this word is practically the opposite of the way one who uses “esoteric and pompous” words would sound.

(E) is incorrect because *didactic* means intended for instruction. Thus, didactic would only work in context if the prompt made clear that the speaker used “esoteric” and “pompous” speech for the purposes of educating his audience. However, the prompt only makes it clear that the speaker used such speech and does not give a purpose.