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Answer Key: Aesthetic Analysis: Ancient Adjectives for College Critics

Moving beyond basic modifiers to investigate how nuanced descriptors shape ideological framing and rhetorical impact in philosophical and literary texts.

1. In Virginia Woolf's seminal essay 'A Room of One's Own,' she characterizes the hypothetical 'Judith Shakespeare' using adjectives that suggest a latent, suppressed genius. Which adjective choice most effectively functions as a 'limiting' rather than a 'descriptive' modifier in a rhetorical context?

Answer: B) Any

In linguistic analysis, 'any' functions as a limiting adjective (specifically an indefinite adjective) that restricts the noun's scope rather than describing its sensory qualities, often used rhetorically to emphasize universality or lack thereof.

2. When analyzing the 'sublime' in Edmund Burke's aesthetic philosophy, the adjective _____ is used to describe an experience that is not merely beautiful, but overwhelming to the point of terror.

Answer: B) Vast

For Burke, adjectives like 'vast' and 'infinite' are essential to the concept of the Sublime, as they denote a scale that transcends human comprehension and sparks 'delight' through fear.

3. In the sentence 'The then-current administration's policy was flawed,' the word 'then-current' serves as a compound attributive adjective.

Answer: A) True

True. 'Then-current' is a compound modifier functioning as an attributive adjective modifying 'administration,' linked by a hyphen for clarity.

4. Analyze the 'intrinsic' vs 'extrinsic' value of adjectives in a legal brief. Which of the following examples utilizes an 'evaluative' adjective that would most likely be flagged for lack of objectivity?

Answer: B) The egregious violation

'Egregious' is an evaluative adjective that carries a subjective moral judgment, whereas the other options are classifiers or quantifiers.

5. In the phrase 'The poet's Kafkaesque narrative style,' the capitalized word is a/an _____ adjective derived from a proper noun.

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Answer: C) Proper

Proper adjectives are derived from proper nouns (Franz Kafka) and are used to describe specific styles or cultural associations.

6. A post-positive adjective occurs when the modifier is placed before the noun it describes, such as in the phrase 'the blue sky'.

Answer: B) False

False. Post-positive adjectives follow the noun (e.g., 'the city limits' or 'whiskey neat'), a structure common in legal, heraldic, or archaic phrasing.

7. Consider the semantic difference in these two descriptors: 'The statesman was childish' vs 'The statesman was childlike.' This distinction highlights what property of adjectives?

Answer: B) Denotation versus Connotation

While both share a similar denotation (resembling a child), their connotations are vastly different: 'childish' implies immaturity (negative), while 'childlike' implies innocence (positive).

8. In linguistic typology, if an adjective is used as a noun, such as 'The _____ and the dead,' it is referred to as a nominalized adjective.

Answer: B) Quick

In the phrase 'the quick and the dead,' 'quick' (historically meaning living) is a nominalized adjective functioning as a subject.

9. In the sentence 'The water felt cold,' the word 'cold' is a predicative adjective that functions as a subject complement.

Answer: A) True

True. Predicative adjectives follow a linking verb (felt) and provide information about the subject (water) rather than appearing directly before it.

10. Evaluate the cumulative adjective order in this doctoral thesis title: 'Three distinct ancient Greek ceramic artifacts.' Why is the order 'distinct ancient' grammatically preferred over 'ancient distinct' in Standard English?

Answer: B) Opinion adjectives must precede age adjectives

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The Royal Order of Adjectives dictates that opinion or observation descriptors ('distinct') must precede age ('ancient'), which in turn precedes origin ('Greek').