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4TH EDITION



Stacey Koprince, Manhattan Prep Instructor

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GRE Strategy Guide

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guide 8

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MANHATTAN PREP

June 3rd, 2014

Dear Student,

Thank you for picking up a copy of *Text Completion & Sentence Equivalence*. I hope this book provides just the guidance you need to get the most out of your GRE studies.

As with most accomplishments, there were many people involved in the creation of the book you are holding. First and foremost is Zeke Vanderhoek, the founder of Manhattan Prep. Zeke was a lone tutor in New York when he started the company in 2000. Now, 14 years later, the company has instructors and offices nationwide and contributes to the studies and successes of thousands of GRE, GMAT, LSAT, and SAT students each year.

Our Manhattan Prep Strategy Guides are based on the continuing experiences of

our instructors and students. We are particularly indebted to our instructors Stacey Koprince, Dave Mahler, Liz Ghini Moliski, Emily Meredith Sledge, and Tommy Wallach for their hard work on this edition. Dan McNaney and Cathy Huang provided their design expertise to make the books as user-friendly as possible, and Liz Krisher made sure all the moving pieces came together at just the right time. Beyond providing additions and edits for this book, Chris Ryan and Noah Teitelbaum continue to be the driving force behind all of our curriculum efforts. Their leadership is invaluable. Finally, thank you to all of the Manhattan Prep students who have provided input and feedback over the years. This book wouldn't be half of what it is without your voice.

At Manhattan Prep, we continually aspire to provide the best instructors and resources possible. We hope that you will find our commitment manifest in this book. If you have any questions or comments, please email me at dgonzalez@manhattanprep.com. I'll look forward to reading your comments, and I'll be sure to pass them along to our curriculum team.

Thanks again, and best of luck preparing for the GRE!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dan".

Dan Gonzalez

President
Manhattan Prep

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TEXT COMPLETION & SENTENCE EQUIVALENCE

INTRODUCTION

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

We know that you're looking to succeed on the GRE so that you can go to graduate school and do the things you want to do in life.

We also know that you may not have done math since high school, and that you may never have learned words like "adumbrate" or "sangfroid." We know that it's going to take hard work on your part to get a top GRE score, and that's why we've put together the only set of books that will take you from the basics all the way up to the material you need to master for a near-perfect score, or whatever your goal score may be. You've taken the first step. Now it's time to get to work!

How to Use These Materials

Manhattan Prep's GRE materials are comprehensive. But keep in mind that, depending on your score goal, it may not be necessary to get absolutely everything. Grad schools only see your overall Quantitative, Verbal, and Writing scores—they don't see exactly which strengths and weaknesses went into creating those scores.

You may be enrolled in one of our courses, in which case you already have a syllabus telling you in what order you should approach the books. But if you bought this book online or at a bookstore, feel free to approach the books—and even the chapters within the books—in whatever order works best for you. For the most part, the books, and the chapters within them, are independent; you don't have to master one section before moving on to the next. So if you're having a hard time

with something in particular, you can make a note to come back to it later and move on to another section. Similarly, it may not be necessary to solve every single practice problem for every section. As you go through the material, continually assess whether you understand and can apply the principles in each individual section and chapter. The best way to do this is to solve the Check Your Skills and Practice Sets throughout. If you're confident you have a concept or method down, feel free to move on. If you struggle with something, make note of it for further review. Stay active in your learning and stay oriented toward the test—it's easy to read something and think you understand it, only to have trouble applying it in the 1–2 minutes you have to solve a problem.

Study Skills

As you're studying for the GRE, try to integrate your learning into your everyday life. For example, vocabulary is a big part of the GRE, as well as something you just can't "cram" for—you're going to want to do at least a little bit of vocab every day. So try to learn and internalize a little bit at a time, switching up topics often to help keep things interesting.

Keep in mind that, while many of your study materials are on paper (including Education Testing Service's [ETS's] most recent source of official GRE questions, *The Official Guide to the GRE revised General Test, Second Edition*), your exam will be administered on a computer. Because this is a computer-based test, you will *not* be able to underline portions of reading passages, write on diagrams of geometry figures, or otherwise physically mark up problems. So get used to this now. Solve the problems in these books on scratch paper. (Each of our books talks specifically

about what to write down for different problem types.)

Again, as you study, stay focused on the test-day experience. As you progress, work on timed drills and sets of questions. Eventually, you should be taking full practice tests (available at www.manhattanprep.com/gre) under actual timed conditions.

THE REVISED GRE

As of August 1, 2011, the Quantitative and Verbal sections of the GRE underwent a number of changes. The actual body of knowledge being tested is more or less the same as it ever was, but the *way* that knowledge is tested changed. Here's a brief summary of the changes, followed by a more comprehensive assessment of the new exam.

The current test is a little longer than the old test, lengthened from about 3.5 hours to about 4 hours. When you sign up for the exam at www.ets.org/gre, you will be told to plan to be at the center for 5 hours, since there will be some paperwork to complete when you arrive, and occasionally test-takers are made to wait a bit before being allowed to begin.

Taking a four-hour exam can be quite exhausting, so it's important to practice not only out of these books, but also on full-length computer-based practice exams, such as the six such exams you have gained access to by purchasing this book (see [page 7](#) for details).

There are now two scored Math sections and two scored Verbal sections. A new

score scale of 130–170 is used in place of the old 200–800 scale. More on this later.

The Verbal section of the GRE changed dramatically. The Antonyms and Analogies disappeared. The Text Completion and Reading Comprehension remain, expanded and remixed in a few new ways. Vocabulary is still important, but is tested only in the context of complete sentences.

The Quant section of the new GRE still contains the same multiple-choice problems, Quantitative Comparisons, and Data Interpretations (which are really a subset of multiple-choice problems). The revised test also contains two new problem formats, which we will introduce in this section.

On both Verbal and Quant, some of the new question types have more than one correct answer, or otherwise break out of the mold of traditional multiple-choice exams. You might say that computer-based exams are finally taking advantage of the features of computers.

One way that this is true is that the new exam includes a small, on-screen, four-function calculator with a square root button. Many test-takers will rejoice at the advent of this calculator. It is true that the GRE calculator will reduce emphasis on computation—but look out for problems, such as percents questions with tricky wording, that are likely to foil those who rely on the calculator too much. *In short, the calculator may make your life a bit easier from time to time, but it's not a game changer.* There are **zero** questions that can be solved *entirely* with a calculator. You will still need to know the principles contained in the six Quant books (of the

eight-book Manhattan Prep GRE series).

Finally, don't worry about whether the new GRE is harder or easier than the old GRE. You are being judged against other test-takers, all of whom are in the same boat. So if the new formats are harder, they are harder for other test-takers as well.

Additionally, graduate schools to which you will be applying have been provided with conversion charts so that applicants with old and new GRE scores can be compared fairly (GRE scores are valid for five years).

Exam Structure

The revised test has six sections. You will get a 10-minute break between the third and fourth sections and a 1-minute break between the others. The Analytical Writing section is always first. The other five sections can be seen in any order and will include:

- Two Verbal Reasoning sections (20 questions each in 30 minutes per section)
- Two Quantitative Reasoning sections (20 questions each in 35 minutes per section)
- Either an unscored section or a research section

An unscored section will look just like a third Verbal or Quantitative Reasoning

section, and you will not be told which of them doesn't count. If you get a research section, it will be identified as such, and will be the last section you get.

Section #	Section Type	# Questions	Time	Scored?
1	Analytical Writing	2 essays	30 minutes each	Yes
2	Verbal #1 Quantitative #1 <i>(order can vary)</i>	Approx. 20	30 minutes	Yes
3		Approx. 20	35 minutes	Yes
<i>10-Minute Break</i>				
4	Verbal #2 Quantitative #2 <i>(order can vary)</i>	Approx. 20	30 minutes	Yes
5		Approx. 20	35 minutes	Yes
?	Unscored Section <i>(Verbal or Quant, order can vary)</i>	Approx. 20	30 or 35 minutes	No
Last	Research Section	Varies	Varies	No

All the question formats will be looked at in detail later in the chapter.

Using the Calculator

The addition of a small, four-function calculator with a square root button means that re-memorizing times tables or square roots is less important than it used to be. However, the calculator is not a cure-all; in many problems, the difficulty is in

figuring out what numbers to put into the calculator in the first place. In some cases, using a calculator will actually be less helpful than doing the problem some other way. Take a look at an example:

If x is the remainder when $(11)(7)$ is divided by 4 and y is the remainder when $(14)(6)$ is divided by 13, what is the value of $x + y$?



Solution: This problem is designed so that the calculator won't tell the whole story. Certainly, the calculator will tell you that $11 \times 7 = 77$. When you divide 77 by 4, however, the calculator yields an answer of 19.25. The remainder is not 0.25 (a remainder is always a whole number).

You might just go back to your pencil and paper, and find the largest multiple of 4 that is less than 77. Since 4 does go into 76, you can conclude that 4 would leave a remainder of 1 when dividing into 77. (Notice that you don't even need to know how many times 4 goes into 76, just that it goes in. One way to mentally "jump" to 76 is to say, 4 goes into 40, so it goes into 80...that's a bit too big, so take away 4 to get 76.)

However, it is also possible to use the calculator to find a remainder. Divide 77 by 4 to get 19.25. Thus, 4 goes into 77 nineteen times, with a remainder left over. Now use your calculator to multiply 19 (JUST 19, not 19.25) by 4. You will get 76. The

remainder is $77 - 76$, which is 1. Therefore, $x = 1$. You could also multiply the left-over 0.25 times 4 (the divisor) to find the remainder of 1.

Use the same technique to find y . Multiply 14 by 6 to get 84. Divide 84 by 13 to get 6.46. Ignore everything after the decimal, and just multiply 6 by 13 to get 78. The remainder is therefore $84 - 78$, which is 6. Therefore, $y = 6$.

Since you are looking for $x + y$, and $1 + 6 = 7$, the answer is 7.

You can see that blind faith in the calculator can be dangerous. Use it responsibly! And this leads us to...

Practice Using the Calculator!

On the revised GRE, the on-screen calculator will slow you down or lead to incorrect answers if you're not careful! If you plan to use it on test day (which you should), you'll want to practice first.

We have created an online practice calculator for you to use. To access this calculator, go to www.manhattanprep.com/gre and sign in to the student center using the instructions on the "How to Access Your Online Resources" page found at the front of this book.

In addition to the calculator, you will see instructions for how to use the calculator. Be sure to read these instructions and work through the associated exercises. Throughout our math books, you will see the  symbol. This symbol means "Use the calculator here!" As much as possible, have the online practice calculator

up and running during your review of our math books. You'll have the chance to use the on-screen calculator when you take our practice exams as well.

Navigating the Questions in a Section

Another change for test-takers on the revised GRE is the ability to move freely around the questions in a section—you can go forward and backward one-by-one and can even jump directly to any question from the “review list.” The review list provides a snapshot of which questions you have answered, which ones you have tagged for “mark and review,” and which are incomplete, either because you didn't indicate enough answers or because you indicated too many (that is, if a number of choices is specified by the question). You should double-check the review list for completion if you finish the section early. Using the review list feature will take some practice as well, which is why we've built it into our online practice exams.

The majority of test-takers will be pressed for time. Thus, for some, it won't be feasible to go back to multiple problems at the end of the section. Generally, if you can't get a question the first time, you won't be able to get it the second time around either. With this in mind, here's the order in which we recommend using the new review list feature.

1. Do the questions in the order in which they appear.
2. When you encounter a difficult question, do your best to eliminate answer choices you know are wrong.

3. If you're not sure of an answer, take an educated guess from the choices remaining. Do NOT skip it and hope to return to it later.
4. Using the "mark" button at the top of the screen, mark up to three questions per section that you think you might be able to solve with more time. Mark a question only after you have taken an educated guess.
5. Always click on the review list at the end of a section, to quickly make sure you have neither skipped nor incompletely answered any questions.
6. If you have time, identify any questions that you marked for review and return to them. If you do not have any time remaining, you will have already taken good guesses at the tough ones.

What you want to avoid is surfing—clicking forward and backward through the questions searching for the easy ones. This will eat up valuable time. Of course, you'll want to move through the tough ones quickly if you can't get them, but try to avoid skipping around.

Again, all of this will take practice. Use our practice exams to fine-tune your approach.

Scoring

You need to know two things about the scoring of the revised GRE Verbal Reasoning and Quantitative Reasoning sections: (1) how individual questions influence the score, and (2) the score scale itself.

For both the Verbal Reasoning and Quantitative Reasoning sections, you will receive a scaled score, based on both how many questions you answered correctly and the difficulties of the specific questions you actually saw.

The old GRE was question-adaptive, meaning that your answer to each question (right or wrong) determined, at least somewhat, the questions that followed (harder or easier). Because you had to commit to an answer to let the algorithm do its thing, you weren't allowed to skip questions or to go back to change answers. On the revised GRE, the adapting occurs from section to section rather than from question to question (e.g., if you do well on the first Verbal section, you will get a harder second Verbal section). The only change test-takers will notice is one that most will welcome: you can now move freely about the questions in a section, coming back to tough questions later, changing answers after "Aha!" moments, and generally managing your time more flexibly.

The scores for the revised GRE Quantitative Reasoning and Verbal Reasoning are reported on a 130–170 scale in 1-point increments, whereas the old score reporting was on a 200–800 scale in 10-point increments. You will receive one 130–170 score for Verbal and a separate 130–170 score for Quant. If you are already putting your GRE math skills to work, you may notice that there are now 41 scores possible ($170 - 130$, then add 1 before you're done), whereas before there were 61 scores possible ($[800 - 200]/10$, then add 1 before you're done). In other words, a 10-point

difference on the old score scale actually indicated a smaller performance differential than a 1-point difference on the new scale. However, the GRE folks argue that perception is reality: the difference between 520 and 530 on the old scale could simply seem greater than the difference between 151 and 152 on the new scale. If that's true, then this change will benefit test-takers, who won't be unfairly compared by schools for minor differences in performance. If not true, then the change is moot.

QUESTION FORMATS IN DETAIL

Essay Questions

The Analytical Writing section consists of two separately timed 30-minute tasks: Analyze an Issue and Analyze an Argument. As you can imagine, the 30-minute time limit implies that you aren't aiming to write an essay that would garner a Pulitzer Prize nomination, but rather to complete the tasks adequately and according to the directions. Each essay is scored separately, but your reported essay score is the average of the two, rounded up to the next half-point increment on a 0–6 scale.

Issue Task: This essay prompt will present a claim, generally one that is vague enough to be interpreted in various ways and discussed from numerous perspectives. Your job as a test-taker is to write a response discussing the extent to which you agree or disagree and support your position. Don't sit on the fence—pick a side!

For some examples of Issue Task prompts, visit the GRE website here:

www.ets.org/gre/revised_general/prepare/analytical_writing/issue/pool

Argument Task: This essay prompt will be an argument comprised of both a claim (or claims) and evidence. Your job is to dispassionately discuss the argument's structural flaws and merits (well, mostly the flaws). Don't agree or disagree with the argument—simply evaluate its logic.

For some examples of Argument Task prompts, visit the GRE website here:

www.ets.org/gre/revised_general/prepare/analytical_writing/argument/pool

Verbal: Reading Comprehension Questions

Standard five-choice multiple-choice Reading Comprehension questions continue to appear on the revised exam. You are likely familiar with how these work. Let's take a look at two *new* Reading Comprehension formats that will appear on the revised test.

Select One or More Answer Choices and Select-in-Passage

For the question type "Select One or More Answer Choices," you are given three statements about a passage and asked to "indicate all that apply." Either one, two, or all three can be correct (there is no "none of the above" option). There is no partial credit; you must indicate all of the correct choices and none of the incorrect

choices.

Strategy Tip: On “Select One or More Answer Choices,” don’t let your brain be tricked into telling you, “Well, if two of them have been right so far, the other one must be wrong,” or any other arbitrary idea about how many of the choices *should* be correct. Make sure to consider each choice independently! You cannot use “process of elimination” in the same way as you do on normal multiple-choice questions.

For the question type “Select-in-Passage,” you are given an assignment such as “Select the sentence in the passage that explains why the experiment’s results were discovered to be invalid.” Clicking anywhere on the sentence in the passage will highlight it. (As with any GRE question, you will have to click “Confirm” to submit your answer, so don’t worry about accidentally selecting the wrong sentence due to a slip of the mouse.)

Strategy Tip: On “Select-in-Passage,” if the passage is short, consider numbering each sentence (i.e., writing 1 2 3 4 on your paper) and crossing off each choice as you determine that it isn’t the answer. If the passage is long, you might write a number for each paragraph (I, II, III), and tick off each number as you determine that the correct sentence is not located in that paragraph.

Now give these new question types a try:

The sample questions below are based on this passage:

Physicist Robert Oppenheimer, director of the fateful Manhattan Project,

said, “It is a profound and necessary truth that the deep things in science are not found because they are useful; they are found because it was possible to find them.” In a later address at MIT, Oppenheimer presented the thesis that scientists could be held only very nominally responsible for the consequences of their research and discovery. Oppenheimer asserted that ethics, philosophy, and politics have very little to do with the day-to-day work of the scientist, and that scientists could not rationally be expected to predict all the effects of their work. Yet, in a talk in 1945 to the Association of Los Alamos Scientists, Oppenheimer offered some reasons why the Manhattan Project scientists built the atomic bomb; the justifications included “fear that Nazi Germany would build it first” and “hope that it would shorten the war.”

For question #1, consider each of the three choices separately and indicate all that apply.

1. The passage implies that Robert Oppenheimer would most likely have agreed with which of the following views:

Some scientists take military goals into account in their work

Deep things in science are not useful

The everyday work of a scientist is only minimally involved with ethics

2. Select the sentence in which the writer implies that Oppenheimer has not been consistent in his view that scientists have little consideration for the effects of

their work.

(Here, you would highlight the appropriate sentence with your mouse. Note that there are only four options.)

Solutions

1. **(A) and (C):** Oppenheimer says in the last sentence that one of the reasons the bomb was built was scientists' *hope that it would shorten the war*. Thus, Oppenheimer would likely agree with the view that *Some scientists take military goals into account in their work*. (B) is a trap answer using familiar language from the passage. Oppenheimer says that scientific discoveries' possible usefulness is not why scientists make discoveries; he does not say that the discoveries aren't useful. Oppenheimer specifically says that ethics has *very little to do with the day-to-day work of the scientist*, which is a good match for *only minimally involved with ethics*.

Strategy Tip: On “Select One or More Answer Choices,” write A B C on your paper and mark each choice with a check, an X, or a symbol such as ~ if you’re not sure. This should keep you from crossing out all three choices and having to go back (at least one of the choices must be correct). For example, say that on a *different* question you had marked

- A. X
- B. ~
- C. X

The answer choice you weren’t sure about, (B), is likely to be correct, since

there must be at least one correct answer.

2. The correct sentence is: **Yet, in a talk in 1945 to the Association of Los Alamos Scientists, Oppenheimer offered some reasons why the Manhattan Project scientists built the atomic bomb; the justifications included “fear that Nazi Germany would build it first” and “hope that it would shorten the war.”** The word “yet” is a good clue that this sentence is about to express a view contrary to the views expressed in the rest of the passage.

Verbal: Text Completion Questions

Text Completions can consist of 1–5 sentences with 1–3 blanks. When Text Completions have two or three blanks, you will select words or short phrases for those blanks independently. There is no partial credit; you must make every selection correctly.

Leaders are not always expected to (i) _____ the same rules as are those they lead; leaders are often looked up to for a surety and presumption that would be viewed as (ii) _____ in most others.

Blank (i)

Blank (ii)

decree	hubris
proscribe	avarice
conform to	anachronism

Select your two choices by actually clicking and highlighting the words you want.

Solution

In the first blank, you need a word similar to “follow.” In the second blank, you need a word similar to “arrogance.” The correct answers are *conform to* and *hubris*.

Strategy Tip: Do NOT look at the answer choices until you've decided for yourself, based on textual clues actually written in the sentence, what kind of word needs to go in each blank. Only then should you look at the choices and eliminate those that are not matches.

Now try an example with three blanks:

For Kant, the fact of having a right and having the (i) _____ to enforce it via coercion cannot be separated, and he asserts that this marriage of rights and coercion is compatible with the freedom of everyone. This is not at all peculiar from the standpoint of modern political thought—what good is a right if its violation triggers no enforcement (be it punishment or (ii) _____)? The necessity of coercion is not at all in conflict with the freedom of everyone, because this coercion only comes into play when someone has (iii) _____ someone else.

Blank (i)	Blank (ii)	Blank (iii)
technique	amortization	questioned the hypothesis of

license	reward	violated the rights of
prohibition	restitution	granted civil liberties to

Solution

In the first sentence, use the clue “he asserts that this marriage of rights and coercion is compatible with the freedom of everyone” to help fill in the first blank. Kant believes that “coercion” is “married to” rights and is compatible with freedom for all. So you want something in the first blank like “right” or “power.” Kant believes that rights are meaningless without enforcement. Only the choice *license* can work (while a *license* can be physical, like a driver’s license, *license* can also mean “right”).

The second blank is part of the phrase “punishment or _____,” which you are told is the “enforcement” resulting from the violation of a right. So the blank should be something, other than punishment, that constitutes enforcement against someone who violates a right. (More simply, it should be something bad.) Only *restitution* works. Restitution is compensating the victim in some way (perhaps monetarily or by returning stolen goods).

In the final sentence, “coercion only comes into play when someone has _____ someone else.” Throughout the text, “coercion” means enforcement against someone who has violated the rights of someone else. The meaning is the same here. The answer is *violated the rights of*.

The complete and correct answer is this combination:

Blank (i)	Blank (ii)	Blank (iii)
license	restitution	violated the rights of

In theory, there are $3 \times 3 \times 3$, or 27 possible ways to answer a three-blank Text Completion—and only one of those 27 ways is correct. In theory, these are bad odds. In practice, you will often have certainty about some of the blanks, so your guessing odds are almost never this bad. Just follow the basic process: come up with your own filler for each blank, and match to the answer choices. If you're confused by this example, don't worry! The Manhattan Prep *Text Completion & Sentence Equivalence GRE Strategy Guide* covers all of this in detail.

Strategy Tip: Do not write your own story. The GRE cannot give you a blank without also giving you a clue, physically written down in the passage, telling you what kind of word or phrase must go in that blank. Find that clue. You should be able to give textual evidence for each answer choice you select.

Verbal: Sentence Equivalence Questions

For this question type, you are given one sentence with a single blank. There are six answer choices, and you are asked to pick two choices that fit the blank and are alike in meaning.

Of the Verbal question types, this one depends the most on vocabulary and also yields the most to strategy.

No partial credit is given on Sentence Equivalence; both correct answers must be selected and no incorrect answers may be selected. When you pick 2 of 6 choices, there are 15 possible combinations of choices, and only one is correct. However, this is not nearly as daunting as it sounds.

Think of it this way: if you have six choices, but the two correct ones must be similar in meaning, then you have, at most, three possible *pairs* of choices, maybe fewer, since not all choices are guaranteed to have a partner. If you can match up the pairs, you can seriously narrow down your options.

Here is a sample set of answer choices:

- A tractable
- B taciturn
- C arbitrary
- D tantamount
- E reticent
- F amenable

The question is deliberately omitted here in order to illustrate how much you can do with the choices alone, if you have studied vocabulary sufficiently.

Tractable and *amenable* are synonyms (tractable, amenable people will do whatever you want them to do). *Taciturn* and *reticent* are synonyms (both mean “not talkative”).

Arbitrary (based on one's own will) and *tantamount* (equivalent) are not similar in meaning and therefore cannot be a pair. Therefore, the *only* possible correct answer pairs are (A) and (F), and (B) and (E). You have improved your chances from 1 in 15 to a 50/50 shot without even reading the question!

Of course, in approaching a Sentence Equivalence, you do want to analyze the sentence in the same way you would a Text Completion—read for a textual clue that tells you what type of word *must* go in the blank. Then look for a matching pair.

Strategy Tip: If you're sure that a word in the choices does *not* have a partner, cross it out! For instance, if (A) and (F) are partners and (B) and (E) are partners, and you're sure neither (C) nor (D) pair with any other answer, cross out (C) and (D) completely. They cannot be the answer together, nor can either one be part of the answer.

The sentence for the answer choice above could read as follows:

Though the dinner guests were quite _____, the hostess did her best to keep the conversation active and engaging.

Thus, (B) and (E) are the best choices.

Try another example:

While athletes usually expect to achieve their greatest feats in their teens or twenties, opera singers don't reach the _____ of their vocal powers until middle age.

A harmony

B zenith

C acme

D terminus

E nadir

F cessation

Solution

Those with strong vocabularies might go straight to the choices to make pairs. *Zenith* and *acme* are synonyms, meaning “high point, peak.” *Terminus* and *cessation* are synonyms meaning “end.” *Nadir* is a low point and *harmony* is present here as a trap answer reminding you of opera singers. Cross off (A) and (E), since they do not have partners. Then, go back to the sentence, knowing that your only options are a pair meaning “peak” and a pair meaning “end.”

The correct answer choices are **(B)** and **(C)**.

Math: Quantitative Comparison

In addition to regular multiple-choice questions and Data Interpretation questions, Quantitative Comparisons have been on the exam for a long time.

Each question contains a “Quantity A” and a “Quantity B,” and some also contain common information that applies to both quantities. The four answer choices are always worded exactly as shown in the following example:

$X \geq$	X^2
○	○
<u>Quantity A</u>	<u>Quantity B</u>
X	X^2
<p>(A) Quantity A is greater. (B) Quantity B is greater. (C) The two quantities are equal. (D) The relationship cannot be determined from the information given.</p>	

Solution

If $x = 0$, then the two quantities are equal. If $x = 2$, then Quantity (B) is greater. Thus, you don't have enough information.

The answer is **(D)**.

Next, take a look at the new math question formats.

Math: Select One or More Answer Choices

According to the *Official Guide to the GRE revised General Test*, the official directions for “Select One or More Answer Choices” read as follows:

Directions: Select one or more answer choices according to the specific question directions.

If the question does not specify how many answer choices to indicate, indicate all that apply.

The correct answer may be just one of the choices or as many as all of the choices, depending on the question.

No credit is given unless you indicate all of the correct choices and no others.

If the question specifies how many answer choices to indicate, indicate exactly that number of choices.

Note that there is no partial credit. If three of six choices are correct, and you indicate two of the three, no credit is given. If you are told to indicate two choices and you indicate three, no credit is given. It will also be important to read the directions carefully.

Here's a sample question:

If $ab = |a| \times |b|$ and $ab \neq 0$, which of the following must be true?

Indicate all such statements.

A $a = b$

B $a > 0$ and $b > 0$

C $ab > 0$

Note that only one, only two, or all three of the choices may be correct. (Also note the word "must" in the question stem!)

Solution

If $ab = |a| \times |b|$, then you know ab is positive, since the right side of the equation must be positive. If ab is positive, however, that doesn't necessarily mean that a and b are each positive; it simply means that they have the same sign.

Answer choice (A) is not correct because it is not true that a must equal b ; for instance, a could be 2 and b could be 3.

Answer choice (B) is not correct because it is not true that a and b must each be positive; for instance, a could be -3 and b could be -4 .

Now look at choice (C). Since $|a| \times |b|$ must be positive, ab must be positive as well; that is, since two sides of an equation are, by definition, equal to one another, if one side of the equation is positive, the other side must be positive as well. Thus, answer (C) is correct.

Strategy Tip: Make sure to fully process the statement in the question (simplify it or list the possible scenarios) before considering the answer choices. That is, don't just look at $ab = |a| \times |b|$ —rather, it's your job to draw inferences about the statement before plowing ahead. This will save you time in the long run!

Note that “indicate all that apply” didn't really make the problem harder. This is just a typical Inference-based Quant problem (for more problems like this one, see the Manhattan Prep *Number Properties* guide as well as the *Quantitative Comparisons & Data Interpretation* guide).

After all, not every real-life problem has exactly five possible solutions; why should problems on the GRE?

Math: Numeric Entry

This question type requires the test-taker to key a numeric answer into a box on the screen. You are not able to work backwards from answer choices, and in many cases, it will be difficult to make a guess. However, the principles being tested are the same as on the rest of the exam.

Here is a sample question:

If $x\Delta y = 2xy - (x - y)$, what is the value of $3\Delta 4$?

Solution

You are given a function involving two variables, x and y , and asked to substitute 3 for x and 4 for y :

$$x\Delta y = 2xy - (x - y)$$

$$3\Delta 4 = 2(3)(4) - (3 - 4)$$

$$3\Delta 4 = 24 - (-1)$$

$$3\Delta 4 = 25$$

The answer is **25**.

Thus, you would type **25** into the box.

Okay. You've now got a good start on understanding the structure and question formats of the new GRE. Now it's time to begin fine-tuning your skills.

Chapter 2
of
Text Completion & Sentence Equivalence

Text Completion

In This Chapter...

Three-Step Process for Text Completions

How to Write Good Fill-ins

Pivot Words

Double-Blank and Triple-Blank Text Completions

Tricky Aspects of Text Completion Sentences

Traps to Avoid During Elimination

Text Completion Recap

Chapter 2

Text Completion

Text Completion questions on the GRE are sentences or paragraphs with one, two, or three blanks for which you must select the appropriate word or words.

Here's an example of the simplest variety of Text Completion, one with a single blank:

Despite his intense _____, he failed to secure the prestigious university's coveted diploma.

imbibition

lugubriousness

lucubration

magnanimity

character

All single-blank Text Completions have exactly five answer choices, of which exactly one is correct. The answer choices for a given blank will always be the same part of speech.

These questions are very much like some of the questions you probably saw on the SAT.

Your task is to find the choice that **best fits the meaning** of the sentence as a whole.

The best approach will be to **anticipate an answer** before looking at the choices. Many people don't do this. Rather, they just plug in the choices one-by-one, rereading the sentence and stopping when it "sounds good."

Here's how you can tell that many people don't anticipate answers: based on empirical data about the GRE, you know that problems of this type with right answer (A) are, on average, significantly easier than problems with right answer (E). 27% of test-takers got "(A)-problems" wrong, whereas 46% of test-takers got "(E)-problems" wrong—almost twice as many!

Do you think the GRE deliberately creates (E)-problems that are so much harder than (A)-problems? That's very unlikely. What's probably happening is that people are lazy. If you don't predict the answer and just plug in the choices instead—and the correct answer is (A)—then you get lucky. The sentence probably makes sense, and you pick (A). On the other hand, if the right answer is (E), then your lack of good process punishes you. You waste a lot of time plugging in all five choices, then get confused and end up picking the wrong one.

By the way, the GRE doesn't actually label the choices (A), (B), (C), (D), and (E) anymore (as in the example problem above—the choices appear in boxes). To answer a question, you simply click on your choice, and the entire box is highlighted. You get a chance to confirm before submitting that answer. (Also, you're allowed to go back and change answers anytime before the clock runs out.)

Although the real problems don't label the answers with letters, this book still uses that nomenclature, because it is easy to understand what is meant by "answer choice (D)," and because saying "the choice second from the bottom" sounds pretty silly. Try to write "A B C D E" on your paper for each question so that you have somewhere to keep track of which answers you think are wrong, which you think might be right, and which feature words you don't know. (We will revisit the above example shortly.)

THREE-STEP PROCESS FOR TEXT COMPLETIONS

Take a look at the following example:

If the student had been less _____, he would not have been expelled from his grade school.

indefatigable

perseverant

refractory

playful

indigent

1. Read only the sentence.

The answer choices will distract you if you read them before you've made sense of the sentence.

2. Find the *target*, *clue*, and the *pivot*, and write down your own fill-in.

The clue and the pivot are the two most important parts of the sentence. **The target is the thing in the sentence that the blank is describing.** Stating the target explicitly can help to locate the clue. Here, the target is simply *the student*.

Note: If the blank represents a missing noun, the idea of a “target” may not apply. That's okay. Targets are very helpful when the blank represents a missing adjective, and can also be useful when the blank represents a missing verb.

The clue is what forces the contents of the blank to be perfectly predictable. In other words, the clue solves the mystery of the blank. Look for dramatic action or emotion. The clue should tell you more about the target (*the student*).

In this case, the clue is *expelled*.

The pivot is what determines the relationship between the blank and the clue. Will the blank agree with the clue? Or will the blank actually disagree with the clue? It depends on the pivot.

The sentence reads “less _____...not expelled.” So the pivot is *less...not*.

Think about what this means. If the student were *less such-and-such*, then he would *not* have been expelled.

So such-and-such got him expelled. In other words, the blank agrees with *expelled*.

Less and *not* cancel each other out as negatives.

Finally, **the fill-in is what you predict the answer to be**. At this point, how would you use this blank to describe this student? Write down this adjective or phrase, as well as your (A) through (E).

badly behaved

- A
- B
- C
- D
- E

3. Compare to each answer choice.

Here are the choices again. One at a time, simplify the choices, then see how well your fill-in matches up. Mark down one of the following next to your “A B C D E”: Good (✓), Bad (✗), Sort Of (~), or Unknown (?).

indefatigable = tireless

perseverant = determined

refractory = ??

playful

indigent = poor

So now your paper might look like this:

badly behaved

A x

B x

C ?

D ~

E ~

The correct answer is in fact (**C**), since *refractory* means “rebellious.” But even if you didn't know what *refractory* means, you would have a good shot at getting this problem right through process of elimination. Also, notice that you can write a plausible story around some of the wrong answer choices. For example, “If the student had been less *playful*, he wouldn't have been expelled.” This could make sense if the student was playing games during a serious lesson. Or maybe, “If the student had been less *indigent*, he wouldn't have been expelled.” What an indictment of the school's administration!

You should avoid writing stories when doing Text Completions. What you want for your fill-in is **complete predictability and redundancy**. There should be no surprises in the blank. Remember, there is only one right answer. **No interesting stories!**

Try it again with the example from earlier in the chapter:

Despite his intense _____, he failed to secure the prestigious university's coveted diploma.

imbibition

lugubriousness

lucubration

magnanimity

character

First, read **only** the sentence. Find the clue (failed to secure the prestigious university's coveted diploma) and the pivot (despite). Write your own fill-in—here, *studying* would be a good choice. Now compare *studying* with every answer choice:

studying

A ✗

B ✗

C ✓

D ✗

E ~

The answer is **(C)**. *Lucubration* means “intense study.”

Of course, you may have some question marks due to a lack of vocabulary knowledge, in which case you should make your best guess *without delay*—you have

limited time to complete the section, and staring at the words for longer will not suddenly make up for a lack of vocabulary. **Your mastery of a large number of GRE-appropriate words is the biggest single factor that will determine your success on the problem.**

Don't worry—there's a *prodigious* section on learning vocabulary coming up later in this book!

HOW TO WRITE GOOD FILL-INS

As you try to write good fill-ins, keep in mind the following simple equation:

$$\text{Fill-in} = \text{Clue} + \text{Pivot}$$

The fill-in is nothing more interesting than a simple sum, so to speak, of the clue and the pivot. The clue and the pivot tell you something *about* the target.

Take a look at an example:

In the past decade, the coffee chain has dramatically expanded all across the country, leading one commentator to describe the franchise as _____.

First, find the target. Since the blank comes right after “describe the franchise as,” it’s pretty clear that the target is *the franchise*.

Next, find the clue. There could be more than one. The clue will tell you something

about *the franchise*. The clue is often the most descriptive part of the sentence (e.g., *expelled*). Typically, clues will be the most descriptive or opinionated elements of the sentence.

In the sentence above, *dramatically expanded* is the clue.

Then, find the pivot. Again, the pivot determines the relationship between the clue and the fill-in. The two most common possibilities are these:

1. The fill-in **agrees with** the clue.
2. The fill-in **opposes** the clue. The pivot will express negation or opposition.

The pivot could also indicate a causal relation or some other type, but even then, you can often get away with simply determining whether the fill-in and the clue agree or disagree.

In the sentence above, the words *leading* and *describe* tell you that the fill-in and the clue are in agreement.

So you need a blank that expresses agreement with *dramatically expanded*.

Finally, construct the fill-in out of the clue and the pivot. Recycle words if possible. This instinct will keep you from straying too far from the given meaning of the sentence. Feel free to use a phrase.

Your fill-in might be this: having dramatically expanded

Be ready to **change the part of speech**, if necessary.

Or you might have gone just a little further: everywhere

Notice how uninteresting this fill-in makes the sentence. Don't overthink. In real life, you could easily imagine the fill-in taking you substantially further than *having dramatically expanded*. For instance, the commentator may add a negative spin (*overreached*), but the GRE will make the fill-in much more boring in meaning. **Assume as little as possible.**

A likely answer would be something like *ubiquitous*, a GRE favorite.

PIVOT WORDS

Fill in your own word in this sentence:

Despite his reputation for _____, the politician decided that in a time of crisis it was important to speak honestly and forthrightly.

Did you say something like “not being direct”? The target is *the politician*. The pivot word *despite* indicates an *opposite direction*. *Honestly and forthrightly* was the clue describing the politician. Since the pivot was negative, the correct answer will need to pivot **away** from *honestly and forthrightly*.

For all her studying, her performance on the test was _____.

This one relies on an idiom. Did you say something like “mediocre” or “bad”? The expression *for all* X, Y is in play here. *For all* here means “despite.” Thus, despite her studying, her performance was *not good*.

Although he has a reputation for volubility, others at the party didn't find him to be especially _____.

Did you say something like “talkative”? Or did you go for “not talkative”? Notice you have a clue (*volubility*, which means “talkativeness”) and a pivot word, *although*. But you also have another pivot—the *not* in *didn't*. Pivoting twice (much like turning 180 degrees twice) is like not pivoting at all. In your blank, you just want another word for *talkative*.

Here are some common pivot words, phrases, and structures:

SAME DIRECTION	OPPOSITE DIRECTION	CAUSAL RELATIONSHIP
; (semicolon)	Although	As a result
: (colon)	Belied	Because
Also	But	Consequently
And	Despite	Hence
Besides	In spite of	So
Furthermore	Nevertheless	Therefore
In addition	On the contrary	Thus
In fact	On the other hand	
Just as...as	Rather than	

Moreover	Still	
Not only...but also	Though	
So...as to be	Whether X or Y	
X, Y, and Z (items in a list)	Yet	

DRILL: SENTENCE ANALYSIS

Analyze each sentence for Target, Clue, and Pivot, then fill in the blank in your own words.

1. The camp established by the aid workers provided a _____ for the refugees, many of whom had traveled for weeks to get there.

2. While others had given only accolades, the iconoclastic critic greeted the book's publication with a lengthy _____.

3. Though many have impugned her conclusions, the studies on which she based her analysis are beyond _____.

4. The ancient poem's value was more _____ than literary; the highly literal work made no attempt at lyricism, and ended by warning the reader never to lie.

5. French food could be said to be the most _____ of all cuisines, considering the high saturated fat content of the otherwise delectable *bechamels* and *remoulades*.

6. It is unfair and incorrect to _____ about an entire minority group based on the actions of a few people, whether those people are reprobates or model citizens.

7. For all the clamor about bipartisanship, in the end, voting _____ to factional loyalties.

8. While digital media should theoretically last forever, in actuality, there are warehouses full of abandoned computer tape drives and other media that have since been _____ by newer technologies.
9. Chad was the most mercurial of young people, but as an adult was able to _____ his wild fluctuations in personality.
10. The _____ position he adopted on the issue belied his reputation for equivocation.

ANSWERS: SENTENCE ANALYSIS

1. This sentence is pretty straightforward—you have the clues that *aid workers* are providing something for *refugees*, who have traveled for a long time to get there. A good fill-in would be *haven* or *sanctuary*.
2. This sentence has an opposite-direction pivot: *While*. You also have the clue that the critic is *iconoclastic*. Since most critics gave the book *accolades*—and an *iconoclastic* critic would do the opposite—a good fill-in would be something like *condemnation*.
3. The target is the *studies*. This sentence also has an opposite-direction pivot: *Though*. It seems that this person's conclusions aren't so great. The studies she used, though, *are* pretty great. You want to say something good about the studies, but you have *another* opposite-direction pivot, *beyond*. You want to say that the studies are so good that they are *beyond* something bad. This sentence would almost certainly be completed with the expression *beyond reproach*.
4. The target is the *poem*. You know that it is *more _____ than literary*—so it's not very literary. You then find out that it's *highly literal* and not even trying to be lyrical—sounds like a really bad poem! It ended by *warning the reader never to lie*. Whoa—that sounds like a *terrible* poem! Maybe the kind that would appear in a children's book. A good fill-in would be *moralistic* or *didactic*.
5. The target is *French food*. You might be tempted to put *delicious* in the blank, but that would be incorrectly inserting an opinion. The clue clearly says that the French food is full of fat. A good fill-in would be *unhealthy*.

6. The target is the *entire minority group*. What should you *not* _____ about them? The clue is “based on the actions of a few people.” A good fill-in might be *make stereotypes or generalize*.

7. The target is *voting*. This sentence depends on an idiom. *For all* here means “despite.” The clue is *clamor about bipartisanship* and the pivot is *for all* (meaning *despite*). Thus, the second part of the sentence should indicate that the voting was the opposite of *bipartisan*—that is, *partisan*. Since *factional loyalties* describe a partisan environment, a good fill-in would be *conformed* or *adhered*.

8. The target is *abandoned computer tape drives and other media*. You have the clue *digital media should theoretically last forever* and the pivot *while*. Thus, the meaning is that digital media does **not** last forever. This tracks with the idea of the computer tape drives being *abandoned*. A good fill-in would be *replaced*. GRE-type words that might appear here would be *supplanted* or *superseded*.

9. The target is *Chad*, or whatever Chad was able to do to his personality fluctuations. You have a clue about Chad—he was *mercurial*, which matches the idea of *wild fluctuations in personality*. You have a pivot, *but*, indicating that you need to go in the opposite direction. Thus, Chad was able to *hold back* or *moderate* his wild fluctuations. GRE-type words that might appear here would be *temper* or *damp*.

10. The target is the *position*. You know that the person in question has a *reputation for equivocation*. Your pivot is *belied*. Thus, a good fill-in would relate to the opposite of equivocation—something like *firm* or *resolute*.

DOUBLE-BLANK AND TRIPLE-BLANK TEXT COMPLETIONS

Most Text Completion questions have more than one blank. Consider the following example:

Twentieth-century America witnessed a nearly (i) _____ ascent to ever greater wealth, leaving its leaders (ii) _____ of publicly acknowledging budgetary limitations.

Blank (i)

Blank (ii)

portentous	chary
pertinacious	opprobrious
unremitting	implicate

In the sentence, the blanks are labeled with lowercase Roman numerals.

Below the sentence, the first column contains the choices—*portentous*, *pertinacious*, and *unremitting*—for the first blank. The second column contains the choices—*chary*, *opprobrious*, and *implicate*—for the second blank.

If you took the SAT, or remember the “old” GRE, you’ll notice something very different here—*your choice for the first blank is independent of your choice for the second blank*. That is, if you choose *unremitting* for the first blank, that does **not** mean that you have therefore chosen *implicate* for the second blank—you must instead make a separate decision for the second blank.

This means that you cannot “cheat” off one column to make your decision for the other. More importantly: *there is no partial credit*. You must get *both* words right or you receive no credit for your response. Thus, your chance of randomly guessing the correct answer is quite low (1 in 9).

It is very difficult to get these questions right based on incomplete information—you must understand the sentences and you must know all or most of the words. This is why such a large portion of this book is dedicated to vocabulary acquisition.

Fortunately, the fact that you must choose each word independently is somewhat compensated for by the fact that, for each blank, there are only three options, not five (as in single-blank Text Completions),

One more pleasant feature of double-blank and triple-blank problems is that, while they may *seem* harder because they are generally longer, there are also more clues for you to find. Also, having multiple blanks means you get to choose which blank to tackle first...and some blanks are easier to solve than others!

Start with the Easier (or Easiest) Blank

Don't just try to fill in the first blank automatically. Look at all of the blanks and figure out which one has the easiest clue. Then create a fill-in and use that fill-in as an extra clue for the harder blank(s).

Take a look at this example:

Even seasoned opera singers, who otherwise affect an unflappable air, can be
(i) _____ performing in Rome, where audiences traditionally view (ii)
_____ performers as a birthright, passed down from heckler to heckler
over generations.

Blank #2 is easier. Why? Compare the clues and pivots:

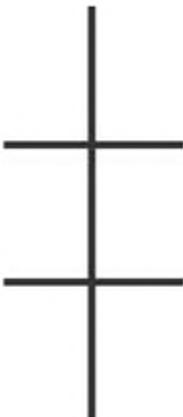
	Clues	Pivots	
Blank #1:	<i>seasoned</i> <i>unflappable</i>	<i>even...otherwise...</i>	The pivots express opposition. What is the opposite of <i>unflappable</i> ?
Blank #2:	<i>heckler</i>	none	No pivot = agreement

Your fill-in for #2 should probably be *heckling*. Remember to reuse the given language in the fill-in when you can.

Now you can use that fill-in as another clue. There is no pivot between the two blanks, meaning that the two fill-ins agree in some way. The relationship seems to be causal: the opera performers are going to react to that heckling. A likely fill-in would be *upset by* or *afraid of*.

Your paper might now look like this: afraid of...heckling

Also on your paper, draw a grid so that you can do process of elimination:



Or, if you prefer, write:

A A

B B

C C

Now compare to the answer choices and mark your paper:

Blank (i)	Blank (ii)
intrepid about	extolling
daunted by	lionizing
tempered by	badgering

Here is an example of what a student might have written down for this question. This student wasn't sure about *tempered by*, and didn't know exactly about *lionizing* but felt that it wasn't quite right.

afraid of...heckling



Nevertheless, this student picked *daunted by* and *badgering*, which are the correct responses.

Remember, the only way to get credit for the question is to pick BOTH *daunted by* and *badgering*.

Now here's an example with three blanks:

Perceptions of the (i) _____ role of intellectual practices within modern life underlie the familiar stereotypes of the educated as eggheads, ideologues, or worse. These negative characterizations may be rooted in a (ii) _____ of the aims of academia, but they are unlikely to be (iii) _____ unless teachers take efforts to address them directly.

Blank (i)

Blank (ii)

Blank (iii)

incongruous	dissemination	espoused
-------------	---------------	----------

refractory	confounding	dispelled
salubrious	corroboration	promulgated

While this sentence has three blanks instead of two, and is made up of more than one sentence, your method is the same—start with the easiest blank. The easiest blank is often the one surrounded by the most text—that is, the one that is furthest from the other two blanks and thus has the most potential clues located near it. Here, the first blank seems promising:

Perceptions of the (i) _____ role of intellectual practices within modern life underlie the familiar stereotypes of the educated as eggheads, ideologues, or worse.

The target is the *role*, and the role *underlies stereotypes* about eggheads “or worse.” So the word describing the role should be related to the idea of intellectual = egghead (a mild slang term roughly equivalent to “nerd”). Don’t ignore the phrase *within modern life*. A good fill-in would be *irrelevant*. The sentence seems to be saying that people think intellectuals are eggheads because intellectual practices are not a helpful or important part of modern life.

The second sentence mirrors that idea (*These negative characterizations ...*). It seems clear that the speaker is trying to defend academia. A good fill-in for the second blank would be *misunderstanding* or *twisting* (you can’t really be sure if the people who think intellectuals are “eggheads” are getting it wrong deliberately or not).

Finally, you have a negative pivot: *unlikely* (and another one, *unless*). Work backwards on this sentence:

If teachers DON'T address negative stereotypes directly...

the stereotypes will continue

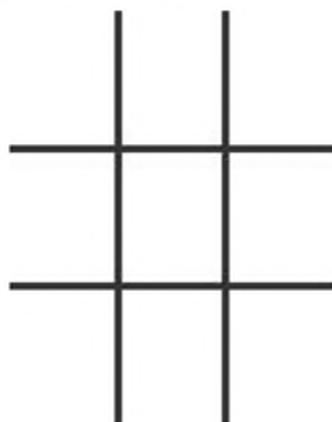
so, the stereotypes are *unlikely to be eliminated or corrected*

On your paper, you might have:

irrelevant

misunderstanding

eliminated



Or, if you prefer:

irrelevant

misunderstanding

eliminated

A

A

A

B

B

B

C

C

C

Consider your choices and mark your paper appropriately:

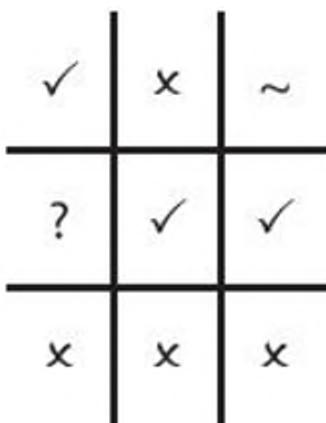
Blank (i)

Blank (ii)

Blank (iii)

incongruous	dissemination	espoused
refractory	confounding	dispelled
salubrious	corroboration	promulgated

Your notes for this question might look like this:



The correct answer is **incongruous, confounding, and dispelled**.

Finally, double-blank and triple-blank questions can sometimes have choices that are phrases rather than single words. These questions tend to be less about knowing difficult vocabulary words than about being able to work out the meaning of the sentence(s).

Try this question:

(i) _____ subject of the sermon, his words possessed a (ii) _____ quality few could fail to find utterly enchanting. It was only when his conclusion devolved into a (iii) _____ that the congregation began to fantasize about returning to the comfort of home.

Blank (i)	Blank (ii)	Blank (iii)
In spite of the insipid	euphonious	thoroughly fallacious slew of prevarications
Notwithstanding the salubrious	euphemistic	seemingly unending string of divagations
Because of the inauspicious	eulogistic	dubiously sanctified series of assignations

Attack the easiest blank first. That might be the last one, since you have the clues that the sermon's conclusion *devolved* into whatever goes in the blank, and that *the congregation began to fantasize about returning to the comfort of home*. Both clues tell you that you want a fill-in that means something like *bunch of stupid or boring stuff*.

Now that you have mentally completed the last sentence, it might help to paraphrase it before using the information to work backwards and analyze the rest of the sentence. Paraphrase: *It was only when the conclusion became stupid or boring that the people got bored*. The phrase *It was only when* serves as a pivot: before things got stupid or boring, they must have been pretty good, as you can verify from the clue *utterly enchanting*.

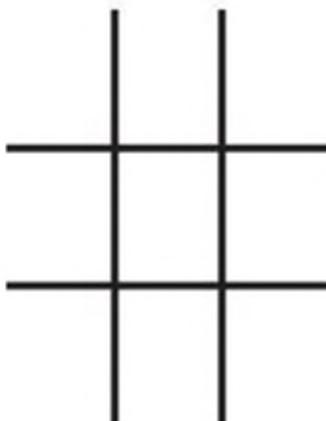
The second blank is pretty easy:...*his words possessed a _____ quality few could fail*

to find utterly enchanting. That means that nearly everyone finds his words enchanting. In fact, you could recycle that word and put it in the blank—a good fill-in here would be *enchanting*.

Finally, the first blank. It's pretty hard to fill in this one without glancing at the answer choices, but at least try to figure out a general category of what you'll be looking for. There is a blank about the *subject* of the sermon, and then something nice about the words used in the sermon. Either these two things will go in the same direction or in an opposite direction.

You might have something like this on our paper:

something comparing *subject w/ words* enchanting stupid/boring stuff



Now try the choices (in any order you prefer).

In the first blank, *In spite of the insipid* makes sense—the meaning is *In spite of the bad quality of the topic, the words of the sermon were enchanting*. In the second option, *notwithstanding* is similar to *in spite of*, so you would expect something bad to

come after, but *salubrious* means *healthy*. Since the third choice begins with *because*, you would expect something positive to come after it (*Because of some good quality of the sermon, the words were enchanting*). But *inauspicious* means *likely to be unsuccessful*. Only *In spite of the insipid* works.

In the second blank, only *euphonious* works. The root *eu* means *good*, but that's not too helpful here, since all three words use that root. However, *euphemistic* (substituting inoffensive words in for more explicit or hurtful ones) doesn't make sense, and *eulogistic* (full of praise, especially for a deceased person) also doesn't match the idea of *enchanting*.

Finally, the only phrase that means anything like *stupid/boring stuff* is *seemingly unending string of divagations* (*divagations* are tangents, or instances of going off-topic). *Prevarications* are falsehoods, and *assignations* are romantic meetups.

The answer is **In spite of the insipid, euphonious, and seemingly unending string of divagations.**

TRICKY ASPECTS OF TEXT COMPLETION SENTENCES

Take a look at this example:

Although Paula claimed not to be _____ that she was not selected for the scholarship, we nevertheless worried that our typically sanguine friend was not entirely _____ by the decision.

This sentence is just chock-full of switchbacks. Count the oppositional pivots: *Although...not...nevertheless...typically...not entirely....*

It's easy to lose your way in a thicket of **double-negative pivots**, especially under exam pressure. How many wrongs make a right?

When you face a situation such as this...

Break It Down

Chop up the sentence and process it in small chunks. Start with the earliest or the most concrete part of the story. Then add one chunk at a time. Change complicated pivots to simple words, such as *but* and *so*.

As you go, emotionally punctuate each part of the story. Exaggerate the switchbacks in your mental voice, as if you were telling a story you really cared about. Finally, as you think about the whole, discard unnecessary elements, so that you don't have to hold everything in your head at once.

For the sentence above, the breakdown might go like this:

Our friend Paula is *typically* sanguine = optimistic ☺

She was not selected for a scholarship ☹

She claimed NOT to be _____

BUT

We still worried ☹

that she was NOT entirely _____ by the decision.

The fill-ins should be pretty easy to generate now: *upset/saddened* ☹ for the first blank, and *unaffected* for the second.

It looks like a lot of work, but your brain can generate this train of thought in seconds. Give it a try.

Other tricky aspects of the sentence yield to the same basic medicine: **Break it down.**

Now break down a few more challenging sentence types.

Unfamiliar Style or Content

That such a _____ of precedent would be countenanced was itself unprecedented in the court, a bastion of traditionalism.

The sentence starts with a *that* clause, a hallmark of a very academic writing style. Moreover, the content is about a legal matter. These two factors combine with difficult vocabulary (*precedent, countenanced, bastion*) to make the sentence forbidding.

The meaning of the sentence is something like, “That such a _____ of previously established examples would be tolerated was a surprising instance of a very traditional court going against tradition.”

A good fill-in here would be something like *rejection*.

Red Herring Clues

A “red herring” is something that seems to be a clue, but is actually only there to confuse you. Such traps occasionally appear on Text Completion questions, so be careful that all the clues you’re using are *actually* clues.

By rigorously observing social behavior, anthropologists _____ strict, though implicit, codes of conduct.

A few “clues” might not really be clues. (“Red herring” is an expression for something that seems like it’s going to be important, but turns out to be just a distraction. The expression arose when criminals started rubbing herring—a type of fish—on trails to distract the hunting dogs chasing after them.)

Here, the word *strict* turns out to be less important to the answer than *implicit*. Decoy answers might be *undermine* or *challenge* (somehow dealing with the *strict* element, but introducing too much new information in the fill-in). The real meaning of the sentence is based on the idea that, because the behavior is *implicit* (hinted at or unspoken), anthropologists have to be rigorous in their observations in order to detect or decode it. A good fill-in would be something like *reveal* or *make explicit*.

Blanks in Tough Spots

If these managers (i) _____ the purported advantages of the new deep-sea recovery methodology to be (ii) _____, then it will rapidly be judged less useful than current alternatives by the broader business community.

Some blanks are positioned in such a way that it's hard to hold the sentence in your head. The gaps occur early or in strategic places. For instance, in the sentence above, the verb of the first clause is missing.

A completed version of this sentence would read something like, "If these managers find the purported advantages...to be lacking, then..."

The main thing to remember is that, no matter how complex or awkward the sentence, you have to make sense of it. The best way to do that is to **break it down into pieces**. Start at the easiest-to-understand chunk and work outwards from there.

DRILL: SENTENCE ANALYSIS WITH MULTIPLE BLANKS

Analyze each sentence for Target, Clue, and Pivot, then fill in the blanks in your own words. Here, you're just practicing the first two steps of the strategy. You'll practice complete problems soon.

1. The radio host claimed to have preternatural powers that allowed her to (i) _____ future events, from cataclysms and illnesses to global booms and personal (ii) _____.

2. After Alexander Graham Bell invented the telephone, he was greeted not with (i) _____ but with a barrage of ridicule. The *London Times* called the invention the latest American “humbug,” disbelieving electricians declared the machine a (ii) _____, and prominent capitalists—always with an eye out to make a profit—all (iii) _____ to buy Graham's patent.
3. Louis Armstrong rose to (i) _____ in the 1920s as an innovative cornet and trumpet player. A(n) (ii) _____ influence in jazz, he is largely credited for shifting focus from a style based on group improvisation to one based on solo performance—such as his own distinctive, even (iii) _____, solos.
4. For years, the idea that blind people can hear better than sighted people was considered something of an old (i) _____. However, functional brain imaging has recently uncovered the fact that a brain region called V1, which (ii) _____ at the back of the skull and which normally responds only to light, has been rewired in the brains of blind people and now processes auditory information in what could be termed a stunning example of the brain's (iii) _____.
5. Throughout the history of human thought, virtually every thinker has (i) _____ of the mind as a unitary entity. (ii) _____, in the 1960s, Roger Sperry conducted his famous studies working with epileptics who had been treated via the cutting of the *corpus callosum*, or division between the two hemispheres. During the studies, Perry was able to observe that each half of the brain could gain new information independently, and that one hemisphere could be entirely unaware of what the other had learned or experienced. Truly, our brains are not unitary, but (iii) _____.

6. The company president was not just (i) _____ but positively (ii) _____; his subordinates lived in perpetual fear of his reproof.
7. Marissa's date was neither (i) _____ nor (ii) _____; he was surly to the waiter and expatiated at great length about mechanical engineering, a topic Marissa finds quite tedious.
8. While many people think of migraines simply as bad headaches, migraines are actually neurological events that can include numbness, slurred speech, and ringing in the ears, with or without headache. Even doctors are (i) _____ to this mischaracterization, thus leading to frequent (ii) _____; these mistakes can lead to instances where both patients with migraines and patients whose disorders are confused with migraines end up getting treatment that may be ineffective or even (iii)_____.
9. We ought not (i) _____ our leaders; it is our (ii) _____ and foibles that make us human, and only by humanizing the greatest among us can we fully understand those whose achievements we admire.
10. In her later years, the artist (i) _____ the wild, chaotic imagery of her early work and instead embraced a prim, highly (ii) _____ formalism.

ANSWERS: SENTENCE ANALYSIS WITH MULTIPLE BLANKS

1. The clue for the first blank is *preternatural powers*. A good fill-in is *predict*. The clue for the second blank is *from cataclysms and illnesses to global booms*. A *from...to...* structure will have to set up opposites. Furthermore, you can expect that the comparison will fit a predictable pattern (otherwise, how could the GRE expect you to know what to put in the blanks?). A *cataclysm* is a big, bad thing, and *illnesses* is a smaller, bad thing. *Global booms* are a big, good thing, so you're looking for a smaller, good thing. A good fill-in might be *windfalls* or *strokes of luck*.

2. For the first blank, you have an opposite-direction pivot (*not with _____ but with ridicule*). Thus, *praise* would be a good fill-in for the first blank. The clue about the electricians is *disbelieving*, so a good fill-in for the second blank would be *hoax*. The third sentence is perhaps the trickiest. If read in isolation, the sentence would seem to indicate that capitalists *always with an eye out to make a profit* would want to *buy* the patent. However, this item is part of a list of ways in which Graham was *ridiculed*. Thus, a correct fill-in for the third blank would indicate that the capitalists did NOT want to buy the patent. A word like *declined* would fit nicely.

3. If Armstrong *rose*, then you're looking for a word describing a high position—something like *prominence* would be a good fill-in for the first blank. For the second blank, simply recycle *influence* and fill in something like *influential* (a nice GRE word might be *foundational*). For the third blank, you want something even more distinctive than *distinctive*—something like *showy*, *flashy*, or *ostentatious*.

4. The opposite-direction pivot in the second sentence (*However*), followed by news of a recent discovery, indicates that whatever was thought *for years* has turned

out to be incorrect. Thus, a good fill-in for the first blank would be *folk tale* or *urban legend*. A more GRE-type word would be *canard*. The second blank should simply say something like *located*. The third blank needs to sum up the idea that part of the brain that normally only responds to light has actually been repurposed to do something else. Thus, a good fill-in would be something like *versatility* or *plasticity*.

5. The first blank should simply be a verb like *thought* or *conceived* (both words that can be followed by *of*). You learn from the first sentence that the traditional way to think of the mind is *as a unitary entity*. The next sentence describes the mind acting in a very non-unitary way (a binary way, actually). So, the word in the second blank should be something like *however*. Finally, the third blank simply needs to be the opposite of *unitary*—perhaps *modular* or *decentralized*.

6. The clue is that the subordinates lived in fear. You also have an important sentence pattern: *not just _____ but positively _____*. This pattern indicates that the second thing should be a more extreme version of the first. Good fill-ins might be *bossy* and *domineering* or even *bossy* and *terrifying*.

7. Notice again the structure: two things are compared to two things. There must be a logical pattern. In this case, the first blank is the opposite of *surly*, so *nice* would be a good fill-in. The second blank is the opposite of *expatiating* on a *tedious* subject, so you could go with something like *interesting*.

8. Most people make mistakes in how they think of migraines—even doctors. From that clue, a good fill-in for the first blank would be *prone* (or something else indicating that the doctors also make this mistake). Following this idea, the second

blank should say something like *misdiagnoses* (this idea is supported by the phrase “whose disorders are confused with migraines”). Finally, there is an important pattern in the final sentence: *that may be ineffective or even _____*. The *even* indicates that you want something even worse than *ineffective*. A good fill-in would be *harmful*.

9. The phrase *only by humanizing the greatest among us can we fully understand those whose achievements we admire* is a big clue—that’s a strong statement that gives you a very good idea of the point of the sentence. You have an opposite-direction pivot (*not*), so a good fill-in for the first blank would be *idealize*. The second blank is matched up with *foibles*, so it will probably mean something very similar, perhaps *flaws*.

10. Since the later years are being contrasted with the early years, the first blank should contain something like *cast off* or *eschewed*. In the second blank, you can simply recycle *prim* or *formal*—she cast off her old, wild style to pursue a *prim, highly formal formalism*.

TRAPS TO AVOID DURING ELIMINATION

In this section, you're going to learn about some traps that you might see in harder Text Completion questions.

Theme Trap

Give the following problem a try:

The event horizon (or boundary) of a black hole represents both (i)_____ and intangibility; space travelers would pass through this literal “point of no return” so (ii)_____ that the precise moment at which their fate was sealed would almost certainly not be registered.

Blank (i)

Blank (ii)

constellation	indiscernibly
irrevocability	universally
infallibility	cosmically

Which is the easier blank?

Most would agree that the second blank is easier. The clue is *the precise moment... certainly not be registered*, and the lack of a pivot tells you that the fill-in agrees with the clue. So you might fill in something like *without registering* (again, recycling language from the sentence itself).

Turning to the first blank, you can see that the *without registering* fill-in lines up with *intangibility*, while the first blank lines up with “point of no return.” So you might fill in *no return* for the first blank.

Now you match to the answer choices. Only *indiscernibly* fits *without registering*. Only *irrevocability* fits *no return*. *Irrevocability* and *indiscernibly* are the correct responses.

A *theme trap* in a wrong answer choice shares a theme or field (such as medicine, sports, etc.) with the sentence. As a result, the choice sounds okay on its own and somehow “together” with the sentence, even though it doesn't really fit the blanks.

Notice the trap language in the choices: *constellation*, *universally*, *cosmically*. These words all relate to space, but they have no actual relation to the meanings you want for your blanks. Have the mental discipline to *follow the strategy every time*, and you won't fall for traps like this!

Close But Not Close Enough Trap

Now try this problem:

Marie was nettled by her sister's constant jocularity and preferred a _____ approach to life.

miserable

indignant

waggish

staid

sycophantic

It was probably pretty easy for you to identify the clues (*nettled*, *jocularity*, *preferred*) and to see that Marie is against *jocularity*, or joking behavior. A fill-in might be *serious*.

Now, imagine that you go through the answer choices. *Miserable* and *indignant* both “sort of” match, but they both seem a little off, too. Just because Marie doesn’t like her sister’s constant joking, that doesn’t mean she’s *miserable* or *indignant* in her outlook on life. Perhaps you don’t remember what *waggish* or *staid* mean, and you don’t totally remember *sycophantic* either, but you’re sure it doesn’t mean *serious*.

So your paper might look like this:

serious

A ~

B ~

C ?

D ?

E x

You can now identify another trap. You don't like *miserable* or *indignant*, but you don't know the other words, so you find yourself reluctant to choose (C) or (D). Unfortunately, you're falling into a trap...

The *Close But Not Close Enough Trap* occurs when a wrong answer choice is "in the ballpark" but something is off in the meaning—however, the word is familiar, so it's attractive.

You might be afraid to pick a word you don't know. **Overcome this fear.** As it turns out, the correct answer is *staid*, which means "serious, sedate by temperament or habits."

You will also see **reversal traps** (you miss a pivot or mix up a negative). This is a matter of attention to detail in the moment.

Finally, there are **vocab traps**. *Conversant* doesn't mean *talkative* (it means *knowledgeable*), *factitious* does not mean *factual* (it means the opposite!), and *ingenuous* can look a lot like *ingenious* if you're not reading carefully. To avoid these traps, you're going to need to really know your vocab!

TEXT COMPLETION RECAP

Three-Step Process	1. Read only the sentence.
---------------------------	----------------------------

2. Find the clue and pivot, and write down your own fill-in.

3. Compare to each answer choice.

Principle for Writing Fill-Ins

Fill-in = Clue + Pivot

The clue describes the target. Reuse material from the sentence when writing a fill-in.

Principle for Two or Three Blanks

Start with the easier/easiest blank. Work outwards from the part of the sentence that is easiest to understand.

Things to Watch Out For

- **Double Negative Pivots**, which create **Reversal Traps**
- **Unfamiliar Style/Content**, which can confuse you and cause you to abandon your process
- **Red Herring Clues**
- **Blanks in Tough Spots**

- **Theme Traps**, where wrong answers are thematically related to the stem
- **Close But Not Close Enough Traps**, where wrong answers have the right spin (positive or negative), but are incorrect in degree or detail
- **Vocab Traps**, where the GRE takes advantage of visual similarities between words to trick you into thinking one word has a similar meaning to some other word it happens to look like

Drill: Easy Questions

Here is the first of three 20-question Text Completion drills. Remember to follow the strategy! Look for clues and pivots, write down your own fill-in on separate paper, write A B C D E or make a grid, and use process of elimination.

You won't get any more reminders after this, so it's important that you make a vow to yourself to maintain the mental discipline to use this strategy and not simply revert back to what most people do (look at the question and pick the choices that "seem best").

You will also want to make a list of vocabulary words to look up later (if you haven't been making such a list already). Even after you've done these drills, you could still spend quite a long time just learning the words in these 60 problems (and then going over the problems again—another reason to work on separate paper and not in the book).

If your current vocabulary is extremely limited, here's another idea: go through the following 20 questions looking at the answer choices only, without reading the sentences. Make flashcards for all new words (look words up on [dictionary.com](#), [m-w.com](#), [thefreedictionary.com](#), etc.). Learn all of the words, *then* come back and attack these questions.

1. Although it appeared to be _____ after its stagnation and eventual cancellation in 1989, *Doctor Who* returned to the BBC in 2005, becoming the longest-running science-fiction show in history.

lackluster

ascendant

unflagging

defunct

sated

2. _____ against China's record on environmental protection has become a ubiquitous pastime at energy summits, especially among those already inclined to invective on such topics.

Inveigling

Speculating

Needling

Ranting

Lauding

3. In 1345, the brothers of Queen Blanche of Namur, Louis and Robert, were appointed _____ to her spouse, conveying upon them the protection of King Magnus Eriksson in exchange for their homage and fealty.

protégés

vassals

vanguards

precursors

partisans

4. Social critic Neil Postman identified what he saw as a sort of intellectual _____ when he wrote, "What Orwell feared were those who would ban books. What Huxley feared was that there would be no reason to ban a book, for there would be no one who wanted to read one."

pondering

mulishness

degeneration

cerebration

banishment

5. The doctor's presentation went into great detail about the supposed _____ of the treatment, but failed to discuss any way of obviating damage to auxiliary structures.

diagnosis

mien

prognosis

costs

benefits

6. Richardson's (i) _____ handling of the (ii) _____ scandal successfully prevented what seemed poised to become the spectacular devastation or ruination of his coalition.

Blank (i)

Blank (ii)

penitent	fretful
adroit	looming
heterogeneous	ecumenical

7. The (i) _____ forces were just barely held at bay by a loyalist battalion (ii) _____ by its allies' reinforcements.

Blank (i)

Blank (ii)

revolting	obviated
outclassed	bolstered
fascistic	sapped

8. While it would be lovely if what he said were true, many of the shareholders are afraid he is _____ liar, based on observations made during his long tenure at the company.

a libelous

an inveterate

a nullified

an unverified

a forfeited

9. In determining the defendant's sentencing, the jury will take into account whether he acted on _____ motives, or, as he claims, acted primarily to shield himself and others in the restaurant from harm.

ulterior

resolute

pathological

lucrative

violent

10. During years of mismanagement by the Socialist Party, Burma drifted into economic _____ and isolation, a far cry from the power and influence exerted by the country at the peak of the Toungoo Dynasty in the 16th century.

monotony

opulence

nonchalance

feebleness

recriminations

11. As the new government revealed itself to be far more authoritarian than the people ever could have guessed, and curfews and roadblocks threatened the _____ of citizens, the public houses began to fill with whispers of a possible coup d'état.

insolence

epitome

belligerence

recidivism

autonomy

12. He is the most hubristic individual his colleagues have ever met, and never passes up an opportunity for _____.

hedonism

augmentation

profit

jubilation

bombast

13. (i) _____ by circumstance, the entrepreneur once known for his

overweening (ii) _____ was now seen by others as the possessor of a broken spirit and timid demeanor.

Blank (i)

Blank (ii)

Unaffected	pretension
Humbled	liberality
Exalted	wealth

14. Though she had made attempts to adopt a more (i) _____ lifestyle, she was not above indulging her proclivities towards fattening, (ii) _____ dishes.

Blank (i)

Blank (ii)

truculent	odious
salutary	edible
frugal	unwholesome

15. The discovery that exposure to allergens through the mother's diet during the last trimester could lead to complications during the first year after birth (i) _____ the U.K. Department of Health to (ii) _____ dietary recommendations for expecting mothers.

Blank (i)

Blank (ii)

prompted	intuit
instigated	codify
lulled	officiate

16. Fearful of being seen as (i) _____ , the Bieber Appreciation Society took pains to include (ii) _____ voices in its monthly newsletter.

Blank (i)

Blank (ii)

enthusiasts	conciliatory
detractors	critical
toadies	tantamount

17. The fact that bringing together criminals and their victims for a moderated conversation has been shown to vastly reduce rates of (i) _____ might be explained by the fact that those who commit crimes can only do so by convincing themselves their actions have no (ii) _____.

Blank (i)

Blank (ii)

violence	inconsistencies
recidivism	aberrations
malfeasance	ramifications

18. The (i) _____ of monks and abbots in Eastern Christianity were typically of plain black modest cloth, indicating their spiritual indifference to matters of this world in favor of a commitment to a (ii) _____ mindset. In this regard, the contrast with the (iii) _____ garments of Buddhist monks is striking.

Blank (i)

Blank (ii)

Blank (iii)

vestiges	mundane	iridescent
habiliments	dogmatic	drab
paragons	transcendent	flowing

19. In many criminal trials, it emerges that the defendant (i) _____ some kind of abuse as a child. However, these biographical revelations should not have any

effect on how the jury apportions (ii) _____. An excuse is not a justification, and the criminal justice system wasn't constructed to help balance the (iii) _____ of someone's life.

Blank (i)

Blank (ii)

Blank (iii)

appreciated	culpability	ledger
exploited	history	imprisonment
suffered	insanity	verdict

20. The university president argued that top universities should not (i) _____ education as an academic (ii) _____; discouraging our brightest students from pursuing teaching careers does a disservice to the next generation of students by (iii) _____ them of the opportunity to learn from the cream of the crop.

Blank (i)

Blank (ii)

Blank (iii)

disdain	recommendation	denigrating
proscribe	tome	degenerating
circumvent	discipline	divesting

Drill: Medium Questions

1. O'Neill's Irish _____ was so incomprehensible to the Royal visitors, accustomed to speaking in formal Queen's English, that they struggled to complete the negotiation.

fortitude

patois

equanimity

diffidence

consternation

2. Traditional upper class _____ such as fox hunting and cricket have largely given way to more egalitarian amusements over the course of the last century.

stereotypes

disportments

vocations

canards

professions

3. Professor Honeycutt was known as a probing questioner of her students; she always wanted to get to the _____ of any intellectual matter.

emotions

academics

pith

periphery

examination

4. Seeing its only alternative to be a (i) _____ diplomacy unbecoming of political visionaries—as members of the so-called National Liberation

Organization saw themselves in those days—the militant branch veered toward a policy of (ii) _____ aggression against its perceived ethnic rivals.

Blank (i)

Blank (ii)

wheedling	supine
freewheeling	unremitting
verdant	superfluous

5. A (i)_____ ran through the crowd of protesters chanting slogans and threats when the queen made the sudden announcement—only a fortnight after vowing not to give in to the popular demands for her departure—that she would abdicate the throne, (ii) _____ a period of disorder and confusion.

Blank (i)

Blank (ii)

frisson	marring
murmur	precipitating
panegyric	diluting

6. After Bismarck's cunning leadership helped the Prussians overcome years of infighting, they were able to turn the aggression outwards, becoming known and feared across Europe for their (i)_____ .

ennui

extravagance

opulence

covetousness

truculence

7. A perfectionist in all things, Joseph expected to immediately become a (i) _____ and was downtrodden indeed when he remained (ii) _____ despite his best efforts.

Blank (i)

Blank (ii)

hack	novel
musician	inane
virtuoso	inept

8. (i) _____ is unlikely to serve someone (ii) _____ by liars and fabulists.

Blank (i)

Blank (ii)

Credulity	foresaken
Duplicity	brooked
Ingenuity	beset

9. The idea, espoused by such heavyweights as Peter Singer, that each sentient being deserves fair treatment on a par with human beings clashes with the ecological insight that _____ some members of a species is occasionally

necessary to prevent the devastating effects of overpopulation.

protecting

culling

murdering

reintroducing

depleting

10. While she was known to all her friends as quite the (i) _____, legendary for humorous stories from her years spent driving a taxi, her private behavior belied this (ii) _____ image.

Blank (i)

Blank (ii)

sage	belligerent
prevaricator	pedantic
raconteur	genial

11. The common opinion at the court had it that her droll utterances as often as not (i) _____ attitudes unbecoming of a lady. This reputation cost her the attentions of some gentlemen, above all thanks to their fear of being bested by her (ii) _____.

Blank (i)

Blank (ii)

eluded	subtlety
derided	doggerel
evinced	repartee

12. While courage is an important virtue to teach—and his character is indeed (i) _____—a cartoon mouse with a (ii) _____ for excessive violence is hardly an appropriate mascot for a children's charity.

Blank (i)

Blank (ii)

mettlesome	penchant
impetuous	kinship
heady	largess

13. The double-dealing ambassador's political (i) _____ and backpedaling looked all the worse when compared to the (ii) _____ straightforwardness of his Australian counterpart.

Blank (i)

Blank (ii)

plutocracy	occlusive
bugaboo	ostensible
sleight of hand	intransigent

14. The most (i)_____ puzzle was in determining how to deliver the antisense strand to the right place at the right moment, after the virus had penetrated the cell, but before it had replicated and escaped to infect other cells. To accomplish this, the synthetic strand had to be potent enough to be effective and to resist rapid (ii)_____ inside the body, allowing it time to accomplish its task.

Blank (i)

Blank (ii)

recalcitrant	desiccation
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pedestrian	degradation
monolithic	compunction

15. It takes only a (i) _____ of dry shrub for an errant spark to turn into a destructive (ii) _____.

Blank (i)

Blank (ii)

surfeit	conflagration
scintilla	incendiary
pallet	havoc

16. The Russo-Turkish war (i) _____ Albanians, placing before them the (ii) _____ prospect of a division of their lands among competing powers. This, above all, served to bring Albanian nationalism surging out of its former (iii) _____ , culminating in a successful bid for independence only a few decades later.

Blank (i)

Blank (ii)

Blank (iii)

rankled	evanescent	latency
enervated	pernicious	insularity
debased	transient	lucidity

17. Though she acknowledges that modern farming practices are more (i) _____ than traditional agriculture, she nonetheless argues that this difference represents no real (ii) _____. Perhaps more worrying, however, is her insistence that similar claims can be advanced regarding the treatment of farmers by an often (iii) _____ social hierarchy.

Blank (i)

Blank (ii)

Blank (iii)

expensive	progress	iniquitous
efficient	disincentive	halcyon
polluting	countermand	stratified

18. The (i) _____ of the word *assassin* is (ii) _____ in philological circles, as the word comes from a sect of brutal killers believed to have smoked the drug hashish before going on a mission. The topic is equally attractive to historians, as the (iii) _____ of the sect, which dates to before the First Crusade in the 11th century, remains a mystery.

Blank (i)

Blank (ii)

Blank (iii)

introduction	notorious	provenance
derivation	unheralded	legend
circumlocution	enigmatic	bane

19. Statistics often need to be (i) _____ for their real meaning: in the last decade, while both the population and the amount of meat eaten annually in the nation remained (ii) _____, the growing gap between rich and poor meant that the wealthy few were eating more meat than ever, while the masses suffered from a (iii) _____ of foodstuffs of all kinds.

Blank (i)

Blank (ii)

Blank (iii)

plumbed	plastic	deceleration
calculated	static	dearth
designed	demographic	glut

20. Although Cage supported the expanded reliance on electronically produced (i) _____, most of his early music is surprisingly (ii) _____. His “Music for Marcel Duchamp,” a prepared-piano work from 1947, never rises above mezzo-piano, offering instead (iii) _____ melody that maintains its

softness throughout.

Blank (i)

Blank (ii)

Blank (iii)

timbre	deleterious	a noisome
murmur	auspicious	an undulating
clangor	subdued	an erstwhile

Drill: Hard Questions

- After renouncing the significant advantages of his noble birth, he wandered from village to village as a lowly _____ ; this reliance on alms, he maintained along with other members of his religious order, was the life best suited to one who wished to see both the miserliness and the generosity of humanity.

abettor

mendicant

rube

anachronism

malefactor

- The serial comma is _____ of many grammarians, who consider it an unnecessary addendum to a perfectly clear sentence structure; obviously, they're wrong, because the serial comma is critical to conveying the correct meaning.

a crotchet

an awl

an apogee

a nadir

an opus

3. In contrast to American social conventions regarding neighborly relations, in which families or individuals residing in close proximity often interact on a familiar basis, residential _____ does not necessarily imply intimacy (or even amity) among the English.

commodiousness

amiability

reciprocity

propinquity

cordiality

4. It is quite dangerous to _____ unnecessarily through the city these days, when explosions shake the buildings to their foundations without letup; it is best to conduct only essential errands, and to do so with haste.

bop

traipse

circumambulate

sidle

reconnoiter

5. The tokens given by the aristocrat, while (i) _____, still served as a reminder that the power of the Crown continued to be held in some esteem even in such (ii) _____ political times.

Blank (i)

Blank (ii)

sardonic	mercurial
nugatory	jocund
sumptuous	magisterial

6. Having built up to a (i) _____, the shelling stopped as suddenly as it had begun; gazing at the drooping barrels, one might be forgiven for thinking they were rendered (ii) _____ by the pathetic sight of their (iii) _____ targets.

Blank (i)

Blank (ii)

Blank (iii)

pique	sidereal	ethereal
crescendo	woebegone	effulgent
euphony	erroneous	haggard

7. Despite having engineered and overseen the return of several stray dioceses that had broken away under his predecessor's (i) _____, the bishop had a modest and open quality that (ii) _____ the (iii) _____ of his position.

Blank (i)

Blank (ii)

Blank (iii)

diligence	construed	tenuousness
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epaulet	belied	audacity
laxity	derided	eminence

8. The (i) _____ of “surds”—irrational roots—with the Pythagoreans’ faith that all phenomena in the universe could be expressed through harmonious ratios of whole numbers led the cult to (ii) _____ any mention of their existence to the uninitiated.

Blank (i)

Blank (ii)

absurdity	condone
incongruity	proscribe
imperilment	palliate

9. Architectural (i) _____ such as Koolhaas recognized Hadid's talents early and encouraged their development. By 1977, only a few years after their initial encounter, she had perfected her (ii) _____ style, inspired equally by such disparate styles as Malevich's sparse constructivism and the flowing calligraphy of her native Arabic.

Blank (i)

Blank (ii)

cognoscenti	fungible
fledglings	malleable
neophytes	heteromorphic

10. Aleister Crowley, despite being given to wildly fantastic claims—he insisted, for instance, that the founding book of his religion was dictated to him by a divine being who visited his hotel room wearing sunglasses and a trench coat—had his share of (i) _____ followers. These were likely spurred on more than dissuaded by the (ii) _____ cast on him by the popular press, whose dubbing him “the wickedest man in the world” was, to be fair, hardly (iii) _____ given the relative harmlessness of his eccentricities.

Blank (i)

Blank (ii)

Blank (iii)

sycophantic	disadvantages	glib
sordid	gauntlets	peevish
skeptical	animadversions	condign

11. The Biblical portrayal of (i) _____ times preceding the great deluge stands in stark contrast to the ancient Greek representation of the (ii) _____ past as a Golden Age from which humanity has slowly descended into godless chaos. Such observations can easily give rise to the notion that stories about the past are less faithful attempts at reconstruction than (iii) _____ , expressing both our cultural fears and hopes.

Blank (i)

Blank (ii)

Blank (iii)

flagitious	proximate	allegories
dubious	antediluvian	equivocations
rustic	obscure	platitudes

12. Seeing (i) _____ as perhaps the most significant cause of preventable illness, such twelfth-century physicians as Moses Maimonides aimed the bulk of their (ii) _____ pamphlets at the prescription of medieval dietary regimens, offering advice that often appears (iii) _____ to modern sensibilities.

Blank (i)

Blank (ii)

Blank (iii)

costiveness	didactic	disingenuous
bathos	maleficent	risible
convalescence	tenable	burgeoning

13. Uncertain whether his (i) _____ attire could impress the suave, nattily-dressed executive—despite her frequent affirmations of a fondness for rural life—Francis reduced himself to near (ii) _____ through new wardrobe acquisitions. If only he had known that the executive was secretly ashamed of her (iii) _____ showboating, which she only indulged to conceal her financial ruin.

Blank (i)

Blank (ii)

Blank (iii)

georgic	penury	bombastic
natty	malaise	runic
exclusive	lethargy	sartorial

14. (i) _____ is unlikely to gain a reputation for reliability; Garth's poorly disguised excuses, however, were improbably interpreted by his (ii) _____, hypochondriac employer as a sign of great foresight and (iii) _____.

Blank (i)

Blank (ii)

Blank (iii)

An embezzler	casuistic	insipidity
A malingerer	imposing	sagacity
A pilferer	trepidatious	temerity

15. History has (i) _____ the movement's leader to the extent that his quite considerable moral shortcomings—his (ii) _____ misogyny, for example—are rarely discussed and, if mentioned at all, are seen as no more than (iii) _____.

Blank (i)

Blank (ii)

Blank (iii)

lionized	risqué	malefactions
narrativized	incorrigible	peccadilloes
impugned	waggish	trespasses

16. The new film, though a chronicle of exploitation and iniquity, nevertheless is deeply concerned with notions of (i) _____, eventually showcasing the elimination of all the protagonist's abusers, granting the audience the (ii) _____ they've been awaiting for two hours. Despite the satisfying upheaval, however, the plodding plot en route to this (iii) _____ leaves much to be desired.

Blank (i)

Blank (ii)

Blank (iii)

fairness	catharsis	embellishment
slavery	relief	denouement
injustice	inconclusiveness	platitudes

17. Although (i) _____ is frequently used to give otherwise insubstantial work (ii) _____ of profundity, even Wallgot's most charitable readers were known to sneer at the breadth of his references.

Blank (i)

Blank (ii)

stringency	an iota
insularity	a veneer
eclecticism	a medley

18. He rarely bothered to (i) _____ his lengthy tomes, but their surprising popularity with the public empowered him to avoid editorial complaints

through (ii) _____ threats to sign a contract with a different publisher.

Blank (i)

Blank (ii)

emend	impuissant
allay	peremptory
edify	toothsome

19. In future discounting, subjects place a lower value on events in the distant future than on (i) _____ ones, explaining the common tendency to (ii) _____ present pleasures even at the expense of a likely (iii) _____ of future detriments.

Blank (i)

Blank (ii)

Blank (iii)

atavistic	avert	malady
remote	rescind	proliferation
proximate	protract	buttressing

20. She claims it is possible to deduce matters of fact from logic and, with just as little (i) _____ , aims to derive ethical and economic truths as well. The laws of logic, in her opinion, (ii) _____ her proclamation that “existence exists,” which is very much like saying that the law of thermodynamics is hot.

Blank (i)

Blank (ii)

epigram	license
warrant	occlude
fallacy	galvanize

Solutions: 20 Easy Questions

- 1. Defunct.** The show stagnated and was canceled, so afterward it might appear to be “dead” or “gone.” *Defunct* (no longer existing) is a good match. A *lackluster* (dull) show might be cancelled, but it doesn’t make sense that Doctor Who appeared to be dull **after** it was cancelled, and this would clash with the fact that the show returned in 2005 and had success. A canceled show is unlikely to appear in a positive light, such as *ascendant* (upwardly moving) or *unflagging* (not tiring; steady and unrelenting). *Sated* (fully satisfied, maybe too much) doesn’t make sense in this context.

- 2. Ranting.** “Inveighing” (expressing disapproval; railing against) would fit, but *inveigling* (winning over by flattery) is a trap. The clues are that this is an action done “against” China’s record and “already inclined to invective (insulting or harsh language).” *Speculating* is too neutral, and *lauding* (praising) is too positive. *Needling* (teasing or provoking) can be negative, but would be done to someone or to some group, not something that could be done “against China’s record.”

- 3. Vassals.** The queen’s brothers became something to her spouse, the king. This gave “them the protection of King Magnus Eriksson in exchange for their homage (publicly expressed respect) and fealty (loyalty)”. By definition, a *vassal* is a person loyal or in service to a feudal lord. *Proteges*, *vanguards*, *precursors*, and *partisans* are all roles that people could serve on a king’s behalf, but the sentence does not provide clues that indicate any of these meanings.

- 4. Degeneration.** Postman’s quote talks about a society in which no one wants to read books anymore. This suggests an intellectual weakening or decline (these are

good suggestions for filling in the blank). *Degeneration* is a good match; its primary definition is “a decline.” *Pondering* (thoughtful consideration) and *cerebration* (thinking about something) are near-synonyms that are too positively intellectual, and thus the opposite of what the blank requires. *Mulishness* (unreasonable stubbornness) and *banishment* (condemnation to exile) are unrelated to the clues in the sentence.

5. Benefits. The pivot here is “but,” and the clue is that the doctor “failed to discuss any way of obviating (anticipating and preventing) damage.” Thus, the doctor went into great detail about only “supposed” good things about the treatment, and only *benefits* works. *Diagnosis* (determination of disease) and *prognosis* (forecast of medical outcome, chances of recovery) both relate to the medical theme, but neither fits in the blank. *Mien* (appearance, bearing) is unrelated.

6. Adroit, looming. His handling of the scandal was “successful” or “skillful,” so *adroit* (skilled, adept) fits best. Neither a *penitent* (sorry for sin) nor *heterogeneous* (mixed; composed of differing parts) “handling of the...scandal” is supported by clues in the sentence. The scandal seemed poised to ruin things—that is, it hadn’t done so already. What makes the most sense here is that the scandal itself hadn’t quite broken yet—it was only *looming* (taking shape as an impending event). Someone might be *fretful* (worried) over a scandal, but *fretful* doesn’t make sense as a description of the scandal itself. There are no indications in the sentence that the scandal was *ecumenical* (worldwide in scope).

7. Revolting, bolstered. One good clue to the first blank is the word “loyalist.” Those fighting the loyalists would likely be the rebels. You don’t have any

indication that the forces were *fascistic* (totalitarian, led by dictator). *Outclassed* (surpassed in quality) is irrelevant here, so *revolting* fits best. Don't be thrown off by the dual meaning of *revolting*—certainly *revolting* can mean disgusting, but it can also mean engaging in a revolt, such as against a government. The loyalist battalion was helped or strengthened by “its allies' reinforcements,” so only *bolstered* (supported) makes sense. *Obviated* (anticipated and made unnecessary) isn't indicated by any clue in the sentence. *Sapped* (weakened, especially of energy) conflicts with the idea that allies would help the loyalists.

8. Inveterate. The “while” and the hypothetical “if what he said were true” in the first part of the sentence indicate that he is actually a liar. This is based on his long track record, so a good fill-in might be “an established” liar. *Libelous* is a trap answer—libel is lying in print for the purpose of damaging someone's reputation. *Libelous* liar would actually be redundant—and, of course, you have no indication that the lying was done in print. *Nullified* (invalidated, voided), *unverified* (unconfirmed), and *forfeited* (lost as a result of crime or fault) all don't quite work as a description of a liar; to the extent that they do, they cast doubt on his ability to lie, a doubt this sentence doesn't support. *Inveterate* (long-established and unlikely to change) is the correct answer.

9. Ulterior. The pivot here is “whether...or”—you are looking for a characterization of “motives” that would make them negative, namely the opposite of “primarily to shield himself and others in the restaurant from harm.” If he truly was acting in defense of himself and others, he would likely get a lighter sentence than if he had *ulterior*, or hidden, (generally selfish) motives. *Resolute* (determined; steady) is unrelated. *Pathological* (related or due to physical or mental disease; compulsive) and *lucrative* (producing large profit) introduce themes of illness and money,

respectively, that are not indicated by any clues in the sentence. *Violent* is a theme trap.

10. Feebleness. You know that Burma was being mismanaged, so you want something bad (and appropriate to describe an economy). The blank and “isolation” are contrasted with “power and influence.” Just as isolation and influence are (somewhat) opposite ideas, you can expect the blank to oppose power: something like “not powerful” or “not strong.” *Feebleness* (weakness) is a good match. *Monotony* (lack of variety, tedious repetition) is negative, but no clues in the sentence indicate this meaning. *Opulence* (wealth, abundance) is opposite of the desired meaning. Both *nonchalance* (casual lack of concern) and *recriminations* (counteraccusations) don’t make sense following “economic.”

11. Autonomy. What would an authoritarian government threaten with roadblocks and curfews? Most likely, something like “independence.” *Autonomy* is more or less a synonym of independence. Though citizens might need to be belligerent to stage a coup, the blank describes what the citizens would lose that would **initially** cause people to just begin to utter “whispers” of a “possible” coup. *Belligerence* (aggressively hostile attitude) doesn’t work in this context. Likewise, *insolence* (rude and disrespectful behavior) does not work in the blank. The remaining choices, *epitome* (a perfect example of something) and *recidivism* (tendency to relapse to previous behavior, often criminal), are not indicated by clues in the sentence.

12. Bombast. “Hubristic” means arrogant—a “hubristic” person would never decline an opportunity for bragging, or *bombast*. *Augmentation* (the action of making or becoming greater in size or amount) is not quite right; greater “size or amount”

is not exactly indicated by the “hubristic” clue. *Hedonism* (the devotion to sensual pleasures and their pursuit) and *jubilation* (the state of rejoicing) are off-topic. Finally, while an arrogant person might desire *profit*, so might anyone else. The sentence would need to include a clue more specifically about money for *profit* to be the right answer.

13. Humbled, pretension. The clue is that the entrepreneur is now “the possessor of a broken spirit and timid demeanor”—thus, he must have been the opposite of that before the change. A good fill-in for the second blank might be “confidence.” The accompanying adjective “overweening” means conceited, or just excessive, so the entrepreneur was previously known for his “confidence, to an extreme degree,” so look for a negative choice for the blank. *Pretension* fits best; *liberality* (giving or spending freely; open-mindedness) is positive and not overweening, and *wealth* adds an idea that is not indicated in the sentence. Moving on to the first blank—a good fill-in might be “brought down.” The only answer that is a match is *humbled*. *Exalted* (held in high regard; in a state of extreme happiness) is the opposite of what the blank requires, and *unaffected* is too neutral to explain the change in how the entrepreneur is seen by others.

14. Salutary, unwholesome. Start with the second blank. Most people would not indulge in a “proclivity” (inclination or predisposition) toward dishes that are *odious* (extremely unpleasant) or *sodden* (soaked); the correct word must be *unwholesome* (not conducive to health), which also agrees with the clue “fattening.” The first word should contrast with this because of the pivot “though.” The best bet is *salutary* (conducive to health). *Truculent* (ferocious, cruel, or savage) and *frugal* (economical in the spending of money or resources) do not work.

15. Prompted, codify. A discovery that pregnancy complications are being caused and can be avoided would *prompt* action—specifically, *codifying*, or “systematizing,” the recommendations. For the first blank, *instigated* (urged, goaded, provoked, or incited) has a somewhat negative spin, and *instigating* is generally something that people do; it is odd to say that a “discovery” instigated a group of people to do something. *Lulled* (deceptively caused to feel safe) is the opposite of what the discovery of the allergen/complications link would do to the Department of Health. For the second blank, *intuit* (understand or solve by instinct) and *officiate* (act as an official in charge) are not right, though the latter represents a bit of a theme trap related to a government agency.

16. Toadies, critical. The Bieber Appreciation Society clearly exists to appreciate all things Bieber, but it seems that the society has become “fearful” of being seen in a certain way. What way? Keep reading—they “took pains” to include a certain kind of voice. *Tantamount* (equivalent) doesn't make sense in the second blank, and *conciliatory* would be positive towards Bieber (so why would the Bieber Appreciation Society have trouble finding such voices?). Only *critical*, which in this context means “involving careful evaluation and judgment,” works. If the societies is struggling to include *critical* voices, it seems that they fear being seen as not having balanced views—that is, they fear being seen as *toadies*; making them nothing but a group of servile flatterers. There is very little danger of an appreciation society (or fan club, booster organization, or any similar group) being seen as *detractors* of their namesake. *Enthusiasts* and “Appreciation” agree in degree of positivity, so that's not something the group would fear, either.

17. Recidivism, ramifications. The people in question are already criminals, so the

issue isn't one of bringing down crime or violence in general, but of repeat offenses, that is, *recidivism*. What meeting victims must convince the criminals of is that their actions have consequences—or *ramifications*.

18. Habiliments, transcendent, iridescent. The first blank is referring to something made of cloth, which is contrasted with the garments of Buddhist monks. You are looking for something that means garments or clothes; *habiliments* (clothes associated with a particular profession or occasion) is the only choice that fits. The second blank is looking for a description of a spiritual reality beyond this one; only *transcendent* (above and beyond the limits of material existence) fits. *Mundane* (earthly, rather than heavenly or spiritual) agrees rather than contrasts with “matters of this world.” *Dogmatic* (inclined to present opinion as unassailable truth) is unrelated. The third blank is looking for a contrast with the “plain black modest cloth” outfits of the first sentence segment; *iridescent* (colorful, lustrous, or brilliant) is the only option that directly contrasts. *Drab* actually agrees with “plain black modest cloth.” *Flowing* is not necessarily the opposite of garments “of plain black modest cloth,” which may or may not be *flowing*.

19. Suffered, culpability, ledger. The first blank is a good place to start. Obviously, no one *appreciates* abuse. *Exploited* is trickier, but the text never implies that the abuse is being used to exploit the system. The best choice is *suffered*. For the second blank, you only need to know what a jury does: they apportion blame, which is a synonym of *culpability*. Finally, the third blank only makes sense with *ledger* (you can't balance *imprisonment* or a *verdict*).

20. Disdain, discipline, divesting. The semicolon in this sentence is a clue that the two parts of the sentence agree—the first part should mirror the meaning that “the

brightest students...pursuing teaching" would be a good thing. For the first and second blanks, universities should therefore not "put down" education as an academic "area" or "pursuit." Don't fall for trap answers; *proscribe* (ban) and *circumvent* (avoid via circuitous means) add extra meaning to the idea of "put down." Only *disdain* fits the first blank. *Discipline* is the closest match for the second blank (*tome* means "book, especially a large, academic book"). The third blank needs something that explains the "disservice" done to future students, namely, something like "depriving" them of the chance to learn from the best. The best choice is the synonym *divesting*; don't fall for the traps of *denigrating* (defaming; belittling) and *degenerating* (deteriorating; declining). Both trap choices work with the theme, but don't fit into the blank.

Solutions: 20 Medium Questions

1. Patois. Since the negotiators find O'Neill "incomprehensible," there must be something in his speech, not the tone or content of that speech, that is confusing them. *Patois* is a regional dialect, in contrast to the official language spoken by the negotiators (Queen's English). The Royal visitors would not find any of the other characteristics—*fortitude* (courage, resilience), *equanimity* (composure, mental calmness), *diffidence* (hesitance or resistance to speak), *consternation* (amazement or dismay that leads to confusion)—"incomprehensible," nor do any of these relate to the clue about speech.

2. Disportments. Fox hunting and cricket are not professional activities for the upper class (the clue is "amusements"); they are hobbies, amusements, or diversions, that is, *disportments*. *Vocations* and *professions* both contradict the idea of

these activities as “amusements.” Fox hunting and cricket are not examples of *canards*, which are unfounded rumors or stories, so that choice does not fit. *Stereotypes* is a trap, since stereotypes of the upper class might have them constantly engaging in such *disportments*.

3. Pith. A “probing questioner” is looking for the central point of a matter. That it is an “intellectual matter” suggests a word other than *emotions* for the blank, as does that choice’s failure to relate to the “probing questioner” clue. *Periphery* is the opposite of central. *Examination* doesn’t fit at all. *Academics* is a theme trap. The only answer that means “core or central point” is *pith*.

4. Wheedling, unremitting. What would seem to be unbecoming of political visionaries is to attempt to convince someone (rather than, say, commanding or dictating terms), especially in a flattering way. That’s exactly what *wheedling* means. *Freewheeling* (acting without concern for rules or consequences) is not indicated by any clues in the sentence, and *verdant* (green, covered in vegetation) is totally unrelated to diplomacy. You have no indication that the aggression undertaken was *superfluous* (unnecessary); if so, why would they undertake it? A “policy of *supine* (passive; apathetic) aggression” would be contradictory. Rather, it was persistent or relentless (*unremitting*).

5. Frisson, precipitating. The protesters are getting what they want: the queen is suddenly abdicating (giving up) the throne. “Thrill” or “excitement” may work well for the first blank, and *frisson* fits. *Murmur*, while possible, doesn’t capture the sense of excitement one would expect. A *panegyric* (formal speech or composition in praise of someone or something) is not something that would “run through the crowd,” certainly not in praise of the very queen the crowd wishes to depose. For

the second blank, one might expect a period of disorder to begin following a political upheaval; *precipitating* is the only possibility. *Marring* (damaging, disfiguring) and *diluting* (making weaker by adding other elements to it) aren't really things that could be done to "a period" of time.

6. Truculence. The blank is referring to something that makes the Prussians feared, and something that has led to internal fighting. *Truculence*—aggression or belligerence—is the best fit here. Neither *ennui* (listlessness arising from boredom) nor *covetousness* (envious desire to possess something) are indicated by any clues in the sentence, and neither would really inspire fear. *Extravagance* and *opulence* (both mean lavishness aren't especially threatening).

7. Virtuoso, inept. Since Joseph is a perfectionist, he probably expected to become "perfect," or at least "good," and was disappointed when he remained something like "unskilled" or "bad." *Virtuoso* (highly skilled, especially in music or art) and *inept* match the fill-ins well. Beware of choosing answers by comparing the options for each blank. Someone who is inept, particularly a writer who is inept, could be called a *hack* (a dull, unoriginal writer), but this is the opposite of what is called for in the first blank. In turn, *hack* might present a theme trap to someone mistakenly thinking of the noun definition of *novel* (book) in the second blank. For the second blank, all the options are adjectives, and *novel* (new) and *inane* (silly) don't work as contrasts to "perfectionist."

8. Credulity, beset. For the first blank, you are looking for a trait that is unhelpful in dealing with "liars and fabulists" (fabulists are just very creative liars). Duplicity and ingenuity would be actively helpful, so the answer must be *credulity* (a

tendency to believe people too easily). For the second blank, you are looking for a participle describing “someone,” that is, you can read it as “someone (who is) *forsaken/brooked/beset* by liars and fabulists.” It wouldn’t be that bad to be *forsaken* (abandoned) by liars—at least they would leave you alone. *Brooked* (tolerated) by liars doesn’t make as much sense; it is the liars that would need to be tolerated by others. But someone who is *beset* (surrounded) by liars would have a problem, and would not be well served by *credulity*.

9. Culling. The discussion is about doing something to “some members of a species...to prevent the devastating effects of overpopulation.” Something like “removing” or “getting rid of” would work in the blank. *Protecting* and *reintroducing* don’t make sense; they are theme traps. *Depleting* can apply to a resource, but not to individuals. *Murdering* and *culling* are both types of killing, but *culling* is the better option since it is a technical term for killing individual members to avoid overpopulation. (Bonus: if you understand this sentence, you’ve got a handle on one of the key debates among environmentalists.)

10. Raconteur, genial. The sentence indicates that she was “legendary for humorous stories” from a certain set of life experiences. A *raconteur* is someone who tells amusing stories, but she wouldn’t be “known to all her friends” as a *sage* (wise or learned person) or a *prevaricator* (someone who tells false stories) just based on that clue. In the last part of her sentence, “belied” indicates that “her private behavior” is at odds with her public reputation, but the blank refers to her image, so it agrees with the first blank. Someone who tells amusing stories would be considered *genial* (friendly and cheerful), but not *belligerent* (hostile and aggressive) or *pedantic* (overly concerned with small details or rules).

11. Evinced, repartee. The opinion about her is clearly negative, so her utterances don't *deride* (ridicule) negative utterances or *elude* (avoid) them, but rather demonstrate (*evince*) them. One isn't likely to fear being bested by *doggerel* (triviality) or—usually—*subtlety* (if you're bested by *subtlety*, you're likely not the sort of person who notices), but clever, quick, and witty replies (*repartee*) are threatening indeed!

12. Mettlesome, penchant. You are looking for another word for "courageous," but one that doesn't carry negative connotations (the "indeed" in front of the blank indicates that the spin will be the same as the spin of "virtue"). *Mettlesome* means spirited or courageous, but *impetuous* (impulsive) and *heady* (intoxicating; exhilarating) do not match the fill-in. But the cartoon mouse seemingly engages in excessive violence, so it has a tendency toward, or a *penchant* for, violence, not a *kinship* (blood relationship) or *largess* (generosity) for violence.

13. Sleight of hand, ostensible. The ambassador is "double-dealing" (duplicitous) and "backpedaling" (retreating from a position). A good fit in the first blank would be something like "deceitfulness," so *sleight of hand* (skillful deception) works. There is no indication that the ambassador had political *plutocracy* (government by the wealthy) or political *bugaboo* (something causing fear). The Australian counterpart is straightforward, and compares favorably with the ambassador mentioned first, so expect a positive adjective that can describe "straightforwardness" for the second blank. *Occlusive* (tending to close off) would conflict with being straightforward, and *intransigent* (uncompromising, obstinate) is too negative. Only *ostensible* (supposedly true, but not necessarily true) is neither too negative nor at odds with any clue, and works in a sentence about how politicians "looked," not necessarily about how they really were.

14. Recalcitrant, degradation. The puzzle sounds quite complicated—delivering an antisense strand to the right place at just the right moment. Only *recalcitrant* (stubborn) is appropriate to describe a complicated puzzle; *pedestrian* (commonplace, uninspired) conflicts with the clue and *monolithic* (inflexible, unchanging) is not indicated by any clue. The strand must be strong enough to resist rapid (something), “allowing it time to accomplish its task.” The clue is that the strand needs time to work, so it needs to resist something like “not being able to work.” *Dessication* (drying out) is probably bad, but there is no indication in the sentence that drying out would prevent the strand from working, and *compunction* (uneasiness due to guilt) doesn’t apply to strands. However, *degradation* (deterioration; breakdown) is something the strand would have to resist in order to work on the virus.

15. Scintilla, conflagration. The clue “only” indicates that you are looking for something that means “small amount” in the first blank. *Surfeit* (excessive amount) is an antonym, but *scintilla* (minute quantity, trace, or bit) is a perfect fit. *Pallet*, which means either “straw mattress” or “platform for storage, stacking, and moving of goods” (such as those often lifted by forklifts), doesn’t follow the “only” clue, so beware of the possible straw/dry shrub theme trap. A *havoc* is destructive, but has nothing to do with fire (which is what “spark” would lead you to expect). An *incendiary* does, but it is not quite appropriate in this spot—an *incendiary* is more of a fire-starter, like dynamite. A *conflagration* is specifically a destructive fire.

16. Rankled, pernicious, latency. The war clearly didn’t weaken (*enervate*) Albanians, since it encourages them to strive for independence. And while some features of the war might have *debased* them, the prospect of division of their lands didn’t do this. However, it might have angered, vexed, or caused bitterness for them, that is, *rankled* them. The “prospect of a division of their lands” would not be a good thing

for the Albanians, so expect a negative word in the second blank. Also, the sentence indicates that “a successful bid for independence” happened a few decades later. *Pernicious* (greatly destructive, deadly, injurious, or harmful) works well, but *evanescent* (fleeting; tending to vanish like vapor) and *transient* (quickly coming into and passing out of existence; transitory) aren’t negative enough and both have short-term meanings that conflict with the long time frame indicated by the clue. The Albanian’s nationalism surged out—it wasn’t already clear (*lucid*), and whether it was *insular* before or after doesn’t seem to make much of a difference; but if it emerged out of *latency*, that would explain why it suddenly became a force that could lead to independence.

17. Efficient, progress, iniquitous. There is a difference between modern farming practices and traditional agriculture. “She nonetheless argues that this difference represents no real” *progress*, the only choice for the second blank that makes sense. *Disincentive* means “deterrent” and *countermand* as a noun means “order that revokes a previous order.” *Progress* in turn provides an additional clue for the first blank: she is arguing that the difference is not really progress, even though modern farming is more (something) than traditional farming, so the blank must be something positive like “advanced.” While more advanced practices could be expensive, more expensive practices would not be thought of as progress, so *expensive* doesn’t fit in this context. *Polluting* is negative, so *efficient* must be the answer in blank (i). The last blank is referring to something bad about the social hierarchy and how it treats farmers. *Stratified* describes the hierarchy, but doesn’t say anything negative about it (aside from the fact that it is a hierarchy!). Since *halcyon* (calm, peaceful, or tranquil) is positive, *iniquitous* or unjust is the only fit.

18. Derivation, notorious, opacity. The first sentence links the word *assassin* with

"hashish," so the first blank is addressing the *derivation* of the term. It says nothing about its *introduction*, since you are only told where the word originates, not how it was introduced. *Circumlocution* (roundabout or evasive speech; use of more words than necessary) represents a theme trap. Since the derivation is known, it follows that it isn't *enigmatic*; but it is *notorious* given the shadiness involved in the derivation. Nothing in the sentence indicates that the derivation is *unheralded* (unannounced, unsung). Something about the sect presents a mystery, and because the sentence discusses how it "dates to before the First Crusade in the 11th century," you can expect a word that means something like "origin" (*provenance* is a synonym). The *legend* of the sect must not be much of a mystery, given that it is summarized in this sentence. The sentence indicates nothing about the *bane* (curse; affliction) of the sect being a mystery, or even whether such a problem existed for the sect.

19. Plumbed, static, dearth. The "growing gap between rich and poor" and the second "while" indicate a contrast in how much meat is consumed by different groups. The "wealthy few were eating more meat than ever," so the masses must have suffered from a "lack," or *dearth*, of foodstuffs. *Glut* (excessive supply) is the opposite, and *deceleration* (slowing down) could happen to the production/harvest of foodstuffs, but not to foodstuffs themselves.

The second blank is a bit trickier: the truth is that the rich are eating more meat and the poor less, but the statistics, on their face, don't make that clear. Thus, the statistics indicate that the amount of meat eaten "remained the same," or was *static*. *Plastic* (artificial; flexible) has some definitions that are unrelated and others that are somewhat opposite the fill-in. *Demographic* (related to structure of a population) is a theme trap.

Finally, consider the surprising “growing gap” and the initial clue that “statistics... need to be _____ for their *real* meaning” (emphasis added). Only *plumbed*, or “examined closely,” works in the first blank.

20. Clangor, subdued, an undulating. Cage's early music is “surprisingly” (something), in contrast to something “electronically produced.” Music is the main clue that the first blank is something like “music” or “sound.” *Clangor* (loud racket or sustained noise) is a type of noise that could be electronically produced, and contrasts nicely with the later clues about the earlier works having “melody” and “softness.” *Timbre* (unique combination of qualities distinguishing a sound from others) is a quality of a sound, not a sound itself; this is a theme trap. *Murmur* (soft, indistinct sound) typically refers to human-generated sound, not “electronically produced,” and also fails to contrast with “softness” as it should. *Clangor* serves as additional clue for the second blank: Cage's early music is surprisingly “not clangorous” or “soft.” *Subdued* (quiet, soft) works perfectly, while *deleterious* (harmful; unhealthy) and *auspicious* (promising or propitious) are unrelated to the sentence. If “‘Music for Marcel Duchamp’...never rises above” some level of volume, only *undulating* (rising or falling in pitch, volume, or cadence) works in the last blank. *Noisome* (noxious, harmful, or dangerous) and *erstwhile* (former, in the past, previous) are unrelated to the sentence. Don't be distracted by the superficial similarity between *noisome* and “noise.”

Solutions: 20 Hard Questions

1. Mendicant. The clues are that he “wandered” and was “lowly” and lived by a “reliance on alms,” which is a reliance on charity, as did the “other members of his religious order.” A *mendicant* is sometimes just a “beggar,” but it can have a

specifically religious connotation. The other choices all introduce meanings that the rest of the sentence doesn't suggest. Both *abettor* (a person who supports an action, typically wrongdoing) and *malefactor* (evildoer) introduce the unsupported idea that he was bad. *Rube* (unsophisticated or naive person) and *anachronism* (person or object out of its proper time) do not follow from the clues either.

2. Crotchet. These answer choices are killer nouns! The fill-in shouldn't be too hard: something like "peeve" or "concern." A *crotchet* is a perverse or unfounded belief. The others are all nonsensical: an *awl* is a hole-punching tool, an *apogee* is a climax or high point, a *nadir* is a low point, and an *opus* is a musical or literary composition.

3. Propinquity. You are told that, for Americans, familiarity follows from close proximity. The blank should be a synonym for proximity, and *propinquity* is. The other answer choices all deal with comfort or friendliness, and thus are theme traps drawing on associations with "neighborly": *commodiousness* (spaciousness), *amiability* (friendliness), *reciprocity* (relationship with mutual exchange of favors or benefits), and *cordiality* (amity).

4. Traipse. The answer choices are all difficult; all of them mean "walk" or "travel" in some way, so nuance is key. Both *bop* (move or travel energetically) and *sidle* (walk timidly) carry strange spin. *Circumambulate* means "walk all the way around," which would avoid the city, the explosions, and, presumably, the danger. *Circumambulate* also conflicts with "through." *Reconnoiter* (make a military observation of a place) carries an unhelpful militaristic spin. *Traipse* (walk casually or needlessly) agrees with the clue "unnecessarily" and properly contrasts with "conduct only essential errands."

5. Nugatory, mercurial. The “while” in front of the first blank suggests that the items given by the aristocrat are valuable *only* as reminders: that is, they have no real value in themselves. *Nugatory* means “of no value,” while *sumptuous* (very costly, luxurious, or lavish) implies real value, and also conflicts with the “tokens” clue. *Sardonic* (scornfully or derisively mocking) is unrelated. The “power of the Crown continued to be held in esteem”—you are looking not just for political conditions that are bad or dangerous, but conditions that are changeable. *Mercurial* means “frequently changeable or changing.” *Jocund* (cheerful, merry) political times are not indicated by any clues. *Magisterial* (having great authority; dictatorial) is a theme trap, and doesn’t follow the pivot “even.” The Crown “still...continued to be held in some esteem” even in political times when the esteem attributed to the Crown must have decreased.

6. Crescendo, woebegone, haggard. The shelling is building up to something like a “peak,” or *crescendo* (climax; loudest point). *Pique* (passing feeling of irritation at a perceived slight) sounds the same as “peak,” but is unrelated to the shelling. *Euphony* (pleasing sound) is positive, a meaning not indicated by this sentence. The pieces of artillery seem like they are “sad,” since that would be an apt response to a pathetic sight. Only *woebegone*—extremely sad or full of woe—fits; *sidereal* (relating to the stars or constellations) and *erroneous* (wrong) are unrelated. Their targets aren’t likely to be *effulgent* (radiant, brilliantly shining, or splendid) or *ethereal* (light, airy; heavenly, celestial) since neither of these is “pathetic.” The targets are most likely *haggard*—worn out.

7. Laxity, belied, eminence. The predecessor had some quality that allowed “several stray dioceses” to break away. *Laxity* (looseness; leniency) is the only choice that

works; *diligence* (perseverance; attentiveness) is the opposite of what is needed. *Epaulet* (shoulder ornament, typically worn on military uniforms) would only make sense—if at all—in an extremely metaphorical sense. The third blank refers to the (something) of the bishop's position. There is no indication of *tenuousness* (uncertainty) or *audacity* (recklessness, daring), but *eminence* (high rank, station, or status) would apply to a leader's position. You can now turn to the second blank: you don't expect someone with a position of *eminence* to be “modest and open,” so his openness seems to misrepresent (*belie*) that *eminence*. *Construed* (deduced; explained) and *derided* (mocked, ridiculed) don't work.

8. Incongruity, proscribe. For the first blank, “with” is important: *absurdity* (ridiculousness) and *imperilment* (endangerment) are not things that would happen “with the Pythagoreans’ faith,” but surds do seem to have an *incongruity* (lack of agreement) with their faith in “harmonious ratios of whole numbers.” For the second blank, the seriousness of the problem would seem to suggest that the Pythagoreans wouldn't want to *condone* (accept, allow) the spreading of this information; they might want to *palliate* (alleviate, diminish) the impact of the information, but forbidding, or *proscribing*, any mention of it outright fits better.

9. Cognoscenti, heteromorphic. People such as Koolhaas “recognized...and encouraged” Hadid's talents, which sounds like the work of a mentor. For the first blank, look for “someone in the know,” or *cognoscenti* (people well informed about a subject). *Fledglings* (young, immature, or inexperienced people) and *neophytes* (beginners) are the opposite. Hadid's style mixes at least two diverse inspirations, so you would not expect it to be replaceable by something else (*fungible*) or easily changeable (*malleable*), but simply to exhibit a plurality of forms: *heteromorphic*.

10. Sycophantic, animadversions, condign. Followers are rarely *skeptical* and you have no reason to think they were particularly *sordid* (morally degraded, base, or vile), since you don't know what sorts of activities Crowley engaged in, short of making "wildly fantastic claims." But followers, especially those of clearly eccentric figures, do tend to be *sycophantic* (fawning, obsequious, or servile). The press is saying something bad about him, not casting *disadvantages* or *gauntlets* (open challenges) on him, so *animadversions* (strong criticisms) fits best. The criticism seems excessive or undeserved in light of his "relative harmlessness," so the criticism was hardly *condign* (appropriate, deserved). Neither *glib* (fluent to the point of insincerity) nor *peevish* (discontented; ill-tempered) works in this context.

11. Flagitious, antediluvian, allegories. The first blank gives you a "stark contrast" with the Greek representation of these times as a Golden Age, so it should be something bad, even starkly bad. *Dubious* (warranting uncertainty or doubt) doesn't necessarily mean bad, and *rustic* (rural; lacking refinement) isn't anywhere near as negative as *flagitious*, which means "marked by vice." The ancient Greek myths are about the "distant" or "remote" past. *Antediluvian* is the correct fit (don't be misled into thinking of *antediluvian* as a trap—it does literally mean "before the flood," and thus doesn't apply to the Greek myths, but it also means "extremely ancient," which is what you're looking for). The stories about the past—in the third blank—would be *equivocations* if each of them contained a mixed message; but instead it looks like the mix comes only if you are comparing Biblical with Greek stories. *Allegories*, or stories with a moral or political meaning, are the right contrast for "faithful attempts at reconstruction" and correctly match "expressing...fears and hopes." *Platitudes* (dull, banal, trite statements or remarks) introduces a connotation of banality not indicated by the text.

12. Costiveness, didactic, risible. *Convalescence* (a period of recovery from illness; recuperation) might seem reasonable, but it is a theme trap. *Convalescence* would follow an illness, not cause it. The topic is medieval medicine, with an emphasis on diet, so the correct choice is *costiveness*, which is a fancy way of describing constipation. *Bathos* (anticlimax) does not fit. The pamphlets are seemingly designed to tell people what to eat; they are educational, or *didactic*. There is no indication that the pamphlets are *maleficent* (malicious; intending or producing harm or evil) or *tenable* (able to be maintained; credible). The dietary regimens might have been *tenable*, but there is no indication that the pamphlets were, and it's worth checking the second blank against the third blank and sentence ending. Since dietary and health views are quite different today from those held by medieval doctors, "modern sensibilities" are likely to find their advice funny, or *risible*. Both *disingenuous* (insincere; hypocritical) and *burgeoning* (growing rapidly; flourishing) add meaning that isn't supported by any clues in the sentence.

13. Georgic, penury, sartorial. His attire has something to do with "rural life"; *georgic* means "agricultural or related to rural life." *Natty* means sharp or stylish and is the opposite of what is required in the first blank; Francis was uncertain about whether he could impress a "nattily-dressed" person, or a person dressed in *natty* clothes. When *exclusive* is used to describe a commodity, it means "not obtainable elsewhere," and is generally used in a positive sense. Out of concern, Francis "reduced himself...through new wardrobe acquisitions." It sounds like Francis spent a lot of money on clothes—spending a lot of money could reduce someone—especially someone with *georgic* means—to near poverty (*penury*). *Malaise* (vague, general sense of unease or mental discomfort) and *lethargy* (state of sluggishness, inactivity, laziness, or indifference) are near-synonyms, and neither follows from the clues. The executive to whom he devoted his attentions, on the other hand, was

concealing “her financial ruin.” But how did she ruin herself? Given that she was nattily-dressed, she probably also spent her money on clothes. *Sartorial* means “relating to clothes or style,” so fits the third blank perfectly. *Bombastic* (pompous, pretentious) and *runic* (mysterious) both add meaning that isn’t indicated by any clues.

14. A malingerer, trepidatious, sagacity. The first blank options all involve some sort of unreliability, but the clues is that Garth’s behavior was “improbably” well-received by his boss, who is a hypochondriac. Since stealing (*embezzler* or *pilferer*) has nothing to do with health, *malingerer* (someone who fakes illness) fits best.

The second blank asks for something similar to “hypochondriac.” The boss may be *casuistic* (practicing clever but unsound reasoning) or *imposing* (grand and impressive in appearance), but it’s only his *trepidatious*, or “in a state of fear that something may happen,” character that ties well with hypochondria. The last blank is a word similar to “foresight”; only *sagacity* fits. *Insipidity* (boringness; dullness) and *temerity* (excessive confidence; audacity) don’t agree with “foresight.”

15. Lionized, incorrigible, peccadilloes. The leader’s “moral shortcomings” are overlooked or ignored. This isn’t because he was *impugned* (disputed; called into question), but quite the opposite: he has been *lionized* (given public attention and approval). *Narrativized* (presented in a story) is too neutral; it doesn’t address the second part of the sentence. His misogyny, if it is a “considerable moral shortcoming,” can’t be *waggish* (humorous; mischevious) or *risqué* (indecent; sexually suggestive). Only *incorrigible* (inveterate; irredeemable) fits. Finally, his moral failures are “seen as no more than” small or insignificant sins, or *peccadilloes*, not as

such larger failures as *malefactions* (crimes) or *trespasses* (sins).

16. Fairness, catharsis, denouement. There is a contrast between “exploitation and iniquity” and what the film is actually concerned with: the first blank must be the opposite of exploitation or iniquity, that is, *fairness*. *Slavery* and *injustice* are theme traps in agreement with “exploitation and iniquity”; both don’t fit considering the pivots “though” and “nevertheless.” The film showcases “the elimination of all the protagonist’s abusers,” which grants the audience something like “closure.” The audience hasn’t been waiting for *inconclusiveness*. Maybe it has been waiting for *relief*, but *catharsis* is a better fit, since it refers specifically to purging of built-up emotions. Finally, the plot is building up to a resolution, or *denouement*. A *platitudo* (trite saying) might leave “much to be desired,” but wouldn’t provide a “satisfying upheaval.” There is no indication that the conclusion of the film was an *embellishment* (an untrue detail added to a story to make it more interesting).

17. Eclecticism, a veneer. You are looking for something that could make a work look less “insubstantial” and that has to do with “breadth”; *insularity* (the narrow point of view resulting from life in a closed, isolated community) and *stringency* (tightness or strictness) imply the opposite of breadth, but *eclecticism* (drawing on a wide variety of sources) fits. *Eclecticism* doesn’t give a work a little bit (*iota*) or a mixture (*medley*) of profundity, which means “deep insight”; *eclecticism* gives a work a surface appearance (*veneer*) of profundity.

18. Emend, peremptory. For the first blank, you are looking for something the writer could do to his lengthy tomes that would appease editors; something like “edit,” “redact,” or “change” seems to fit, and *emend* is a synonymous verb that often has a text as its object (as it does here). He avoids editorial complaints through

threats, which are certainly not delicious (*toothsome*) and don't seem to be powerless (*impuissant*)—rather, they prevent complaints from publishers in advance; *peremptory* fits this role.

19. Proximate, protract, proliferation. The first blank asks for a contrast with “distant future”; *remote* is a synonym trap, and *proximate* fits. *Atavistic* (manifesting or reverting to ancestral characteristics) events don't make sense in context. Future discounting involves placing more of a premium on present than on future events, and pleasures are desirable while detriments are not. It follows that subjects will tend to want to promote or prolong (*protract*) present pleasures, not *avert* (avoid by turning away or aside) or *rescind* (revoke) them. This is the common tendency “even at the expense of” a rapid increase in or a large number of (*proliferation*) “future detriments.” Neither *malady* (illness) nor *buttressing* (reinforcing) fits in this context.

20. Warrant, license. It is clear from “claims” and the generally derisive tone of the sentence that the author does not think it is possible to deduce matters of fact from logic (that would be pretty silly, come to think about it). Thus, the “she” who is the subject of the text has little *warrant* (justification) for doing this, and just as little *warrant* for using logic to inappropriately derive other “*truths*.” A *fallacy* is a “mistaken belief, especially one based on unsound argument”—she has lots of *fallacies*, not the dearth of *fallacy* indicated by “just as little.” An *epigram* is a “witticism” or “quip,” an extra meaning not indicated by any clues. *License* is similar to *warrant* and serves the same function in the second sentence. The “laws of logic” do not *occlude* (close, cover, or obstruct) or *galvanize* (spur to action) “her proclamation.”

*Chapter 3
of*

Text Completion & Sentence Equivalence

SENTENCE EQUIVALENCE

In This Chapter...

Sentence Analysis

Answer Choice Analysis

Finding Near-Synonym Pairs

When to Use Answer Choice Analysis

What If I Don't Know the Words?

Why It Is Important to Learn Words in Context

Chapter 3

SENTENCE EQUIVALENCE

Sentence Equivalence questions on the GRE are very similar to single-blank Text Completion questions, with one twist—there are six answer choices, and two of them are correct. For example:

The judge dismissed Steffen's lawsuit, ruling that since Steffen had been the first to _____ the contract, the company he was suing was no longer obligated to uphold the provisions of the original agreement.

- forswear
- transmute
- breach
- abrogate
- vituperate
- slake

Note that the answer choices are marked not with letters (as in, choices A–F), but with checkboxes. Throughout the exam (in math, too), the GRE uses circular radio buttons for questions with one correct answer and square checkboxes to indicate

questions with more than one correct answer.

To get a Sentence Equivalence question correct, you must select **both** correct answers—there is no partial credit. In the question above, the correct answer is **breach** and **abrogate**, which both mean “fail to do what is required by.”

Take a look at what Educational Testing Service (ETS) has to say about the approach for this question type before revisiting this question.

According to ETS:

Like Text Completion questions, Sentence Equivalence questions test the ability to reach a conclusion about how a passage should be completed on the basis of partial information, but to a greater extent they focus on the meaning of the completed whole. Sentence Equivalence questions consist of a single sentence with just one blank, and they ask you to find two choices that both lead to a complete, coherent sentence and that produce sentences that mean the same thing.

Success on a Sentence Equivalence question sometimes depends on hard vocabulary words in the answer choices, sometimes depends on hard vocabulary words or complex sentence construction in the sentence itself, and sometimes hinges on both of these things at once.

Although the idea of “two correct answers” is an interesting test-making twist, it doesn't actually make the questions any harder for you. In fact, it opens up the strategic tool of Answer Choice Analysis, which will be explained in this chapter.

Many of the skills you have already learned for Text Completion still apply here, such as looking for clues and pivots, and filling in your own word in the blank.

There are two main methods of attack for a Sentence Equivalence question, both of which will be reviewed in the pages that follow:

1. Sentence analysis
2. Answer choice analysis

Sentence Analysis

Like Text Completion questions, Sentence Equivalence questions ask you to fill in a blank based on the information contained in the text around it.

As with Text Completions, it is very important to remember that the sentences are not anything like sentences pulled from a newspaper, with a few words blanked out. In such a real-life case, you might not be able to fill in the missing word—what if the sentence didn't provide any context for figuring out what word should go in the blank?

On the GRE, things have to be much more concrete. In order to construct a Sentence Equivalence question that has two objectively correct answers and four objectively incorrect answers, *the test makers have to specifically construct sentences that have clues planted in them for you to find.*

The clue is always there.

There are four questions you should ask yourself for each Sentence Equivalence question:

1. What is the blank referring to? Call this the “target.” To find the target, ask which of the nouns in the sentence the blank is describing, or who is doing the action in the blank and to what.

Note: If the blank represents a verb, you might have two targets. In “The ornery critic _____ the play,” the *critic* is performing the action and the *play* is receiving the action. In such a case, think of the target as the relationship between the subject and object. Ask “What happened to the play?” or “What did the critic do to the play?”

2. What does the sentence tell you about the target? This is the “clue.” **Do not guess, assume, or use outside information.** The clue will be physically present in the sentence.
3. Does the sentence have a “pivot”? Pivots indicate whether the blank is on the same side as or the opposite side from the clue.
4. What word would you use to fill in the blank in your own words (a “fill-in”), based on the clue?

Remember the four parts: *target, clue, pivot, fill-in.*

Here's an example:

The village's water supply had been _____ by toxic industrial by-products that had seeped into groundwater.

- adumbrated
- vitiated
- abashed
- adulterated
- truncated
- abridged

The blank is about the water supply. Thus, "water supply" is the target. What do you know about it? That "toxic" substances seeped into it. There is no pivot (like "but" or "however") that sends you in the opposite direction. So you are looking for a pair that means something like "contaminated."

The answer is **adulterated** and **vitiating**. *Adulterated* means "contaminated," and *vitiating* means "spoiled, made defective, corrupted." (Of the incorrect answers, *truncated* and *abridged* are similar in meaning, and *adumbrated* and *abashed* are unrelated.)

Try one more:

Unlike the more genial researchers, who often went out together after work, the _____ Dr. Spicer believed that socializing was nothing more than a distraction, and thus made few friends at the lab.

- sedulous
- baneful
- standoffish
- partisan
- glacial
- assiduous

The blank is about Dr. Spicer. He or she is the target. The primary clue is the word “unlike,” which sets up a comparison between “the more genial X” and “the _____ Dr. Spicer.” The rules of a comparison tell you that the blank should be something that means “less genial.” Thus, you are looking for a word in the blank that means “unfriendly.”

The answer is **standoffish** and **glacial**. Both words can mean “emotionally cold and distant.” (*Glacial* can also mean slow, physically cold, or pertaining to glaciers.) *Sedulous* and *assiduous* mean hardworking or persistent. *Baneful* means harmful,

and *partisan* means biased, in favor of only one's own side or party.

Drill: Sentence Analysis

Analyze each sentence for target, clue, and pivot, then fill in the blank in your own words. (This drill is kept succinct, as a similar practice set appears in the Text Completion chapter; the skill is the same for both question types.)

1. The biography was neither encomium nor condemnation, but rather a _____ look at a life, its facts verifiable and delivered without commentary.*
2. After her friends betrayed her, she vowed never to trust anyone again, becoming a virtual _____.
3. While several months of progress had been made on the new highway plan in the early part of the year, it was now questionable whether the plan would ever re-emerge from its current state of _____, its funding held up while politicians bickered about the changing state of the economy.
4. Josh's generally lackadaisical attitude towards his work caused his boss to suspect that his "moral objection" to the task was really just a way to _____ his duties.
5. In isolation, the data may seem _____, but when the context is supplied, trends can indeed be isolated.

* In situations where "a" or "an" comes before the blank, the "a" or "an" will often be included with each answer choice rather than in the sentence itself so that some

of the answer choices can begin with vowels and some with consonants.

Answers: Sentence Analysis

1. The target is the “biography.” What you know about it is that it is neither “encomium nor condemnation.” Even without knowing the word “encomium,” you could probably figure out from the “nor” that the phrase means “neither praise nor criticism.” Thus, the biography must be neutral or in the middle. “Its facts verifiable and delivered without commentary” corroborates this. A good word to fill in the blank would be something like **an objective**, **a disinterested**, or **an unbiased**.

2. The target is the subject of the sentence (“she”). Since her friends “betrayed” her and she has “vowed never to trust” again, a good word to fill the blank would be something like **recluse** or **hermit**.

3. The target is the “highway plan.” “While” is an opposite-direction pivot, indicating that the fill-in should be on the opposite side of making progress. Indeed, you are given the clue that the project’s funding is held up (tied up or delayed). A good fill-in would be something like **gridlock**, **deadlock**, or simply **not moving**.

4. The target is both “Josh” and his “duties”—or, the relationship between Josh and the duties. The clues are that the boss “suspects” (which has a negative connotation) that Josh’s “moral objections” (the quotes in the original sentence also indicate suspicion) are motivated by something else. One more clue fills in the blank for us—the fact that Josh is “lackadaisical” (casual or lazy). A good fill-in would be **avoid** or **shirk**.

5. The target is the “data.” You know that, “with context,” trends can be found. So your blank should disagree with the notion that one can find trends in something.

A good fill-in would be **random** or **chaotic**.

Answer Choice Analysis

When Educational Testing Service introduced the Sentence Equivalence format, most people's natural response was, "So we pick a pair of synonyms, right?" ETS officials insist that the two correct answers don't have to be synonyms:

Do not simply look among the answer choices for two words that mean the same thing. This can be misleading for two reasons. First, the answer choices may contain pairs of words that mean the same thing but do not fit coherently into the sentence, and thus do not constitute a correct answer. Second, the pair of words that do constitute the correct answer may not mean exactly the same thing, since all that matters is that the resultant sentences mean the same thing.

Hmmn. When the two correct answers are inserted into the sentence, the resulting sentences mean the same thing? Sounds like those words would have to be pretty close, right?

Theoretically, the GRE could give a question like this one:

Miriam broke up with John because he was _____ .

boring

handsome

limber

unintelligent

kind

fun

Since Miriam “broke up” (your clue) with John (your target), you are looking for something bad. There are only two matches: **boring** and **unintelligent**. These two words certainly are not synonyms, although each makes sense in the sentence.

However, there is little evidence for this type of “loose construction” on the GRE. A question like the one above, in which the correct choices really aren’t synonyms, would have to have answers that fall into pretty easily distinguishable categories (e.g., “something bad”). Most of those questions would fall on the easy side.

What seems to be going on is that the GRE is being overly respectful of the English language. To quote the famous science-fiction writer Theodore Sturgeon, “There are no synonyms.” In other words, subtleties of meaning separate **any** two words you find listed in any individual entry in a thesaurus. *Deluge* and *flood* **don’t** mean the exact same thing (a *deluge* is, by definition, a **severe** flood), and the GRE wants you to recognize that the two words you pick will likely differ in terms of some similar nuance. However, unless you are trying to write some very stylish and precise prose, the difference between *deluge* and *flood* doesn’t really matter.

On the actual GRE, it is almost always the case that the two correct answers are pretty close to being synonyms. Here’s an example:

Many people at the dinner party were inordinately interested in questioning the _____ new guest, who refused to reveal his profession or even the origin of his exotic accent.

- acerbic
- mysterious
- insightful
- trenchant
- intrepid
- inscrutable

Look for clues. The blank describes the new guest. You know that this guest is very cagey about himself. You're looking for a word like *secretive* or *mysterious*.

As it turns out, **mysterious** and **inscrutable** are the correct answers. *Inscrutable* means “not able to be scrutinized” and often indicates hiding emotions. It's not exactly the same thing as *mysterious*, but there's a substantial overlap in their meanings.

You've discovered that most correct answer pairs are at least as closely related as these two. For the purposes of this book, call them “near-synonyms.”

Finding Near-Synonym Pairs

Most Sentence Equivalence questions have a built-in secret strategy: answer choice analysis. This is because most sets of answer choices are “two by two”—that is, among the six choices there are two pairs of synonyms and two “loose,” unrelated words.

Typical “two by two”:

horrible
nice
pleasant
impoverished
terrible
dying

Horrible and *terrible* are a pair. *Pleasant* and *nice* are a pair. *Impoverished* and *dying* are unrelated.

Here is a weaker variant of a “two by two”:

wicked
healthful
evil
qualified
gifted

well-practiced

Wicked and *evil* are a pair. *Gifted* and *well-practiced* are “sort of” a pair—that is, *gifted* implies an ability that comes from within, whereas *well-practiced* implies an ability that comes from, obviously, practice. However, both are different paths to the same goal (being talented or skilled). They’re a weak pair.

In any sentence, it should be pretty easy to tell whether *wicked/evil* or *gifted/well-practiced* is the more appropriate match. However, *in the case that a set of choices provides a closely related pair and a less closely related pair, the more closely related pair is more likely to be the answer.*

Occasionally, three words will seem to match up (a “triplet”). Usually, in this case, two are really synonyms, and the other is off in terms of spin or strength. For instance, in the case of *excoriate*, *admonish*, and *castigate*, the real pair is *excoriate* and *castigate*—both mean to criticize or scold very harshly, and *admonish* means to scold mildly. (Note that if all three “triplets” really were synonyms, they would necessarily all be wrong as a result, since there can only be two correct answers. However, this is unlikely.)

False triplet:

determined

talkative

hapless

unsuccessful

unlucky