

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) — BRINGING BACK THE MAMMOTH — THE DE-EXTINCTION DEBATE (SCIENCE / Q1-ETHICS) 5

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

In recent years, a heavily funded biotechnology start-up has promised to 'resurrect' the woolly mammoth by editing the genome of the Asian elephant, its closest living relative. The venture, equal parts genetics and showmanship, has reignited a question that has simmered since the cloning of Dolly the sheep: should humanity attempt de-extinction at all?

Proponents advance three claims. First, restored 'proxy' species could repair broken ecosystems. Mammoth-like herbivores trampling Siberian shrubland might, in theory, re-establish the grasslands that once kept the permafrost — and the vast stores of carbon locked within it — frozen. Second, the gene-editing tools refined along the way could directly help living endangered species, for instance by injecting lost genetic diversity into dangerously inbred populations of ferrets or frogs. Third, there is the argument from restitution: where human beings caused an extinction, human beings owe repair.

Critics find each claim quixotic. An animal that is overwhelmingly elephant with a sprinkling of mammoth genes is not a resurrected species but a novel organism, whose behaviour in a modern ecosystem nobody can predict. The permafrost hypothesis rests on contested climate models and would require herds of hundreds of thousands, not the handful of calves a laboratory might produce in a decade. Conservation biologists worry, further, about a subtler harm they call moral hazard: if the public comes to believe that extinction is a reversible inconvenience, the political urgency of preventing extinctions in the first place may quietly drain away.

Money is the sharpest objection. Conservation is chronically starved of funds; rangers go unpaid and habitat corridors unpurchased. Every dollar spent gestating a mammoth, critics say, is a dollar withheld from the unglamorous work that demonstrably saves species today.

The debate, however, is not symmetrical. Proponents need only one spectacular success to vindicate decades of expenditure; critics must defend a counterfactual about where the money would otherwise have gone. As one reviewer acidly observed, de-extinction may ultimately be less about the mammoth's return than about our own absolution.

1. As used in the third paragraph, the word 'quixotic' most nearly means:

- A. Maliciously deceptive
- B. Impractically idealistic
- C. Scientifically meticulous
- D. Financially prudent

2. Which of the following best captures the central idea of the passage?

- A. Gene editing of endangered species should be banned because novel organisms always behave unpredictably in the wild.
- B. Reintroduced mammoth-like herbivores will certainly restore Siberian grasslands and keep the permafrost permanently frozen.
- C. Conservation biologists have conclusively rejected de-extinction, and the scientific debate is therefore now closed.
- D. De-extinction is technologically striking, but its conservation claims remain contested and may carry hidden costs.

3. It can be inferred that the 'moral hazard' feared by conservation biologists is the possibility that:

- A. public belief that extinction is reversible could weaken support for preventing extinctions in the first place.
- B. laboratories will deliberately drive certain species extinct in order to profit later from the technology that revives them.
- C. mammoth calves produced in laboratories will be mistreated by the companies that create them.
- D. climate models will be falsified once the revived herbivores fail to restore the grasslands.

4. The author's tone in the passage is best described as:

- A. Breathlessly celebratory
- B. Bitterly hostile
- C. Cautiously sceptical
- D. Coldly indifferent

5. Which of the following, if true, would MOST weaken the critics' funding objection described in the fourth paragraph?

- A. Several governments have recently doubled their budgetary allocations for traditional habitat conservation and ranger salaries.
- B. De-extinction ventures are financed almost entirely by private investors who would not otherwise donate to conservation.
- C. The cost of gene-editing technology has fallen sharply over the past decade across all laboratories.
- D. Rangers in several reserves have reported improved morale after reading about the mammoth project.

PASSAGE 2 (RC) — VANISHING TOWERS OF ICE — HIMALAYAN GLACIERS AND SOUTH ASIA'S WATER FUTURE (ENVIRONMENT / GEOPOLITICS) Q6-10

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

The Hindu Kush Himalayan region is often called the Third Pole: outside the Arctic and Antarctic, no other place on Earth stores so much frozen water. Its glaciers and snowfields feed ten great river systems, including the Indus, the Ganga and the Brahmaputra, on which nearly two billion people depend for drinking water, irrigation and hydropower. Yet scientific assessments now converge on a sobering conclusion: even under optimistic emissions scenarios, the region is likely to lose a third of its ice by the end of the century; under high-emissions pathways, the loss could approach two-thirds.

The consequences will not arrive as a simple, steady decline. As glaciers melt faster, rivers initially swell — a phase hydrologists call 'peak water' — bringing more floods, landslides and outburst events from newly formed glacial lakes. Only after this deceptive period of abundance do flows begin their long-term fall. Communities and governments that plan around present river volumes are therefore planning around a temporary illusion.

The distribution of pain will be uneven. The Indus basin, where meltwater contributes a large share of dry-season flow, is far more vulnerable than the rain-fed lower Ganga. Mountain springs, the unsung water source for millions of hill villages, are already drying as winter snowfall turns erratic. Perennial rivers that once flowed dependably through the year may become increasingly seasonal in their upper reaches.

What makes the Himalayan case peculiarly difficult is politics. The rivers cross contested borders, yet the countries of the region share remarkably little hydrological data, treating river-flow measurements almost as state secrets. Scientists have long argued that a common monitoring network and open data protocols would cost little and benefit everyone, since floods and droughts do not respect frontiers.

The region's dilemma, then, is not merely glaciological but institutional. The ice is melting faster than the trust required to manage what its melting will unleash, and the window for building that trust is narrowing with every warming year.

6. As used in the fourth paragraph, the word 'perennial' most nearly means:

- A. Fed only by monsoon rain
- B. Sacred to river communities
- C. Flowing throughout the year
- D. Prone to sudden flooding

7. Which of the following best states the main point of the passage?

- A. Himalayan ice loss threatens South Asia's water security, and weak data-sharing institutions compound the physical danger.
- B. The Indus, Ganga and Brahmaputra will all run completely dry before the end of the present century.
- C. Hydropower projects are the principal cause of glacial retreat across the Hindu Kush Himalayan region.
- D. South Asian governments have already built a fully functioning common monitoring network that will manage the coming water crisis.

8. From the description of 'peak water', it can MOST reasonably be inferred that:

- A. river flows have already entered their permanent decline in every Himalayan basin.
- B. flood risk will fall steadily as the glaciers shrink and rivers lose their meltwater.
- C. the Ganga receives a far larger share of glacial meltwater in the dry season than the Indus basin does.
- D. rivers may carry more water in the near term even though their long-term flows will decline.

9. The author's attitude towards the crisis described in the passage is best characterised as:

- A. Detached amusement
- B. Measured alarm
- C. Open despair
- D. Triumphant optimism

10. Which of the following, if true, would MOST strengthen the author's argument for a common monitoring network and open data protocols?

- A. Several mountain villages have revived traditional spring-water harvesting techniques entirely without any support from their governments.
- B. Some downstream cities have reduced their dependence on river water by recycling waste water.
- C. Satellite imagery alone can now substitute fully for ground-based river-flow measurement.
- D. A flood early-warning system shared by two of the basin countries cut downstream deaths sharply during recent outburst events.

**PASSAGE 3 (CR) — ONE NATION, ONE ELECTION — THE CASE FOR SIMULTANEOUS POLLS
(POLITY / GOVERNANCE)**

**Q11-
15**

READ THE ARGUMENT AND ANSWER Q11-15.

India, it is said, is perpetually in election mode. With a national election, twenty-eight state elections and innumerable local polls staggered across every five-year cycle, hardly a season passes without some part of the country voting. A growing chorus of reformers argues that this permanent campaign is a luxury the republic can no longer afford, and that India should move to simultaneous elections — one consolidated vote for the national Parliament and all state assemblies.

The reformers' argument rests on three premises. The first is cost. Each round of elections consumes enormous public money — security deployment, polling staff, electronic machines — and even larger private spending by parties; consolidating the calendar would spread these fixed costs over a single exercise. The second is governance paralysis. Every election triggers the Model Code of Conduct, which restrains governments from announcing new schemes and projects in the poll-bound territory. Because some election is nearly always imminent somewhere, ministries are said to operate under a near-continuous freeze, postponing decisions for fear of violating the code. The third premise is administrative fatigue: teachers, police and civil servants are repeatedly diverted from their core duties to conduct polls, and the same voters are summoned to booths again and again, breeding weariness and falling turnout.

From these premises the reformers conclude that simultaneous elections would save money, liberate governance from a permanent campaign, and restore administrative focus — all without diminishing the citizen's right to vote, since every elector would still cast the same ballots, merely on a single day.

Critics, the reformers concede, raise objections about federalism and the fate of governments that fall mid-term. But these, they argue, are design details: questions of how to synchronise, not whether to. The central claim stands — a republic that votes constantly governs poorly, and the cure is to vote less often, all at once.

11. Which of the following best expresses the main conclusion of the reformers' argument?

- A. India should adopt simultaneous elections for the national Parliament and all state assemblies.
- B. The Model Code of Conduct should be abolished because it freezes government decision-making.
- C. Election spending by political parties must be capped by an independent statutory authority.
- D. Voter turnout in India has been falling steadily because citizens are summoned to vote too often.

12. The reformers' governance-paralysis premise depends on which of the following assumptions?

- A. Security forces are unwilling to be deployed repeatedly for the conduct of staggered elections.
- B. Most voters are unable to distinguish between national issues and state issues when both sets of ballots are cast together on a single day.
- C. The restraint imposed by the Model Code of Conduct materially delays decisions that governments would otherwise have taken.
- D. Electronic voting machines are too expensive to be manufactured afresh for every separate election.

13. Which of the following, if true, would MOST weaken the reformers' argument?

- A. Several mature democracies, including some large federal ones, hold their national and regional elections on entirely separate calendars.
- B. The Model Code of Conduct applies only to the poll-bound state, only for a few weeks, and expressly exempts all ongoing schemes.
- C. Some political parties have publicly opposed simultaneous elections in their manifestos.
- D. The cost of electronic voting machines has fallen significantly over the past decade.

14. Which of the following, if true, would MOST strengthen the reformers' argument?

- A. A constitutional amendment, ratified by at least half of the state legislatures, would be required before simultaneous elections could be implemented anywhere.
- B. Opinion polls show that urban voters are evenly divided on the merits of simultaneous elections.
- C. Several committees have studied the question of simultaneous elections since the 1980s.
- D. States that happened to vote alongside national elections showed no decline in attention to state issues, while spending per voter fell by half.

15. Which of the following best describes a flaw in the reformers' reasoning?

- A. It treats savings in cost and administrative convenience as decisive while dismissing the democratic costs to federalism as mere details of design.
- B. It relies on the unsupported claim that no other democracy in the world conducts staggered elections.
- C. It assumes that the Model Code of Conduct is legally binding on private companies as well as governments.
- D. It contradicts itself by claiming both that elections are held far too frequently and that turnout among weary voters has nonetheless been falling steadily.

**PASSAGE 4 (CR) — PROVING YOUR AGE — MANDATORY ID VERIFICATION ON SOCIAL MEDIA
(TECH / POLICY)**

**Q16-
20**

READ THE ARGUMENT AND ANSWER Q16-20.

A draft proposal before policymakers would require every social-media platform operating in the country to verify the age of its users against a government-issued identity document before allowing them to create or retain an account. The proposal's defenders mount a forceful argument.

Minors, they begin, are demonstrably harmed by unrestricted social-media use: studies link heavy adolescent use to anxiety, disturbed sleep, body-image disorders and exposure to predatory adults. The platforms' current safeguard — a self-declared date of birth — is a fiction everyone ages past; a twelve-year-old needs only arithmetic to claim to be eighteen. Society, the defenders continue, already accepts age-gating backed by identity proof in the physical world: a teenager cannot buy alcohol or tobacco, enter a casino, or watch an adult film in a cinema without the law demanding proof of age. There is no principled reason, they argue, why the digital world should be a zone of exemption from rules we apply without controversy everywhere else. Since self-declaration has failed, and since platforms have proved unwilling to police themselves, only verification against government identity documents can make the age limit real. The conclusion follows: mandatory ID-based age verification should be enacted, and platforms that fail to comply should face penalties calibrated to their revenues.

The defenders acknowledge the privacy objection — that citizens would be forced to attach their legal identity to their online presence — but dismiss it briskly: law-abiding adults, they say, have nothing to fear from proving their age, and the data can be protected by requiring platforms to delete identity documents immediately after verification.

What is at stake, they insist, is a straightforward choice between the convenience of anonymous sign-ups and the mental health of a generation. Framed that way, they conclude, no responsible legislature can hesitate.

16. Which of the following best states the main conclusion of the defenders' argument?

- A. Self-declared dates of birth are an unreliable and easily falsified mechanism for establishing the true age of social-media users.
- B. Heavy social-media use is linked to anxiety and disturbed sleep among adolescents.
- C. Age-gating backed by identity proof is already accepted for alcohol, tobacco and casinos.
- D. Mandatory ID-based age verification should be enacted, with revenue-linked penalties for non-compliant platforms.

17. The defenders' argument depends on which of the following assumptions?

- A. Adolescents will voluntarily reduce their social-media use once the new verification rules are widely publicised across the country.
- B. Verification against government identity documents will in fact prevent most minors from gaining access.
- C. Social-media platforms earn the majority of their revenue from users below eighteen.
- D. Parents are incapable of supervising the online activity of their own children.

18. Which of the following, if true, would MOST weaken the defenders' argument?

- A. Several large platforms have voluntarily introduced screen-time reminders, parental dashboards and age-appropriate content filters for their younger users.
- B. Most adults say in surveys that they would not mind verifying their age once.
- C. In countries that adopted ID-based verification, minors routinely borrowed adult documents, while verification databases suffered repeated breaches.
- D. The penalties proposed in the draft are lower than those imposed under competition law.

19. Which of the following, if true, would MOST strengthen the defenders' argument?

- A. In a year-long pilot, verified platforms saw under-age accounts fall by ninety per cent with no decline in adult usage.
- B. A majority of legislators belong to parties that have endorsed the draft proposal.
- C. Platforms have spent heavily on lobbying against the draft proposal.
- D. Several celebrities have publicly deleted their social-media accounts, citing the mental-health pressures of constant online visibility.

20. The analogy the defenders draw between online age verification and proof of age for alcohol or casinos is vulnerable to which criticism?

- A. Alcohol and tobacco cause direct and lasting physiological damage to growing adolescents, which makes them far more dangerous than social media platforms could ever be.
- B. Casinos verify age using private databases rather than government identity documents.
- C. A one-time check at a physical point of sale differs fundamentally from attaching legal identity to a continuing space of speech and association.
- D. Cinemas have largely stopped checking the age of patrons for adult films.

SECTION C — RAPID-FIRE GK & CURRENT AFFAIRS

Q21-30 · 10 Marks

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

21. What is the official currency of South Korea?

- A. Yen
- B. Won
- C. Yuan
- D. Ringgit

22. Who is the author of the book 'The Discovery of India'?

- A. Mahatma Gandhi
- B. Rabindranath Tagore
- C. S. Radhakrishnan
- D. Jawaharlal Nehru

23. Who was the first woman judge of the Supreme Court of India?

- A. Justice M. Fathima Beevi
- B. Justice Leila Seth
- C. Justice Anna Chandy
- D. Justice Sujata Vasant Manohar

24. Choose the word closest in meaning to 'EPHEMERAL':

- A. Imperishable
- B. Robust
- C. Short-lived
- D. Hidden

25. What does the idiom 'to let the cat out of the bag' mean?

- A. To create unnecessary panic in public
- B. To abandon a project midway
- C. To punish someone publicly
- D. To reveal a secret carelessly

26. The writ of Mandamus literally means:

- A. We command
- B. To be certified
- C. By what authority
- D. You may have the body

27. Which strait separates India from Sri Lanka?

- A. Strait of Hormuz
- B. Palk Strait
- C. Strait of Malacca
- D. Sunda Strait

28. The Jnanpith Award, one of India's highest honours, is conferred for outstanding contribution to:

- A. Classical music
- B. Scientific research
- C. Literature
- D. Social service

29. Choose the word most nearly OPPOSITE in meaning to 'PARSIMONIOUS':

- A. Extravagant
- B. Miserly
- C. Frugal
- D. Overcautious

30. A Money Bill is defined under which Article of the Constitution of India?

- A. Article 109
- B. Article 110
- C. Article 112
- D. Article 117