Name _____ Date _____

Euphemism and Oxymoron in Context

Directions: Read each sentence or short exchange closely, paying careful attention to the context around each figure of speech. Then answer the question about how the euphemism or oxymoron works.

1. Which sentence uses a euphemism to make an unpleasant fact sound milder than it really is?

A. The bad news spread through the office like a winter cold.

B. The company announced that it was rightsizing its staff, and forty employees lost their jobs in March.

C. The company fired forty employees in March and gave no reason.

D. The meeting about the announcement dragged on for a thousand years.

2. Mr. Delgado read the real estate listing aloud, "A cozy fixer-upper with lots of potential," and then he scrolled through photos of a sagging porch and a single tiny bedroom and sighed. What is the listing's gentle language really telling buyers?

A. The house is so popular that it will sell within a day.

B. The house is large and was recently remodeled.

C. The house is comfortable and ready to move into.

D. The house is small and needs a lot of repair work.

3. After green foam poured from a factory pipe into Alder Creek, the company's official statement described the event as "an unplanned release of material" and promised to review the situation. What is the main effect of this phrase?

A. It makes a spill into a creek sound vague and minor, drawing attention away from the factory's responsibility.

B. It warns families downstream to stay away from the water.

C. It tells the public exactly which chemical spilled into the creek.

D. It admits that workers caused the spill on purpose.

4. When a neighbor at the block party asked Mr. Abernathy where he worked, he smiled and explained that he was "between jobs right now." Why does Mr. Abernathy choose this particular phrase?

A. To announce that he has just been promoted

B. To explain that he works two jobs at the same time

C. To say that he helps other people find work

D. To admit that he is out of work while making it sound temporary and less harsh

5. A euphemism can make something unpleasant sound gentler than it really is. In which two sentences is a euphemism used in that way? Select two.

☐ A. After their shouting match, the two coaches described it to reporters as "a frank exchange of views."

☐ B. The old furnace groaned and rattled all winter.

☐ C. The referee's call was flat-out wrong, and the whole crowd knew it.

☐ D. Our defense was a brick wall in the second half.

☐ E. The teacher told the class gently that their hamster had "passed away" over the weekend.

6. Read these sentences from a sports story: "After the loss, the locker room was a pressure cooker, and the coach's words landed like a slap. Then a deafening silence settled over the team." Which phrase is an oxymoron?

A. a deafening silence

B. a pressure cooker

C. landed like a slap

D. settled over the team

7. Everyone at the bakery knew that Mrs. Kim planned to retire in June; it was an open secret, even though she had never said a word about it to anyone. What does the oxymoron "open secret" mean in this sentence?

A. A plan that only Mrs. Kim knows about

B. Something meant to be private that everyone already knows

C. News that Mrs. Kim announced to the whole bakery

D. A plan that everyone has forgotten

8. Ms. Ferreira called the science fair setup "organized chaos": the tables were crammed with poster boards and tangled extension cords, yet by eight o'clock every single project sat in its numbered spot. What does her oxymoron suggest about the setup?

A. It looks wild and messy, but it is working according to a plan.

B. It is completely out of control.

C. It is calm, neat and quiet.

D. It has been canceled because of the mess.

9. Graduation felt bittersweet to Kofi, who was proud to walk across the stage but sensed that every hug from his friends was really a goodbye. Why is "bittersweet" a fitting word for Kofi's day?

A. It shows that the graduation cake tasted strange.

B. It joins two opposite tastes to capture pride and sadness felt at the same time.

C. It shows that Kofi was angry at his friends for leaving.

D. It shows that Kofi felt only sad about graduating.

10. On the crowded bus ride home, Mara and her best friend sat alone together, each wearing headphones and each watching the dark fields slide past the window. What does the oxymoron "alone together" suggest about the two friends?

A. They have chosen seats at opposite ends of the bus.

B. They are angry with each other and refuse to talk.

C. They are the only two people on the bus.

D. They are sitting together, but each is lost in private thoughts.