



● Sentence Completion 20 *(high-advanced GRE level)*

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

1. At halftime, the furious coach _____ his team for their pitiful performance; his censuring may have been responsible for the team's about-face victory in the second half of the game.
A. excoriated
B. embroiled
C. venerated
D. exterminated
E. scourged
2. The Law of 22 Prairial broadened the scope of the Committee of Public Safety's powers and likewise increased the _____ of the Revolutionary Tribunal.
A. precinct
B. bailiwick
C. purview
D. avocation
E. perspective
3. Many Malcolm X biographers are convinced that his assassination was _____ of his former comrades in the Nation of Islam; nevertheless, the conspiracy has yet to be proven.
A. a subterfuge
B. a mendacity
C. an auto-da-fé
D. a machination
E. a fratricide
4. Though his teachers worried about her _____ appearance, Kara was actually among the more _____ students in the classroom.
A. wan ... salubrious
B. sanguine ... virile
C. pallid ... infirm
D. jaundiced ... enfeebled
E. luminous ... zaftig
5. The inventor tweaked her design several times, but found that the first version of her design was by far the strongest; each of the _____ was unnecessary.
A. modulations
B. paragons
C. perditions
D. permutations
E. modifications
6. Even for the most erudite individuals, many of the experiments conducted at the Large Hadron Collider remain _____; thus, anything discovered there is virtually guaranteed to remain _____ to most laymen.
A. necromantic ... lucid
B. enigmatic ... recondite
C. impenetrable ... capricious
D. churlish ... opaque
E. atypical ... idiosyncratic

Answers and Explanations

1) **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 “censuring,” something the prompt states “the furious coach” did to his team. The missing word likewise describes what the coach did to his team, so it too must mean censure or harsh criticism. Because *excoriate* means vehemently denounce or criticize, choice **(A)** is the correct answer.

(B) is incorrect because *embroiled* means involved in. This does not describe what the coach did to his team, since the team would have already been involved in the game.

(C) is incorrect because *venerated* means adored or respected. This is the opposite of what the coach did to his team, since the prompt implies that he harshly criticized the team.

(D) is incorrect because *exterminated* means killed off completely. This is far too strong to work in context, since the coach merely criticized his team verbally.

(E) is incorrect because *scourged* means lashed or severely punished. The prompt does imply that the coach harshly criticized his team, but it does not suggest that he punished them.

2) **C**

To figure out what the missing word is, try to predict its definition by using key words from the prompt. In this prompt, the words are “the scope of the Committee of Public Safety’s powers.” These powers were “broadened” by the law. The missing word is something that was “likewise increased,” so it too must refer to the powers or influence of a group of people. Thus, the correct answer choice is **(C)**, because *purview* is the scope of the influence of something.

(A) is incorrect because a *precinct* is a space with definite limits marked out for administrative purposes. This word describes the “scope” of a certain jurisdiction, but it does not work in context. The prompt discusses the scope of a Committee’s and a Tribunal’s powers, not a physical space.

(B) is incorrect because a *bailiwick* is a person’s area of skill or knowledge. This would not be used to refer to the “scope” of power of a “Tribunal.”

(D) is incorrect because an *avocation* is a person’s side occupation. The word does not refer at all to a sphere or “scope” of influence, so choice (D) does not make sense in context.

(E) is incorrect because a *perspective* is one's mental view or outlook, not the "scope" of one's power.

3) **D**

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 "conspiracy," a word that suggests a plan or scheme made by a group of people. The missing word likewise refers to something made by a group of people, namely Malcolm X's "former comrades." The missing word must also mean plan or scheme. As a result, choice (D) is the strongest answer choice, since a *machination* is a plot or scheme.

(A) is incorrect because *subterfuge* is a trick used to avoid or escape something. While a "conspiracy" could involve subterfuge, this word does not work in context. The conspiracy in question specifically refers to an "assassination," not an escape.

(B) is incorrect because a *mendacity* is a lie or deception. While a "conspiracy" or assassination plot would likely involve deception, the missing word refers to the plot itself, not merely the deceptive aspect of the plot.

(C) is incorrect because an *auto-da-fé* is the public burning of a heretic. While this does refer to the act of killing someone, this term is too specific to work in context. It also fails to relate to the "conspiracy" aspect of the prompt.

(E) is incorrect because a *fratricide* is the murder of a brother or sister. While this could work symbolically, if one assumes that the members of the Nation of Islam were like brothers to one another, this word is still not the strongest answer choice. The prompt does not give any evidence that members of the Nation of Islam viewed Malcolm X like a brother. This word also fails to relate to the "conspiracy" aspect of the prompt.

4) **A**

To figure out what the missing words are, try to predict their definitions by using key words from the prompt. The key word in this sentence is "though," a word that suggests contrast between the two clauses. The first missing word describes Kara's "appearance," and the prompt implies that her appearance has caused her teachers to worry about her. The second missing word describes how Kara actually was. The use of "though" implies that Kara was the opposite of what her teachers assumed she was, given her appearance. Thus, the two missing words must be near opposites. Because *wan* means sickly pale and *salubrious* means healthful, choice (A) is correct.

(B) is incorrect because *sanguine* means reddish or ruddy. This does not form the proper relationship with *virile*, which means manly.

(C) is incorrect because *pallid* means lacking in color and could imply poor health. This does not form the proper relationship with *infirm*, which means ill.

(D) is incorrect because *jaundiced* means yellow in color due to an increase of bile in the blood. This does not form the proper relationship with *enfeebled*, which means weakened.

(E) is incorrect because *luminous* means glowing and could imply good health. This does not form the proper relationship with *zaftig*, which means well-proportioned or full-bodied.

5) **E**

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 “tweaked her design several times,” a phrase that implies that the inventor kept changing the design. The missing word likewise describes these changes, since it is part of a clause that explains that the changes were unnecessary. Thus, choice (E) is correct: *modifications* are minor adjustments or changes.

(A) is incorrect because *modulations* are changes in voice pitch or musical key, not changes made to an invention.

(B) is incorrect because *paragons* are models of excellence. This word would not be used to describe changes or tweaks to an invention.

(C) is incorrect because *perditions* are complete and utter losses, not minor tweaks to an invention.

(D) is incorrect because *permutations* are complete alterations or fundamental changes. This word is too strong to describe an invention that was merely “tweaked.” Tweaking implies minor, not major alterations.

6) **B**

To figure out what the missing words are, try to predict their definitions by using key words from the prompt. In this prompt, the key word is “thus,” a word that links the two clauses and makes it clear the second clause derives from the first. Both missing words describe what the experiments at the Large Hadron Collider “remain” to people, so the two words must have similar meanings. Because *enigmatic* means perplexing and *recondite* means abstruse or little-understood, choice (B) is the correct answer.

(A) is incorrect because *necromantic* means relating to magic, particularly the raising of the dead. This does not form the proper relationship with *lucid*, which means clear and easily understood.

(C) is incorrect because *impenetrable* means incapable of being understood. This does not form the proper relationship with *capricious*, which means impulsive.

(D) is incorrect because *churlish* means rude. This does not form the proper relationship with *opaque*, which means hard to understand or unclear.

(E) is incorrect because *atypical* means irregular. This does not form the proper relationship with *idiosyncratic*, which means pertaining to something peculiar to an individual.