



● Sentence Completion 11 *(high-advanced GRE level)*

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

1. The doctor warned his patient of the need to forfeit his _____ lifestyle and gave him a list of _____ activities he might employ to become more active.
A. static ... passive
B. vivacious ... latent
C. sedentary ... kinetic
D. vigorous ... lively
E. demoniac ... prostrate
2. Mr. Ernst is clearly magnanimous, as his _____ enabled the university to build a new library; what is more, he also donated money to start a scholarship fund for minority students.
A. bequeathal
B. equitableness
C. pension
D. largess
E. misappropriation
3. Martha attempted to adopt the terse style of Hemingway, but she found herself struggling to write so _____, since her writing was habitually _____.
A. bounteously ... jocund
B. succinctly ... epigrammatically
C. compendiously ... prolix
D. curtly ... brusque
E. turgidly ... pithy
4. The Maginot Line was used to create _____ column—an unyielding defense against German invasion; although the line itself was impervious, the Germans simply circumnavigated this fortification and continued their march into France.
A. an impregnable
B. a staunch
C. a porous
D. an indelible
E. a formidable
5. The romantic comedy was so sentimental that I found it difficult to watch; after all, one can only stomach so much _____ dialogue.
A. stilted
B. insipid
C. chimerical
D. plausible
E. maudlin
6. Ralph Waldo Emerson expressed his grief in a _____ for his dead son; similarly, Charles Mingus mourned Lester Young in his elegiac composition “Goodbye Pork Pie Hat.”
A. hymn
B. threnody
C. paeon
D. canticle
E. lilt

Answers and Explanations

1) C

To figure out what the missing words are, try to predict their definitions by using key words from the prompt. In this prompt, both missing words share the same key words: “become more active.” The first missing word describes the patient’s “lifestyle.” Since the doctor is attempting to “encourage” the patient to be more active, the patient’s current lifestyle must be one that involves very little physical activity. Thus, the first missing word must mean idle or inactive. The second missing word describes the type of “activities” the doctor encourages, so they must be physical exercises or activities. Therefore, the second missing word must mean active or involving motion. The correct answer is choice **(C)**, since *sedentary* means accustomed to sitting a great deal and not exercising, while *kinetic* means pertaining to motion.

(A) is incorrect because only the first word works in context. *Static* means lacking movement, so it could correctly describe the patient’s “lifestyle,” since his lifestyle apparently involves very little physical activity. However, *passive* means inactive, so it would not describe the actions that the doctor would recommend.

(B) is incorrect because neither word works in context. *Vivacious* means lively, so it would not be used to describe the patient’s inactive “lifestyle.” *Latent* means dormant or existing but not yet seen. It cannot logically be used to describe the “activities” the doctor would encourage.

(D) is incorrect because only the second word works in context. *Lively* means active and could correctly describe the types of “activities” the doctor would recommend. However, *vigorous* means energetic or active and cannot describe the type of lifestyle the patient actually has.

(E) is incorrect because neither word works in context. *Demoniac* means frantic or raging. This would imply an active “lifestyle,” not the lifestyle that the patient currently has. *Prostrate* means lying flat or face-down. This would not work in context of the second missing word, then, since the second missing word should refer to exercise or other physical “activities.”

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 “magnanimous” and “donated money.” The first key word describes Mr. Ernst, while the second key phrase describes what he did. The missing word describes something he did that helped fund a “new library.” This implies that the missing word also relates to donating money and being generous. The missing word must mean charity. Thus, choice **(D)** is correct, since *largess* is generous bestowal of gifts.

(A) is incorrect because a *bequeathal* is the passing on of property or money after death through a legal will. It is possible that Mr. Ernst left money to the university in his will, but the prompt does not support this. The second clause states that he actively “donated money,” which implies that he is alive. Donations are generally made by the living; bequeathals are made by the wills of the dead.

(B) is incorrect because *equitableness* is fairness. This does not work in context because it does not relate to the key words in the prompt. The missing word is supposed to refer to donations or being “magnanimous,” not fairness.

(C) is incorrect because a *pension* is a regular allowance or subsidy, especially one paid to workers after they have retired. Mr. Ernst may have been a retiree who received a pension from a previous employer, but it is not likely that he himself paid a pension to “the university.” Charitable donations are not usually referred to as pensions.

(E) is incorrect because a *misappropriation* is a misuse of funds entrusted to one’s care. If Mr. Ernst misappropriated funds, he probably would have stolen money from the university and used it for his own purposes. He would not have funded a “library” or a “scholarship.”

3) **C**

To figure out what the missing words are, try to predict their definitions by using key words from the prompt. There are four key words in this sentence. The first three provide the relationship between the missing words. These words are “struggling,” “since,” and “habitually,” which collectively suggest that the two missing words are opposites of each other. Martha found writing in one style difficult because she usually wrote in the opposite way. The prompt provides one last hint in the word “terse.” Since the Martha’s goal was to write in a terse style, she must have wanted to write concisely, using few words. Thus, the first missing word must mean concisely and the second missing word the opposite of that, or wordy. Choice **(C)** is the best answer, since *compendiously* means concisely or in few words, while *prolix* means tedious or wordy.

(A) is incorrect because neither word works in context. *Bounteously* means generously, while *jocund* means cheery. Neither word works in the context of this prompt, since neither word relates to wordiness.

(B) is incorrect because only the first word works in context. *Succinctly* means concisely and would correctly describe what the author struggled to do. However, *epigrammatically* also means concise or terse, especially in the style of an epigram. The prompt requires a pair of antonyms, not synonyms, so choice (B) is incorrect.

(D) is incorrect because neither word works in context. *Curtly* means bluntly, while *brusque* means blunt. These two words are synonyms. Moreover, neither

word necessarily is connected to wordiness, although one who is blunt might make his or her point faster than one who is not blunt. In any case, the prompt requires a pair of antonyms, not synonyms, so choice (D) is incorrect.

(E) is incorrect because neither word works in context. *Turgidly* means bloated, while *pithy* means concise. Thus, the two words have the proper relationship to each other but would need to be flipped in order to work in context.

4) A

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 “impervious,” a word that, like the missing word, is used to describe the “line.” Since the missing word must likewise mean impervious, choice (A) is correct: *impregnable* means totally safe from attack.

(B) is incorrect because *staunch* means strong or substantial. This could describe what the Maginot Line was supposed to have been in theory, but it is not strong enough in meaning to work in context. The prompt states that “the line was impervious,” but a staunch line would merely be strong, not impenetrable.

(C) is incorrect because *porous* means permeable or full of holes. This would describe a line that was the exact opposite of “impervious.”

(D) is incorrect because *indelible* means permanent; a line that is permanent is not necessarily “impervious” and vice-versa.

(E) is incorrect because *formidable* means powerful. This could describe what the Maginot Line was supposed to have been in theory, but it is not strong enough in meaning to work in context. The prompt states that “the line was impervious,” but a formidable line would merely be powerful, not impenetrable.

5) E

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 “so sentimental,” a phrase that explains why the film was “difficult to watch.” The missing word describes the limits of what a viewer can “stomach” and is part of the clause that elaborates on the why the film was difficult to watch. What made the film hard to stomach was that it was overly sentimental, so the missing word must likewise mean extremely sentimental. Choice (E) is the correct answer, since *maudlin* means overly sentimental.

(A) is incorrect because *stilted* means stiff or unnatural. This could be used to describe the dialogue of a movie that was “difficult to watch,” but not necessarily to describe the dialogue of an extremely “sentimental” film. A movie can have stilted dialogue without being overly sentimental and vice versa.

(B) is incorrect because *insipid* means bland or lacking excitement. This word would not be used to describe something that was highly “sentimental,” since sentimentality and a lack of excitement are not synonymous.

(C) is incorrect because *chimerical* means fanciful or romantic and generally refers to things that are unrealistic. However, the prompt states only that the movie was “sentimental.” It does not provide any indication that the story was unrealistic or fanciful; it merely implies that it was sappy.

(D) is incorrect because *plausible* means believable. However, the prompt gives no indication that the “dialogue” in the film is either believable or unbelievable. It merely implies that the film was sappy.

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 phrase is “expressed his grief.” The prompt also implies that Emerson expressed his grief in a similar way to Mingus, who wrote an “elegiac composition” in memory of Lester Young. Since Emerson’s expression of grief is similar to Mingus’s composition, it must be something he wrote. Specifically, the missing word must mean an elegiac composition. Choice **(B)** is correct: a *threnody* is a sad poem or song written for the dead.

(A) is incorrect because a *hymn* is a song of joy or praise. While Emerson’s and Mingus’s compositions were probably written to praise the dead, this is not the strongest answer choice. Hymns are not necessarily about the dead.

(C) is incorrect because a *paeon* is a song of joy or praise. While Emerson’s and Mingus’s compositions were probably written to praise the dead, this is not the strongest answer choice. Paeans are not necessarily about the dead.

(D) is incorrect because a *canticle* is a Biblical or liturgical song. Emerson’s and Mingus’s compositions may or may not have related to the Bible or church liturgy. The prompt does not give any evidence to support this idea, so this is not the strongest answer choice.

(E) is incorrect because a *lilt* is a cheerful song or tune. A lilt would not usually refer to songs or writings that eulogize or lament the dead. Most songs and writing that eulogize the dead are sad, not cheerful.