

• **Sentence Completion 1** Level 11

Directions: Complete the sentence using the word or set of words for each blank that best fits the meaning of the sentence as a whole.

1. My chronic back pain was only _____ by the whiplash I experienced in the car crash.
A. ameliorated
B. aggravated
C. alleviated
D. assuaged
E. amended
2. The _____ ceremony of the ancient tribe can be shocking to modern researchers who are not familiar or comfortable with human sacrifices.
A. atonement
B. immolation
C. hedonistic
D. ritualistic
E. penance
3. The argument Laura made in her essay seemed _____; it was clear to the teacher that she had not fully thought through the differences between the moons of Saturn.
A. synthesized
B. sagacious
C. inchoate
D. developed
E. coherent
4. The film's story seemed so _____ that audiences couldn't believe that it was based on a true story.
A. implausible
B. tenable
C. orchestrated
D. conceivable
E. lucid
5. As punishment for his insubordination, the lance corporal was demoted and _____ to the demeaning task of cleaning the latrine.
A. scourged
B. patronized
C. exonerated
D. succored
E. relegated
6. After putting out the devastating blaze, investigators quickly came to the conclusion that the _____ was probably started by _____ device.
A. arson ... an incombustible
B. holocaust ... a noisome
C. pyre ... a flammable
D. conflagration ... an incendiary
E. terror ... an inflammable

Answers and Explanations

1) B

To figure out what the missing word is, try to predict its definition by using keywords from the prompt. Here, the keywords are “whiplash” and “car crash,” and the prompt hinges on a cause-and-effect relationship: the missing word is the effect of the car crash and whiplash. Since the narrator had “back pain” before the car crash, and since whiplash and car crashes would not make back pain better, the missing word must mean worsened. Choice **(B)** is correct, then: *aggravated* means made worse.

(A) is incorrect because *ameliorated* means improved, the exact opposite of what one would expect to happen to back pain as a result of a car crash.

(C) is incorrect because *alleviated* means lessened, the exact opposite of what one would expect to happen to back pain as a result of a car crash.

(D) is incorrect because *assuaged* means soothed, though one would not expect a car crash or whiplash to soothe one’s back.

(E) is incorrect because *amended* means improved or changed for the better, the exact opposite of what one would expect to happen to back pain as a result of a car crash.

2) B

To figure out what the missing word is, try to predict its definition by using keywords from the prompt. Here, the keywords are the phrase “human sacrifices.” This phrase makes it clear that the ceremony in question involves human sacrifices, so the missing word, which describes the ceremony, must mean sacrificial. Therefore, choice **(B)** is correct, as *immolation* means sacrifice.

(A) is incorrect because *atonement* means reparation for a past wrong. While there certainly are atonement ceremonies in many cultures, an atonement ceremony does not necessarily involve human sacrifice.

(C) is incorrect because *hedonistic* means devoted to seeking pleasure, which is not something that would be used to describe a ceremony involving a human sacrifice.

(D) is incorrect because *ritualistic* means descriptive of a ceremony done for religious or spiritual purposes. The ceremony in the prompt is clearly ritualistic, but a ritual does not need to include sacrifices. This choice is not specific enough to be correct.

(E) is incorrect because *penance* is a sacrament done as redemptive punishment for a sin. While there certainly are penance ceremonies, a penance ceremony does not usually involve human sacrifice.

3) C

To figure out what the missing word is, try to predict its definition by using keywords from the prompt. Here, the keywords are “not fully thought through,” a phrase that, like the missing word, describes Laura’s argument. Thus, the missing word must mean not fully thought through or undeveloped. Choice **(C)** provides such a word, since *inchoate* means not fully developed.

(A) is incorrect because *synthesized* means formed through a combination or fusion of parts. Since Laura’s argument was “not fully thought through,” this word cannot describe her argument.

(B) is incorrect because *sagacious* means wise. This would describe an argument that was “fully thought through,” unlike Laura’s.

(D) is incorrect because *developed* means brought to maturity. The prompt implies that Laura’s argument was not fully mature, since it was “not fully thought through.”

(E) is incorrect because *coherent* means understandable. This would describe an argument that was “fully thought through,” unlike Laura’s.

4) A

To figure out what the missing word is, try to predict its definition by using keywords from the prompt. Here, the keywords are in the construction of “so ... that,” a phrase that sets up a cause-and-effect relationship: the film’s story led audiences to disbelieve that it was based on a true story. The missing word describes the story, so the missing word must mean unbelievable or atypical of reality. Since *implausible* means not having an appearance of truth, choice **(A)** is correct.

(B) is incorrect because *tenable* means capable of being defended as a theory. However, the plot in question is apparently not tenable, since “audiences couldn’t believe that it was based on a true story.”

(C) is incorrect because *orchestrated* means arranged, and while the story was probably orchestrated by a writer or director, this would not imply that the story was unbelievable. The unbelievable elements of the film are grounded in the story’s factuality or plausibility.

(D) is incorrect because *conceivable* means possible or able to be understood, but the prompt suggests that the film’s story is just the opposite, since “audiences couldn’t believe that it was based on a true story.”

(E) is incorrect because *lucid* means clear, but nothing in the prompt implies that the film's story was clear or unclear.

5) E

To figure out what the missing word is, try to predict its definition by using keywords from the prompt. Here, the keyword is "demoted," a word that, like the missing word, describes the result of the lance corporal's insubordination, his punishment. Thus, the missing word must also mean demoted. Because *relegated* means consigned to an inferior position, choice (E) is correct.

(A) is incorrect because *scourged* means punished. The prompt does discuss the lance corporal's punishment, but the missing word describes what the punishment was, not merely the fact that he was punished.

(B) is incorrect because *patronized* means acted in a condescending manner. The lance corporal might have patronized his newfound duties, but whoever reprimanded him did not necessarily act in a condescending manner.

(C) is incorrect because *exonerated* means cleared of blame. Since the prompt hinges on the lance corporal's punishment, nothing in the prompt indicates that he was cleared of blame. If he had been exonerated, he would not have been "demoted."

(D) is incorrect because *succored* means assisted. As the lance corporal was punished, succored is the exact opposite of what the missing word describes.

6) D

To figure out what the missing words are, try to predict their definitions by using key words from the prompt. Here, the key words are "devastating blaze," and the prompt makes it clear both missing words relate to fire, since the prompt hinges on a cause-and-effect relationship: once the fire was put out, the investigators found out what "started" it. Thus, the first missing word must mean a devastating blaze, while the second missing word must mean a device that causes fire. Therefore, choice (D) is correct, since a *conflagration* is an intense, destructive fire and *incendiary* means used for starting fires.

(A) is incorrect because neither word fully works in context. An *arson* is a malicious, intentional fire to a piece of property, though the prompt does not necessarily imply that the fire was intentional. Moreover, *incombustible* means fireproof and is, as such, not a word that would describe a device that caused arson.

(B) is incorrect because only the first word could work in context. A *holocaust* is a complete devastation caused by fire and is, thus, synonymous with a "devastating blaze," but *noisome* means foul smelling. Nothing in the prompt discusses the smell of the device that caused the fire.

(C) is incorrect because only the second word works in context. A *pyre* is a pile of a combustible material, so it is something that would cause a fire, not a fire itself. However, *flammable* means easily set on fire and, as such, could describe a device that investigators believe caused the "devastating blaze."

(E) is incorrect because only the second word works in context. *Terror* is extreme fear or something that causes extreme fear. This term is too broad to work in context, since a terror is not necessarily a fire. However, *inflammable* means capable of being set on fire and, as such, could describe a device that investigators believe caused the "devastating blaze."