

GRE Verbal Reasoning

Text Completion

Text Completion questions include a passage composed of one to five sentences with one to three blanks. There are three answer choices per blank, or five answer choices if there is a single blank. There is a single correct answer, consisting of one choice for each blank. You receive no credit for partially correct answers.

1. Upon visiting the Middle East in 1850, Gustave Flaubert was so ____ belly dancing that he wrote, in a letter to his mother, that the dancers alone made his trip worthwhile.

- (A) overwhelmed by
- (B) enamored by
- (C) taken aback by
- (D) beseeched by
- (E) flustered by

Answer: (B) enamored by

Choose carefully here. The clue is "the dancers alone made his trip worthwhile." Thus, Flaubert was impressed by them. *Enamored by* is the only choice that captures such a feeling. *Overwhelmed by* is extreme, and implies that Flaubert got more than he could handle. *Taken aback by*, in contrast, merely suggests that our traveler was surprised by the dancers; we cannot be sure that his surprise was pleasant. Meanwhile, *beseeched by* does not indicate how Flaubert felt, whereas if he were *flustered by* the performers, he would not likely have found his encounter with them *worthwhile*.

2. Increasingly, the boundaries of congressional seats are drawn in order to protect incumbents, as legislators engineer the demographics of each district such that those already in office can coast to (i) ____ victory. Of course, there is always the possibility that the incumbent will face a challenge from within his or her own party. Nevertheless, once the primary is over, the general election is (ii) ____.

| BLANK (I) | BLANK (II) |
|--------------------|----------------------------|
| (A) an ineluctable | (B) seldom nugatory |
| (C) an invidious | (D) remarkably contentious |
| (E) a plangent | (F) merely denouement |

Answer: (A) an ineluctable and (F) merely denouement

If district boundaries are designed to *protect incumbents*—that is, those already in office—then *victory* for those incumbents should be close to *assured* or *inevitable*. *Ineluctable* is synonymous with these words. *Invidious* means "causing envy" and *plangent* means "full of lamentation," neither of which is as well supported as the credited response. The second blank comes after a couple of transition words. The first is *Of course*, which might sound like the passage is continuing in the same direction, but here indicates a change of direction: The author is conceding that sometimes incumbents face challenges. The second, *Nevertheless*, also changes direction, meaning that the passage has returned to where it started, arguing that elections are essentially decided before they begin. That is what *merely denouement* means. *Seldom nugatory* means rarely inconsequential, which is the opposite of what the passage calls for; *remarkably contentious* is wrong for the same reason, as that phrase would indicate that the general election is fiercely contested.

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Sentence Equivalence

Sentence Equivalence questions consist of one sentence with six answer choices. Your job is to choose the two answer choices that logically complete the sentence.

3. Possessed of an insatiable sweet tooth, Jim enjoyed all kinds of candy, but he had a special ____ for gumdrops, his absolute favorite.

- (A) container
- (B) affinity
- (C) odium
- (D) nature
- (E) disregard
- (F) predilection

Answer: (B) affinity and (F) predilection

The word in the blank is used to describe Jim's feelings for gumdrops. The clues "enjoyed all kinds of candy" and "his absolute favorite" dictates that the blank means *liking*. Both *affinity* and *predilection* mean *liking*. *Odium* and *disregard* go in the wrong direction. *Container* might sound right, but it is not related to the clue. *Nature* does not mean liking.

4. The twins' heredity and upbringing were identical in nearly every respect, yet one child remained unfailingly sanguine even in times of stress while her sister was prone to angry outbursts that indicated an exceptionally choleric ____.

- (A) genotype
- (B) environment
- (C) physiognomy
- (D) incarnation
- (E) temperament
- (F) humor

Answer: (E) temperament and (F) humor

The main clues are that one twin is described as *sanguine*, the other *choleric*; even if you don't know these words, the phrases "even in times of stress" and "angry outbursts" suggest that words are used to describe *personality*. *Temperament* is a good synonym for *personality*. While it is frequently used to mean comedy, *humor* can also mean personality, especially in conjunction with the words such as *sanguine* and *choleric*, which derive from the ancient belief that temperament was shaped by the levels of different fluids or humors, in a person's body. The remaining choices don't fit. *Environment* means one's surroundings while the other three words are concerned with the physical rather than the mental.

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Reading Comprehension

Questions 5-6 are based on the following reading passage.

Called by some the “island that time forgot,” Madagascar is home to a vast array of unique, exotic creatures. One such animal is the aye-aye. First described by western science in 1782, it was initially categorized as a member of the order Rodentia. Further research then revealed that it was more closely related to the lemur, a member of the primate order. Since the aye-aye is so different from its fellow primates, however, it was given its own family: Daubentoniidae. The aye-aye has been listed as an endangered species and, as a result, the government of Madagascar has designated an island off the northeastern coast of Madagascar as a protected reserve for aye-ayes and other wildlife.

Long before Western science became enthralled with this nocturnal denizen of Madagascar’s jungles, the aye-aye had its own reputation with the local people. The aye-aye is perhaps best known for its large, round eyes and long, extremely thin middle finger. These adaptations are quite sensible, allowing the aye-aye to see well at night and retrieve grubs, which are one of its primary food sources, from deep within hollow branches. However, the aye-aye’s striking appearance may end up causing its extinction. The people of Madagascar believe that the aye-aye is a type of spirit animal, and that its appearance is an omen of death. Whenever one is sighted, it is immediately killed. When combined with the loss of large swaths of jungle habitat, this practice may result in the loss of a superb example of life’s variety.

5. Based on the information given in the passage, the intended audience would most likely be

- (A) visitors to a natural science museum
- (B) professors of evolutionary science
- (C) a third-grade science class
- (D) students of comparative religions
- (E) attendees at a world cultural symposium

Answer: (A)

The passage contains a mixture of information about the aye-aye, both from a scientific and cultural background. It gives an overview of the animal without giving a lot of detail in any one area. Choice (B) is incorrect because the passage mentions evolution only briefly, at the end. This choice is too narrow. Choice (C) is incorrect because the style of the passage is too advanced for young students. Choice (D) is incorrect because the passage mentions religion only as it relates to the fate of the aye-aye. Choice (E) is incorrect because the information given focuses more on the aye-aye itself than on the culture of Madagascar.

6. Consider each of the choices separately and select all that apply.

Which of the following statements can be logically inferred from the passage?

- (A) Taxonomic classifications are not always absolute.
- (B) The traditional religion of Madagascar involves augury.
- (C) There are no longer enough resources on the main island to support the aye-aye population.

Answer: (A) and (B)

Choices (A) and (B) can both be inferred from the passage. Choice (A) is supported by the first paragraph. The classification of the aye-aye changes, which demonstrates that such classifications are not absolute. Choice (B) is supported by the part of the passage dealing with the future of the aye-aye. It states that aye-aye is seen as an omen of death in the traditional religion of the Madagascar. *Augury* refers to the use of omens, so this statement must be true. Choice (C), however, is not supported. Although the passage states that the aye-aye is in danger, it does not directly discuss whether this is due to limited resources on the main island.