

Vocabulary in Context

Read the following passage, in which some of the words you have studied in this unit appear in **boldface** type. Then complete each statement given below the passage by circling the letter of the item that is **the same** or **almost the same** in meaning as the highlighted word.

"A Pageant of Fatigue"

One of the most **incomprehensible** public competitions ever conceived was the dance marathon. The object of this crazy contest, first held in 1923, was to see which couple could dance for longer than any other. Grace and style didn't matter. **Stamina** was the only thing that counted.

Dance marathons were wildly popular in the 1920s and 1930s. Young couples staggered around dance floors, moving to the **contemporary** tunes of the day. The music was played by live bands or on records.



A woman struggles to hold up her fast-fading dance partner.

The last couple to remain standing won. Winners might be rewarded up to a **maximum** of \$1000, which was a vast sum at that time. But they faced highly **adverse** conditions in their efforts to win.

Rules varied slightly from contest to contest, but the main idea was always the same. Dancers could never leave the dance floor, except to use the rest room. They were **constrained** to eat, drink, and sleep on their feet. They always had to move, at least a little. Partners took turns supporting each other as best they could.

Critics claimed that the dance marathons were simply physical cruelty. Lawmakers tried to get the contests banned. However, curious onlookers packed the dance halls. To them, it was entertaining to watch weary dancers.

Why did people put themselves through this? Of course, there was prize money at stake. But the major reason seemed to be the power of the fad itself. Marathon dancers became overnight celebrities. Morning papers ran ongoing stories on them. People couldn't resist tales of wacky, risk-taking heroism, and juicy gossip about the dancers, whose relationships suffered as much as their bodies did during those grueling hours.

1. The meaning of **incomprehensible** (line 1) is
- understandable