Vocabulary in context: eloquence & persuasion

A vocabulary-in-context question is answered by the sentence, not by a memorized. . .



Lesson `grev.vocab.V11`

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The idea

A vocabulary-in-context question is answered by the sentence, not by a memorized gloss. The sentence almost always plants a clue — a defining phrase, an example, a contrast, or a consequence — that pins down which meaning the writer intends.

What clue in the sentence fixes the intended meaning of the word, and what plain paraphrase does that clue predict?

Predict a paraphrase from the clue before reading the options. Then match, discarding opposites, wrong-nuance near-synonyms, wrong dictionary senses, and sound-alikes.

Watch every step

The lullaby's dulcet tones, soft and sweetly soothing, sent the whole nursery to sleep.

As used in the sentence, 'dulcet' most nearly means

- **A.** sweet and soothing (of sound)
- **B.** shrill and jarring ✗ *opposite-meaning*
- **C.** quiet and faint ✗ *near-synonym-wrong-nuance*
- **D.** sweet to the taste ✗ *wrong-dictionary-sense*
- **E.** boring and lifeless ✗ *sound-alike-or-association*

Why **A** — "sweet and soothing (of sound)." Choose the option closest to your predicted paraphrase.

Now a harder one

The 'report' was frankly tendentious, marshaling every fact to push one predetermined conclusion.

As used in the sentence, 'tendentious' most nearly means

A. impartial and balanced ✗ *opposite-meaning*

B. highly controversial ✗ *near-synonym-wrong-nuance*

C. prone to nervous tension ✗ *wrong-dictionary-sense*

D. biased toward a viewpoint

E. hesitant and unsure ✗ *sound-alike-or-association*

Why D — "biased toward a viewpoint." Choose the option closest to your predicted paraphrase.

The method, in one line

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Predict a paraphrase from the clue before reading the options. Then match, discarding opposites, wrong-nuance near-synonyms, wrong dictionary senses, and sound-alikes.

Could my choice replace the word and preserve the sentence's logic? Have I resisted the opposite, the almost-right synonym, and the alternate sense the context rules out?

Watch out: two traps to dodge

opposite-meaning
Selects a meaning roughly opposite to the one the clue requires.

near-synonym-wrong-nuance
Selects a meaning in the right general family but with the wrong precise nuance for this sentence.

Name the trap before you pick — most wrong answers are one of these two.

Try it, then watch the walk-through

Explore this live

Watch the walk-through