Ten Words in Context

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

1. **allusion**
   - noun
   - After I suggested that Monty have fruit for dessert instead of chocolate cake, he responded, “Is that an allusion to my weight?”
   - Ramon didn’t have the courage to come right out and ask Lia to marry him. Instead, he made only an allusion to marriage by asking, “Wouldn’t it be easier if we had to fill out just one tax return?”
   
   _Allusion to means_
   - A. a contrast to
   - B. a hint about
   - C. an answer for

2. **altruistic**
   - adjective
   - When an enemy approaches, ground squirrels show altruistic behavior. They risk their own lives to give alarm calls to nearby relatives.
   - “I’m not often altruistic,” Brett admitted. “I usually put my own welfare first.”
   
   _Altruistic means_
   - A. unselfish
   - B. cheerful
   - C. greedy

3. **appease**
   - verb
   - The elderly woman was able to appease the fussy baby by singing him a gentle lullaby.
   - Roger was furious when he saw me out with another guy, but I quickly appeased him by explaining that the “date” was my cousin.
   
   _Appease means_
   - A. to annoy
   - B. to heal
   - C. to calm

4. **arbitrary**
   - adjective
   - Professor Miller’s students were angry that he graded essays in an arbitrary way, rather than using clear-cut standards.
   - Parents should not enforce rules according to their moods. Such arbitrary discipline only confuses children.
   
   _Arbitrary means_
   - A. steady
   - B. slow
   - C. impulsive

5. **assail**
   - verb
   - The storm assailed us with hail and heavy rain.
   - The two candidates continuously assailed each other with accusations of dishonesty.
   
   _Assail means_
   - A. to attack
   - B. to confuse
   - C. to support

6. **banal**
   - adjective
   - The film, with its repetitive conversations and unimaginative plot, was the most banal I had ever seen.
   - “Nice to see you” may be a banal comment, but what it lacks in originality it makes up for in friendliness.
   
   _Banal means_
   - A. greedy
   - B. unoriginal
   - C. clever

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. ____________  Determined by personal judgment, not rule or reason; based on impulse
2. ____________  Motivated only by financial gain; greedy
3. ____________  An indirect reference
4. ____________  A group of symptoms typical of a particular disease or condition
5. ____________  A mild or vague term used as a substitute for one considered offensive or unpleasant
6. ____________  To calm, especially by giving in to the demands of
7. ____________  Lacking originality; overused; commonplace
8. ____________  To stai the honor of someone or something
9. ____________  To attack physically or verbally
10. ____________  Unselfishly concerned for the welfare of others; unselfish
Sentence Check 1

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

A. allusion  B. altruistic  C. appease  D. arbitrary  E. assail
F. banal  G. euphemism  H. mercenary  I. syndrome  J. taint

1. When the word “died” seems too harsh, people use the ___s “passed away” or “is at peace.”

2. The prankster ___(e)d his victims by squirting them with honey and then showering them with flour.

3. Jayden is so ___ he decided to spend his vacation rebuilding homes damaged by the hurricane.

4. “Someone hasn’t shown me her report card,” my mother said, making a(n) ___ to my sister.

5. My brother is so ___ I think he’d sell our grandmother if the price was right.

6. “You’re special” probably appears on thousands of greeting cards, but when someone says it to you and means it, it never seems ___.

7. The judge’s harsh sentence was ___. Rather than being based on past similar cases or on the seriousness of the crime, it was based on the judge’s opinion of the defendant.

8. Abraham Lincoln is thought to have had Marfan’s ___, a group of symptoms which includes unusually long bones and abnormal blood circulation.

9. The only thing that will ___ angry parents in our community is firing the coach accused of stealing team funds.

10. The report that the halfback was addicted to drugs ___(e)d the team’s image.

Sentence Check 2

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

1–2. My boss judges performance in a(n) ___ manner, praising and scolding according to his moods. And when he says, “Please stay a few minutes longer today,” “a few minutes” is a(n) ___ for “an hour.”

3–4. A certain rare ___ includes a very odd symptom—an uncontrollable urge to use obscene language. This disease can ___ a victim’s reputation, because some people who hear the foul language won’t understand the reason for it.

5–6. The angry customer loudly ___(e)d the salesman for having sold her a broken clock. The salesman quickly ___(e)d her by giving her a full refund.

7–8. ___ people tend to place the public welfare above their own self-interest. In contrast, ___ people will exploit anyone for a profit—they will even sell harmful products.

9–10. The critic hated stale language. Instead of writing a(n) ___ comment such as “That ballerina is light on her feet,” he made an interesting ___ to the dancer’s movements: “She was never heavier than moonlight.”

Final Check: No Luck with Women

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.

My older brother, Mark, has no luck with women. He doesn’t understand why I do.

To begin with, when he first meets a woman, he goes into one of two styles of conversation. The first is to ___(e) her with a stream of personal questions: “What’s your name? Where do you live? Is that your real hair color? What kind of work do you do? Do you want to have kids someday? Are you seeing anyone? Would you like to have dinner with me?” Naturally, most women find this surprising and annoying. His other approach is to say the most ___(e) things imaginable: “Nice day, isn’t it? I thought it might rain this morning, but it didn’t. It might rain tomorrow, but who knows. Last week was nice weather, too.” By this time, the poor girl has either walked away or passed out from boredom.

Another thing Mark often does in his encounters with women is to say things that make him sound totally ___(e), as if money were the most important thing in the world to him. He makes frequent ___(e)s to his own salary, asks the woman how much she makes, and complains about the prices of everything on a menu. When he takes a date to a movie, he sometimes embarrasses her by trying to get his money back from the theater manager afterward, claiming he hadn’t liked the movie. Naturally, this sort of behavior somewhat ___(e) him in the woman’s eyes, and he rarely gets a second date. When one of my former girlfriends complained to me about Mark’s behavior, I tried to ___(e) her by telling her that underneath it all, Mark is really a nice guy. She replied by saying that she didn’t have the inclination to dig that far down.

Mark, of course, finds women’s reactions to him completely ___(e). He shakes his head and says, “Women are just not reasonable. Here I am, as nice as I can be, and they act as if I have some horrible, contagious ___(e).” I try to be a(n) ___(e) sister and help the guy out. I point out how his behaviors turn women off, using gentle ___(e)s such as “You’re a special, unusual person, Mark. You’re just a little eccentric.” Maybe I need to come right out and let him hear the truth, even if it makes him mad: “You’re weird, Mark.”