



● Sentence Completion 20 *(low-advanced SAT level)*

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

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 film's story seemed so _____ and convoluted that audiences couldn't believe that it was based on a true story.
A. implausible
B. tenable
C. orchestrated
D. conceivable
E. lucid
3. 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
4. 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
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. phlogiston ... an inflammable

Answers and Explanations

1) **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 “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 the resulting whiplash. As the narrator had “back pain” before the car crash, and as whiplash and car crashes are generally bad things, the missing word must be one that means worsened, as a car crash would not make back pain better. Choice **(B)** is correct, then, as *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) **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 “convoluted,” which, like the missing word, is used to describe the film’s story. The prompt also gives a further hint by saying that audiences “couldn’t believe” that the film was based on a true story. Thus, the missing word must be one meaning unbelievable or atypical of reality, and choice **(A)** is correct, since *implausible* means not having an appearance of truth.

(B) is incorrect because *tenable* means capable of being defended as a theory, but the plot in question is apparently not tenable, as it is “convoluted.”

(C) is incorrect because *orchestrated* means arranged, and while the story was probably orchestrated by a writer or director, nothing in the prompt implies that it would be unbelievable that the film would be arranged by someone. The unbelievable elements of the film are grounded in the story’s factuality.

(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: “convoluted.”

(E) is incorrect because *lucid* means clear, an antonym of “convoluted,” the other adjective ascribed to the film’s story. It would be impossible for a story to be both clear and convoluted.

3) **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 the noun phrase “human sacrifices.” This phrase makes it clear that the ceremony in question is one that involves human sacrifices, so the missing word, which describes the ceremony, must be one that means 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, so choice (D) is not the best choice, especially given that there is a word more clearly related to sacrifice in choice (B).

(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.

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 words are “not fully thought through,” a phrase that, like the missing word, describes Laura’s argument. Thus, the missing word must be one that means not fully thought through or undeveloped. Choice (C) provides such a word, as *inchoate* means not fully developed.

(A) is incorrect because *synthesized* means formed through a combination or fusion of parts. As Laura’s argument was “not fully thought through,” synthesized has the opposite meaning of a word that would describe her argument.

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

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

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

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 word 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 be one that means demoted. Therefore, choice (E) is correct, since *relegated* means consigned to an inferior position.

(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 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, as 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 be one that means a devastating blaze, while the second missing word must be one that means a device that causes fire. Therefore, choice (D) is correct, as 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 an 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, though 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. *Flammable* means easily set on fire and, as such, could describe a device that investigators believe caused the “devastating blaze.” However, a *pyre* is a pile of a combustible material, meaning it is something that would cause a fire, not a fire itself.

(E) is incorrect because only the second word works in context. *Inflammable* means capable of being set on fire and, as such, could describe a device that investigators believe caused the “devastating blaze.” However, *phlogiston* is a nonexistent chemical that scientists once thought was released during fire, not a fire itself.