SENTENCE COMPLETION PRACTICE

Instructions: Please look up the meaning of every word you don't know. If you do so, you will strengthen your vocabulary as you practice; if you don't, you're not likely to get much benefit out of this exercise.

1) The ballet room is a bright, seemingly weightless world where gravity is continually being ________ by the dancers.
   (a) unbalanced  (c) prolonged  (e) reflected
   (b) defied       (d) reapportioned

2) Meals can be ________ element in family life, bringing us together in times of trouble and in times of joy.
   (a) a unifying (c) an addictive (e) an inconsistent
   (b) a residual  (d) a conflicting

3) Because she has a great need for __________, she loathes the public appearances demanded of her as a leading urban planner.
   (a) reward       (c) luxury     (e) distraction
   (b) devotion      (d) privacy

4) Researchers have discovered that our sense of smell is surprisingly ________, capable of distinguishing thousands of chemical odors.
   (a) erratic      (c) rigid       (e) innate
   (b) keen         (d) inert

5) Unlike the politician, who must spend his or her energy in public show or endless meetings, the writer needs ________ for significant efforts.
   (a) approval     (c) motivation   (e) perseverance
   (b) prudence     (d) solitude

6) The research is so ________ that it leaves no part of the issue unexamined.
   (a) comprehensive (c) sporadic    (e) problematical
   (b) rewarding     (d) economical

7) Although it seems to have been a fixture of the square since the city's origin, the farmer’s market actually opened only __________.
   (a) enthusiastically (c) frequently (e) graciously
   (b) recently        (d) illegally

8) A group of Black American fighter pilots known as the Birds of Paradise has the __________ of never having lost any of the bombers it escorted on missions over the Pacific islands in the Second World War.
   (a) onus          (c) imperative   (e) misfortune
   (b) distinction   (d) potential
9) According to Swift, a novelist should not ________, for sermonizing has no place in good fiction.
   (a) invent           (c) preach           (e) inform
   (b) offend           (d) distort

10) Professor Abenaki believes that the universal character of art refutes the prevailing notion that art is a _________ of civilization, a cultural fillet, a social veneer.
    (a) record           (c) guarantee       (e) depiction
    (b) luxury           (d) hallmark

Please read the answers and explanations for Problems 1 through 10 now.

11) Paradoxically, this successful entrepreneur is sometimes ________, and at other times gregarious.
    (a) autonomous       (c) ingratiating    (e) reclusive
    (b) dispassionate    (d) unthinking

12) To Maxine, traveling was ________; her mother, however, looked upon each trip as an _________ experience.
    (a) confusing ...    (c) exhilarating ... (e) stupefying ...
    unnerving           interminable       unhappy
    (b) tiring ...       (d) joyous ...      (e) happy ...

13) Their conversation was unsettling to her, for the gravity of his topic contrasted so oddly with the _________ of his tone.
    (a) uniqueness       (c) lightness       (e) reverence
    (b) rapidity         (d) precision

14) Very few adults boast that no one can understand a word they say, but quite a few seem proud of _________ handwriting.
    (a) elegant          (c) indecipherable (e) legible
    (b) stylized         (d) unusual

15) Although often victims of circumstance, the heroines of Wendy Wasserstein’s comedies tend to be _________ women, usually ready with a clever stratagem or verbal ploy for getting out of a difficult situation.
    (a) imperious        (c) excitable       (e) precocious
    (b) suffering        (d) resourceful

16) The jellyfish’s slow pulsing action propels it in a graceful, seemingly _________ drift, but its tentacles contain a poison potent enough to stun a swimming human.
    (a) sinister          (c) murky           (e) patient
    (b) rhythmic          (d) harmless
17) Grace was stunned that her neighbor had the ____________ to inquire about borrowing her new lawnmower, considering the fact that he had broken her old one.

(a) foresight  (b) temperament  (c) conviction  (d) audacity  (e) integrity

18) The radio show's host seemed genial, but he often turned ____________ when provoked by guests who challenged his opinions.

(a) surly  (b) intrusive  (c) lenient  (d) convincing  (e) giddy

19) The painter was ____________ over his lack of funds and his inability to sell any of his paintings, and his letters to his brother reflected his unhappiness.

(a) prudent  (b) prudently  (c) despondent  (d) supercilious  (e) fortified

20) Laboratories have been warned that provisions for water protection that in the past were merely ____________ will now be mandatory; ____________ of this policy will lose their federal funding.

(a) disregarded ... proponents  (b) recommended ... advocates  
proponents  (c) comprehensive ... resisters  (d) nominal ... adversaries

21) Scientists are studying the birth and growth of thunderstorms to discover what causes the difference between showers that enable crops to ____________ and ________ storms that cause floods and erosions.

(a) grow ... harmless  (b) parch ... severe  (c) flourish ... violent  (d) multiply ... essential

22) Many of the misconceptions about Princess Diana were created by those who ____________ her most; in their efforts to ____________ her as a model of all virtues, they lost sight of the real woman.

(a) challenged ... delineate  (b) admired ... depict  (c) esteemed ... discredit  (d) idolized ... disparage

23) The ____________ of trees in Southeast Asia has caused the number of native tigers to ____________ sharply because they can live only where the forest is most dense.

(a) felling ... decrease  (b) abundance ... dip  (c) planting ... decline  (d) destruction ... grow  (e) protection ... drop
24) Ignoring the growing accusations of ____________, Mayor Curley appointed yet another of his personal friends to a well-compensated government position.

(a) cronyism  (c) propriety  (e) nepotism
(b) sensationalism  (d) indolence

25) The rumor was of the ____________ variety, spreading slowly and almost imperceptibly until, finally, everyone seemed to have heard the story.

(a) insidious  (c) manifest  (e) expeditious
(b) aggressive  (d) dilatory

26) Mrs. Foster found it ironic that her eleven-year-old son, who made all A's on his report card, was so ____________ at home, apparently unable to follow her most basic instructions concerning such commonsense matters as tidiness.

(a) candid  (c) stubborn  (e) sullen
(b) obtuse  (d) astute

27) Tantra paintings from Ceylon are not only beautiful but ____________: in addition to their aesthetic value, they are used to facilitate meditation.

(a) numerous  (c) garish  (e) functional
(b) omate  (d) valuable

28) Suellen Byers’ character Sydney Rose appears ____________ but feels great anger: she ____________ her emotions with a mask of compliance.

(a) docile ... camouflages  (c) responsive ... echoes  (e) invincible ... catapults
(b) uncontrolled ... belies  (d) nonchalant ... exposes

29) George Foreman was ____________ fighter: he inspired fear in many of his opponents.

(a) a serene  (c) an insipid  (e) a redoubtable
(b) an impetuous  (d) a malleable

30) The visually captivating nature of Ludwig Mies van der Rohe’s designs suggests that the architect is a true ____________, infusing his designs with beauty as well as functionality.

(a) instigator  (c) intellectual  (e) aesthete
(b) nonconformist  (d) minimalist

**PLEASE READ THE ANSWERS AND EXPLANATIONS FOR PROBLEMS 21 THROUGH 30 NOW**

31) Although the scientist claimed to have made a major breakthrough in his research, the evidence he offered as proof of his assertion was ____________ at best.

(a) conclusive  (c) paltry  (e) extensive
(b) indubitable  (d) copious
32) There was no denying the candidate’s __________, but her arguments were unsophisticated and __________.
   (a) bravura ... precise   (c) charisma ... vapid   (e) indifference ...
   (b) boorishness ...        (d) competence ...       (e) infallible

33) The idea that people __________ their own reality or shape their experience based on previous subjective events is one of the fundamental __________ of social psychology.
   (a) instill ...             (c) construct ...       (e) extricate ...
       archetypes              axioms               privileges
   (b) avoid ... desires      (d) fortify ... goals

34) The notoriously temperamental American actor John Barrymore was known for his __________ both on stage and off.
   (a) apologies              (c) inequities       (e) philosophies
   (b) musings                (d) histrionics

35) Rafael Kahlo’s novel consists of discrete vignettes, so the reader must supply the invisible __________ binding such apparently __________ parts.
   (a) emotions ...           (c) descriptions ...   (e) connections ...
       impersonal             related               independent
   (b) interpretations ...    (d) categories ...
       somber                cohesive

36) Many of today’s physicians and patients are __________ high technology, captivated by computer-designed drugs and laser surgery.
   (a) nervous about          (c) tolerant of       (e) overwhelmed by
   (b) defensive about        (d) enamored of

37) The filmmaker was known for choosing __________ projects, so many critics were surprised that her latest effort was uncharacteristically __________.
   (a) innovative ...        (c) unusual ...
       hackneyed              refreshing
   (b) risky ...              (d) cerebral ...
       controversial          complex

38) Refuting the claim that the surest way to reduce anger is to express it, the psychologist asserts that __________ anger can actually increase its __________.
   (a) denying ... impact    (c) overcoming ...
   (b) understanding ...     (d) voicing ...
       importance             benefits
       likelihood
39) The language of Amsley Finn’s poetry conveys an impression of _____________ that can be misleading: just when a poem seems to be echoing routine feelings, the diction suddenly sharpens to embody fresh and unexpected ideas.

(a) frivolity  (b) triteness  (c) diversity  (d) lyricism  (e) precision

40) The world, accustomed to _____________ whenever governments change hands, expected anarchy and bloodshed; but the transition of power was remarkably _____________.

(a) turmoil ... chaotic  (b) violence ... uneventful  (c) ceremony ... solemn  (d) harmony ... orderly  (e) splendor ... unpopular

41) Steven Jay Gould’s main criticism of the artist’s rendering of the ancient mammal’s physical appearance was that, unsupported by even a _____________ of fossil evidence, the image was bound to be _____________.

(a) modicum ... speculative  (b) particle ... supplemented  (c) perusal ... substantiated  (d) fabrication ... obsolete  (e) recapitulation ... exhausted

42) There has been little _____________ criticism written about Warhol’s art; indeed, that which has been expressed is at the two extremes, either appallingly _____________ or bitterly antagonistic.

(a) hostile ... ambiguous  (b) objective ... sycophantic  (c) fervent ... complimentary  (d) recent ... illogical  (e) temperate ... censorious

43) Although the acreage involved in a national boundary dispute may seem insignificant, even the slightest _____________ in a country's alleged border appears _____________. to that nation, a threat to its security.

(a) breach ... ominous  (b) variation ... trivial  (c) rigidity ... traumatic  (d) change ... favorable  (e) inconsistency ... felicitous

44) Currently rising temperatures in the Arctic and Antarctic are _____________ of a still warmer world that could result from an excess of atmospheric carbon dioxide produced by the burning of oil, gas, and coal.

(a) polarities  (b) harbingers  (c) vestiges  (d) counterexamples  (e) aftereffects
45) Their ideal was to combine individual liberty with material equality, a goal that has not yet been realized and that may be as __________ as changing lead into gold.

(a) chimerical  (c) historical  (e) inharmonious
(b) indispensable  (d) cynical

46) He maintains that racial and cultural __________ are generalizations no more related to what an individual is actually like than are the __________ representations of constellations to the actual nature of a star.

(a) details...  (c) traditions...  (e) specimens...
(b) heritages...  (d) stereotypes...

47) The CFO of the brokerage house, who had quit school at the age of 15, was a noted __________, having taught himself everything he needed to know about securities and business, in addition to working to gain proficiency in such subjects as international finance.

(a) demagogue  (c) pedant  (e) disputant
(b) ambassador  (d) autodidact

48) The teacher asked the students to make sure they read the entire treatise, both the fourteen regular chapters and the extensive __________ materials that the author included at the beginning of the book.

(a) prefatory  (c) prophetic  (e) conjunctive
(b) orthographic  (d) redacted

49) Because he felt intimidated in his new position, he was __________ divulging his frank opinions of company proposals.

(a) fervid about  (c) scurrilous about  (e) candid in
(b) precipitate in  (d) chary of

50) The test of truth is not __________, for we have often felt firmly convinced of many things that were not so.

(a) originality  (c) implication  (e) moderation
(b) impartiality  (d) certitude

51) Contemporary novelist Ruta Arledge is quite the opposite of __________; through the ability of her heroines to rise above tragic setbacks, she expresses the belief that people can take charge of their own destinies.

(a) a moralizer  (c) an optimist  (e) a competitor
(b) a fatalist  (d) an idealist
52) His inclination to succumb to flattery made him __________ to the __________ of people who wished to take advantage of him.
(a) immune ... (c) susceptible ...
(b) resistant ... (d) prejulicial ...

53) The __________ of Margaret Thatcher impressed her contemporaries: she seemed to know what dignitaries and foreign leaders were thinking.
(a) punctiliousness (c) symbiosis (e) perspicacity
(b) consternation (d) malevolence

54) Barbara’s distinguishing trait is her __________: she gives liberally to those less fortunate than herself.
(a) venerability (c) frivolity (e) inexorableness
(b) munificence (d) amicability

55) Gabrielle schemed and plotted for weeks and these __________ were rewarded when Marcus was fired and Gabrielle was promoted.
(a) renunciations (c) gibberings (e) affiliations
(b) machinations (d) circumlocutions

56) Despite San Francisco’s large Asian community, Asian-American dance companies in that city are anything but __________; in fact, in 2005 there was only one, Rachman Studio.
(a) wily (c) advantageous (e) legion
(b) nondescript (d) bourgeois

57) In effect, the Voting Rights Act of 1965 __________ African-Americans in the Southern United States by outlawing restrictions that had barred them from voting.
(a) proliferated (c) enfranchised (e) inspired
(b) preserved (d) promulgated

58) The poet brings out the __________ of human beings time and time again by __________ their lives to the permanence of the vast Southwestern landscape.
(a) uniqueness ... (c) evanescence ...
(b) complexity ... (d) transience ...

59) Wave direction, apparently the primary __________ used by young manatees to navigate in water, is later __________ by their orientation to magnetic fields.
(a) cue ... supplanted (c) mechanism ...
(b) vestige ... propagated (d) agent ...

60) Once an occasional liar, Simon has become ____________ one in that he lies habitually.

   (a) a perfidious  (c) a selective  (e) a rancorous
   (b) an inveterate  (d) an arcane

PLEASE READ THE ANSWERS AND EXPLANATIONS FOR PROBLEMS 51 THROUGH 60 NOW
SENTENCE COMPLETION PRACTICE

The sentences are repeated in italics. The words in **bold** are the ones I consider clues.

1) **B.** The ballet room is a bright, seemingly **weightless** world where gravity is continually being _____________ by the dancers. In a weightless world, there is no gravity. So, to simulate weightlessness, one would defy gravity.

2) **A.** Meals can be _____________ element in family life, **bringing us together** in times of trouble and in times of joy. Anything that brings us together unifies us.

3) **D.** Because she has a great need for _____________, she **loathes the public appearances** demanded of her as a leading urban planner. If she loathes public appearances, what sort of life would she love? What’s the opposite of public?

4) **B.** Researchers have discovered that our sense of smell is surprisingly _____________, **capable of distinguishing** thousands of chemical odors. Note that the words following the blank could be used in the blank! “Keen” is defined as “characterized by strength and distinctness of perception.”

5) **D.** Unlike the politician, who must **spend his or her energy in public show** or endless meetings, the writer needs _____________ for significant efforts. This is an “antonym” sentence, in which we’re given the opposite of what we’re looking for. Those who don’t “spend ... energy in public show” value solitude.

6) **A.** The research is so _____________ that it leaves no part of the issue unexamined. The research must be all-inclusive, exhaustive, or comprehensive.

7) **B.** Although it **seems to have been a fixture** of the square **since the city’s origin**, the farmer’s market **actually opened** only _____________. Like question 5, this is another “antonym” sentence, which describes the opposite of what we’re looking for. Would we ever say that something “seems” to have been around forever if it actually has been around forever?

8) **B.** A group of **Black American fighter pilots** known as the Birds of Paradise has the _____________ of **never having lost** any of the bombers it escorted on missions over the Pacific islands in the Second World War. We know two things: First, the sentence tells us that this group has a record to be proud of; second, the SAT never says anything negative about patriots, celebrities, women, or non-Caucasians. So, we’re looking for a positive answer!

9) **C.** According to Swift, a novelist should not _____________, for **sermonizing** has no place in good fiction. Let’s put “sermonize” into the blank; so, I guess we need a synonym for “sermonize.”

10) **B.** Professor Abenaki believes that the universal character of art **refutes** the prevailing notion that art is a _____________ of civilization, a **cultural fill, a social veneer**. We’re looking for a synonym for “a cultural fill, a social veneer.” Must be something that’s not necessary ...

The vocabulary is going to get tougher. Let’s establish guidelines for eliminating wrong answer choices. Here’s the first rule: If you can’t define a word you can’t eliminate it.

PLEASE RETURN TO PROBLEM 11 NOW
11) E. **Paradoxically,** this successful entrepreneur is **sometimes** _______ and **at other times** gregarious. It just wouldn’t make sense to say, “Bob is **sometimes** nice and **at other times** a good guy,” would it? So, we have two clues here, paradoxically and sometimes… at other times. If you didn’t know the meaning of gregarious, you could have worked backwards from the answer choices that are familiar to you. If the entrepreneur were sometimes “unthinking,” wouldn’t that be dangerous?

12) C. To Maxine, traveling was ________; her mother, **however,** looked upon each trip as an _______ experience. The only clue we have here is that Maxine and her mother reacted differently to traveling. So, let’s find an answer choice that offers us antonyms. Guessing: Even if we didn’t know what (c) and (e) meant, the “however” clue made (a), (b), and (d) impossible. Agree?

13) C. Their conversation was unsettling to her, for the **gravity of his topic** contrasted so oddly with the _______ of his tone. Here’s another chance to “find the antonym.” What choice is the most different from “gravity”? If you didn’t know what “gravity” meant, working backwards might have helped. Could “gravity” be the opposite of “uniqueness” or “precision”?

14) C. Very few adults boast that **no one can understand a word** they say, but quite a few seem proud of _______ handwriting. “But” is a strong clue that looking for the opposite of “no one can understand a word…..” However, would it be notable if people were of readable handwriting? Either way, since we’re talking about handwriting, only (c) and (e) seem to apply.

15) D. Although often **victims** of circumstance, the heroines of Wendy Wasserstein’s comedies tend to be _______ women, usually **ready with a clever stratagem or verbal ploy** for getting out of a difficult situation. We’re given a lot of information here; we know that these women are not your usual “victims of circumstance” because they are “ready with a … stratagem.” So, what sort of person gets herself out of jams?

16) D. The jellyfish’s slow pulsing action propels it in a graceful, **seemingly** _______ drift, **but** its tentacles contain a poison potent enough to **stun a swimming human.** In this Antonym sentence, we’re told the **opposite** of what we’re looking for. How could we describe a jellyfish’s appearance in water in order to make the surprising point that a jellyfish can **stun a swimming human**? If you chose (b), it’s true that jellyfish are “rhythmic,” but there’s nothing in the rest of the sentence to suggest that the topic is the jellyfish’s sense of rhythm. Is there?

17) D. Grace was stunned that her neighbor had the ________ to inquire about borrowing her new lawnmower, **considering the fact that he had broken her old one.** This neighbor is not someone upon whom Grace looks kindly. In fact, when you read the sentence the first time, your “prediction” may have made you smile; if so, you’re on the right track. At one time, audacious people were said to have the “cheek” to ask or attempt something.

18) A. The radio show’s host **seemed genial,** but he often turned ________ when **provoked** by guests who challenged his opinions. So, we’re looking for the **opposite** of “genial,” right?

19) C. The painter was ________ over **his lack of funds and his inability** to sell any of his paintings, and his letters to his brother reflected his **unhappiness.** The SAT tries
mightily to steer us in the right direction. We’re looking for something like “unhappiness,” right? In fact, if we were to put “unhappy” into the blank, we’d be satisfied. Wouldn’t we?

20) B. Laboratories have been warned that provisions for water protection that in the past were merely __________ will now be mandatory; __________ of this policy will lose their federal funding. Two blanks, two clues: The first tells us that we’re looking for the opposite of “mandatory”; the second tells us about someone who will “lose federal funding”; according to the logical world of the SAT, one would only lose funding if one violates the terms of an agreement.

PLEASE RETURN TO PROBLEM 21 NOW

21) C. Scientists are studying the birth and growth of thunderstorms to discover what causes the difference between showers that enable crops to __________ and __________ storms that cause floods and erosions. When a sentence contrasts two things, the two things will be very different. So, “showers” tells us that the second blank will describe “not-harmless” storms. Similarly, “that cause floods and erosions” must be the opposite of what we need for the first blank. So, for the first blank we’re looking for something “nice,” and for the second something “nasty.”

22) B. Many of the misconceptions about Princess Diana were created by those who __________ her most; in __________ to __________ her as a model of all virtues, they lost sight of the real woman. Would it be worth discussing if those who spread false, malicious rumors caused the misconceptions? No. So, we need something “unusual” for the first blank, which brings is down to (b), (c), and (d); next, what were they attempting to do? “As a model of all virtues” tells us it was something positive, which eliminates (c) and (d).

23) A. The __________ of trees in Southeast Asia has caused the number of native tigers to __________ sharply because they can live only where the forest is most dense. Here we have one clue that helps us fill both blanks. If the tigers can live only where the forest is dense, density of the forest is the issue, right? So, either the forest is getting denser or sparser; which makes sense to you? OK, so the forest is being cut away, which means that the environment is tougher on the tigers. Under such conditions, should we expect more tigers or fewer tigers?

24) A. Ignoring the growing accusations of __________, Mayor Curley appointed yet another of his personal friends to a well-compensated government position. Here, you might be tempted to go with (e), but nepotism is always “in the family.”

25) A. The rumor was of the __________ variety, spreading slowly and almost imperceptibly until, finally, everyone seemed to have heard the story. We deal with this sort of clue in the Definition TEN FOR TEN. Also, some of the vocabulary here is pretty tough—however, if nothing else, you should have been able to eliminate (b), which under no circumstances means anything like “slowly and almost imperceptibly,” and guess.
26) B. Mrs. Foster found it **ironic** that her eleven-year-old son, who **made all A's** on his report card, was so ___________ at home, apparently **unable to follow her most basic instructions** concerning such commonsense matters as tidiness. Here we have another Antonym problem; to get A’s in school, one needs be able to follow instructions (and be pretty bright); so, here we’re looking for the opposite of “bright” and “responsive.” If you chose (c), note that by changing “unable” to “unwilling” the test maker could have pointed you toward that answer choice.

27) E. Tantra paintings from Ceylon are not only beautiful but ___________: in addition to their aesthetic value, they are used to facilitate meditation. Here’s a classic Definition problem. Whenever the blank is closely followed by punctuation, the word will be defined right after the punctuation. “They are used ...”

28) A. Suellen Byers’ character Sydney Rose **appears ___________ but feels great anger:** she ___________ her emotions with a mask of compliance. Two blanks, two clues. Sydney Rose must appear to be not angry; if she uses a mask it must be to hide her real feelings.

29) E. George Foreman was ___________ fighter: he inspired fear in many of his opponents. This one’s kind of easy to predict—we’re looking for something that means “scary.” So, even if you don’t know what all the words mean, I’m guessing you could get rid of (a) and maybe (b) and (c).

30) E. The visually captivating nature of Ludwig Mies van der Rohe’s designs suggests that the architect is a true ___________, infusing his designs with beauty as well as functionality. The sentence is telling us that Mies van der Rohe was an artist as well as a builder; so, we’re looking for a choice that says “artist.” The right choice, (e), is a word you should learn (it’s the noun form of “aesthetic,” which you probably know); however, it’s likely that, based upon your prediction, you were able to eliminate (a), (b), and (c).

**PLEASE RETURN TO PROBLEM 31 NOW**

31) C. Although the scientist **claimed to have made a major breakthrough** in his research, the evidence he **offered** as proof of his assertion was ___________ at best. If you say, “Steve claims that yogurt cures hives,” should we assume that you believe Steve’s claim? Of course not. Likewise, the author of this sentence doesn’t believe the scientist’s breakthrough was major.

32) C. There was no denying the candidate’s ___________, but her arguments were unsophisticated and ___________. Sometimes it’s easier to work on the second blank first. In that second blank we’re looking for a synonym (“and” is the clue) for “unsophisticated.” Clearly, choices (a) and (d)—as well as (e)—if you know what “benign” means—don’t work. So, now we’re down to (b), (c)—and maybe (e). So, if her arguments were unsophisticated, what was remarkable about her? We wouldn’t say, “Bob is not interesting, but when he speaks he puts everyone to sleep.” So, we must be looking for a “surprise” word. If we haven’t done so before, we can now eliminate (e), since “indifference” to unsophisticated ideas wouldn’t surprise us. Do you know what “boorishness” means? It means bad manners.
33) C. The idea that people __________ their own reality or shape their experience based on previous subjective events is one of the fundamental __________ of social psychology. Sometimes you have to read a sentence a couple of times to get the idea the writer’s trying to communicate. As is often the case, we should look at the second blank first. Sciences like social psychology must have core beliefs (or axioms—note “the idea” at the beginning of the sentence). Now to the first blank—the “or” tells us that we’re looking at a synonym for “shape their experience.”

34) D. The notoriously temperamental American actor John Barrymore was known for his __________ both on stage and off. Another synonym problem featuring tough vocabulary; however, here it’s hard to ignore “temperamental” (it’s a really long word), so we can eliminate every choice we know, leaving us (perhaps) with just the right choice, which is derived from the Latin for “actor.”

35) E. Rafael Kahlo’s novel consists of discrete vignettes, so the reader must supply the invisible __________ binding such apparently __________ parts. The tough vocabulary here is in the sentence—what’s “discrete vignettes” mean? It helps to notice “binding” in the second half of the sentence. Why would we need to supply binding unless the “parts” didn’t hang together on their own? So, we’re looking for a word to put in the second blank that means, essentially, “in need of binding,” right?

36) D. Many of today’s physicians and patients are __________ high technology, captivated by computer-designed drugs and laser surgery. Couldn’t we put “captivated by” directly into the blank? Either you know which choice that’s right or you know two or three that are clearly wrong.

37) A. The filmmaker was known for choosing __________ projects, so many critics were surprised that her latest effort was uncharacteristically __________. Again, we see a sentence whose two parts are set up to oppose one another. Whatever kind of projects she normally chooses, she chose the opposite this time. So, we can eliminate (b), (c), and (d) immediately. Remember: On the SAT, the right answer fits perfectly. So, if you made a case for (e) and then picked it, don’t do that any more.

38) D. Refuting the claim that the surest way to reduce anger is to express it, the psychologist asserts that __________ anger can actually increase its __________. Other psychologists seem to “assert” that yelling at your mother will reduce your anger; what’s the opposite? Oh, if you yell at your mother you may actually get madder at her. That ever happen?

39) B. The language of Arnsley Finn’s poetry conveys an impression of __________ that can be misleading: just when a poem seems to be echoing routine feelings, the diction suddenly sharpens to embody fresh and unexpected ideas. Look away from the blank to find the strongest clues. We’re looking for a synonym for “routine feelings,” right?

40) B. The world, accustomed to __________ whenever governments change hands, expected anarchy and bloodshed; but the transition of power was remarkably __________. Here, again, we have two blanks that are “opposites.” If the world expected something (like anarchy and bloodshed; getting the pattern?), the opposite must have actually occurred.

PLEASE RETURN TO PROBLEM 41 NOW
41) A. Steven Jay Gould’s main criticism of the artist’s rendering of the ancient mammal’s physical appearance was that, unsupported by even a ______ of fossil evidence, the image was bound to be _________. We need a reason to criticize. Dr. Gould’s criticism must have been that the rendering was attempted “unsupported by even a little bit” (yes, you can use more than one word in your predictions) of fossil evidence. OK, the vocabulary is tough. Let’s continue by trying to predict what goes in the second blank. If the evidence was incomplete, mustn’t any image based on that evidence be just a guess? So, we can eliminate any choices, like (b), (d), and (e), that clearly are on a different track.

42) B. There has been little _______ criticism written about Warhol’s art; indeed, that which has been expressed is at the two extremes, either appallingly _______ or bitterly antagonistic. Let’s go after the second blank first, since the first blank could be anything at this point. We’re looking for the opposite of “antagonistic,” no? So, we can get rid of (a) and (d). For the first blank, we need to find a word that means the opposite of “two extremes.”

43) A. Although the acreage involved in a national boundary dispute may seem insignificant, even the slightest ______ in a country’s alleged border appears ________ to that nation, a threat to its security. Again, let’s go after the second blank first. We’re looking for a synonym for “a threat to its security.” That eliminates (b) and (d). For the first blank, let’s note “alleged border.” Would we ever refer to something as “alleged” if we believed it was solid? (“This is my alleged friend ...”) So, we’re looking for something as “alleged” if we believed it was solid? (“This is my alleged friend ...”) So, we can eliminate (b) and (d). For the first blank, we need to find a word that means the opposite of “two extremes.”

44) B. Currently rising temperatures in the Arctic and Antarctic are _______ of a still warmer world that could result from an excess of atmospheric carbon dioxide produced by the burning of oil, gas, and coal. Another tough vocabulary problem. It’s possible that you didn’t know any of the choices. When that happens, you have two options: Move on quickly, and on your way pick the scariest answer.

45) A. Their ideal was to combine individual liberty with material equality, a goal that has not yet been realized and that may be as ________ as changing lead into gold. If the goal “has not yet been realized,” it may be on the horizon or it may be impossible. Which one here? How successful have people been at “changing lead into gold”? Not very. So, success is unlikely. Which choices are irrelevant? I’d nominate (c) and (d), at the least.

46) D. He maintains that racial and cultural _______ are generalizations no more related to what an individual is actually like than are the ________ representations of constellations to the actual nature of a star. Can’t we look for a synonym for “generalizations” to solve the first blank? That would eliminate (a), (b), and (c). Also, (e) is pretty strange—cultural “specimens”? In a jar?

47) D. The CFO of the brokerage house, who had quit school at the age of 15, was a noted ________, having taught himself everything he needed to know about securities and business, in addition to working to gain proficiency in such subjects as international finance. The clue is clear (we’re looking for something like “self-teacher,” right?), but the vocabulary is difficult. However, I think we can all agree that choice (b) makes no sense at all.
48) **A.** The teacher asked the students to make sure they read the entire treatise, both the fourteen regular chapters and the extensive _______ materials that the author included at the beginning of the book. Why is it important that the materials are at the beginning of the book? Maybe because materials in the beginning of a book have a specific name. And no, “prophetic” doesn’t mean “predicting what’s on page 64.”

49) **D.** Because he felt intimidated in his new position, he was _____________ divulging his frank opinions of company proposals. You probably came up with “scared of” for the blank—if so, great! It might have even pointed you toward the answer choice that contained “of.”

50) **D.** The test of truth is not _____________, for we have often felt firmly convinced of many things that were not so. We’d like to find a synonym for, say, “firm conviction.”

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51) **B.** Contemporary novelist Ruta Arledge is quite the opposite of _____________; through the ability of her heroines to rise above tragic setbacks, she expresses the belief that people can take charge of their own destinies. Here, you probably knew that she was the opposite of someone who thinks that our destinies are controlled by fate. Wait a minute! A person who believes that our destinies are controlled by fate is called a “fatalist.” No kidding!

52) **C.** His inclination to succumb to flattery made him _____________ to the _____________ of people who wished to take advantage of him. So, the guy likes to be praised, which helps us to work on the second blank and eliminate (d) and (e). Now, would he be “immune,” “resistant” (note how similar “immune” and “resistant” are), or “susceptible”?

53) **E.** The _____________ of Margaret Thatcher impressed her contemporaries: she seemed to know what dignitaries and foreign leaders were thinking. Here’s a synonym sentence in which all of the choices are tough. Perhaps you were able to eliminate “malevolence”? Maybe “consternation”? Then you guessed? Quickly? I hope?

54) **B.** Barbara’s distinguishing trait is her _____________: she gives liberally to those less fortunate than herself. We’re looking for a synonym for “liberal giving.”

55) **B.** Gabrielle schemed and plotted for weeks and these _____________ were rewarded when Marcus was fired and Gabrielle was promoted. Even though the vocabulary is tough, we know we’re looking for something like “schemes and plots.” That should be enough to eliminate at least (e), right?

56) **E.** Despite San Francisco’s large Asian community, Asian-American dance companies in that city are anything but _____________; in fact, in 2005 there was only one, Rachman Studio. Here’s something that doesn’t come up too often, but when it does you can take full advantage. By now, you probably sense that all five answer choices in any set have to be the same part of speech; so, why here do we seem to have four adjectives and a noun (legion)? Maybe because “legion” is also an
adjective—look it up. In any case, if we were looking for a word that meant “seemingly everywhere,” we could have eliminated most of the other choices, right?

57) C. In effect, the Voting Rights Act of 1965 ______________ African-Americans in the Southern United States by outlawing restrictions that had barred them from voting. So, the Act helped African-Americans overcome restrictions to their right to vote. Any choice that isn’t closely related to voting must be wrong; so, we can eliminate (b) and (e). In America, “the franchise” is what we call the right to vote.

58) C. The poet brings out the _____________ of human beings time and time again by ___________ their lives to the permanence of the vast Southwestern landscape. This is a tough problem, although one word, “permanence,” gives us all we need. Are humans permanent? No, which means that humans are unlike the landscape, which is permanent. So, the first blank must be something like “impermanence.” That eliminates (a), (b), and (e). Now, choice (c) says that the poet “contrasts,” while choice (d) says that she “likens.” If two things are unlike, we contrast them.

59) A. Wave direction, apparently the primary ___________ used by young manatees to navigate in water, is later ___________ by their orientation to magnetic fields. If we try to make sense of this sentence, we come up with something like “guide” for the first blank. That eliminates (e), at least. So, what happens later? The manatees are no longer using wave direction, but have switched over to magnetic fields. So, shouldn’t we look for a word like “replaced”?

60) B. Once an occasional liar, Simon has become ___________ one in that he lies habitually. There’s been a change in Simon’s approach to lying. He lies all the time now—eliminate (c). Note that the difference is not in intensity—eliminate (e).