Comprehensive Drill: Module 2, Set 2

One more drill at the level of the harder Module 2, and this time the texts are the hardest in the chapter. This set is built differently from Set 1. Each question starts from a hard official question and keeps its answer: the word that is right here was right there, too. The three wrong choices are all new, and most of them are made to catch strong readers: a word that fits half of the clue, a word of the right direction but the wrong strength, a word that belongs to the topic but not to the clue. Three passages come from nineteenth-century writers (Dickens, Hazlitt, and Irving) in their own words, so expect long sentences and older usage. Use the same three steps: find the clue, predict, match. Give yourself 18 minutes, about 54 seconds a question.

Question 1

Most geological surveys of the nineteenth century were written by specialists for other specialists, and their dense terminology and high prices kept them out of ordinary hands. Margery Thirlby's 1874 survey of the Cumbrian fells was conceived differently. Issued in inexpensive monthly parts, with each technical term explained where it first appeared, it was a deliberately _____ work, and copies turned up in the cottages of the farmers and quarrymen whose land it described.

Which choice completes the text with the most logical and precise word or phrase?

A) abstruse — *hard to understand*
B) provisional — *temporary; open to revision*
C) accessible — *easy to obtain and understand*
D) rudimentary — *basic; undeveloped*

Question 2

When engineers proposed hanging a pedestrian walkway beneath the century-old iron railway bridge at Brackford, critics warned that the extra weight would overstrain the aging girders. Load tests settled the matter: with the walkway packed with test weights, strain gauges on the girders registered smaller changes than the ordinary warming of the iron on a sunny afternoon produces. The engineers judged the walkway's effect on the bridge _____.

Which choice completes the text with the most logical and precise word or phrase?

A) negligible — *too small to matter*
B) prohibitive — *so great it rules something out*
C) unpredictable — *impossible to foresee*
D) structural — *relating to a structure or framework*

Question 3

Wyburn's ordinance requiring shops to close at sundown on Saturdays, passed in 1887 to spare clerks from eighteen-hour Saturdays, stayed on the city's books until 2016. No council in all that time had defended it, and no shop had obeyed it in living memory; the ordinance survived, a local historian concluded, not on its merits but through sheer _____.

Which choice completes the text with the most logical and precise word or phrase?

A) precedent — *an earlier case that guides later ones*
B) popularity — *wide approval*
C) ambiguity — *unclear or double meaning*
D) inertia — *tendency to stay unchanged*

Question 4

When fossil collectors sent the anatomist Henri Vasselin bones that fit none of his categories, he did not revise the categories. His letters from the 1830s treat each puzzling specimen not as a test of his classification but as one more confirmation of it, explaining away every oddity as damage or a collector's error. Even his admirers found this _____ streak exasperating, and the younger anatomists he had trained abandoned his scheme within a few years of his death.

Which choice completes the text with the most logical and precise word or phrase?

A) tentative — *hesitant; not definite*
B) dogmatic — *rigidly insisting one's beliefs are right*
C) meticulous — *extremely careful*
D) collegial — *friendly and cooperative with colleagues*

Question 5

Visitors to Halsey Bay are often puzzled by the names on the town's map: a Harbor & Western Street, a Harbor & Western Park, even a Harbor & Western Depot that now houses a bakery. The railroad behind those names stopped running in 1931, and its tracks were pulled up soon afterward, but the names remain, among the few traces left of the _____ company that once employed nearly half the town.

Which choice completes the text with the most logical and precise word or phrase?

A) defunct — *no longer existing or operating*
B) solvent — *able to pay its debts*
C) dormant — *temporarily inactive*
D) notorious — *famous for something bad*

Question 6

The following text is from Charles Dickens's 1853 novel *Bleak House*. Caddy and her husband share their home with his father, the elderly Mr. Turveydrop.

Then there was old Mr. Turveydrop, who was from morning to night and from night to morning the subject of innumerable precautions. If the baby cried, it was nearly stifled lest the noise should make him uncomfortable. If the fire wanted stirring in the night, it was _____ done lest his rest should be broken. If Caddy required any little comfort that the house contained, she first carefully discussed whether he was likely to require it too.

Which choice completes the text with the most logical and precise word or phrase?

A) ostentatiously — *showily, so as to be noticed*
B) grudgingly — *reluctantly*
C) surreptitiously — *secretly; stealthily*
D) methodically — *in an orderly, systematic way*

Question 7

Chinese silk was reaching Roman markets by the first century CE, yet few if any traders from either empire ever reached the other. The trade was _____ Parthian and Kushan merchants, who carried goods across the lands between the two empires and profited from every exchange; according to Chinese records, when a Han envoy reached the sea at the western edge of Parthian lands in 97 CE, hoping to sail on toward Rome, Parthian sailors talked him out of the voyage.

Which choice completes the text with the most logical and precise word or phrase?

A) disrupted by — *thrown into disorder by*
B) documented by — *recorded by*
C) unknown to — *not known by*
D) mediated by — *carried on through a go-between*

Question 8

In 1561 the council of Ravensmark, a cathedral town with no press of its own, offered any master printer who settled there ten years' freedom from municipal taxes. The exemption was intended as _____, and it served its purpose: within a decade four printing houses had opened in the streets around the cathedral, each run by a printer who had come from one of the larger cities to the south.

Which choice completes the text with the most logical and precise word or phrase?

A) a reprieve — *a temporary relief from something bad*
B) an inducement — *an incentive; something that persuades*
C) a deterrent — *something that discourages action*
D) a levy — *a tax*

Question 9

Visitors to the Velde Valley in the 1880s saw hundreds of households at work among its vineyards, but a land registry from 1880 tells a narrower story. Ownership of the valley's forty square miles of vines was _____ just six families; nearly everyone else worked the rows as tenants or day laborers. When those six families quarreled over water rights in 1883, almost the entire harvest went unpicked.

Which choice completes the text with the most logical and precise word or phrase?

A) withheld from — *kept back from*
B) concentrated among — *gathered within a small group*
C) contested by — *disputed by*
D) hidden from — *kept secret from*

Question 10

The town of Elmsford floods most springs because the river narrows sharply as it passes under the town's old stone bridge, backing water up into the streets nearby. Engineers expect the bypass channel now under construction to _____ the problem, but they are careful not to promise more than that: in the wettest years, they warn, a few low-lying streets will still take on water.

Which choice completes the text with the most logical and precise word or phrase?

A) exacerbate — *make worse*
B) obviate — *remove or prevent entirely*
C) diagnose — *identify the cause of*
D) mitigate — *make less severe*

Question 11

The following text is from William Hazlitt's 1825 essay collection *The Spirit of the Age*. Hazlitt compares the writing of the poet Lord Byron with that of the novelist Sir Walter Scott.

The colouring of Lord Byron's style, however rich and dipped in Tyrian dyes, is nevertheless _____, is in itself an object of delight and wonder: Sir Walter Scott's is perfectly transparent. In studying the one, you seem to gaze at the figures cut in stained glass, which exclude the view beyond, and where the pure light of Heaven is only a means of setting off the gorgeousness of art: in reading the other, you look through a noble window at the clear and varied landscape without.

Which choice completes the text with the most logical and precise word or phrase?

A) opaque — *not letting light through*
B) lucid — *clear; easy to understand*
C) garish — *gaudy; too bright*
D) fleeting — *brief; passing quickly*

Question 12

Ask chemists about Thea Wennick and most will mention the colorfast navy dye she synthesized in 1931, which was used in naval uniforms for decades and made her wealthy. Far fewer know that ten years earlier she had devised a method for separating closely related metal salts, a technique still taught in introductory laboratory courses. That earlier achievement has long been _____ the dye, whose commercial success brought her a fame the separation method never did.

Which choice completes the text with the most logical and precise word or phrase?

A) more celebrated than — *more praised or famous than*
B) derived from — *developed from*
C) overshadowed by — *made to seem less important by*
D) superseded by — *replaced by*

Question 13

To measure how much the railroads contributed to economic growth in the United States, economic historian Robert Fogel could not simply total up the freight they carried. He had to estimate what the economy would have looked like in 1890 if the railroads had never been built, with the same goods moving by wagon, river, and canal. Critics objected that Fogel's _____ economy could be imagined but never observed and therefore could never be checked against evidence.

Which choice completes the text with the most logical and precise word or phrase?

A) documented — *recorded in evidence*
B) agrarian — *relating to farming*
C) counterfactual — *contrary to fact; hypothetical*
D) stagnant — *not growing; inactive*

Question 14

Accounts of the Halvern Astronomical Society, founded in 1871, rarely describe its first members as _____; most picture a circle of wealthy gentlemen, each with a private observatory. The society's membership ledgers tell another story. They list a schoolteacher, two clockmakers, a printer, and a seamstress among the founders, several of whom paid their dues in small installments.

Which choice completes the text with the most logical and precise word or phrase?

A) diverse — *varied; of many different kinds*
B) uniform — *all alike*
C) litigious — *quick to sue; fond of lawsuits*
D) prosperous — *wealthy; thriving*

Question 15

Early-eighteenth-century French dance masters fixed the steps of many dances in published notation and drilled them in rehearsal until every dancer knew them by heart. Yet even within the steps _____ by the masters, the finest performers found room for freedom, varying the small ornaments that decorated each step.

Which choice completes the text with the most logical and precise word or phrase?

A) improvised — *made up on the spot*
B) admired — *regarded with approval*
C) performed — *carried out; presented*
D) prescribed — *laid down as a rule*

Question 16

Historians had long hoped that the journal of an Arctic expedition that vanished in the 1880s would someday turn up and settle where the crew spent its last winter. When the journal was finally found in 1962, it did settle that question. But by revealing that the crew had split into two parties months earlier, it also ended up _____ a debate about which party had come closer to reaching safety, a question no one had thought to ask before.

Which choice completes the text with the most logical and precise word or phrase?

A) resolving — *settling*
B) engendering — *causing; giving rise to*
C) postponing — *delaying*
D) documenting — *recording*

Question 17

The following text is from Washington Irving's 1819–1820 collection *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent.* The narrator describes the people who attend a country church in England.

I found, as usual, that there was the least pretension where there was the most acknowledged title to respect. I was particularly struck, for instance, with the family of a nobleman of high rank, consisting of several sons and daughters. Nothing could be more simple and _____ than their appearance. They generally came to church in the plainest equipage, and often on foot.

Which choice completes the text with the most logical and precise word or phrase?

A) affected — *artificial; put on to impress*
B) solemn — *serious; grave*
C) eccentric — *odd; unconventional*
D) unassuming — *modest; not showy*

Question 18

In the mid-1900s, a soil fungus nearly wiped out the Gros Michel, once the world's leading export banana, and the plantations' weakness had a simple source: they were _____. Growers never raised the plants from seed; they started each new plant from a shoot cut from an older one, so a fungus able to kill one Gros Michel could kill them all.

Which choice completes the text with the most logical and precise word or phrase?

A) homogeneous — *all of the same kind*
B) diversified — *varied; mixed*
C) overcrowded — *too full*
D) neglected — *poorly cared for*

Question 19

Grammatical gender, despite its name, is often _____ the sex of the thing a noun names. The German word for "girl," *Mädchen*, is neuter, because every noun formed with the diminutive suffix *-chen* (which marks something as small) is neuter; the French word for "sentry," *sentinelle*, is feminine, though for centuries nearly every sentry was a man.

Which choice completes the text with the most logical and precise word or phrase?

A) determined by — *decided or controlled by*
B) translated from — *converted from another language*
C) independent of — *not controlled by; separate from*
D) obscured by — *hidden or made unclear by*

Question 20

England had no civil registration of births until 1837, but historians who study earlier centuries are not left without evidence. Most children were baptized soon after they were born, and the parishes of the Church of England kept registers of the baptisms they performed; counted and adjusted for infants who died unbaptized, those registers can serve as _____ the births that no official ever recorded.

Which choice completes the text with the most logical and precise word or phrase?

A) corrections to — *fixes for errors in*
B) proxies for — *stand-ins for*
C) precedents for — *earlier examples that set a pattern for*
D) celebrations of — *festivities honoring*