

**Daily Reading Comprehension & Critical Reasoning**

Two RC passages (English-as-Language) and two CR passages (Argumentation). Read each carefully and answer based on what is stated or implied.  
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**PASSAGE 1 (RC) — THE RISE OF MICROTRANSACTIONS IN MOBILE GAMING (TECHNOLOGY / ECONOMY)**

**Q1-5**

**READ CAREFULLY AND ANSWER Q1-5 BASED ONLY ON THE PASSAGE.**

When the App Store launched in 2008, the average mobile game cost two or three dollars and the transaction ended there. A decade and a half later, that model has been all but dismantled. Today, the dominant business architecture of mobile gaming is the 'free-to-play' (F2P) game funded by microtransactions — small in-app purchases for cosmetic items, time-savers, lottery-style 'loot boxes', or progress unlocks. The largest titles, from Genshin Impact to Honor of Kings, do not charge a download fee at all. Instead, they extract value from a tiny fraction of the playerbase, the so-called 'whales' who individually spend thousands of dollars a year, while the silent majority pay nothing.

Defenders argue that this is the most democratic pricing model ever devised for entertainment: the game is genuinely free for anyone who wants to play, and the cost is borne entirely by those willing to pay for optional extras. Critics counter that 'optional' is doing a great deal of work in that sentence. Modern F2P design is highly engineered to manufacture frustration and then sell relief from it. Energy timers, asymmetric matchmaking and deliberately throttled progression nudge the player toward the in-app store, and the design vocabulary borrows openly from casino mechanics — variable rewards, near-miss visuals, loss aversion framing.

The most contentious feature, the loot box, has now drawn the attention of regulators in Belgium, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. Each has, to varying degrees, treated some loot boxes as a form of unlicensed gambling, particularly where children are involved. Industry bodies insist that the items inside have no real-world cash value and therefore lie outside the definition of gambling. But academic studies, including a 2023 meta-analysis in Nature Human Behaviour, find statistically robust correlations between loot-box engagement and problem-gambling symptoms in adolescents.

Whatever the regulatory outcome, the economics are unlikely to retreat. F2P now accounts for roughly four-fifths of global mobile-gaming revenue, and a premium-only title is increasingly a curiosity. The deeper question is not whether microtransactions will dominate but whether the industry can devise a design ethic for an entertainment medium whose business model rewards the very behavioural patterns we usually treat as disorders.

**1. The phrase 'optional is doing a great deal of work in that sentence' in paragraph 2 most nearly conveys that:**

- A. The author endorses the industry's framing that purchases are optional
- B. The author is sceptical that the purchases are genuinely optional given the engineered pressure to buy
- C. The author considers optional purchases legally inadequate
- D. The author believes the F2P model is fundamentally fairer than premium pricing

**2. Which of the following best captures the author's overall tone?**

- A. Uncritical admiration of the F2P model
- B. Measured concern about the design ethics of microtransactions while acknowledging their commercial logic
- C. Outright hostility to the entire mobile gaming industry
- D. Indifference — the author considers the issue trivial

**3. The author's reference to casino mechanics in paragraph 2 is intended primarily to:**

- A. Argue that all mobile games are illegal under gambling law
- B. Illustrate that F2P design borrows psychological techniques designed to extract spending from compulsive use
- C. Celebrate the design sophistication of modern mobile games
- D. Suggest that mobile games should be taxed like casinos

**4. Which finding, if newly established, would MOST WEAKEN the industry's defence that loot boxes are not gambling?**

- A. A study showing that most loot-box purchasers are adults
- B. A regulatory determination that items inside loot boxes can be resold for cash on secondary markets, giving them real-world value
- C. Data showing that loot-box revenue is declining year-on-year
- D. A finding that loot boxes are unpopular in some jurisdictions

**5. In context, 'whales' (paragraph 1) most nearly means:**

- A. A small group of players who individually account for a large share of spending
- B. Players who spend nothing
- C. Players banned for cheating
- D. Players from coastal regions

**PASSAGE 2 (RC) — THE SLOW DEATH OF INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM (MEDIA / SOCIETY)**

**Q6-10**

**READ CAREFULLY AND ANSWER Q6-10 BASED ONLY ON THE PASSAGE.**

The numbers are striking. In the United States, the staff strength of newsroom investigative units has fallen by more than half since 2008. In India, where newspaper circulations held up longer than in the West, the same hollowing-out is now visible: investigative desks at major dailies have shrunk, and full-length investigations now appear less often than at any time in the last three decades. The reasons are economic before they are anything else. Classified advertising migrated to digital platforms over a decade ago, display advertising followed, and the audience itself moved to free-to-read aggregators that pay nothing to the original reporter.

Investigative work is uniquely expensive. A single accountability story can absorb six months of one reporter's time, the support of editors and lawyers, travel costs, document procurement, and frequently the cost of defending the story in court after publication. Routine reporting, by contrast, can be produced in hours. When budgets contract, the rational choice for an editor under quarterly pressure is to keep the routine and cut the investigations.

The displacement effect, however, is the more serious problem. The vacuum is rarely empty. In place of slow, document-grounded investigation, the public sphere now hosts a louder ecosystem of partisan commentary, viral video explainers, and crowd-sourced 'open-source intelligence'. Some of this is remarkable work — the verification networks around conflict reporting, for instance, have transformed the field. But much of it is not investigation in the older sense: it does not file Right to Information applications, it does not subpoena documents, and it does not give a named subject a fair right of reply before publication.

Philanthropic funding has tried to fill the gap. Non-profit newsrooms now do much of the most important investigative work in several countries. Yet philanthropy is not a perfect substitute. It is concentrated geographically, donor-driven, and dependent on the continued enthusiasm of a handful of foundations. A free society that outsources its accountability journalism to the goodwill of donors has not solved the problem so much as moved it. The deeper task — building a sustainable business model that pays the salaries of reporters who spend months on a single story — remains unfinished.

6. The author identifies the PRIMARY cause of the decline in investigative journalism as:

- A. Falling reader interest in serious news
- B. Government censorship of investigative reporters
- C. The economic collapse of the advertising model that traditionally funded newspapers
- D. The voluntary retirement of investigative reporters

7. The author's tone in describing crowd-sourced 'open-source intelligence' is best described as:

- A. Wholly dismissive
- B. Uncritically enthusiastic
- C. Qualified — recognising genuine contributions but noting structural limits
- D. Indifferent

8. Which of the following, if true, would MOST WEAKEN the author's claim that philanthropic funding is not a perfect substitute for advertiser-funded investigative journalism?

- A. Evidence that philanthropic newsrooms have geographically diversified, are governed by independent boards insulated from donor preference, and have established endowments to weather donor exits
- B. Evidence that philanthropic funding has grown 10% year-on-year
- C. Evidence that some non-profit newsrooms publish high-quality reporting
- D. Evidence that traditional newspapers are also receiving philanthropic grants

9. The 'displacement effect' the author describes refers to:

- A. The migration of reporters from print to digital
- B. The replacement of slow, document-grounded investigation with louder but methodologically weaker forms of commentary
- C. The geographical relocation of newsrooms
- D. The shift of advertising from print to television

10. In paragraph 2, the word 'rational' is used to indicate that an editor's choice to cut investigations is:

- A. Morally correct
- B. Economically understandable under quarterly budget pressure, regardless of its social cost
- C. Required by law
- D. Approved by reporters

**PASSAGE 3 (CR) — SHOULD INDIA MANDATE ANTI-CHEATING TECHNOLOGY IN ONLINE EXAMINATIONS? (EDUCATION / TECHNOLOGY)**

**Q11–15**

**READ THE ARGUMENT AND ANSWER Q11–15.**

The proposal under consideration is straightforward: every recognised online examination conducted in India for academic credit or for selection to Government posts should be required, by regulation, to deploy AI-driven remote-proctoring software — face-recognition, eye-tracking, ambient sound analysis, screen monitoring and forced lockdown of the test-taker's browser. Advocates argue that the integrity of the certificate is non-negotiable: without effective proctoring, an online degree is a piece of paper, and the promise of equal-opportunity remote examination collapses into a charade in which the dishonest prosper. They point to a series of recruitment-test scandals over the last five years and argue that no manual system can match the scale at which AI proctoring operates.

The case sounds clean, but it survives only by ignoring three large objections. First, the technology is not as accurate as its vendors claim. Face-recognition systems have repeatedly shown elevated error rates for women and for darker-skinned candidates. Eye-tracking flags 'suspicious' behaviour in candidates with disabilities — those with poor eye-muscle control, those who think with their eyes closed, those whose neurodivergence makes them fidget. The accused candidate does not get a hearing. She gets a flag, and she gets disqualified.

Second, the surveillance footprint is significant and irreversible. To proctor an examination, the software typically requires access to the candidate's camera, microphone, screen and, in some implementations, her bedroom — for the 'room scan' to verify she is alone. The candidate is not in a position to refuse: she has paid for the examination, often years of preparation hang on it, and her consent is coerced. Once collected, this biometric and environmental data sits on private vendor servers, with no statutory data-protection regime fully in force.

Third, the alleged scale advantage is illusory. The same scandals cited in support of mandatory AI proctoring occurred on systems that already used AI proctoring. Determined cheats hire stand-ins outside camera frame, deploy voice modulation, and use second devices. Honest candidates bear the cost of the surveillance; dishonest ones evade it. A serious response to integrity concerns would invest in question-bank design, randomised item delivery, and post-hoc statistical detection of anomalous response patterns, rather than mandate a technology that polices the innocent and inconveniences nobody else.

11. The MAIN CONCLUSION of the argument is best stated as:

- A. India should mandate AI-driven proctoring in all online examinations
- B. AI proctoring is technically perfect but politically unpopular
- C. India should NOT mandate AI proctoring; the integrity concern is better addressed by question design and statistical anomaly detection
- D. Online examinations should be abolished

12. Which of the following is an unstated ASSUMPTION on which the author's third objection depends?

- A. The cited recruitment-test scandals are representative of the integrity problem and not isolated exceptions
- B. Question-bank design can never be defeated by cheating
- C. AI proctoring vendors are not regulated
- D. Examinations should be free of cost

13. Which of the following, if true, would MOST STRENGTHEN the author's argument against mandatory AI proctoring?

- A. A peer-reviewed study finding that statistical anomaly detection on response patterns catches more cheating than face-recognition does, with far lower false-positive rates
- B. Data showing that AI proctoring vendors have recently raised prices
- C. Survey data showing that students dislike being proctored
- D. A statement by an examination board that it prefers human invigilators

14. Which of the following would MOST WEAKEN the author's argument?

- A. Evidence that newer AI proctoring systems have eliminated demographic bias in their face-recognition algorithms, that India has enacted and enforced a strict data protection law applicable to vendors, and that AI-proctored exams have demonstrably lower fraud rates than alternatives
- B. Evidence that online cheating has increased in the last year
- C. Evidence that students prepare longer for proctored exams
- D. Evidence that one university has adopted AI proctoring

15. The author's argument is structured as:

- A. An emotional appeal followed by anecdotes
- B. A statement of the opposing case, followed by three substantive objections (technical accuracy, surveillance footprint, and the illusory nature of the scale claim) and a constructive alternative
- C. A historical narrative of online examinations
- D. A legal opinion citing only statutes

**PASSAGE 4 (CR) – THE CASE FOR CAPPING CHIEF EXECUTIVE PAY (ECONOMICS / PUBLIC POLICY)**

**Q16–20**

**READ THE ARGUMENT AND ANSWER Q16–20.**

The ratio of chief executive compensation to the median wage at the same company has risen from roughly 20:1 in 1965 to nearly 350:1 today at the largest American firms, and India's leading companies have followed the same trajectory at a slower pace. The proposal here is modest: a statutory cap limiting CEO compensation to fifty times the median compensation of all employees in the company, including contract labour. Compensation above that level would not be illegal, but it would not be deductible as a business expense for corporate tax purposes — a soft cap, enforced through the tax code.

Opponents argue that the labour market for executive talent is global and thin. Companies pay what they must to retain leaders capable of running complex global businesses, and any cap merely diverts talent to jurisdictions without such restrictions. Capping pay, the argument runs, harms exactly the shareholders, employees and pensioners whom the cap is meant to protect.

These objections do not survive scrutiny. The 'global thin market' argument is empirically thin: studies of large CEO transitions find that performance-on-the-job correlates weakly with compensation level, and that internal successors regularly outperform expensively-hired outsiders. The premise that high pay is necessary to attract talent is supported by intuition and consultancy reports, not by causal evidence.

More importantly, runaway executive compensation imposes costs that the market does not internalise. It corrodes employee morale and trust in institutions; it generates political backlash that produces clumsier interventions than a soft cap; and it widens the wage distribution at a moment when income inequality is already a salient grievance. A tax-coded limit, indexed to the median wage of the company's own workforce, has the elegant property of being self-adjusting: if a CEO wishes to raise her own deductible compensation, she must raise everyone else's. The proposal does not abolish high pay; it merely refuses to subsidise it through the tax system.

16. The MAIN CONCLUSION of the passage is:

- A. CEO pay should be capped at twenty times the median wage by direct statutory prohibition
- B. A tax-coded soft cap on CEO compensation indexed to the median wage of the company is justified
- C. CEO pay is irrelevant to economic outcomes
- D. Indian CEOs are paid less than American CEOs

17. Which of the following is the unstated PREMISE on which the 'self-adjusting' claim in paragraph 4 rests?

- A. All employees deserve the same wage
- B. CEOs are strongly motivated by deductibility of their own pay and will accept the linkage between their pay and the median wage
- C. Tax codes never change
- D. Shareholders own the company

18. Which of the following, if true, would MOST WEAKEN the author's argument?

- A. Evidence that countries with similar tax-coded caps have seen no measurable improvement in worker morale, that high-performing CEOs systematically relocate to uncapped jurisdictions, and that median wages have not risen in capped firms
- B. Evidence that the CEO-to-median-wage ratio has risen in India
- C. Evidence that some CEOs hold long tenures
- D. Evidence that shareholders rarely vote on executive pay

19. The author's reply to the 'global thin market' objection rests primarily on:

- A. An emotional appeal to fairness
- B. Empirical evidence that pay levels correlate weakly with on-the-job performance and that internal successors often outperform expensive external hires
- C. A constitutional argument
- D. Anecdotal stories of well-paid CEOs

20. Which of the following is the FLAW that the author identifies in the opposition's reasoning?

- A. The opposition treats the necessity of high pay as established, when the empirical evidence shows the link between compensation level and performance is weak
- B. The opposition relies on legal precedent
- C. The opposition cites no statistics at all
- D. The opposition confuses correlation with causation in employee morale studies

**SECTION C — RAPID-FIRE GK & CURRENT AFFAIRS**

**Q21-33 · 13 Marks**

Standalone questions on current affairs, static GK, vocabulary in context and idiom usage. No passage required.

21. The capital of Australia is:

- A. Sydney
- B. Melbourne
- C. Canberra
- D. Perth

22. The Booker Prize 2025 was awarded to which author for which work?

- A. Samantha Harvey for Orbital
- B. David Szalay for Flesh
- C. Paul Lynch for Prophet Song
- D. Eleanor Catton for The Luminaries

23. The PM-JANMAN scheme launched in 2024 primarily targets which group?

- A. Urban informal workers
- B. Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs)
- C. Senior citizens below the poverty line
- D. Smallholder dairy farmers

24. Which of the following was the principal legal issue in the Supreme Court's 2024 ruling in State of Punjab v. Davinder Singh?

- A. Reservation in promotions for public servants
- B. Whether sub-classification within Scheduled Castes for reservation purposes is constitutionally permissible
- C. Validity of the Citizenship Amendment Act
- D. Electoral bonds and political funding

25. Choose the option closest in meaning to the underlined word: 'The lawyer's argument was perfunctory and failed to address the merits.'

- A. Thorough
- B. Cursory
- C. Persuasive
- D. Vehement

26. Choose the word OPPOSITE in meaning to 'sanguine':

- A. Cheerful
- B. Optimistic
- C. Pessimistic
- D. Energetic

27. Choose the most appropriate meaning of the idiom: 'to throw in the towel.'

- A. To accept a challenge
- B. To give up or surrender
- C. To prepare for a contest
- D. To clean a place quickly

28. Fill in the blank with the most appropriate phrasal verb: 'After two hours of debate, the committee finally \_\_\_\_\_ a decision.'

- A. arrived at
- B. looked into
- C. given up on
- D. carried out

29. Article 51A of the Constitution of India contains:

- A. Fundamental Rights
- B. Directive Principles of State Policy
- C. Fundamental Duties
- D. The Preamble

30. Which landmark Supreme Court judgment laid down the 'basic structure' doctrine of the Indian Constitution?

- A. Golaknath v. State of Punjab (1967)
- B. Kesavananda Bharati v. State of Kerala (1973)
- C. Minerva Mills v. Union of India (1980)
- D. Maneka Gandhi v. Union of India (1978)

31. Who is the author of the 2024 Nobel-Prize-winning novel 'Kairos'?

- A. Han Kang
- B. Jenny Erpenbeck
- C. Annie Ernaux
- D. Olga Tokarczuk

32. Which Indian player won the 2025 World Chess Championship?

- A. Viswanathan Anand
- B. Rameshbabu Praggnanandhaa
- C. Gukesh Dommaraju
- D. Arjun Erigaisi

33. The IMEC (India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor) was first announced at which international summit?

- A. G20 Bali Summit, 2022
- B. G20 New Delhi Summit, 2023
- C. BRICS Summit, Kazan, 2024
- D. COP28 Dubai, 2023