

Words in Context Hard Questions

Question 1

In forests, trees are connected by a complex belowground network of mycorrhizal fungi. This "wood-wide web," as dubbed by researcher Suzanne Simard in her 1997 *Nature* paper, facilitates the bidirectional transfer of resources like carbon, water, and nutrients between trees, even those of different species. These networks also serve as conduits for alarm signals, enabling trees to _____ warnings about threats such as herbivore infestations.

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

- A suppress
- B obscure
- C convey
- D inhibit

Question 2

Literary critic Hans Robert Jauss, known for his reception theory, posited that a literary work's meaning is not fixed but is instead generated through the reader's interaction with the text. This perspective emphasizes the reader's active role, moving beyond the notion of passive reception. Jauss argued that the historical and cultural context of the reader shapes their understanding, creating a dynamic _____ between the text and its audience. Thus, meaning is not inherent in the text alone but arises from this responsive interplay.

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

- A disparity
- B synthesis
- C interplay
- D detachment

Question 3

In their seminal 1968 study, Bibb Latané and John Darley investigated the "bystander effect," wherein individuals are less likely to offer aid in an emergency when other people are present. They posited that this phenomenon stems from a *diffusion of responsibility*, where the perceived need for personal intervention is _____, as others are assumed to share the obligation to act. This dilution of individual accountability corresponds with a decreased likelihood of helping behavior.

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

- A diminished
- B amplified
- C diversified
- D established

Question 4

In his seminal work *Narrative Discourse* (1972), Gérard Genette introduced the concept of focalization to distinguish between "who sees" and "who speaks" in a narrative. He posited that narratives could exhibit different types of focalization, including internal, where the perspective is limited to a character's knowledge and perception. This internal perspective thus serves to _____ the information presented to the reader, confining it within the bounds of that character's awareness.

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

- A amplify
- B disperse
- C underscore
- D circumscribe

Question 5

Research by Suzanne Simard and her colleagues at the University of British Columbia in 1997 revealed the existence of extensive underground networks of fungi connecting trees. These mycorrhizal networks act as conduits, allowing for the transfer of resources like carbon, water, and nutrients between trees. This symbiotic relationship appears to _____ communication and mutual support within forest ecosystems, challenging the historical view of trees as solely competing entities.

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

- A facilitate
- B impede
- C isolate
- D suppress

Question 6

In his groundbreaking 1951 study, Solomon Asch investigated the degree to which social pressure influences individual judgment. Participants were asked to match line lengths, a task with a clear correct answer. However, when surrounded by confederates who unanimously provided an incorrect answer, a significant proportion of participants chose to conform to the group's wrong judgment, demonstrating the powerful effect of _____ influence, where individuals yield to group norms to gain acceptance or avoid disapproval.

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

- A cognitive
- B normative
- C objective
- D statistical

Question 7

Historians evaluating primary sources must engage in rigorous source criticism, a method for assessing a source's value as evidence. This involves scrutinizing the document's origin, purpose, and potential biases. Ultimately, the goal is to determine the source's _____, or its conformity with truth or fact, despite any inherent subjectivity or limitations it may possess.

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

- A brevity
- B currency
- C singularity
- D veracity

Question 8

In their seminal work on cognitive biases, Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky (1974) identified how human judgment often relies on *heuristics*, or mental shortcuts, to process complex information rapidly. While beneficial for efficiency, these *heuristics* can systematically lead to predictable errors, indicating that certain cognitive processes are not easily altered. The tendency for these biases to persist across diverse contexts suggests that some perceptual frameworks are _____ within human cognition.

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

- A malleable
- B contingent
- C volatile
- D immutable

Question 9

In *The Art of Describing: Dutch Art in the Seventeenth Century* (1983), Svetlana Alpers challenged the prevailing art historical tendency to interpret Dutch Golden Age painting through the lens of Italian Renaissance art, which prioritized narrative and symbolic meaning. Alpers argued that Dutch art, unlike its Italian counterpart, was fundamentally descriptive, focused on representing the visible world with striking specificity. This approach, she contended, downplayed the pursuit of hidden or allegorical significance, emphasizing instead the artwork's capacity to accurately depict the surface appearance of reality, thereby prioritizing a _____ representation of the world.

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

- A subjective
- B historical
- C conceptual
- D verisimilar

Question 10

In the 1950s, Solomon Asch conducted a series of experiments demonstrating the power of social pressure. Participants were asked to match the length of lines, a seemingly simple task. However, when confederates (actors) in the group unanimously gave an incorrect answer, a significant percentage of real participants conformed, yielding to the majority influence despite the clear perceptual evidence to the contrary. These studies revealed how individuals can _____, even when presented with unambiguous information.

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

- A deviate
- B acquiesce
- C object
- D persevere

Question 11

In a foundational 1981 study, Amos Tversky and Daniel Kahneman investigated the *framing effect*, demonstrating how the presentation of information, rather than its objective content, could significantly alter people's decisions. Participants were presented with scenarios where logically equivalent options were described either positively (in terms of lives saved) or negatively (in terms of lives lost). The study revealed that individuals were highly _____ to the way the choices were formulated, consistently exhibiting a bias towards options framed as gains and against those framed as losses.

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

- A susceptible
- B resistant
- C indifferent
- D analytical

Question 12

In his foundational 1946 work on impression formation, psychologist Solomon Asch proposed that certain personality traits are not merely added to form an overall impression but are instead *central* to it, fundamentally influencing the interpretation of other traits. He posited that replacing a central trait like "warm" with "cold" in a list describing a person would not just incrementally alter the impression but would rather _____ the entire perception, changing the meaning and weight of the accompanying traits.

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

- A mitigate
- B stabilize
- C affirm
- D transform

Question 13

In their seminal work in the 1970s, psychologists Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky investigated how individuals make judgments under uncertainty. They found that people often rely on mental shortcuts or rules of thumb, rather than engaging in complex calculations, to arrive at decisions _____. These *heuristics*, while often efficient and adaptive, can also lead to systematic biases and errors in judgment.

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

- A expediently
- B arbitrarily
- C reluctantly
- D theoretically

Question 14

Literary theorist Stanley Fish (1980) challenged the premise of inherent textual meaning, asserting that a text's significance emerges from the dynamic interplay between the reader and the work. This perspective contrasted sharply with formalist criticisms, which often sought objective truths embedded solely within the text. Fish's reader-response theory thus underscored the fundamentally _____ nature of literary interpretation.

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

- A impartial
- B static
- C experiential
- D dogmatic

Question 15

According to literary theorist Viktor Shklovsky in his 1917 essay *Art as Device*, the purpose of art is not to reproduce reality as it is habitually perceived, but to disrupt that habitual perception. He termed this technique "defamiliarization." By presenting ordinary things in an unusual or strange way, art forces the viewer to see them anew, regenerating their sensory experience. This disruption makes the artistic experience more perceptible and thus more _____.

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

- A singular
- B universal
- C comprehensive
- D typical

Question 16

Psychologist Solomon Asch's seminal conformity experiments (1951) revealed that individuals often succumb to group pressure, even when the group's opinion clearly contradicts their own perception. Participants, tasked with matching line lengths, frequently aligned their judgments with a unanimous, incorrect majority. This finding underscored the potent capacity of social dynamics to _____ individual decision-making, even in unambiguous perceptual tasks.

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

- A circumscribe
- B contour
- C extrapolate
- D perpetuate

Question 17

Tardigrades, also known as water bears, are microscopic invertebrates renowned for their remarkable ability to survive extreme environmental conditions. Research, including studies by K. Ingemar Jönsson (2008), has shown these creatures can enter a state of cryptobiosis, allowing them to withstand desiccation, freezing, radiation, and even the vacuum of space. This extraordinary _____ underscores their unique biological adaptations for enduring severe abiotic stressors.

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

- A pliability
- B volatility
- C transience
- D tenacity

Question 18

Research by L. E. Franks in 2018 explored the collective behavior of ant colonies. Franks's work posited that while individual ants possess limited cognitive capacity, the colony as a whole can exhibit complex responses to stimuli. For instance, faced with a disturbance, a colony might adjust foraging patterns or initiate migrations. These behaviors, though seemingly coordinated, emerge not from central command but from local interactions among individuals. Thus, the sophisticated actions observed at the colony level are fundamentally _____ phenomena, arising from the simple rules followed by many individuals.

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

- A predetermined
- B emergent
- C hierarchical
- D innate

Question 19

Studies of *Tardigrada*, or water bears, reveal their remarkable capacity to survive desiccation and other extreme environmental stressors. When faced with such conditions, these micro-animals can enter a state known as cryptobiosis, significantly reducing metabolic activity and physiological functions. This process allows them to become _____, enduring conditions that would be lethal to most other organisms for years, sometimes even decades.

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

- A vigorous
- B quiescent
- C adaptive
- D mobile

Question 20

Research in social psychology has long explored factors influencing prosocial behavior, particularly charitable giving. While explicit requests for donations are common, studies suggest that subtle environmental cues can also significantly impact generosity. For example, a 2007 study by Haley and Fessler demonstrated that the mere presence of stylized eye images on a computer screen, implying being watched, could reliably _____ altruistic behavior in an anonymous economic game. This indicates that even minimal, non-conscious reminders of social observation can influence decisions to help others.

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

- A augment
- B curtail
- C neutralize
- D stabilize

Answers

Question 1

Correct Answer: C

The passage states that the networks "serve as conduits for alarm signals, enabling trees to _____ warnings". This means the networks allow the trees to send or transmit warnings. Looking at the answer choices, (A) suppress means to stop or hold back, which contradicts the idea of sending a warning. (B) obscure means to make unclear, which is not what a warning signal should do. (D) inhibit means to hinder or prevent, also contradicting the idea of sending a warning. (C) convey means to transport or transmit, which fits the context of sending warning signals through a network.

Question 2

Correct Answer: C

The passage states that Hans Robert Jauss argued for a "dynamic _____ between the text and its audience" and that meaning arises from this "responsive interplay." This indicates that the blank should describe a dynamic interaction or exchange between the text and the reader. Looking at the choices, (A) disparity means a great difference. (B) synthesis means combining things to create something new. (C) interplay means reciprocal action or influence. (D) detachment means separation or aloofness. The word that best fits the context of a dynamic and responsive exchange is "interplay."

Question 3

Correct Answer: A

The passage explains that "diffusion of responsibility" means that when others are present, individuals feel less personal responsibility to help. This feeling of lessened or reduced responsibility leads to a decreased likelihood of helping behavior. Therefore, the perceived need for personal intervention is lessened or reduced. Looking at the answer choices, (A) "diminished" means lessened or reduced. (B) "amplified" means increased. (C) "diversified" means varied. (D) "established" means created or set up. The only word that matches the meaning of lessened or reduced is "diminished."

Question 4

Correct Answer: D

The passage explains that internal focalization limits the information presented to the reader, keeping it within the character's knowledge. The blank needs a word that means to limit or confine.

(A) amplify means to increase or make stronger, which is the opposite of limiting.

(B) disperse means to scatter or spread out, which doesn't fit the idea of confining information.

(C) underscore means to emphasize, which is not the primary function described.

(D) circumscribe means to restrict something within limits or boundaries. This aligns perfectly with the passage's description of how internal focalization limits the information to the character's perspective.

Question 5

Correct Answer: A

The passage states that mycorrhizal networks allow for the transfer of resources and mutual support between trees, challenging the view of trees as competing. This indicates that the networks help or make easier the processes of communication and support. The word in the blank should

mean "to make easier" or "to help bring about". Looking at the options, (A) "facilitate" means to make easier or help something happen. (B) "impede" means to hinder or obstruct. (C) "isolate" means to set apart from others. (D) "suppress" means to put an end to or restrain. Only (A) aligns with the context of the passage, which describes the networks as enabling communication and support.

Question 6

Correct Answer: B

The passage describes participants conforming to a group's incorrect answer despite the correct answer being obvious. It explicitly states this occurs because individuals want to gain acceptance or avoid disapproval from the group. This behavior, conforming to group norms for social reasons, is defined as normative influence. (A) cognitive relates to thinking and understanding, which is not the primary driver described. (C) objective means based on facts, which is the opposite of conforming to a clearly incorrect answer. (D) statistical relates to data and probability, which is not the type of influence discussed. Therefore, "normative" is the most logical and precise word.

Question 7

Correct Answer: D

The passage describes source criticism as a method to assess a source's value as evidence, involving scrutiny of origin, purpose, and biases to determine its "conformity with truth or fact". This phrase directly defines the meaning of the blank. Look for the answer choice that means conformity with truth or fact.

(A) brevity means shortness or conciseness. This does not match the meaning.

(B) currency means the fact or quality of being generally accepted or in use.

This does not match the meaning.

(C) singularity means the state of being strange or unique. This does not match the meaning.

(D) veracity means conformity with truth or fact. This directly matches the meaning provided in the passage.

Question 8

Correct Answer: D

The passage states that "certain cognitive processes are not easily altered" and that "these biases tend to persist across diverse contexts." This indicates that the perceptual frameworks are fixed or unchanging. (D) "immutable" means unchanging over time or unable to be changed, which perfectly matches the context. (A) "malleable" means easily influenced or pliable, which contradicts the idea that the processes are "not easily altered." (B) "contingent" means dependent on something else, which is not supported by the context of fixed perceptual frameworks. (C) "volatile" means liable to change rapidly and unpredictably, which also contradicts the idea that the processes "persist" and are "not easily altered."

Question 9

Correct Answer: D

The passage states that Dutch art, according to Alpers, was "focused on representing the visible world with striking specificity" and emphasized "the artwork's capacity to accurately depict the surface appearance of reality." This means the art aimed for a representation that closely resembled reality. Looking at the answer choices, (D) verisimilar means having the appearance of being true or real. This aligns perfectly with the description of Dutch art in the passage. (A) subjective means based on personal feelings or opinions, which is not supported. (B) historical relates to history, which is not the primary focus described. (C) conceptual relates to abstract ideas, which is contrasted with the focus on the visible world.

Question 10

Correct Answer: B

The passage describes how participants in Asch's experiments yielded to majority influence and conformed to incorrect answers, even when the correct answer was obvious. This means they gave in to the group pressure. The word that means to give in or comply with something, often reluctantly, is "acquiesce".

(A) "Deviate" means to depart from an established course or standard. This is the opposite of what the participants did; they followed the group.

(C) "Object" means to express opposition to or disapproval of something. The participants conformed, they did not object.

(D) "Persevere" means to continue in a course of action despite difficulty or delay. The participants changed their answers to match the group, they did not stick to their original, correct judgment.

Question 11

Correct Answer: A

The passage states that individuals consistently exhibited a bias towards options framed as gains and against those framed as losses. This shows that their decisions were easily changed by how the information was presented. The blank needs a word that means easily influenced or affected.

(A) susceptible means easily influenced or affected. This matches the meaning required by the context clues.

(B) resistant means opposing or fighting against something. This is the opposite of what the passage describes.

(C) indifferent means having no strong feelings or opinions. This contradicts the finding that participants consistently showed a bias.

(D) analytical means using logic and reason. The passage describes a bias based on presentation, not a decision based on analysis.

Question 12

Correct Answer: D

The passage states that replacing a central trait would not just incrementally alter the impression but would "change the meaning and weight of the accompanying traits." This indicates a fundamental change to the entire perception. Look for a word that means to change something completely.

(A) mitigate means to make something less severe, which is the opposite of what is described.

(B) stabilize means to make something firm or constant, which contradicts the idea of changing the perception.

(C) affirm means to state positively, which doesn't fit the context of altering an impression based on a change in traits.

(D) transform means to change completely, which aligns directly with the description that the entire perception changes, altering the meaning and weight of other traits.

Question 13

Correct Answer: A

The passage states that people use mental shortcuts instead of complex calculations to make decisions. It also mentions that these methods are "often efficient and adaptive." This suggests that the decisions are reached quickly and effectively. The word that means quickly and effectively is expediently.

(B) arbitrarily means randomly, which is not supported by the passage. While the shortcuts can lead to biases, the passage does not say the decisions themselves are random.

(C) reluctantly means unwillingly. The passage does not suggest that people are unwilling to make decisions this way; rather, they "rely on" these shortcuts.

(D) theoretically means in theory rather than in practice. The passage describes how people *actually* make decisions, not just how they might in theory.

Question 14

Correct Answer: C

The passage describes Stanley Fish's theory, which argues that a text's meaning is "constructed by the reader's engagement" and emerges from "dynamic interplay between the reader and the work," rather than being "inherent" or "objective." This indicates that interpretation is based on the reader's personal involvement and experience. Therefore, the blank should be filled with a word that means "relating to experience." (C) "experiential" means relating to or based on experience. (A) "impartial" means treating all rivals or disputants equally, which contradicts the idea of reader involvement. (B) "static" means lacking in movement, action, or change, which contradicts "dynamic interplay." (D) "dogmatic" means asserting opinions as facts, which is unrelated to how meaning is derived.

Question 15

Correct Answer: A

The passage explains that defamiliarization makes the artistic experience "more perceptible." This means the experience stands out and is noticed more acutely. The word that fits this meaning of standing out or being unique is "singular." Looking at the choices, (A) singular means unique or out of the ordinary, which aligns with the idea of the experience being more perceptible due to being made strange. (B) universal means applying everywhere or to everyone, which is the opposite of making something stand out uniquely. (C) comprehensive means complete or including everything, which doesn't fit the context of perception. (D) typical means usual or standard, which contradicts the idea of defamiliarization making things unusual. Therefore, "singular" is the most logical and precise word.

Question 16

Correct Answer: B

The passage describes how group pressure causes individuals to change their judgments to align with the group, even when the group is wrong. The blank needs a word that means "to shape" or "to influence profoundly" individual decision-making. (B) "contour" means to form into a specific shape, which aligns with the idea that social dynamics shape or mold decision-making. (A) "circumscribe" means to restrict or limit, which is not the primary action described, as the group's influence is more about shaping than merely limiting. (C) "extrapolate" means to infer or estimate by extending known information, which does not fit the context of social dynamics influencing decisions. (D) "perpetuate" means to make something continue indefinitely, which is unrelated to the immediate impact of group pressure on judgments.

Question 17

Correct Answer: D

The passage describes the tardigrades' "remarkable ability to survive extreme environmental conditions" and their capacity for "enduring severe abiotic stressors." This indicates a quality of toughness, resilience, or persistence. (D) tenacity refers to the quality of being tenacious, meaning persistent, determined, or resistant to breaking or giving up. This aligns perfectly with the tardigrades' ability to survive harsh conditions. (A) pliability refers to the quality of being easily bent or flexible, which does not convey the idea of extreme endurance. (B) volatility refers to a tendency to change rapidly and unpredictably, which contradicts the consistent ability to endure. (C) transience refers to the state of lasting for only a short time, which is the opposite of the tardigrades' ability to survive extended periods of stress.

Question 18

Correct Answer: B

The passage states that the complex actions of the ant colony "emerge not from central command but from local interactions among individuals" and "arising from the simple rules followed by many individuals." This means the complex colony behavior comes about from the interactions of the simple individual behaviors. The word that describes a complex system arising from simpler interactions is "emergent."

(A) "Predetermined" means decided in advance, which contradicts the idea of behaviors arising from dynamic interactions.

(C) "Hierarchical" implies a top-down structure, which the passage explicitly denies by stating the behavior doesn't come from "central command."

(D) "Innate" means something that is natural or inborn, but the passage focuses on how complex behavior arises from interactions, not just something the ants are born with.

Question 19

Correct Answer: B

The passage describes tardigrades entering a state during extreme conditions where they significantly reduce "metabolic activity and physiological functions." The context indicates they become inactive or dormant to survive. The blank needs a word that means inactive or dormant. Looking at the choices: (A) vigorous means energetic or active, which is the opposite of the description. (C) adaptive describes the ability to change to suit new conditions, but the blank describes the state they enter, not the general ability. (D) mobile means capable of movement, which is also the opposite of an inactive state. (B) quiescent means inactive or dormant, which perfectly matches the description of reduced metabolic activity and the ability to endure harsh conditions by shutting down physiological functions. Therefore, (B) quiescent is the most logical and precise word.

Question 20

Correct Answer: A

The passage discusses how subtle environmental cues can "significantly impact generosity" and that the presence of eye images could "reliably _____ altruistic behavior". This means the eye images caused an increase in altruistic behavior. Therefore, the blank needs a word that means to increase or make greater.

Look at the answer choices:

(A) Augment means to increase the size, amount, or strength of something. This matches the idea of increasing altruistic behavior.

(B) Curtail means to reduce or limit something. This is the opposite of what is needed.

(C) Neutralize means to make something ineffective or counteract its effect. This does not fit the context of increasing behavior.

(D) Stabilize means to make something fixed or stop changing. The passage indicates an increase, not a stabilization of behavior.

The only word that means to increase is augment.