Vocabulary in context: intrepidity versus diffidence

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



Lesson `grev.vocab.V13`

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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 medal honored his valor: unarmed, he shielded two wounded comrades from enemy fire until help arrived.

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

A. craven cowardice ✗ *opposite-meaning*

B. physical strength ✗ *near-synonym-wrong-nuance*

C. worth or value ✗ *wrong-dictionary-sense*

D. loud boasting ✗ *sound-alike-or-association*

E. great courage

Why **E** — "great courage." Choose the option closest to your predicted paraphrase.

Now a harder one

History remembered him as a poltroon, the officer who fled at the first shot and left braver men to die.

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

A. a fearless hero ✗ *opposite-meaning*

B. a clumsy fool ✗ *near-synonym-wrong-nuance*

C. a lazy idler ✗ *wrong-dictionary-sense*

D. a large decorative bird ✗ *sound-alike-or-association*

E. an utter coward

Why E — "an utter coward." 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

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