

**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) — WHY WE READ FICTION (LITERATURE / PSYCHOLOGY)**

**Q1-5**

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

For centuries, the reading of stories was defended chiefly as a moral exercise: novels were thought to refine taste, instruct the young, and hold up examples of virtue and vice. In recent decades, however, psychologists have begun to make a different and more intriguing claim — that immersion in literary fiction may quietly sharpen our capacity to understand other minds. Reading a novel, on this view, is not an escape from social reality but a sustained rehearsal of it.

The argument rests on a faculty psychologists call 'theory of mind': the everyday ability to attribute beliefs, desires and intentions to other people, and to grasp that their inner lives may differ from our own. Literary fiction, with its ambiguous characters and its refusal to spell everything out, forces the reader to infer what is left unsaid — to wonder why a character hesitates, what a silence conceals, how a decision will land. Each act of inference, the theory holds, is a small workout for the social imagination.

Crucially, the proponents of this idea distinguish literary fiction from much popular fiction. Genre stories that hurry the reader from one event to the next, peopled by characters whose motives are transparent, are said to demand little of this inferential muscle. It is the difficult, character-driven novel — the kind that frustrates as much as it satisfies — that supposedly does the cognitive work.

Sceptics are unconvinced. They point out that the early studies were small and not always easy to reproduce, and that correlation is not causation: perhaps empathetic people are simply more drawn to serious novels in the first place. The author of the present passage, while sympathetic to the romance of reading, is careful not to overstate the case. The claim that fiction makes us kinder, she suggests, is a hopeful hypothesis still in search of firm proof — appealing precisely because readers wish it to be true.

**1. As used in the passage, the word 'inference' most nearly means:**

- A. A firm and final conclusion proved beyond any possible doubt.
- B. A wild guess made without any basis in the text at all.
- C. A reasoned conclusion drawn from what is implied rather than stated.
- D. A summary of the events that have already taken place in the plot, and this holds whatever the parties may privately have intended.

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

- A. Literary fiction may strengthen our ability to understand other minds, though the evidence remains contested.
- B. Popular genre fiction is more valuable to readers than difficult literary novels.
- C. The reading of novels was historically defended only as a moral and instructive exercise, regardless of the surrounding circumstances of the particular case.
- D. Psychologists have conclusively proved that reading novels makes people more empathetic.

**3. It can be inferred from the passage that the author would most likely agree that:**

- A. Genre fiction demands exactly as much inferential effort as literary fiction does.
- B. A novel that explains every motive plainly is the ideal training ground for empathy, on the same facts and subject to the usual statutory exceptions.
- C. Theory of mind is a faculty that only trained psychologists are able to possess.
- D. A novel's reluctance to explain its characters fully is part of what makes it cognitively demanding.

**4. The author's attitude towards the claim that fiction makes us kinder is best described as:**

- A. Wholly dismissive and openly contemptuous of the idea.
- B. Sympathetic yet cautious, withholding final endorsement.
- C. Completely certain that the claim has been firmly established.
- D. Indifferent and detached, expressing no view of her own.

**5. Which of the following, if true, would most WEAKEN the psychologists' claim described in the passage?**

- A. A large, well-designed study finds no difference in empathy between regular readers of literary fiction and non-readers.
- B. Many celebrated novelists are themselves known to be unusually perceptive about people, as has long been recognised by courts considering similar disputes.
- C. Readers report feeling deeply moved by the characters in serious literary novels.
- D. Sales of difficult literary fiction have risen modestly over the past decade.

**PASSAGE 2 (RC) — THE ATTENTION ECONOMY (TECHNOLOGY / ECONOMICS)**

**Q6-10**

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

Economists have long observed that when something becomes abundant, something else becomes scarce. In a world drowning in information, the scarce resource is no longer content but the human attention required to absorb it. This simple inversion is the engine of what is now called the attention economy — a marketplace in which our moments of notice are the commodity being bought and sold.

Most large digital platforms do not charge users a fee. Instead, they offer their services free of monetary cost and earn revenue by selling advertisers access to the attention they capture. The longer a user lingers, the more advertisements can be shown, and the more precisely the user's behaviour can be tracked and packaged for targeting. The business model therefore rewards not the usefulness of the time a user spends, but merely its quantity.

This creates a quiet conflict of interest. The features that keep us scrolling — endless feeds, autoplaying videos, the small jolt of a notification — are engineered to be difficult to put down. Critics argue that such design exploits well-documented weaknesses in human psychology, turning ordinary distraction into a reliable source of profit. What looks like a free service, they say, is paid for in a currency we rarely count: our focus.

Defenders of the model reply that no one is forced to use these platforms, that connection and information have genuine value, and that users can always look away. Yet even sympathetic observers concede that the deck is not evenly stacked. Vast resources are devoted to capturing attention, while the individual, armed only with willpower, is left to resist. The passage does not call for the platforms to be banned. It asks, more modestly, that we recognise attention for what it has become — a finite resource worth guarding — and that we judge these services not by their price, which is zero, but by what they quietly extract.

**6. The passage is primarily concerned with:**

- A. Proving that digital platforms should be banned for harming their users.
- B. Explaining why information has become more abundant than ever before.
- C. Examining how the attention economy works and the conflict of interest it creates.
- D. Comparing the advertising revenues earned by several rival technology firms, provided that no overriding consideration of policy intervenes.

**7. As used in the passage, the word 'extract' most nearly means:**

- A. To advertise openly to a paying audience.
- B. To draw out or take away, often without the giver fully noticing.
- C. To summarise a long text into a shorter form.
- D. To repair or restore something that has been damaged, according to the view generally taken by most commentators.

**8. It can be inferred from the passage that, under the business model described, a platform would most prefer a user who:**

- A. Pays a high monthly subscription fee and then logs off quickly.
- B. Uses the service efficiently and leaves as soon as a task is done, whatever the precise motive of the parties may have been.
- C. Refuses to allow any of his behaviour to be tracked for targeting.
- D. Spends many hours scrolling, viewing a large number of advertisements.

**9. Which of the following best describes the author's overall position?**

- A. Critical of the model's incentives, yet stopping short of demanding that the platforms be banned.
- B. Entirely opposed to digital platforms and calling for their immediate prohibition, and this holds whatever the parties may privately have intended.
- C. Wholly approving of the model, seeing no conflict of interest in it whatsoever.
- D. Uninterested in the debate, merely listing facts without taking any stance.

**10. Which of the following, if true, would most STRENGTHEN the critics' argument as presented in the passage?**

- A. Some users say they enjoy the videos and notifications that the platforms provide.
- B. A few platforms have begun offering optional paid versions without advertisements.
- C. Internal research shows features are deliberately tuned to be hard to stop using, to maximise time spent.
- D. Advertising is a long-established industry that predates the rise of digital platforms, regardless of the surrounding circumstances of the particular case.

**PASSAGE 3 (CR) — BANNING JUNK-FOOD ADVERTISING TO CHILDREN (PUBLIC HEALTH / REGULATION)**

**Q11–15**

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

Childhood obesity has risen sharply over the past two decades, and with it the early onset of conditions once seen only in adults, such as type-2 diabetes. The government is now considering a ban on the advertising of high-fat, high-sugar foods during hours when children are most likely to be watching television or browsing online. The case for such a ban runs as follows.

Children, the argument begins, are not in a position to evaluate advertising critically. Younger children in particular often cannot distinguish a programme from the advertisement that interrupts it, and they lack the experience to weigh a cheerful jingle against the long-term cost to their health. Advertising aimed at them is therefore not an appeal to reasoned choice but an exploitation of their immaturity.

Such advertising, the argument continues, demonstrably shapes what children ask for and what they eat. Repeated exposure to images of sugary cereals and fizzy drinks increases the pressure children place on parents and the quantity of such foods they consume. Since these foods are a significant driver of the rise in childhood obesity, reducing the advertising should reduce consumption, and reducing consumption should, over time, improve children's health.

The conclusion drawn is that the state is justified in restricting this particular form of commercial speech. Where a practice profits a few firms while imposing diffuse and serious costs on a vulnerable group that cannot protect itself, the ordinary presumption in favour of free advertising gives way. A ban during children's viewing hours, the proponents insist, is a proportionate response: it does not forbid the sale of these foods, nor advertising to adults, but simply shields children at the times they are most exposed. Opponents counter that parents, not the state, should police what their children watch and eat, and that the link between advertising and obesity is too tangled to justify so blunt an instrument.

**11. Which of the following best states the main conclusion of the argument in favour of the ban?**

- A. Childhood obesity has risen sharply over the past two decades in the country.
- B. Young children often cannot tell a television programme apart from an advertisement.
- C. High-fat, high-sugar foods are a significant driver of childhood obesity today.
- D. The state is justified in restricting the advertising of junk food to children.

**12. The argument depends on which of the following unstated assumptions?**

- A. A reduction in junk-food advertising to children will actually lead to a reduction in their consumption of such foods.
- B. All forms of television advertising should be banned during every hour of the day, unless the contrary is clearly established by reliable evidence.
- C. Junk-food manufacturers earn no profit at all from advertising aimed at adults.
- D. Childhood obesity is caused exclusively by advertising and by no other factor.

**13. Which of the following, if true, would most WEAKEN the argument for the ban?**

- A. Some adults also find junk-food advertisements appealing and persuasive.
- B. In regions where such advertising was banned, children's junk-food consumption stayed unchanged because they saw the same products elsewhere.
- C. A small number of advertising firms would lose revenue if the ban were imposed, as has long been recognised by courts considering similar disputes.
- D. Many children prefer watching cartoons to watching advertisements.

**14. Which of the following, if true, would most STRENGTHEN the argument for the ban?**

- A. Junk-food firms have stated that they oppose any new restriction on their advertising, provided that no overriding consideration of policy intervenes.
- B. Adults are generally better than children at resisting persuasive advertising.
- C. Controlled studies show that children exposed to less junk-food advertising eat measurably less of such food.
- D. Television remains a popular medium among households with young children.

**15. The opponents' reply that 'parents, not the state, should police what their children watch' would, if accepted, most directly undercut which step of the argument?**

- A. The claim that children themselves cannot critically evaluate the advertising directed at them.
- B. The claim that childhood obesity has risen over the past two decades, according to the view generally taken by most commentators.
- C. The claim that junk foods are high in fat and sugar.
- D. The claim that the ban would not forbid the sale of these foods.

**PASSAGE 4 (CR) — A WEALTH TAX ON THE ULTRA-RICH (ECONOMICS / POLICY)**

**Q16–20**

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

As the gap between the very rich and everyone else has widened, several economists have revived an old proposal: an annual tax levied not on income but on the total net wealth of the richest households above a very high threshold. The argument for such a tax can be set out plainly.

The case begins with a claim about fairness. Income taxes fall on what a person earns in a year, but the largest fortunes grow chiefly through the rising value of assets — shares, land, businesses — which may never be sold and so may never be taxed as income. A great deal of wealth therefore accumulates lightly taxed, or untaxed, while wages are taxed in full. A modest annual levy on net wealth above the threshold, proponents argue, would correct this imbalance.

The second strand is about consequences. Concentrated wealth, the argument holds, concentrates power: it lets a small group shape politics, media and markets in its own favour. Taxing extreme fortunes would not only raise substantial revenue for public goods such as health and education but would also gently slow the runaway concentration that the proponents regard as a danger to democracy itself.

From these premises the conclusion is drawn that a well-designed wealth tax on the ultra-rich is both just and prudent. Critics, however, raise practical doubts. Wealth, they note, is hard to value year after year — how does one price a private company or a painting? — and the very rich are mobile, able to move themselves or their assets to friendlier jurisdictions. Several countries that once levied such taxes later abandoned them, finding that the revenue collected fell short of expectations and the costs of administration ran high. Proponents respond that better international cooperation and tighter valuation rules could answer these objections, and that the difficulty of a policy is not, by itself, a reason to reject a policy that is fair in principle.

**16. Which of the following best expresses the main conclusion of the argument for the wealth tax?**

- A. The gap between the very rich and everyone else has widened in recent years.
- B. The largest fortunes grow mainly through the rising value of assets that are rarely sold.
- C. Concentrated wealth allows a small group to shape politics and markets in its own favour.
- D. A well-designed wealth tax on the ultra-rich is both just and prudent.

**17. The fairness strand of the argument relies on which of the following assumptions?**

- A. The ultra-rich earn no salary income of any kind whatsoever.
- B. Wages ought not to be taxed at all in a just system.
- C. Wealth that grows through rising asset values often escapes taxation that wages do not escape.
- D. Every painting and private company can be valued instantly and without any cost, and this holds whatever the parties may privately have intended.

**18. Which of the following, if true, would most WEAKEN the argument for the wealth tax?**

- A. Some wealthy individuals already donate part of their fortunes to charity.
- B. In countries that adopted such a tax, the rich relocated assets abroad and revenue fell far below projections.
- C. A few economists disagree about the precise threshold at which the tax should begin, regardless of the surrounding circumstances of the particular case.
- D. Income taxes have existed in most countries for well over a century.

19. Which of the following, if true, would most **STRENGTHEN** the argument for the wealth tax?

- A. New international agreements and valuation rules have made it practical to assess and collect the tax with little evasion.
- B. Some members of the public say they admire successful entrepreneurs.
- C. The richest households already pay a large share of total income tax, on the same facts and subject to the usual statutory exceptions.
- D. Wealth taxes were debated by economists many decades ago as well.

20. The proponents' final reply — that 'the difficulty of a policy is not, by itself, a reason to reject a policy that is fair in principle' — is best understood as:

- A. An admission that the wealth tax is, in fact, unfair in principle.
- B. A claim that the wealth tax would be very easy to administer in practice.
- C. An attempt to separate the practical objections from the question of the policy's underlying justice.
- D. A concession that the critics' practical objections are entirely decisive, unless the contrary is clearly established by reliable evidence.

**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. The official currency of Japan is the:

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

22. Choose the word most nearly **SIMILAR** in meaning to 'EPHEMERAL':

- A. Eternal
- B. Spacious
- C. Hidden
- D. Short-lived

23. Choose the word most nearly **OPPOSITE** in meaning to 'BENEVOLENT':

- A. Malevolent
- B. Generous
- C. Gentle
- D. Cordial

24. The idiom 'to bury the hatchet' means:

- A. To hide important evidence from other people
- B. To start a bitter quarrel
- C. To make peace and end a dispute
- D. To work extremely hard

25. The writ issued by a court to secure the release of a person from unlawful detention is:

- A. Mandamus
- B. Habeas Corpus
- C. Certiorari
- D. Quo Warranto

26. The Nobel Prize is NOT awarded in which of the following fields?

- A. Physics
- B. Literature
- C. Peace
- D. Mathematics

27. Which of the following is the longest river flowing within India?

- A. Ganga
- B. Godavari
- C. Brahmaputra
- D. Yamuna

28. The 2024 Summer Olympic Games were hosted by which country?

- A. Japan
- B. Australia
- C. France
- D. United States

29. With effect from 1 July 2024, the principal substantive criminal law in India — replacing the Indian Penal Code, 1860 — is the:

- A. Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023
- B. Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023
- C. Bharatiya Sakshya Adhinyam, 2023
- D. Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973

30. A person who can speak several languages is called a:

- A. Linguist
- B. Orator
- C. Bilingual
- D. Polyglot