

## MEETING 13

# VOCABULARY-IN-CONTEXT QUESTIONS

### A. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To explain the different meaning of words in different field or context.

### B. THE AIMS OF THE TOPIC

1. Students are able to define a word based on their context or field of use.

### C. GUIDANCE AND METHODS OF LEARNING

1. Lectures
2. Discussions
3. Presentations
4. Practices

### D. MATERIAL DESCRIPTION

#### I. Vocabulary-in-Context

In vocabulary-in-context questions, you must determine which of four words or phrases can best substitute for a word or words in the passage. Most of the questions ask about single words (usually nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs). Some ask about two- or three-word phrases. Sometimes two or more of the answer choices for these items might be "correct" definitions of the word that is asked about. In those cases, you must decide which is correct in the context of the passage. There are a number of clues that can help you determine the meaning of an unknown word:

- **Synonyms** The first state to institute compulsory education was Massachusetts, which made it mandatory for students to attend school 12 weeks a year. The word mandatory is a synonym for the word compulsory.
- **Examples** Many gardeners use some kind of mulch, such as chopped leaves, peat moss, grass clippings, pine needles, or wood chips, in order to stop the growth of

weeds and to hold in moisture. From the examples given, it is clear that mulch is plant matter.

- **Contrast** In the 1820's the Southern states supported improvements in the national transportation system, but the Northern states balked. Since the Southern states supported improvements, and since a word signaling contrast (but) is used, it is clear that the Northern states disagreed with this idea, and that the word balked must mean objected or refused.
- **General Context** In a desert, vegetation is so ~ as to be incapable of supporting any large human population. As is generally known, deserts contain little vegetation, so clearly the word scanty must mean scarce or barely sufficient. When answering vocabulary-in-context questions, you must often depend on the general context of the sentence to help you choose the correct answer. You should follow these steps to answer vocabulary-in-context items:
  1. Look at the word being asked about and the four answer choices. If you are familiar with the word, guess which answer is correct. Do not mark your answer sheet yet.
  2. 2. Read the sentence in which the word appears. If you were familiar with the word and guessed at the answer, make sure that the word that you chose fits with the word as it is used in the sentence. If you were unfamiliar with the word, see if context clues in the sentence or in the sentences before or after help you guess the meaning.
  3. If you are not sure which answer is correct, read the sentence with each of the four answer choices in place. Does one seem more logical, given the context of the sentence, than the other three? If not, do any seem illogical? (Those you can eliminate.)
  4. If you're still not sure, make the best guess you can and go on.

In Britain's NorthAmerican colonies, university trained physicians were at a premium. At the time of the Revolution, there were probably only around 400 physicians and some 3,000 practitioners who had on-the-job training as barber-surgeons or physicians' apprentices. Whether university trained or not, none had much knowledge of the causes of disease, and the "cures" they often recommended-

bleeding, blistering, and the use of violent purgatives-were at best ineffective and at worst lethal.

The phrase "at a premium" in line 2 is closest in meaning to

- (A) well-paid
- (B) not very numerous
- (C) very experienced
- (D) not well-respected

The phrase "only around 400" indicates that there was a shortage of university-trained physicians.

## II. EXERCISES

### Exercise 13.1

Focus: Using context clues to answer vocabulary-in-context questions involving words with multiple definitions.

Directions: Read each item. Then mark the answer choice that could best be used in place of the underlined expression as it appears in the sentence.

1. The planet Mercury is visible to the naked eye but is not the easiest planet to spot.

- \_\_\_ (A) unclothed
- \_\_\_ (B) unaided
- \_\_\_ (C) unarmed

2. Every atlas has its own legend.

- \_\_\_ (A) mythical story
- \_\_\_ (B) famous person
- \_\_\_ (C) explanation of symbols

3. Above the snowline, any mountain hollow is permanently occupied with snow.

- \_\_\_ (A) filled
- \_\_\_ (B) busy

4. The glass factories of Toledo, Ohio, boomed after Michael Owens invented a process that turned out bottles by the thousands.

- \_\_\_ (A) exploded
- \_\_\_ (B) resounded
- \_\_\_ (C) prospered

5. Dr. Rene Dubos, a French physician who came to the United States in 1924, searched for substances that would check the growth of bacteria.

- \_\_\_ (A) restrict
- \_\_\_ (B) investigate

6. The root of the horseradish plant has a biting taste.

- \_\_\_ (A) chewing
- \_\_\_ (B) sharp
- \_\_\_ (C) sarcastic

7. The double-bass is shaped like a viola and has a deep, rich tone.

- \_\_\_ (A) valuable
- \_\_\_ (B) resonant
- \_\_\_ (C) abundant

8. A public library is a resource the entire community can draw on.

- \_\_\_ (A) illustrate
- \_\_\_ (B) approach
- \_\_\_ (C) use

9. A business concern with two or more owners is referred to as a partnership.

- \_\_\_ (A) firm
- \_\_\_ (B) worry

10. Table salt is finer than rock salt.

- \_\_\_ (A) made up of smaller particles
- \_\_\_ (B) of better quality
- \_\_\_ (C) freer of impurities

### Exercise 13.2

**Focus** : Answering vocabulary-in-context questions about words or phrases in reading passages.

**Directions** : Answer the questions about the vocabulary in the passages, and mark the words or phrases that are closest in meaning to the words or phrases that are asked about. The first one is done as an example.

Questions 1-11

The Civil War created feverish manufacturing activity to supply critical material, especially in the North. When the fighting stopped, the stage was set for dramatic economic growth. Wartime taxes on production vanished, and the few taxes that remained leaned heavily on real estate, not on business. The population flow from farm to city increased, and the labor force it provided was buttressed by millions of newly arrived immigrants willing to work for low wages in the mills of the North and on the railroad crews of the Midwest and West.

Government was nothing if not accommodating. It established tariff barriers, provided loans and grants to build a transcontinental railroad, and assumed a studied posture of nonintervention in private enterprise. The social Darwinism of British philosopher Herbert Spencer and American economist William Graham Sumner prevailed. The theory was that business, if left to its own devices, would eliminate the weak and nurture the strong. But as business expanded, rivalry heated up. In the 1880's, five railroads operating between New York and Chicago were vying for traffic, and two more were under construction. As a result of the battle, the fare between the cities decreased to \$1. The petroleum industry suffered from similar savage competition, and in the 1870's, many oil industries failed.

1. The word "feverish" in line 1 is closest in meaning to  
\_✓\_ (A) extremely rapid  
\_\_\_ (B) sickly and slow  
\_\_\_ (C) very dangerous  
\_\_\_ (D) understandable
2. Which of the following is closest in meaning to the word "critical" in line 2?  
\_\_\_ (A) Industrial  
\_\_\_ (B) Serious  
\_\_\_ (C) Crucial  
\_\_\_ (D) Insulting
3. The phrase "the stage was set" in line 3 is closest in meaning to which of the following?  
\_\_\_ (A) The play was over.

- \_\_\_ (B) The progress continued.
- \_\_\_ (C) The foundation was laid.
- \_\_\_ (D) The direction was clear.
4. The phrase "real estate" in line 5 refers to
- \_\_\_ (A) tools and machines
- \_\_\_ (B) actual income
- \_\_\_ (C) new enterprises
- \_\_\_ (D) land and buildings
5. The word "buttressed" in line 7 is closest in meaning to
- \_\_\_ (A) concerned
- \_\_\_ (B) supplemented
- \_\_\_ (C) restructured
- \_\_\_ (D) enriched
6. The word "accommodating" in line 10 is closest in meaning to
- \_\_\_ (A) persistent
- \_\_\_ (B) indifferent
- \_\_\_ (C) balanced
- \_\_\_ (D) helpful
7. Which of the following could best be substituted for the word "posture" in line 12?
- \_\_\_ (A) Stature
- \_\_\_ (B) Predicament
- \_\_\_ (C) Position
- \_\_\_ (D) Situation
8. The word "prevailed" in line 15 is closest in meaning to
- \_\_\_ (A) influenced
- \_\_\_ (B) triumphed
- \_\_\_ (C) premiered
- \_\_\_ (D) evolved
9. The phrase "left to its own devices" in lines 15-16 means
- \_\_\_ (A) forced to do additional work
- \_\_\_ (B) allowed to do as it pleased
- \_\_\_ (C) made to change its plans

\_\_\_ CD) encouraged to produce more goods

10. The word "vying" in line 18 is closest in meaning to

\_\_\_ (A) competing

\_\_\_ (B) hoping

\_\_\_ (C) arranging

I. \_\_\_ (D) caring