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**18.** Consider the given identity  $(x - 6) \cdot P(x) = x \cdot P(x - 1)$ . If we set  $x = 0$ , we find that  $P(x) = 0$ , so 0 is a root of  $P(x)$ . If we set  $x = 1$ , we find that the  $(1 - 6) \cdot P(1) = 1 \cdot P(0) = 0$ , so 1 is another root. Similarly, we see that 2, 3, 4, and 5 are roots. But when we set  $x = 6$ , both sides of the identity are 0, so it doesn't tell us anything.

Since 0 through 5 are roots, we know that  $P(x) = x(x - 1)(x - 2)(x - 3)(x - 4)(x - 5)Q(x)$ . Plugging this into the identity, we see  $Q(x) = Q(x - 1)$  for all  $x$ .

It would be reasonable to guess that  $Q(x)$  must be a constant, and since  $P(x)$  is monic, this constant must be 1. So it remains to plug in  $-1$  into  $P(x) = x(x - 1)(x - 2)(x - 3)(x - 4)(x - 5)$  to get  $(-1)^6 \cdot 6! = 720$ .

[Without guessing, we can prove that if  $Q(x) = Q(x - 1)$  for all  $x$ ,  $Q(x)$  must be constant. Consider  $T(x) = Q(x) - Q(0)$ . That's a polynomial, with  $T(0) = 0$  and  $T(x) = T(x - 1)$  for all  $x$ . This means that  $T(n) = T(n - 1) = T(n - 2) = \dots = T(0) = 0$  for all positive integers  $n$ . But a polynomial can't have infinitely many roots unless it is identically zero. So it must be that  $T(x) = 0$ . But that means that  $Q(x) = Q(0)$  for all  $x$ , i.e. it is indeed constant.]