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## Depressed People Use These Words More Often

From the way you move and sleep, to how you interact with people around you, depression changes just about everything. It is even noticeable in the way you speak and express yourself in writing. Sometimes this “language of depression” can have a powerful effect on others. **(Line A)** Just consider the impact of the poetry and song lyrics of Sylvia Plath and Kurt Cobain, who both killed themselves after struggling with depression.

Traditionally, linguistic analyses in this field have been carried out by researchers reading and taking notes. Nowadays, computerized text analysis methods allow the processing of extremely large data banks in minutes. This can help spot linguistic features which humans may miss, calculating the percentage **(1)** [prevalence](#) of words and classes of words, lexical diversity, average sentence length, grammatical patterns and many other metrics.

So far, personal essays and diary entries by depressed people have been useful, as has the work of well-known artists such as Cobain and Plath. For the spoken word, snippets of natural language of people with depression have also provided insight. **(Line B)** Taken together, the findings from such research reveal clear and consistent differences in language between those with and without symptoms of depression.

It is of course possible to use a language associated with depression without actually being depressed. Ultimately, it is how you feel over time that determines whether you are suffering. But the World Health Organisation estimates that more than 300 million people worldwide are now living with



depression, which is an increase of more than 18 percent since 2005. **(Line C)**  
Having more tools available to spot the condition is certainly important to improve health and prevent tragic suicides such as those of Plath and Cobain.

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**Questions:**

- (1) Which of the following best explains why the author most likely included information about Sylvia Plath and Kurt Cobain in the passage?
  - (a) To draw the reader's attention
  - (b) To show that suicides due to depression is widespread throughout the world
  - (c) To analyze the success of a scientific research
  - (d) To use examples of their depression and written work to make a general point
  
- (2) Which choice best supports why the author thinks understanding the "language of depression" and researching them is important?
  - (a) Line A ("Just consider...depression")
  - (b) Line B ("Taken together...of depression")
  - (c) Line C ("Having more...Cobain")
  
- (3) As used in Line (1), "prevalence" most closely means:
  - (a) increase
  - (b) superior
  - (c) widespread
  - (d) big



## ANSWER KEY:

- (4) Which of the following best explains why the author most likely included information about Sylvia Plath and Kurt Cobain in the passage?
- (a) To draw the reader's attention
  - (b) To show that suicides due to depression is widespread throughout the world
  - (c) To analyze the success of a scientific research
  - (d) To use examples of their depression and written work to make a general point
- (5) Which choice best supports why the author thinks understanding the "language of depression" and researching them is important?
- (a) Line A ("Just consider...depression")
  - (b) Line B ("Taken together...of depression")
  - (c) Line C ("Having more...Cobain")
- (6) As used in Line (1), "prevalence" most closely means:
- (a) increase
  - (b) widespread
  - (c) superior
  - (d) big