Ten Words in Context

In the space provided, write the letter of the meaning closest to that of each **boldfaced** word. Use the context of the sentences to help you figure out each word’s meaning.

1 **ambiguous**
   (əm-bɪɡˈyoo-əs)
   -adjective
   - The portrait known as the “Mona Lisa” is famous for the woman’s **ambiguous** expression. Is she smiling or not?
   - Omar left an **ambiguous** message on my answering machine: “Meet me at twelve o’clock.” I couldn’t tell whether he meant noon or midnight.
     A. unclear.  B. unintentional.  C. unpleasant.

2 **dissident**
   (dɪsˈɪd-ənt)
   -noun
   - Some **dissidents** in the Catholic church favor such changes as allowing women to be priests and allowing priests to marry.
   - In a dictatorship, **dissidents** are not tolerated. People who speak out against the government may be imprisoned or even executed.
     A. a rebel.  B. a dishonest person.  C. a foolish person.

3 **embellish**
   (əm-bɛlˈɪsh)
   -verb
   - Lauren **embellished** the door of her room with postcards from her friends and photos of her cats.
   - The cover of the biology textbook was **embellished** with a pattern of colorful seashells.
     A. to hide.  B. to decorate.  C. to damage.

4 **fritter**
   (frɪtˈər)
   -verb
   - I thought my little sister would **fritter** away her entire allowance on M&M’s, but instead of wasting her money, she put it in her piggy bank.
   - Vince **fritters** away both his time and his money playing game after game in video arcades.
     A. to earn.  B. to count.  C. to waste.

5 **inadvertent**
   (ɪnˈæd-vɜrtənt)
   -adjective
   - Alexander Fleming’s discovery of penicillin was **inadvertent**. He forgot to cover a dish of bacteria, and some mold got into it. The next day, Fleming found that the mold had killed the bacteria.
   - The final draft of Nancy’s paper was shorter than the previous version, but this was **inadvertent**. She had accidentally deleted an entire page without realizing it.
     A. not required.  B. not finished.  C. not intended.

6 **inane**
   (ɪnˈænə)
   -adjective
   - The conversation at the party was **inane**, consisting mainly of foolish comments about whose clothes were the most “awesome.”
   - Television programming is often so **inane** that TV has been described as “bubble gum for the mind.”
     A. silly.  B. interesting.  C. shocking.
7 juxtapose (jük's-ta-pöz')
-verb
- Juxtapose means
  a. to cover up.
  b. to put side by side.
  c. to replace.

8 lethargy (lë-thar'jé)
-noun
- Lethargy means
  a. weariness.
  b. hopelessness.
  c. foolishness.

9 sporadic (spə-räd'ık)
-adjective
- Sporadic means
  a. steady.
  b. irregular.
  c. long.

10 subsidize (süb’sid-i泽)
-verb
- Subsidize means
  a. to pay for.
  b. to advertise.
  c. to criticize.

Matching Words with Definitions
Following are definitions of the ten words. Clearly write or print each word next to its definition. The sentences above and on the previous page will help you decide on the meaning of each word.

1. ____________ To place close together, especially in order to compare or contrast
2. ____________ A great lack of energy; inactivity due to laziness; sluggishness
3. ____________ Able to be interpreted in more than one way; not clear
4. ____________ Without sense or meaning; foolish
5. ____________ A person opposed to established ideas or beliefs, especially in politics or religion
6. ____________ To decorate; beautify by adding details
7. ____________ To support financially; provide a grant or contribution
8. ____________ To spend or waste a little at a time
9. ____________ Unintentional; accidental
10. ____________ Happening now and then; occasional

CAUTION: Do not go any further until you are sure the above answers are correct. Then you can use the definitions to help you in the following practices. Your goal is eventually to know the words well enough so that you don’t need to check the definitions at all.
Sentence Check 1

Using the answer line provided, complete each item below with the correct word from the box. Use each word once.

A. ambiguous  B. dissident  C. embellish  D. fritter  E. inadvertent
F. inane  G. juxtapose  H. lethargy  I. sporadic  J. subsidize

1. Instead of refreshing me, an afternoon nap only deepens my ___. I wake up even sleepier than I was before.

2. I get news of Darren only now and then, in ____ letters from him or his mother.

3. A research grant will ____ Belinda’s study of common fears among the elderly.

4. My recent trip to Newark was ___. I wanted to go to New York City, but I got on the wrong train.

5. Tracy has learned the hard way not to ____ away her time and affection on friends who don’t really care about her.

6. My little brother has ____(e)d his bedroom ceiling with stars arranged like several of the constellations.

7. In plays and movies, good and evil characters are often ____(e)d. This contrast makes the good ones seem even better and the bad ones seem even worse.

8. When student ___s led a protest against China’s communist leaders in 1989, some students were killed by government troops.

9. Checking a job applicant’s references, the personnel manager was puzzled by one ____ comment: “You will be lucky if you can get her to work for you.”

10. Steve Martin was poking fun at ____ ideas for products when he said, “I got a fur sink, an electric dog polisher, a gasoline-powered turtleneck sweater—and, of course, I bought some dumb stuff too.”

NOTE: Now check your answers to these items by turning to page 177. Going over the answers carefully will help you prepare for the next two practices, for which answers are not given.

Sentence Check 2

Using the answer lines provided, complete each item below with two words from the box. Use each word once.

1–2. “Spring fever” isn’t really a detrimen___ to health, but it often includes ___. People just want to sleep. Also, attention to work is interrupted off and on by a(n) ____ need to daydream.

3–4. On the cover of the news magazine, two pictures were ____(e)d: those of a young ___ and the elderly ruler he was opposing.

5–6. Local businesses ____(e)d our club’s Christmas party for the homeless, so we were able to afford a special meal as well as decorations to ___ the room.
7–8. Why do you want to ___ away your money week after week on tickets for silly movies that all the critics agree are ___?

9–10. This week’s episode of one television serial had a(n) ___ ending: we don’t know whether one of the characters survives his heart attack or dies. In retrospect, I don’t think this was ___. I believe the producers want to keep us guessing so we’ll tune in again next week.

**Final Check: Grandfather at the Art Museum**

Here is a final opportunity for you to strengthen your knowledge of the ten words. First read the following selection carefully. Then fill in each blank with a word from the box at the top of the previous page. (Context clues will help you figure out which word goes in which blank.) Use each word once.

Last Saturday, my grandfather and I spent some time in the modern section of an art museum. Our visit was completely ___.

We’d come to see a show of nature photographs and wandered into the wrong room. Instead of leaving, Grandfather just stood there, staring at the paintings. His idea of worthwhile art is the soft-focus photography on greeting cards, and here was an exhibit of angry paintings by political ___.

In one painting, an empty plate and a plate that was piled high with food had been ___(e)d on a table; the tablecloth was an American flag. Around this painting was an ornate golden frame ___(e)d with tiny plastic models of hot dogs, apple pies, and other typical American foods. There was nothing ___ about the message—it was crystal-clear. The artist was saying that some people in this country don’t have enough to eat. After a few moments of stunned silence, my grandfather jolted the sleepy-looking guard out of his ___ by shouting, “Garbage! What is this garbage?”

When we learned that two major corporations had collaborated to ___ this exhibit and even owned some of the art works, Grandfather was outraged. “How dare they ___ away their money on one piece of unpatriotic trash after another while people are starving?” I started to say that the painting itself was a protest against starvation, but Grandfather just scoffed at me. “Don’t be ___,” he said, squelching my attempt to explain the painting. “Let’s get out of here.” So we did.

On the way home, Grandfather stared out the car window. He was silent except for ___ sputterings of “Garbage!” and “Incredible!”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scores</th>
<th>Sentence Check 2</th>
<th>Final Check</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>90%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Enter your scores above and in the Vocabulary Performance Chart on the inside back cover of the book.