

Name: _____ Date: _____

Answer Key: Lexical Chess: Advanced Wordplay for 11th Grade Rhetoricians

Students analyze semantic nuances between disparate synonyms and resolve homophonic ambiguities within complex literary and legal contexts.

1. In a legal context, while 'nullify' and 'abrogate' relate to cancellation, which nuance distinguishes 'abrogate' in high-level discourse?

Answer: B) It specifically refers to the formal repeal of a law or right by an authoritative body.

While both words mean to invalidate, 'abrogate' carries a formal, often political or legal connotation of abolishing a law or sovereign duty.

2. The philosopher's _____ toward the corruption was not 'indifference' but a calculated 'dispassion,' intended to foster objective analysis.

Answer: C) detachment

'Detachment' functions as a synonym for 'dispassion' in this context, emphasizing a lack of bias rather than a lack of movement or care (apathy).

3. The words 'discreet' (meaning cautious or unobtrusive) and 'discrete' (meaning individually separate and distinct) are homophones often confused in technical writing.

Answer: A) True

These are homophones; 'discreet' relates to wisdom/privacy, while 'discrete' relates to mathematics and separate entities.

4. Which set of antonyms best illustrates the transition from a 'mercurial' temperament to one that is reliable and unchanging?

Answer: B) mercurial / steadfast

'Mercurial' describes someone prone to sudden changes in mood; 'steadfast' is its direct antonym, denoting consistency and fixedness.

5. The diplomat noted that the _____ of the bells from the cathedral provided a somber _____ for the funeral procession.

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Answer: D) knell / chord

A 'knell' is the sound of a bell rung for a death; a 'chord' is a harmonic set of musical notes.

6. In literary criticism, the term 'laconic' is a synonym for 'verbose' when describing a character's dialogue style.

Answer: B) False

They are antonyms; 'laconic' means using very few words, whereas 'verbose' means using more words than needed.

7. Choose the most precise synonym for 'mitigate' when used in the context of environmental damage control.

Answer: B) alleviate

'Alleviate' is the best synonym for 'mitigate' as both terms involve making a problem or pain less severe.

8. Despite the evidence, the suspect continued to ____ any involvement, hoping the jury would ____ his claims as the truth.

Answer: C) deny / accept

The context requires a verb of refusal (deny) and a synonym for 'believe/receive' (accept), avoiding the homophone 'except'.

9. The words 'aesthetic' and 'ascetic' are homophones that can be used interchangeably in essays about art history.

Answer: B) False

They are neither homophones (pronounced differently) nor synonyms. 'Aesthetic' concerns beauty; 'ascetic' concerns severe self-discipline/abstention.

10. Identify the relationship: 'Ephemeral' is to 'Permanent' as 'Capricious' is to ____.

Answer: C) Stable

This is an analogy of antonyms. 'Ephemeral' (short-lived) is the opposite of 'Permanent'; 'Capricious' (impulsive) is the opposite of 'Stable'.