

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 VANISHING NIGHT SKY (ENVIRONMENT / SCIENCE)

Q1-5

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

For most of human history, the night sky was a shared inheritance. A short walk beyond the firelight revealed thousands of stars, the luminous band of the Milky Way arching overhead, and a darkness deep enough to humble anyone who looked up. Today, that inheritance is quietly disappearing. More than four-fifths of the world's population now lives under skies brightened by artificial light, and a third of humanity can no longer see the Milky Way at all. The culprit is light pollution — the scattering of excessive, misdirected artificial light into the night environment.

Light pollution is not merely an aesthetic loss, though that loss is real. Ecologists have documented its toll on the living world. Migrating birds, which navigate by the stars, are drawn fatally towards illuminated towers and skyscrapers. Newly hatched sea turtles, programmed to crawl towards the brightest horizon — historically the moonlit sea — instead wander inland towards streetlamps and perish. Nocturnal insects, the unseen pollinators of countless plants, exhaust themselves circling lamps until dawn. These effects ripple outward through entire food webs.

Human health is implicated too. The hormone melatonin, which regulates our sleep, is suppressed by exposure to bright light at night, particularly the blue-rich glare of modern LEDs. Disrupted sleep has been linked to a range of disorders, and researchers continue to investigate the long-term consequences of bathing our nights in perpetual twilight.

What makes light pollution unusual among environmental problems is how readily it can be reversed. Unlike carbon dioxide, which lingers for centuries, light vanishes the instant a lamp is switched off. Shielded fixtures that direct light downwards, warmer colour temperatures, motion sensors and simple restraint can restore the night at modest cost. A growing 'dark-sky' movement has persuaded several towns to dim their glow, and the stars have promptly returned. The remedy, in short, is already in our hands; what is missing is the will to use it.

1. As used in the first paragraph, the word 'inheritance' most nearly means:

- A. a fixed sum of money formally left to an heir in a will
- B. something of value received from the past and shared by all
- C. a genetic trait passed automatically between successive generations
- D. a legal right to occupy and use a piece of inherited property

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

- A. Artificial light has improved human safety far more than it has ever harmed the natural world.
- B. The loss of the Milky Way from view is mainly an aesthetic and cultural misfortune for stargazers.
- C. Light pollution is among the most intractable environmental problems now facing all of humanity.
- D. Light pollution is a serious but uniquely reversible harm to ecosystems and to human health.

3. It can be inferred from the passage that, compared with carbon dioxide pollution, light pollution is:

- A. easier to undo, because its effects cease as soon as the source of the light is removed.
- B. more dangerous, because it spreads silently across far greater distances every single night.
- C. less studied, because scientists have only very recently discovered that it harms wildlife.
- D. more expensive to address, because it requires replacing every single streetlamp in a city.

4. The author's attitude towards the problem of light pollution is best described as:

- A. detached and purely descriptive, offering essentially no judgement on the issue at all.
- B. alarmed and deeply despairing, suggesting that the loss of the night sky has by now become completely irreversible.
- C. concerned yet hopeful, stressing that practical and affordable remedies are already available.
- D. dismissive and sceptical, doubting that artificial light at night causes any real harm.

5. Which of the following, if true, would most WEAKEN the author's claim that light pollution is easily reversible?

- A. Several towns that dimmed their lights reported that residents could soon see the stars again.
- B. Most cities depend on bright nighttime lighting for safety and refuse to reduce it for any reason.
- C. Shielded lamps that direct their light downwards are now cheaper to buy than older unshielded fixtures.
- D. Melatonin levels among residents recovered within a few weeks once blue-rich LEDs were replaced.

PASSAGE 2 (RC) — THE UNLIKELY HISTORY OF THE COLOUR BLUE (ART / HISTORY)

Q6-10

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

Of all the colours, blue has the strangest history. Although the sky and the sea appear unmistakably blue to modern eyes, the colour is curiously absent from the earliest human records. The ancient Greeks, whose poetry described the world in loving detail, never settled on a word for it; Homer famously called the sea 'wine-dark' and the sky 'bronze'. Scholars once took this as evidence that the Greeks were colour-blind, but the truth is subtler: blue was simply the last colour for which most ancient languages developed a name, appearing well after black, white, red and yellow.

The reason lies partly in nature. Blue is vanishingly rare among the pigments available to early peoples. There are few blue animals, fewer blue plants, and no easy way to extract a stable blue dye from the earth. The first culture to manufacture a blue pigment was ancient Egypt, which produced a synthetic compound now called Egyptian blue around 2200 BCE by grinding sand, copper and lime at high heat. For the Egyptians, blue evoked the heavens and the life-giving Nile, and they reserved it for gods and pharaohs.

Centuries later, the most prized blue of all came from a single source: lapis lazuli, a semi-precious stone mined in the remote mountains of Afghanistan. Ground into the pigment ultramarine — literally 'beyond the sea' — it was so costly that Renaissance painters used it sparingly, often only for the robes of the Virgin Mary. A patron commissioning a painting might specify in the contract exactly how much ultramarine the artist was obliged to use.

Only in 1706 did a Berlin colour-maker accidentally create Prussian blue, the first modern synthetic blue, making the colour affordable at last. Today blue is the world's most popular favourite colour, a preference that would have baffled our ancestors. The hue we now take for granted was, for most of history, the rarest and most precious of all.

6. Which of the following best states the main idea of the passage?

- A. Blue, now commonplace, was for most of history the rarest and most prized of all colours.
- B. The ancient Greeks were genuinely colour-blind and therefore could not perceive the colour blue.
- C. Egyptian blue and ultramarine were the only two blue pigments ever used by artists in history.
- D. Prussian blue was invented deliberately to make religious paintings far cheaper to produce.

7. As used in the second paragraph, the word 'reserved' most nearly means:

- A. booked in advance for a particular future occasion or special event
- B. kept quiet and shy in manner when dealing with unfamiliar strangers
- C. set apart for an exclusive and restricted special use by a few
- D. stored away very carefully in a safe place for later resale

8. It can be inferred from the passage that Renaissance contracts sometimes specified the quantity of ultramarine because:

- A. patrons deeply distrusted painters and suspected them of stealing the precious blue stone.
- B. ultramarine faded very quickly and had to be reapplied in several carefully measured layers.
- C. the Church legally required a fixed amount of blue to appear in all religious paintings.
- D. ultramarine was extremely expensive, so the quantity used directly affected a work's cost.

9. The author mentions Homer's 'wine-dark' sea primarily in order to:

- A. prove conclusively that ancient Greek civilisation was, in scientific terms, quite backward.
- B. illustrate that early languages lacked a settled and agreed-upon word for the colour blue.
- C. argue that the sea is not truly blue but in fact much closer in colour to dark red wine.
- D. suggest that ancient Greek poetry was generally careless and unreliable about all colours.

10. Which of the following, if true, would best SUPPORT the passage's explanation for why blue was named late in most languages?

- A. Languages reliably develop colour words in the order black and white, then red, and only then blue.
- B. Modern young children learn the word 'blue' a little more quickly than they learn the word 'red'.
- C. The colour blue actually appears more frequently in nature than any other single colour does.
- D. Ancient Egyptian was the very first language in the world ever to acquire a word for the colour red.

PASSAGE 3 (CR) — SHOULD INDIA MOVE TO A FOUR-DAY WORK WEEK? (LABOUR / ECONOMY) Q11-15

READ THE ARGUMENT AND ANSWER Q11-15.

India should adopt a four-day working week as the new national standard, with no reduction in monthly pay. The case rests on a simple observation: the eight-hour, six-day model is a relic of an industrial age in which output depended directly on hours spent at the machine. In today's knowledge economy, value is created by focus, creativity and judgement — none of which improves after the first several hours of concentrated effort. Beyond a point, longer hours do not produce more work; they produce more mistakes.

The evidence from pilot programmes is encouraging. Where firms in several countries have compressed the week to four days, productivity per worker has held steady or even risen, while reported stress and burnout have fallen sharply. Employees, given an extra day to rest, return to their desks more focused. Companies, meanwhile, have found that absenteeism declines and that talented staff are far less likely to resign. A rested workforce, the argument runs, is a more productive workforce.

There are wider social gains as well. A three-day weekend would allow millions to share caregiving duties more equally, pursue further education, and spend time with their families. Fewer commuting days would mean less traffic and lower carbon emissions. For a country grappling with both overwork in its cities and a rising tide of lifestyle disease, the health benefits alone could be substantial.

Critics worry that sectors such as healthcare, manufacturing and retail cannot simply close for an extra day. But the proposal does not demand uniform closure; it asks only that the standard full-time week be redefined, with shift patterns adjusted so essential services continue. If a nation can legislate an eight-hour day, it can legislate a four-day week. The shorter week is not a loss of work but a smarter way of working — and India, with its vast and youthful workforce, has the most to gain from leading the change.

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

- A. Longer working hours will inevitably lead to a far greater number of careless workplace mistakes.
- B. A well-rested workforce is always more productive than an overworked one in absolutely every sector.
- C. India should make a four-day working week its new national standard without any cut to monthly pay.
- D. Healthcare and manufacturing simply cannot afford to close down their operations for an extra day.

12. The argument's reliance on overseas pilot programmes assumes that:

- A. Indian workers are at present far more productive than the workers in most other countries.
- B. every single company in India already offers its employees a full and proper two-day weekend.
- C. no Indian firm has ever before experimented with any form of a compressed working week.
- D. the results seen in those pilot programmes would broadly carry over to Indian workplaces too.

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

- A. In most large-scale trials, output per worker fell sharply once the week was cut down to four days.
- B. Employees in the pilot programmes reported feeling notably less stressed and far more rested overall.
- C. A three-day weekend allowed many workers to spend significantly more time together with their families.
- D. Several small technology firms found that their most talented staff became less likely to resign.

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

- A. Some employees said that they would clearly prefer a pay rise to an additional day of weekly rest.
- B. A large Indian firm that adopted a four-day week saw output rise and resignations fall over two years.
- C. The standard eight-hour working day was first introduced in large factories during the industrial era.
- D. Traffic congestion in most major Indian cities is heaviest on Monday mornings and on Friday evenings.

15. The claim 'If a nation can legislate an eight-hour day, it can legislate a four-day week' is most vulnerable to the objection that:

- A. the eight-hour working day was never actually legislated by any government anywhere in history.
- B. legislating a four-day week would require the active support of every single political party.
- C. the power to pass one kind of law does not establish that a very different law is workable.
- D. different nations vary so greatly that no single labour law could ever apply across all of them.

PASSAGE 4 (CR) — SHOULD WILD-ANIMAL ZOOS BE PHASED OUT? (ETHICS / CONSERVATION) Q16–20

READ THE ARGUMENT AND ANSWER Q16–20.

Traditional zoos that keep wild animals on public display should be phased out over the coming decades. However affectionately they are run, such zoos rest on a premise that no longer holds: that confining wild creatures for human viewing is justified by the education and conservation they provide. On closer inspection, both justifications are weaker than they appear.

Consider education first. Defenders claim that seeing a tiger or an elephant in the flesh inspires visitors to care about wildlife. Yet studies of zoo-goers find that most spend less than a minute at each enclosure and leave knowing little more than when they arrived. A child today can watch a leopard hunt in stunning detail through a wildlife documentary — behaviour no captive animal pacing a concrete pen will ever display. The educational case, once decisive, has been overtaken by technology.

The conservation argument fares no better. Only a tiny fraction of the species held in zoos are part of any genuine programme to return animals to the wild, and fewer still are ever released successfully. The vast majority are charismatic crowd-pullers — big cats, primates, bears — chosen for their box-office appeal rather than their conservation need. The money spent housing a single elephant for its lifetime could protect far more of its wild cousins in their natural habitat.

Against this stand the real welfare costs. Large, far-ranging animals suffer measurably in captivity: elephants and big cats in zoos show repetitive, abnormal behaviours and die younger than they would in protected reserves. To impose such suffering for entertainment, when the supposed benefits are largely illusory, is difficult to defend.

None of this means abandoning animals already in human care, nor ending the genuine field conservation that some institutions fund. It means redirecting resources from cages to habitats. The age of the menagerie is ending; what should replace it is the protection of wild animals where they truly belong — in the wild.

16. Which of the following is the main conclusion the author seeks to establish?

- A. Wildlife documentaries are now far more entertaining for people to watch than any actual in-person visit to a zoo.
- B. Elephants and big cats both suffer in clearly measurable ways when they are kept in captivity.
- C. Most zoo visitors spend less than a single minute looking at each individual animal enclosure.
- D. Traditional zoos that put wild animals on display should be phased out over the coming decades.

17. The author's argument about education most directly assumes that:

- A. documentaries can inspire concern for wildlife at least as well as seeing the animals in person.
- B. no visitor has ever learned anything genuinely useful during a single visit to a modern zoo.
- C. all wildlife documentaries are completely scientifically accurate in every last small detail.
- D. children are the only single category of visitors whose education the zoos have ever actually claimed that they improve.

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

- A. Most of the animals displayed in our modern zoos are popular crowd-pulling species such as lions, bears, tigers and monkeys.
- B. Visitors typically glance at each enclosure only very briefly before moving quickly along to the next.
- C. A majority of zoos now run breeding programmes that have successfully returned threatened species to the wild.
- D. Maintaining a single large elephant in a zoo costs a very great deal of money each and every year.

19. Which of the following, if true, would most **STRENGTHEN** the author's argument?

- A. Some zoos have recently improved both the overall size and the careful internal design of their various animal enclosures.
- B. Large mammals in zoos consistently die several years earlier than those in protected wild reserves.
- C. Zoo ticket sales have actually risen steadily in several different countries over the past decade.
- D. A few rare species of birds have been successfully bred in captivity and then later released.

20. Which of the following reasoning patterns is most similar to the author's overall argument?

- A. This medicine has some side effects; therefore no medicine should ever be prescribed to anyone at all.
- B. Public libraries are popular; therefore the government should quickly build many more of them everywhere.
- C. He failed at this task once; therefore he will certainly go on to fail at every task in the future.
- D. This practice is justified only by benefits that no longer exist, so it ought now to be discontinued.

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 currency of Japan is the:

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

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

- A. Permanent
- B. Colourful
- C. Short-lived
- D. Enormous

23. The idiom 'to bite the bullet' means:

- A. to make a very serious and costly mistake
- B. to face a hard or unpleasant situation bravely
- C. to waste a valuable and rare opportunity
- D. to speak rashly without thinking it through first

24. The Preamble to the Indian Constitution declares India to be all of the following EXCEPT a:

- A. Socialist republic
- B. Secular republic
- C. Democratic republic
- D. Capitalist republic

25. The Ranji Trophy is associated with which sport in India?

- A. Cricket
- B. Hockey
- C. Football
- D. Badminton

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

- A. Generous
- B. Kindly
- C. Malicious
- D. Cheerful

27. Which is the longest river flowing within India by its length inside the country?

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

28. The 'basic structure doctrine' of the Indian Constitution was propounded by the Supreme Court in:

- A. Maneka Gandhi v. Union of India (1978)
- B. A. K. Gopalan v. State of Madras (1950)
- C. Golaknath v. State of Punjab (1967)
- D. Kesavananda Bharati v. State of Kerala (1973)

29. The book 'The Discovery of India' was written by:

- A. Mahatma Gandhi
- B. B. R. Ambedkar
- C. Jawaharlal Nehru
- D. Sardar Patel

30. Which Schedule of the Indian Constitution contains the list of officially recognised languages?

- A. Eighth Schedule
- B. Ninth Schedule
- C. Seventh Schedule
- D. Tenth Schedule