

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

C2 English Worksheet – Lesson 2: 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>Even mundane letters possessed a modicum of deliberateness.</i>
a dearth of	Countable/uncountable, formal, "a lack or shortage of"	<i>Scholars noted a dearth of literary merit in most letters.</i>
copious	Uncountable, formal, "abundant, plentiful"	<i>We exchange messages that are copious in number.</i>
ample	Countable/uncountable, formal, "more than enough"	<i>Thought had ample room to settle before words were sent.</i>
sundry	Countable (plural), formal/literary, "various, miscellaneous"	<i>Consider the sundry implements once required to write a letter.</i>
manifold	Countable (plural), formal/literary, "many and various"	<i>The manifold small rituals of addressing an envelope by hand.</i>
myriad	Countable (plural), formal/literary, "innumerable"	<i>We exchange a myriad of hurried messages within minutes.</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 Diminishing Art of Letter-Writing

Read the essay below, then complete Exercise 1.

There was a time when correspondence demanded patience: a letter, once sent, might travel for days before eliciting a reply, and in that interval, thought had ample room to settle before words were finally committed to paper. Today, by contrast, we exchange a myriad of hurried messages within minutes, each one thinner in substance than the last, however copious in number.

This is not to suggest that earlier generations wrote with uniform brilliance; scholars have long noted a dearth of literary merit in the vast majority of historical correspondence, most of which concerned nothing more exalted than the price of grain or the health of distant relatives. Still, even the most mundane letters possessed a modicum of deliberateness that our present exchanges seldom achieve.

Consider the sundry implements once required: the blotting paper, the sealing wax, the manifold small rituals of folding and addressing an envelope by hand. Each was a minor obstacle, and each obstacle, paradoxically, invited a kind of care that speed now renders unnecessary. Whether this trade-off constitutes progress remains, perhaps, ample cause for genuine debate.

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 doubt in her voice as she accepted the award.
- b) Ample supplies had been stockpiled before the storm.
- c) There was a modicum of enthusiasm for the plan, and it was implemented immediately with great fanfare.
- d) Ample notice was given before the policy changed.

Set 2:

- a) There was a dearth of skilled labour in the region.
- b) The critic offered copious praise for the debut novel.
- c) There was a dearth of qualified candidates, yet the position received hundreds of eager applications.
- d) Copious tears were shed at the farewell ceremony.

Set 3:

- a) The attic contained sundry keepsakes from decades past.
- b) The manifold difficulties of the expedition were well documented.
- c) The bazaar offered sundry wares, though every stall sold precisely the same single item.
- d) The manifold advantages of the new system were soon apparent.

Set 4:

- a) The festival featured myriad performers from around the world.
- b) There was a dearth of rainfall during the drought.
- c) Myriad solutions were proposed, yet the panel could not settle on even one.
- d) A dearth of interest doomed the campaign from the start.

Set 5:

- a) Ample evidence supported the verdict.
- b) A modicum of hesitation crept into his speech.
- c) Ample funding had been secured, yet the project was abandoned for lack of money.
- d) A modicum of relief washed over the survivors.

2. Multiple Choice

Context: a theatre review

1. The production received ___ acclaim from critics across the country.
copious / a dearth of
2. There was ___ chemistry between the two leads, who seemed to be acting in entirely separate plays.
a modicum of / ample
3. ___ rehearsal had clearly gone into the choreography, which moved with remarkable precision.
Ample / A dearth of
4. The set design featured ___ props, each more inventive than the last.
sundry / a modicum of
5. The play's ___ small inconsistencies did little to spoil an otherwise gripping evening.
myriad / ample
6. There was ___ genuine tension in the final act, which felt curiously flat.
a dearth of / copious

3. Matching

Context: a philosophy essay excerpt

Draw a line to match each sentence to its meaning.

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. The manifold interpretations of the text have divided scholars for centuries. | <i>A small portion has been rendered accurately</i> |
| 2. Myriad objections have been raised against the argument over the years. | <i>An abundance of supporting examples</i> |
| 3. There is a dearth of consensus on the matter, even among specialists. | <i>Its many and varied interpretations</i> |
| 4. The essay offers copious illustration of the central claim. | <i>Very little agreement exists</i> |
| 5. Only a modicum of the original manuscript has been reliably translated. | <i>A huge, hard-to-count number of objections</i> |

4. Gap Fill

Context: an essay on silence in the digital age

Complete this passage with the correct quantifier for each gap.

Genuine silence has become an increasingly rare experience in modern life, drowned out by the constant hum of notifications. _____ people now report actively seeking it out, whether through retreats, meditation apps, or simply switching off their devices for an afternoon. _____ research has emerged linking uninterrupted quiet to improved concentration, though _____ studies have yet examined its long-term effects with real rigour. _____ tools now exist for finding it - retreats, apps, courses - and there is, if one looks, _____ opportunity to build it into daily life.

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

5. Error Identification

Context: a legal brief / court judgment excerpt

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

1. There was a modicum of witnesses called to testify.
2. The court received manifold evidence regarding the defendant's whereabouts.
3. Myriad testimony was presented across the three-day hearing.
4. There was a dearth of objections from the defence, yet the judge repeatedly halted proceedings to address them.
5. Ample doubt remained about the witness's credibility, though the jury reached a unanimous guilty verdict without hesitation.

6. Sentence Reordering

Context: a radio discussion on classical music

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

- _____ Even so, copious new ensembles are experimenting with format and venue.
- _____ True, though a modicum of scepticism remains among traditional concert halls.
- _____ Would you say there's ample appetite for classical music among younger audiences?
- _____ Certainly, and myriad streaming platforms are making it more accessible than ever.
- _____ That's promising, especially given the dearth of funding orchestras faced only a decade ago.

7. Complete the Conversation

Context: a job interview for a museum directorship

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

Interviewer: How would you approach fundraising in your first year?

Candidate: I believe there's _____ opportunity we haven't yet explored, particularly among younger donors.

Interviewer: What challenges do you anticipate?

Candidate: Honestly, there's _____ experience on the current board with digital fundraising specifically.

Interviewer: How would you describe your management style?

Candidate: I'd say I bring _____ patience to difficult conversations, though I'm not afraid to make hard decisions.

Interviewer: What would you change about the current exhibition programme?

Candidate: There are _____ small adjustments I'd make, though nothing drastic in year one.

Interviewer: How do you feel about the museum's community outreach?

Candidate: It currently reaches _____ audiences, from schoolchildren to retirees, which I'd want to preserve.

Interviewer: What about the building itself?

Candidate: _____ structural issues remain unresolved, from the roof to the climate control, and those would need addressing early.

Interviewer: Any final thoughts?

Candidate: Just that I see _____ potential in this institution, and I'd be honoured to help realise it.

1. Odd One Out – Answers

Set 1: **c)**

A modicum of enthusiasm is inconsistent with immediate implementation and great fanfare.

Set 2: **c)**

A dearth of qualified candidates is inconsistent with hundreds of eager applications.

Set 3: **c)**

Sundry wares implies variety, inconsistent with every stall selling the same single item.

Set 4: **c)**

Myriad solutions being proposed is inconsistent with failing to settle on even one.

Set 5: **c)**

Ample funding is inconsistent with the project being abandoned for lack of money.

2. Multiple Choice - Answers

1. The production received ___ acclaim from critics. **copious**
2. There was ___ chemistry between the two leads. **a modicum of**
3. ___ rehearsal had gone into the choreography. **Ample**
4. The set design featured ___ props. **sundry**
5. The play's ___ small inconsistencies did little harm. **myriad**
6. There was ___ genuine tension in the final act. **a dearth of**

3. Matching - Answers

1. The manifold interpretations of the text have divided scholars for centuries.
Its many and varied interpretations
2. Myriad objections have been raised against the argument over the years.
A huge, hard-to-count number of objections
3. There is a dearth of consensus on the matter, even among specialists.
Very little agreement exists
4. The essay offers copious illustration of the central claim.
An abundance of supporting examples
5. Only a modicum of the original manuscript has been reliably translated.
A small portion has been rendered accurately

4. Gap Fill - Answers (in order)

- | | |
|------------|--------------------|
| 1. Blank 1 | Myriad |
| 2. Blank 2 | Copious |
| 3. Blank 3 | a dearth of |
| 4. Blank 4 | Sundry |
| 5. Blank 5 | ample |

5. Error Identification - Answers

1. There was a modicum of witnesses called to testify.
Fix: a modicum of → sundry - Uncountable phrase used with a countable noun ("witnesses")
2. The court received manifold evidence...
Fix: manifold → copious - Countable phrase used with an uncountable noun ("evidence")
3. Myriad testimony was presented across the hearing.
Fix: Myriad → Copious - Countable phrase used with an uncountable noun ("testimony")
4. There was a dearth of objections..., yet the judge repeatedly halted proceedings.
Fix: a dearth of → copious - Suggests a small amount, but repeated halts imply a large amount of objections
5. Ample doubt remained..., though the jury reached a unanimous verdict without hesitation.
Fix: Ample → A modicum of - Suggests a large amount, but a unanimous verdict implies little doubt

6. Sentence Reordering - Answers

1. Would you say there's ample appetite for classical music among younger audiences?
2. Certainly, and myriad streaming platforms are making it more accessible than ever.
3. That's promising, especially given the dearth of funding orchestras faced only a decade ago.
4. True, though a modicum of scepticism remains among traditional concert halls.
5. Even so, copious new ensembles are experimenting with format and venue.

7. Complete the Conversation - Answers

Candidate:	There's ample opportunity among younger donors.	ample
Candidate:	There's a dearth of experience with digital fundraising.	a dearth of
Candidate:	I bring a modicum of patience to difficult conversations.	a modicum of
Candidate:	There are myriad small adjustments I'd make.	myriad
Candidate:	It reaches sundry audiences, from schoolchildren to retirees.	sundry
Candidate:	Manifold structural issues remain unresolved.	Manifold
Candidate:	I see copious potential in this institution.	copious