Vocabulary in context: abundance and excess vs. . . .

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



Lesson `grev.vocab.V27`

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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

For a full day's labor they paid him a pittance, barely enough for a loaf of bread.

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

A. a princely sum ✗ *opposite-meaning*

B. a fair wage ✗ *near-synonym-wrong-nuance*

C. a very small sum

D. an act of pity ✗ *wrong-dictionary-sense*

E. a small pit or hollow ✗ *sound-alike-or-association*

Why C — "a very small sum." Choose the option closest to your predicted paraphrase.

Now a harder one

Rations grew scanty as the siege dragged on, until each soldier's daily bread shrank to a few crumbs.

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

A. lavishly ample ✗ *opposite-meaning*

B. carefully rationed ✗ *near-synonym-wrong-nuance*

C. quick and hurried ✗ *wrong-dictionary-sense*

✓ **D.** meager and insufficient

E. scandalous or shocking ✗ *sound-alike-or-association*

Why D — "meager and insufficient." Choose the option closest to your predicted paraphrase.

The method, in one line

Vocabulary in context: abundance and excess vs. scarcity. . .
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