

What is Ambiguity?

Worksheet

Ambiguity is the presence of multiple possible interpretations or meanings. A word, phrase or situation is ambiguous when it is unclear or open to different understandings.

Questions

1. What is ambiguity?
 - A) A mistake in writing
 - B) Multiple possible meanings of a word or phrase
 - C) A figure of speech
 - D) Confusion caused by poor grammar only
2. Example: 'I like cooking and eating.' What is the ambiguity?
 - A) The sentence makes no sense
 - B) Unclear if 'eating' is cooking-related or separate
 - C) No ambiguity here
 - D) Grammatically incorrect
3. What kind of ambiguity is 'bat' (animal or sports equipment)?
 - A) Structural ambiguity
 - B) Lexical ambiguity
 - C) Grammatical error
 - D) Metaphor
4. Which sentence has structural ambiguity?
 - A) I like red apples.
 - B) The cat sat on the mat.
 - C) She handed the letter to her sister in the office.
 - D) He walked slowly.
5. She saw the star with a telescope.
6. The chicken is ready to eat.
7. Time flies like an arrow.
8. Define: What is ambiguity?
9. Define: What is lexical ambiguity?
10. Define: What is structural ambiguity?

Answer Key

1. B) Multiple possible meanings of a word or phrase — Ambiguity is the presence of multiple valid interpretations or meanings.
2. C) No ambiguity here — There is no ambiguity; the sentence is clear (both activities are liked).
3. B) Lexical ambiguity — Lexical ambiguity: the word has multiple meanings.
4. C) She handed the letter to her sister in the office. — Unclear: Was the sister in the office, or did she hand the letter there?
5. Ambiguity: Did she use the telescope to see the star, or did the star have a telescope? Lexical: unclear grammar creates two possible readings. Context and common sense resolve it, but the sentence is ambiguous as written.
6. Ambiguity: Is the chicken ready to eat food, or is it ready to be eaten? Both interpretations are valid based on grammar alone. Sentence structure creates structural ambiguity.
7. Possible meaning 1: Time passes as quickly as an arrow flies. Possible meaning 2: Insects called 'time flies' enjoy arrows (nonsensical). Lexical ambiguity with 'flies' as verb or noun.
8. The state of being unclear or open to multiple interpretations or meanings.
9. When a single word has multiple meanings, like 'bank' (river or finance).
10. When sentence grammar allows multiple interpretations, like 'I saw the man with the telescope.'

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