GRE

Sample Questions
Ragwort was accidentally introduced to New Zealand in the late nineteenth century and, like so many invading foreign species, quickly became a pest. By the 1920s, the weed was rampant. What made matters worse was that its proliferation coincided with sweeping changes in agriculture and a massive shift from sheep farming to dairying. Ragwort contains a battery of toxic and resilient alkaloids: even honey made from its flowers contains the poison in dilute form. Livestock generally avoid grazing where ragwort is growing, but they will do so once it displaces grass and clover in their pasture. Though sheep can eat it for months before showing any signs of illness, if cattle eat it they sicken quickly, and fatality can even result.
1. The passage suggests that the proliferation of ragwort was particularly ill-timed because it
A. coincided with and exacerbated a decline in agriculture
B. took place in conditions that enabled the ragwort to spread faster than it otherwise would have done
C. led to an increase in the amount of toxic compounds contained in the plants
D. prevented people from producing honey that could be eaten safely
E. had consequences for livestock that were more dramatic than the otherwise would have been
For the following question, consider each of the choices separately and select all that apply.

2. The passage implies which of the following about the problems ragwort poses to dairy farmers?

A. Milk produced by cows that eat ragwort causes illness in humans who drink it
B. Ragwort can supplant the plants normally eaten by cattle
C. Cattle, unlike sheep, are unable to differentiate between ragwort and healthy grazing
1. The passage mentions that ragwort’s impact on New Zealand’s agriculture was especially severe because the plant’s proliferation “coincided with sweeping changes in agriculture that saw a massive shift from sheep farming to dairying.” The severity of the impact was increased because cattle, which were displacing sheep, are much more sensitive than sheep to the toxins contained in ragwort. This points to Choice E as the correct answer choice. Nothing in the passage suggests that choices A, B or C were responsible for the proliferation of ragwort. Additionally, choice D was not even addressed in the passage. The passage did not address whether or not the toxic honey was responsible for the proliferation of ragwort.
2. The question asks about the problems ragwort poses to dairy farmers.

Choice A is incorrect – the passage does not mention the effect of ragwort consumption on the milk produced by cows

**Choice B is correct** – the passage mentions that livestock will eat ragwort “once it displaces grass and clover in their pastures.”

Choice C is incorrect – the passage claims that “livestock generally avoid grazing where ragwort is growing,” but does not make a distinction between cattle and sheep.
1. This composer has never courted popularity: her rugged modernism seems to defy rather than to ______ the audience.

A. ignore
B. discount
C. woo
D. teach
E. cow
1. The first part of the sentence asserts that the composer has never sought popularity, while the second part of the sentence explains what the composer’s style does instead. The blank, then, must be filled with a verb that is roughly synonymous with “court popularity.” The choice that best does this is “woo”; its correctness is confirmed by the fact that it also forms the best contrast with “defy.” None of the other choices indicates the desire to be like by or to win over audiences that a synonym of “court popularity” would require.

The correct answer is choice C – woo.
The sight of a single actor portraying several characters in the same scene is no longer a shock to the average moviegoer, such special-effects trickery having become so ______.

A. expensive  
B. specialized  
C. sinister  
D. commonplace  
E. unreliable
2. The blank calls for a term that would explain why the special effects that once astonished moviegoers no longer do so. “Commonplace” does this by suggesting that the technology has become so familiar that it no longer surprises. None of the other options suggests a change that would result in desensitizing moviegoers to the special effects on-screen.

The correct answer is choice D – commonplace.
For the next two questions, compare Quantity A and Quantity B, using additional information centered above the two quantities if such information is given. Select one of the four answer choices.

A. Quantity A is greater
B. Quantity B is greater
C. The two quantities are equal
D. The relationship cannot be determined from the information given
1. Today the price of a table was reduced by 20 percent from what it was yesterday, and the price of a lamp was reduced by 30 percent from what it was yesterday.

Quantity A
The dollar amount of the reduction in the price of the table

Quantity B
The dollar amount of the reduction in the price of the lamp

A. Quantity A is greater
B. Quantity B is greater
C. The two quantities are equal
D. The relationship cannot be determined from the information given
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1. Quantity A is 20 percent of yesterday’s price of the table. Since yesterday’s price is not given, you cannot calculate this quantity. Similarly, you cannot calculate Quantity B. In the absence of further information with which to compare the two quantities, the correct answer is Choice D.

The strategy used in this example is “Determine whether a conclusion follows from the information given.”
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2. \( \frac{x(x-2)}{(x+3)(x-4)^2} = 0 \)

Quantity A \[ x \]  Quantity B \[ -2 \]

A. Quantity A is greater
B. Quantity B is greater
C. The two quantities are equal
D. The relationship cannot be determined from the information given
2. To compare $x$ with $-2$, you should first solve the equation
\[
\frac{x(x-2)}{(x+3)(x-4)^2} = 0
\]
for $x$.

To solve the equation, recall that a fraction $\frac{a}{b}$ is equal to 0 only if $a = 0$ and $b \neq 0$.

So the fraction $\frac{x(x-2)}{(x+3)(x-4)^2}$ is equal to 0 only if $x(x - 2)$ is equal to 0 and $(x + 3)(x - 4)^2$ is not equal to 0. Note that the only values of $x$ for which $x(x - 2) = 0$ are $x = 0$ and $x = 2$, and for these two values, $(x + 3)(x - 4)^2$ is not equal to 0. Therefore, the only values of $x$ for which the fraction $\frac{x(x-2)}{(x+3)(x-4)^2}$ is equal to 0 are $x = 0$ and $x = 2$. Since both 0 and 2 are greater than Quantity B, $-2$, the correct answer is **Choice A**.

The strategy used is this example is “Search for a Mathematical Relationship.”
1. Which of the following operations carried out on both the numerator and the denominator of a fraction will always produce an equivalent fraction?

Indicate all such operations.

A. Adding 2
B. Multiplying by 5
C. Dividing by 100
1. Multiplying both the numerator and the denominator of a fraction by the same non-zero number is equivalent to multiplying the fraction by 1, thus producing an equivalent fraction. The same is true for division. However, adding the same number to both the numerator and denominator does not usually produce an equivalent fraction. Here is an example.

\[
\frac{1}{2} \neq \frac{1+2}{2+2} = \frac{3}{4}
\]

Thus the correct answers are Choices B and C.

The strategy used in this example is “Determine whether a conclusion follows from the information given.”
2. A group of 5,000 investors responded to a survey asking whether they owned stocks and whether they owned bonds. Of the group, 20 percent responded that they owned only one of the two types of investments. If $r$ is the number of investors in the group who owned stocks but not bonds, which of the following represents the number of investors in the group who owned bonds but not stocks, in terms of $r$?

A. $5,000 - r$
B. $1,000 - r$
C. $r - 1,000$
D. $1,000r$
E. $(0.2)(5,000 - r)$
2. Twenty percent of the 5,000 investors that responded to the survey said they owned either stocks or bonds, but not both. So the number of investors in that group is \((0.2)(5,000)\), or 1,000. Given that \(r\) members of that group owned stocks but not bonds, the number of investors in that group who owned bonds but not stocks is \(1,000 - r\).

Thus the correct answer is **Choice B**.

The strategies used in this example are “Translate from words to an arithmetic or algebraic representation” and “Search for a mathematical relationship.”
Questions?

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