

GRE VERBAL PRACTICE PAPER

Idioms and Rhyming Slang by Will Floyd

While dialects and slang exist in most corners of the world, a few peculiar language habits stand out as developing entirely new ways of speaking. Most famously, the rhyming Cockney slang of East London that developed in the late nineteenth century has created many different idioms. The process of creating rhyming slang appears quite simple. A common word gets replaced by a phrase whose terminal syllable rhymes with the word. Thus, “wife” would become “trouble and strife,” except rhyming slang quite frequently will not stop there. Remarkably, the rhyming component of the phrase will be dropped altogether, so that wife is actually just “trouble.” Other notable examples is “stairs” becoming “apples,” from “apples and pears,” and “bottle” becoming “aris,” shortened from “Aristotle.”

Obviously, this can lead to quite a bit of confusion to a person unfamiliar with rhyming slang, or someone who does not know the full rhymes. This problem is exacerbated by the fluidity of rhyming slang. Celebrities and politicians can often lend their names to new forms, and “Britney Spears” has become a term for “beers” in recent years. This confusion may actually be an intentional development of rhyming slang. Theories abound about the origin of rhyming slang, with the one constant being a form of deception by the people using the slang, with the language of shady shopkeepers or the doubletalk of thieves as the most commonly cited examples. No matter the origin, rhyming Cockney slang is a true innovation on the English language.

1. The word "idioms" in the passage means _____.

unusual phrases

idiosyncratic accents

offensive comments

common expressions

rare languages

2. It can be inferred from the passage that "Britney Spears" _____.

has a fondness for beers

is confused by rhyming slang

is a well-known celebrity

uses rhyming slang

is from London

3. The author would agree with the statement that _____.

rhyming Cockney slang is never used by the well educated and articulate

rhyming Cockney slang is only used as a kind of code

rhyming Cockney slang has largely died out

rhyming Cockney slang is only used by criminals

rhyming Cockney slang has provided interesting linguistic forms

4. The author's view of practitioners of rhyming slang is _____.

that they are all illiterate and poorly educated

they need to learn proper English

that they have little imagination in language

that they are all criminals

that they have created interesting linguistic forms

5. The main idea of the passage is _____.

rhyming slang can be confusing to outsiders

dialects are slight revisions to a language that are usually easy to pick up by native speakers

rhyming slang was created by a single individual to get around the police

Cockney people cannot be trusted by anyone in business dealings

rhyming Cockney slang is a particularly innovative dialectic

6. The word "exacerbated" in the passage means _____.

assisted or helped

eased or made better

given or benefited

undone or pulled apart

made worse or aggravated

Choose the word or set of words that best completes the following sentence.

7. Although the boy was known for walking briskly everywhere he went, today he traveled at a pace that was quite _____.

surprising

plodding

unpredictable

expeditious

irregular

Choose the word or set of words that best completes the following sentence.

8. Patrick told Isidore that he was a(n) _____. In response, Isidore said, "Good, I do not want others to be able to _____ my actions easily."

perplexity . . . condemn

enigma . . . decipher

fool . . . enjoy

sage . . . underrate

wretch . . . comprehend

Choose the word or set of words that best completes the following sentence.

9. Although Robert did not have _____ beliefs, he would regularly _____ about

almost any topic, expressing his passing thoughts with little hesitation, often to the _____ of his reticent, conservative friends.

heralded . . . recollect . . . salutations

intellectual . . . teach . . . amusement

dogmatic . . . preach . . . sadness

settled . . . opine . . . consternation

certain . . . publish . . . amazement

Choose the word or set of words that best completes the following sentence.

10. The office building was infested, and the ants were particularly _____.

mundane

personable

perturbed

irksome

affable

Choose the word or set of words that best completes the following sentence.

11. The author was both very popular and anonymous; she managed to remain unknown despite her books being widely read by using a _____.

mystique

contrivance

appellation

rubric

pseudonym

Choose the word or set of words that best completes the following sentence.

12. Even when he tried to give a simple answer, the professor had a tendency to _____ on his subject.

abridge

simplify

pontificate

clarify

excise

Choose the word or set of words that best completes the following sentence.

13. The scientists benefitted from the formal structure provided by the _____ lead researcher; they performed their work with great _____.

wizened ... duress

abstruse . . . discernment

dilettante . . . largesse

pedantic . . . alacrity

prodigious . . . compunction

Choose the word or set of words that best completes the following sentence.

14. During the Protestant Reformation, _____ sought to _____ the Christian church of idolatry by destroying traditional religious images, including paintings and sculptures.

demagogues . . . inveigle

iconoclasts . . . purge

dilettantes . . . redress

raconteurs . . . pare

paragons . . . inculcate

Choose the word or set of words that best completes the following sentence.

15. Scott was well known for his _____, though he tried to retain as much _____ as possible with regard to such acts of beneficence.

malevolence . . . foolhardiness

wealth . . . benignity

philanthropy . . . secrecy

pusillanimity . . . magnanimity

gregariousness . . . pacifism