11. The following passage describes how ranchers compensate for poor land quality. (Line No. 1) Eradicating tree cover sets the wheels of land degradation in motion. Shallow, acidic, and nutrientpoor, tropical soils rapidly lose critical phosphorus and other nutrients when the forest is converted to pasture. To compensate for the fertility decline, ranchers often stock newly cleared land at four times the standard rate of one cow per hectare, which accelerates erosion and the vegetative shift to (Line No. 5) annual weeds and shrubs. Stocking rates fall precipitously thereafter, and most pasture is abandoned for land newly carved from the forest. As used in line 5, precipitously most nearly means (A) prematurely (B) early (C) abruptly (D) sadly (E) tragically