Vocabulary in context: clarity vs. obscurity of. . .

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



Lesson `grev.vocab.V8`

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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 paper's abstruse notation was intelligible to perhaps a dozen specialists in the entire world.

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

A. plain and accessible ✗ *opposite-meaning*

B. hard to understand

C. deliberately misleading ✗ *near-synonym-wrong-nuance*

D. extremely tedious ✗ *wrong-dictionary-sense*

E. slow-witted; stupid ✗ *sound-alike-or-association*

Why **B** — "hard to understand." Choose the option closest to your predicted paraphrase.

Now a harder one

The prose was limpid, every sentence clear as spring water, with not a shadow of ambiguity.

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

A. cloudy and confusing ✗ *opposite-meaning*

B. clear and transparent

C. plain and unadorned ✗ *near-synonym-wrong-nuance*

D. of liquid, perfectly clear ✗ *wrong-dictionary-sense*

E. lacking firmness; drooping ✗ *sound-alike-or-association*

Why B — "clear and transparent." Choose the option closest to your predicted paraphrase.

The method, in one line

Vocabulary in context: clarity vs. obscurity of expression

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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