

50. (a) The disintegration energy for uranium-235 “decaying” into thorium-232 is

$$\begin{aligned}Q_3 &= (m_{235\text{U}} - m_{232\text{Th}} - m_{3\text{He}}) c^2 \\&= (235.0439 \text{ u} - 232.0381 \text{ u} - 3.0160 \text{ u})(931.5 \text{ MeV/u}) \\&= -9.50 \text{ MeV} .\end{aligned}$$

(b) Similarly, the disintegration energy for uranium-235 decaying into thorium-231 is

$$\begin{aligned}Q_4 &= (m_{235\text{U}} - m_{231\text{Th}} - m_{4\text{He}}) c^2 \\&= (235.0439 \text{ u} - 231.0363 \text{ u} - 4.0026 \text{ u})(931.5 \text{ MeV/u}) \\&= 4.66 \text{ MeV} .\end{aligned}$$

(c) Finally, the considered transmutation of uranium-235 into thorium-230 has a Q -value of

$$\begin{aligned}Q_5 &= (m_{235\text{U}} - m_{230\text{Th}} - m_{5\text{He}}) c^2 \\&= (235.0439 \text{ u} - 230.0331 \text{ u} - 5.0122 \text{ u})(931.5 \text{ MeV/u}) \\&= -1.30 \text{ MeV} .\end{aligned}$$

Only the second decay process (the α decay) is spontaneous, as it releases energy.