“The Red-Headed League” Vocabulary Exercises

Part I. Match the word with the correct meaning.

1. league (n) ______ a story; a piece of literature with a plot
2. cordially (adv) ______ open, honest, sincere
3. narrative (n) ______ unlikely, not probable
4. pompous (adj) ______ a detective
5. snuff (n) ______ of the night; active at night
6. candid (adj) ______ think deeply, ponder, meditate, consider carefully
7. contemplate (v) ______ someone who helps another, often giving money
8. improbable (adj) ______ proud, haughty, arrogant, snobby
9. curt (adj) ______ business, trade between countries
10. commerce (n) ______ short; brief to the point of rudeness
11. pedestrian (n) ______ in a friendly manner, warmly
12. vex (v) ______ a group of people with a common interest; alliance
13. sleuth (n) ______ powdered tobacco, often inhaled in the nose
14. nocturnal (adj) ______ trouble, worry, annoy, torment
15. benefactor (n) ______ a person who travel on foot; a walker
Part II. Use the words listed in Part I to fill in the following blanks. Choose the best word for each blank.

1. The famous _______________ Sherlock Holmes has solved many difficult cases.
2. Owls are ____________ animals, coming out to hunt at night.
3. If you _______________ the dog by pulling on its tail and teasing it, it is much more likely to bite you.
4. Gentlemen used to carry their _______________ in little boxes, and it was quite fashionable for them to put a pinch in their nostrils in public.
5. Holmes seems instantly to doubt the existence of a _______________ made up of only red-headed men.
6. A _______________ poem tells a story, while a lyric poem expresses emotion.
7. Sometimes Holmes’ _______________ answers to Watson hurt his friend’s feelings, but Watson always forgives the detective for his rudeness.
8. Holmes refuses to give his __________opinion about a case until he has all the facts.
9. Sherlock Holmes prefers to be by himself when he needs to _______________; he often asks Watson to leave him alone in their Baker Street flat so he can have time to think.
10. Any good detective would know not to dismiss a possibility just because it seems _______________; according to Holmes, one must eliminate only those answers that are absolutely impossible.
11. _______________ are asked to cross only in the crosswalks and only when the light is green.
12. The owner of the restaurant _______________ welcomed the customers, and he himself showed them to their seats.
13. In Great Expectations a boy named Pip receives a gift from a mysterious _______________ which forever changes his life.
14. That sailor has never served on a warship; all of his assignments have been on ships engaged in _______________
15. The _______________ surgeon treated his nurses so badly that most of them quit, refusing to be constantly treated as slaves by the arrogant man.
Part III. Write a synonym for each of the following. Use the words from Part I.

1. a story -
2. a detective -
3. short -
4. walker -
5. proud -
6. honest and open -
7. ponder -
8. unlikely -
9. annoy -
10. alliance -

Part IV. Answer each of the following questions.

1. Do you know of any leagues in your community?

2. If someone were not behaving cordially, how might he be behaving?

3. What is the meaning of snuff when it is used as a verb?

4. Where do you go when you have a problem to contemplate?

5. If your best friend showed up with a terrible haircut and asked for your candid opinion about it, would you give it?