



austere
esoteric
facsimile
grotesque
mesmerize

metamorphosis
notorious
perfunctory
provocative
travesty

Ten Words in Context

In the space provided, write the letter of the meaning closest to that of each **boldfaced** word. Use the context of the sentences to help you figure out each word's meaning.

1 **austere**
(ô-stîr')
-adjective

___ *Austere* means

- Ms. Stone's appearance was **austere**. She wore plain, dark-colored clothing with no jewelry, and she never used makeup.
 - The walls in Mario's den are white and nearly bare, and his white furniture has simple lines. This **austere** decor gives the room a pleasantly calm mood.
- A. very ugly. B. very plain. C. very youthful.

2 **esoteric**
(ës'ə-tēr'ik)
-adjective

___ *Esoteric* means

- The instruction manuals that come with computer software often use such **esoteric** terms that they seem to be written in a foreign language.
 - The poetry of Ezra Pound, filled with references to ancient Greek culture, is too **esoteric** for most readers.
- A. difficult to understand. B. shallow. C. unfavorable.

3 **facsimile**
(făk-sim'ə-lē)
-noun

___ *Facsimile* means

- When a **facsimile** of an old Sears-Roebuck catalog was published recently, it became a bestseller. People enjoyed seeing what was for sale a century ago.
 - The word *fax* is short for **facsimile**. With a fax machine, you can send a precise image of a document across the country electronically in seconds.
- A. an original. B. a distorted version. C. an accurate copy.

4 **grotesque**
(grō-těsk')
-adjective

___ *Grotesque* means

- Most people found the movie character E.T. adorable, but I thought the little alien was **grotesque**, with its weird combination of babyish features and old, wrinkled skin.
 - The clown made **grotesque** faces, squinting his eyes, pulling down the corners of his mouth, and sticking out his tongue.
- A. strange-looking. B. hard to understand. C. charming.

5 **mesmerize**
(měz'mə-rīz')
-verb

___ *Mesmerize* means

- The intense eyes of the woman in the photograph **mesmerized** me. I couldn't take my eyes off the picture.
 - When driving at night, you can become **mesmerized** by the lines on the road or by other cars' headlights or taillights. To avoid a hypnotic state, keep your eyes moving from front to side to rearview mirror.
- A. to amuse. B. to fascinate. C. to distort.

6 **metamorphosis**
(mēt'ə-môr'fē-sīs)
-noun

___ *Metamorphosis* means

- A caterpillar's transformation into a butterfly is a well-known example of **metamorphosis**.
 - In Franz Kafka's famous story "The **Metamorphosis**," a man wakes up on his thirtieth birthday to discover that he has turned into an enormous insect.
- A. a change in form. B. a disaster. C. a scientific theory.

7 notorious
(nō-tôr'ē-əs)
-adjective

___ *Notorious* means

- Batman and Robin matched wits with the Joker and the Penguin, who were **notorious** for their evil deeds.
 - The local diner is **notorious** for bitter coffee, soggy vegetables, limp salads, and mystery meat.
- A. regarded negatively. B. regarded with curiosity. C. ignored.

8 perfunctory
(pər-fŭnk'tə-rē)
-adjective

___ *Perfunctory* means

- The doctor's examination was **perfunctory**. He seemed to be just going through the motions without taking any interest in the patient.
 - Most of the candidates were passionate on the subject of nuclear weapons, but one spoke in a very **perfunctory** way, apparently bored with the topic.
- A. uninterested. B. enthusiastic. C. exaggerated.

9 provocative
(prō-vŏk'ə-tĭv)
-adjective

___ *Provocative* means

- "A good essay is **provocative**," said our English instructor. "It gets the reader interested and attentive, starting with the very first paragraph."
 - To arouse the viewers' curiosity, the television ad began with a **provocative** image: a spaceship landing on a baseball field, at home plate.
- A. predictable. B. difficult to understand. C. attention-getting.

10 travesty
(trāv'is-tē)
-noun

___ *Travesty* means

- The fraternity skit, a **travesty** of college life, exaggerated and ridiculed many campus activities.
 - The musical-comedy version of *Hamlet* was a **travesty**. The critics and audience agreed that it made a mockery of Shakespeare's profound tragedy.
- A. a joking, disrespectful imitation. B. an exact copy. C. a simple version.

Matching Words with Definitions

Following are definitions of the ten words. Clearly write or print each word next to its definition. The sentences above and on the previous page will help you decide on the meaning of each word.

1. _____ To hypnotize or fascinate; hold spellbound
2. _____ A great or complete change; transformation
3. _____ A crude, exaggerated, or ridiculous representation; mockery
4. _____ Done only as a routine, with little care or interest; performed with no interest or enthusiasm
5. _____ Known widely but unfavorably; having a bad reputation
6. _____ Tending to arouse interest or curiosity
7. _____ An exact copy or reproduction
8. _____ Intended for or understood by only a certain group; beyond the understanding of most people
9. _____ Without decoration or luxury; severely simple
10. _____ Distorted or strikingly inconsistent in shape, appearance, or manner

CAUTION: Do not go any further until you are sure the above answers are correct. Then you can use the definitions to help you in the following practices. Your goal is eventually to know the words well enough so that you don't need to check the definitions at all.