CONTEXT CLUES

(From Common Threads)

13 I detect a whiff of aftershave, and something tightens hard across my chest. Suffering the embarrassment of parents is a verity of childhood, as inevitable as scraped knees and bent bicycles. It is doubly uncomfortable, however, when you are the child of immigrants, the prized possession of a well-meaning but clueless Mami and Papi who just don’t get it, and maybe never will.

In paragraph 13, the word **verity** means —

A. truth  
B. mystery  
C. resentment  
D. delight

(From The Trailblazer: Jackie Robinson)

5 Rickey believed Jackie Robinson, who at the time was a star shortstop in the Negro Leagues, could compete with the best in the major leagues. But Rickey wanted to make sure Robinson had the composure to withstand the racial taunts of fans and opposing players.

What is the meaning of the word **composure** in paragraph 5?

A. Creativity  
B. Strength  
C. Talent  
D. Agility

(From Letter That Changed My Life)

2 Between alarms I would rush to the company office to read Captain Gray’s copy of the Sunday *New York Times*. It was late in the afternoon when I finally got to the *Book Review* section. As I read it, my blood began to boil. An article blatantly stated what I took to be a calumny—that William Butler Yeats, the Nobel Prize-winning light of the Irish Literary Renaissance, had transcended his Irishness and was forever to be known as a universal poet.

In paragraph 2, the word **calumny** means —

A. disappointment  
B. anecdote  
C. slander  
D. compliment
When I walked into the house, all excited, with the phonograph hitched to my hip, my mother gave me a look that suggested an eight-ounce day. She said nothing, however, and I said nothing as I placed the phonograph on the round table in the parlor, checked it for any accidents to expose parts that might have happened in transit, found none, lifted the record from the turntable where the girl in the store had fixed it with two big rubber bands, examined both sides of it, and noticed that my mother was watching. While I was still cranking the machine, she spoke at last, softly and politely, which I knew meant she didn’t like the looks of what was going on. She spoke in Armenian.

1 Read the following dictionary entry.

**fix**  
\[\text{fiks}\]  
v 1. to stabilize 2. to capture the attention of 3. to get ready for 4. to repair or mend

Which definition best matches the use of the word fixed in paragraph 8?

A. Definition 1  
B. Definition 2  
C. Definition 3  
D. Definition 4

(From The Police Beat)

Read these sentences from the article.

. . . she left and was replaced by Steve Burgard, who also came in early and read a lot of my copy. Steve, who is now at *The Los Angeles Times*, always asked a lot of questions about facts in the story.

What is the most likely meaning of the word *copy*?

A. a printout of a newspaper  
B. editorial criticisms of writing  
C. grammatical concerns in writing  
D. text that reporters write for the paper
(From The Snob)

15 Young Harcourt stood beside Grace, brushing against her soft shoulder, and made faintly aware again of the delicate scent she used. There, so close beside him, she was holding within her everything he wanted to reach out for, only now he felt a sharp hostility that made him sullen and silent.

Which words from paragraph 15 help the reader understand the meaning of the word *sullen*?

A faintly aware  
B delicate scent  
C sharp hostility  
D brushing against

(From The Solace of Open Spaces)

4 Today the sun is out—only a few clouds billowing. In the east, where the sheep have started off without me, the benchland tilts up in a series of eroded red-earthed mesas, planed flat on top by a million years of water; behind them, a bold line of muscular scarps rears up ten thousand feet to become the Big Horn Mountains. A tidal pattern is engraved into the ground, as if left by the sea that once covered this state. Canyons curve down like galaxies to meet the oncoming rush of flat land.

Read this excerpt from paragraph 4 of the passage.

... planed flat on top by a million years of water ...

The word *planed* is from the Latin root *plan*, which means

A level.  
B broad.  
C faded.  
D polished

1. Read this sentence from “Walking.”

They are all, somehow, one plant, each with a share of communal knowledge.

What does the word *communal* mean?

A. basic  
B. diverse  
C. growing  
D. mutual