

A Modicum Of, A Dearth Of, Copious, Ample, Sundry, Manifold, Myriad

C2 English Worksheet – Lesson 1: Formal and Literary Quantity

Language Focus

At C2, quantifiers reach their most formal and literary register, often found in essays, literary prose, and elevated spoken discourse rather than everyday conversation.

a modicum of	Uncountable, formal, "a small amount"	<i>Such places offer a modicum of resistance to homogenisation.</i>
a dearth of	Countable/uncountable, formal, "a lack or shortage of"	<i>There is now a dearth of anything resembling character.</i>
copious	Uncountable, formal, "abundant, plentiful"	<i>The city furnishes the wanderer with copious rewards.</i>
ample	Countable/uncountable, formal, "more than enough"	<i>There was ample variety before the high street changed.</i>
sundry	Countable (plural), formal/literary, "various, miscellaneous"	<i>The window was cluttered with sundry oddments.</i>
manifold	Countable (plural), formal/literary, "many and various"	<i>The city reveals its manifold contradictions on foot.</i>
myriad	Countable (plural), formal/literary, "innumerable"	<i>A myriad of small discoveries await the curious wanderer.</i>

Key contrast: "copious / ample / myriad / manifold" all emphasise a large or varied quantity, while "a modicum of / a dearth of" emphasise a small amount or shortage – these belong to formal, often literary, written English rather than everyday speech.

Reading: On the Art of Wandering: A Reflection on the Modern City

Read the essay below, then complete Exercise 1.

To wander a city without purpose is to encounter its manifold contradictions: gleaming towers standing sentinel over crumbling terraces, and quiet courtyards tucked improbably behind a cacophony of traffic. The modern city, for all its sundry distractions, rewards the attentive stroller with details that hurried commuters rarely notice.

Consider, for instance, the ordinary shopfront: its faded awning, its window cluttered with sundry oddments accumulated over decades of trade. Such places offer a modicum of resistance to the relentless homogenisation of the high street, even as their numbers dwindle. Where once there was ample variety, there is now, in many towns, a dearth of anything resembling character at all.

And yet the city continues to furnish the curious wanderer with copious rewards. A myriad of small discoveries await: an unexpected mural, a bench positioned just so beneath a plane tree, the scent of bread drifting from a doorway. These are not grand revelations, but they accumulate into something like understanding - the sense that a place, however overlooked, contains ample reason to be looked at more closely.

1. Odd One Out

In each set, three sentences use the quantifier logically. One doesn't make sense – circle it.

Set 1:

- a) There was a modicum of hesitation before she signed the contract.
- b) The team enjoyed ample time to prepare for the presentation.
- c) There was a modicum of interest in the proposal, and it was met with immediate, unanimous enthusiasm.
- d) Ample resources were allocated to the new initiative.

Set 2:

- a) There was a dearth of funding for the arts programme.
- b) The report offered copious detail on every aspect of the case.
- c) There was a dearth of applicants for the role, which was filled within hours by dozens of eager candidates.
- d) Copious amounts of rain fell throughout the festival.

Set 3:

- a) The drawer was filled with sundry trinkets collected over the years.
- b) The policy's manifold flaws became apparent almost immediately.
- c) The market stall sold sundry goods, though only a single type of item was available.
- d) The manifold benefits of the reform were widely acknowledged.

Set 4:

- a) The city offers myriad opportunities for aspiring entrepreneurs.
- b) There was a dearth of evidence to support the prosecution's case.
- c) Myriad options were available, yet the committee struggled to find even one acceptable choice.
- d) A dearth of rainfall left the reservoirs dangerously low.

Set 5:

- a) Ample warning was given before the road closure.
- b) A modicum of doubt remained even after the verdict.
- c) Ample preparation had gone into the expedition, yet it ended in complete disaster within hours.
- d) A modicum of comfort came from knowing they had tried their best.

2. Multiple Choice

Context: a restaurant review

1. The tasting menu offered ___ variety, each course more inventive than the last.
copious / a dearth of
2. There was ___ enthusiasm from the kitchen staff, who seemed visibly disengaged throughout service.
a modicum of / ample
3. ___ attention had clearly been paid to presentation, down to the smallest garnish.
Ample / A dearth of
4. The wine list featured ___ options from small, lesser-known vineyards.
sundry / a modicum of
5. The evening's ___ small missteps did little to diminish an otherwise memorable experience.
myriad / ample
6. There was ___ genuine warmth in the service, which felt mechanical throughout.
a dearth of / copious

3. Matching

Context: a history book excerpt

Draw a line to match each sentence to its meaning.

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. The empire's manifold territories stretched across three continents. | <i>A small fraction remained</i> |
| 2. Historians have long debated the myriad causes of the empire's decline. | <i>An abundance of formal ritual</i> |
| 3. There was a dearth of reliable records from this period. | <i>Its many and varied territories</i> |
| 4. The court was known for its copious ceremony and ritual. | <i>Very few trustworthy documents survive</i> |
| 5. Only a modicum of the original archive survived the fire. | <i>The very many, hard-to-list causes</i> |

4. Gap Fill

Context: an essay on the craft of translation

Complete this passage with the correct quantifier for each gap.

Translation is a discipline beset by _____ difficulties, not least the challenge of rendering idiom without losing nuance. There is, by most accounts, _____ translators who possess the rare combination of linguistic precision and literary sensitivity required to do a text full justice, and _____ small decisions must be made on nearly every page, from word order to tone. Where the original author enjoyed _____ room for stylistic invention, the translator often works within far narrower constraints, granted only _____ latitude to deviate from the source.

Word bank: manifold / a dearth of / myriad / ample / a modicum of / copious / sundry

5. Error Identification

Context: an academic peer review comment

Each sentence has one wrong quantifier. Underline it and explain why it's wrong.

1. There was a modicum of complaints about the venue.
2. The report contained manifold detail on the incident.
3. Myriad evidence was presented at the trial.
4. There was a dearth of interest in the lecture, yet the hall was completely full.
5. Ample criticism was levelled at the proposal, though it passed without a single objection.

6. Sentence Reordering

Context: a literary panel discussion

These lines of a conversation are in the wrong order. Number them 1-5 to rebuild it correctly.

_____ Even so, copious independent presses are stepping in to fill that gap.

_____ True, though a modicum of resistance to genuine risk-taking still lingers among larger publishers.

_____ Would you say there's ample scope for experimentation in contemporary fiction?

_____ Certainly, and myriad new voices are emerging as a result.

_____ That's heartening, especially given the dearth of diversity the industry faced a generation ago.

7. Complete the Conversation

Context: a curator's gallery talk

Complete with: a modicum of, a dearth of, copious, ample, sundry, manifold, myriad.

- Visitor:** How would you describe the current state of contemporary sculpture?
Curator: I'd say _____ innovations are happening right now - far more than critics often acknowledge.
- Visitor:** Are emerging artists getting enough support?
Curator: Honestly, there's _____ funding available for early-career sculptors compared to painters.
- Visitor:** What about gallery space?
Curator: There's _____ space in this city for smaller, experimental shows, if you know where to look.
- Visitor:** Do collectors take risks on unknown names?
Curator: Only _____ interest exists among collectors willing to buy work by someone without an established reputation.
- Visitor:** How would you describe the range of materials artists are using today?
Curator: It's remarkable - _____ materials, from reclaimed metal to biodegradable textiles.
- Visitor:** And the challenges facing the sector as a whole?
Curator: _____ challenges remain, from funding to visibility, but the creative energy is undeniable.
- Visitor:** Any final thoughts?
Curator: Just that there's _____ reason to be optimistic about where sculpture is heading.

1. Odd One Out – Answers

Set 1: **c)**

A modicum of interest (very little) is inconsistent with immediate, unanimous enthusiasm.

Set 2: **c)**

A dearth of applicants is inconsistent with dozens of eager candidates filling the role.

Set 3: **c)**

Sundry goods implies variety, inconsistent with only one type of item available.

Set 4: **c)**

Myriad options being available is inconsistent with struggling to find even one choice.

Set 5: **c)**

Ample preparation is inconsistent with the expedition ending in complete disaster.

2. Multiple Choice - Answers

1. The tasting menu offered ___ variety. **copious**
2. There was ___ enthusiasm from the kitchen staff. **a modicum of**
3. ___ attention had been paid to presentation. **Ample**
4. The wine list featured ___ options. **sundry**
5. The evening's ___ small missteps did little harm. **myriad**
6. There was ___ genuine warmth in the service. **a dearth of**

3. Matching - Answers

1. The empire's manifold territories stretched across three continents.
Its many and varied territories
2. Historians have long debated the myriad causes of the empire's decline.
The very many, hard-to-list causes
3. There was a dearth of reliable records from this period.
Very few trustworthy documents survive
4. The court was known for its copious ceremony and ritual.
An abundance of formal ritual
5. Only a modicum of the original archive survived the fire.
A small fraction remained

4. Gap Fill - Answers (in order)

- | | |
|------------|---------------------|
| 1. Blank 1 | manifold |
| 2. Blank 2 | a dearth of |
| 3. Blank 3 | myriad |
| 4. Blank 4 | ample |
| 5. Blank 5 | a modicum of |

5. Error Identification - Answers

1. There was a modicum of complaints...
Fix: a modicum of → sundry - Uncountable phrase used with a countable noun ("complaints")
2. The report contained manifold detail...
Fix: manifold → copious - Countable phrase used with an uncountable noun ("detail")
3. Myriad evidence was presented at the trial.
Fix: Myriad → Copious - Countable phrase used with an uncountable noun ("evidence")
4. There was a dearth of interest..., yet the hall was completely full.
Fix: a dearth of → copious - Suggests a small amount, but a full hall implies a large amount of interest
5. Ample criticism was levelled..., though it passed without objection.
Fix: Ample → A modicum of - Suggests a large amount, but passing without objection implies little criticism

6. Sentence Reordering - Answers

1. Would you say there's ample scope for experimentation in contemporary fiction?
2. Certainly, and myriad new voices are emerging as a result.
3. That's heartening, especially given the dearth of diversity the industry faced a generation ago.
4. True, though a modicum of resistance to genuine risk-taking still lingers among larger publishers.
5. Even so, copious independent presses are stepping in to fill that gap.

7. Complete the Conversation - Answers

Curator:	Myriad innovations are happening right now.	myriad
Curator:	There's a dearth of funding for early-career sculptors.	a dearth of
Curator:	There's ample space for experimental shows.	ample
Curator:	Only a modicum of interest exists among collectors.	a modicum of
Curator:	It's remarkable - sundry materials are being used.	sundry
Curator:	Manifold challenges remain, but the energy is undeniable.	Manifold
Curator:	There's ample reason to be optimistic.	ample