

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 CITIES ARE GETTING HOTTER — THE URBAN HEAT ISLAND (ENVIRONMENT / URBAN STUDIES)

Q1-5

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

On a still summer night, the centre of a large city can be several degrees warmer than the fields that surround it. This difference, known to scientists as the urban heat island effect, is one of the clearest fingerprints that human settlement leaves on the local climate. It arises not from any single cause but from the accumulated consequences of how we build. Concrete, asphalt and brick absorb solar radiation through the day and release it slowly after dark, so that the warmth of noon lingers long into the small hours. Tall buildings trap this heat in narrow street canyons, where it cannot easily escape to the sky. Meanwhile the very surfaces that once held moisture — soil, grass, ponds — have been paved over, removing the cooling that comes from evaporation.

The effect is more than an inconvenience. During heatwaves, the inability of a city to cool down at night is precisely what makes such events deadly, for the human body depends on the respite of cooler darkness to recover. The elderly, the poor and those without air-conditioning bear the heaviest burden, and so a phenomenon that sounds merely meteorological becomes, on closer inspection, a matter of social justice. Districts with little greenery and dense housing — often the poorest — are commonly the hottest.

Yet the heat island is not an inevitable feature of urban life. Cities that plant trees along their streets, that paint roofs in pale, reflective colours, and that weave parks and water bodies through their fabric can measurably lower their own temperatures. A single mature tree cools the air around it as effectively as several air-conditioners, and at no running cost. The irony is that the cheapest remedies are also the oldest: shade and water, the things that every traditional settlement once took for granted. As the planet warms and more of humanity crowds into cities, the question is no longer whether we can afford to green our streets, but whether we can afford not to.

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

- A. a period of relief or rest
- B. a sudden increase
- C. a permanent solution
- D. a measurement of heat, at any rate on the most natural reading of the passage

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

- A. Concrete and asphalt are the only causes of rising global temperatures across the planet, at any rate on the most natural reading of the passage.
- B. The urban heat island is a human-made and unequal problem that cities can mitigate through greenery and reflective surfaces.
- C. Air-conditioning is the single most effective way to cool an entire city at night.
- D. Traditional settlements were warmer than modern cities because they lacked technology.

3. It can be inferred from the passage that the author regards street trees as valuable chiefly because they:

- A. are more fashionable than reflective roof paint in modern architecture, at any rate on the most natural reading of the passage.
- B. increase the value of nearby residential property in poorer districts.
- C. provide cooling at little or no running cost while also being a traditional remedy.
- D. trap heat within street canyons during summer heatwaves.

4. The author's overall tone in the final paragraph is best described as:

- A. bitterly cynical
- B. coldly indifferent
- C. nostalgically defeatist
- D. constructively urgent

5. Which finding, if true, would most WEAKEN the author's claim that greening streets is an effective remedy for urban heat?

- A. A survey reveals that city residents enjoy walking in tree-lined streets, at any rate on the most natural reading of the passage.
- B. Controlled studies show that newly planted urban trees fail to lower night-time temperatures even after decades of growth.
- C. Reflective roof paint has become cheaper to manufacture in recent years.
- D. Rural areas also experience occasional heatwaves during the summer.

PASSAGE 2 (RC) — THE CURIOUS ECONOMICS OF FREE (ECONOMICS / BEHAVIOUR)

Q6-10

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

There is something about the word 'free' that switches off our ordinary caution. A shopper who would haggle for an hour over the price of a kettle will happily queue in the rain for a free sample worth a few rupees. Economists have long puzzled over this behaviour, because in strict terms 'free' is simply a price of zero, no different in kind from any other price. Yet experiments repeatedly show that zero is not just another number on the scale; it is a category of its own, capable of producing choices that no small positive price ever could.

Consider a famous study in which people were offered a choice between an expensive luxury chocolate at a small charge and an ordinary chocolate at an even smaller one. Most chose the luxury chocolate, sensibly judging it the better value. But when the price of each was reduced by the same tiny amount, so that the ordinary chocolate became free while the luxury one still cost a little, the pattern flipped: the crowd now reached for the free ordinary chocolate, abandoning the better bargain they had preferred moments before. Nothing about the relative value had changed; only the presence of the magic word.

Why should this be? One explanation is that paying anything at all carries a small psychological cost — a faint fear of making a mistake, of being the fool who overpaid. 'Free' removes that fear entirely. There is no downside to be weighed, no risk of regret, and so the offer feels not merely cheap but safe. Marketers have understood this for a century, which is why 'buy one, get one free' outsells an equivalent half-price discount, and why 'free delivery' can persuade a customer to spend more than the delivery charge he has avoided.

The lesson is not that people are irrational, but that our rationality is shaped by feelings we rarely notice. The pull of 'free' is a reminder that price is not only a number; it is also a story we tell ourselves about risk, fairness and loss. To understand markets, one must understand not just what things cost, but how costs make us feel.

6. In the passage, the phrase 'a category of its own' (referring to zero) is used to convey that:

- A. zero is mathematically larger than any other number on the scale, at any rate on the most natural reading of the passage.
- B. free products are always of higher quality than paid ones.
- C. a price of zero affects behaviour in a way that ordinary positive prices do not.
- D. economists refuse to study items that have no monetary price.

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

- A. Luxury chocolates are objectively a better purchase than ordinary chocolates, at any rate on the most natural reading of the passage.
- B. People are wholly irrational and cannot make sensible economic decisions.
- C. Marketers should stop using the word 'free' because it misleads customers.
- D. The appeal of 'free' shows that our economic choices are powerfully shaped by feelings about risk and loss, not by value alone.

8. In the chocolate experiment described, the shift in people's preference occurred because:

- A. removing all cost from the ordinary chocolate eliminated the fear of overpaying, making 'free' feel risk-free.
- B. the luxury chocolate suddenly became more expensive than before.
- C. the ordinary chocolate's taste was improved between the two rounds.
- D. the relative value of the two chocolates was deliberately reversed by the experimenters, at any rate on the most natural reading of the passage.

9. The author's attitude towards consumers who are drawn to 'free' offers is best described as:

- A. openly contemptuous
- B. completely indifferent
- C. understanding rather than scornful
- D. alarmed and disapproving, at any rate on the most natural reading of the passage

10. Which assumption does the author's explanation of the power of 'free' most depend upon?

- A. That all consumers have studied economics formally.
- B. That free goods are produced at no cost to the seller, at any rate on the most natural reading of the passage.
- C. That luxury goods are never offered at a discount.
- D. That paying a positive price carries some psychological cost, however small, that zero does not.

PASSAGE 3 (CR) — SHOULD INDIA INTRODUCE A UNIVERSAL BASIC INCOME? (ECONOMICS / POLICY)

Q11-15

READ THE ARGUMENT AND ANSWER Q11-15.

India should adopt a universal basic income — a modest, unconditional cash payment made to every adult citizen, regardless of need or employment. The case rests on a simple observation: our existing welfare system is a tangle of hundreds of separate schemes, each with its own eligibility rules, its own bureaucracy, and its own opportunities for leakage and corruption. A poor household must prove, again and again, that it deserves help, and in the proving much of the help is lost. A single universal payment would sweep away this maze. Because it goes to everyone, there is no costly machinery to decide who qualifies, no humiliating means test, and far less room for officials to demand bribes for access to benefits that are theirs by right.

Critics object that a universal payment is wasteful, since it hands money to the rich who do not need it. But this objection misunderstands the design. The rich can be made to return their basic income, and more, through the tax system, so that the net transfer still flows downward. What universality buys is not equality of payment but simplicity and dignity: no one is labelled a beneficiary, no one must beg, and no genuinely poor person is wrongly excluded because a clerk lost a form.

A further objection is that free money will make people idle. Yet the evidence from pilot programmes, in India and abroad, points the other way. Recipients of unconditional cash more often start small businesses, repair their homes, or invest in their children's schooling than they do abandon work. A secure floor beneath a person's feet does not sap ambition; it gives people the confidence to take the risks that lift them out of poverty. A basic income, in short, treats citizens as adults capable of judging their own needs — and that, more than any targeted scheme, is what a self-respecting democracy owes them.

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

- A. India should adopt a universal basic income.
- B. India's existing welfare schemes are numerous and prone to leakage.
- C. Pilot programmes show that cash recipients rarely become idle.
- D. The rich can be made to return their basic income through taxation.

12. The argument's reply to the objection that a basic income is 'wasteful' because it pays the rich relies on the assumption that:

- A. the rich will voluntarily refuse to accept the basic income out of conscience, at least as the argument has actually been framed here.
- B. the tax system can effectively recover the payment from wealthy recipients so the net transfer flows downward.
- C. there are very few wealthy citizens in India.
- D. the wealthy do not pay any taxes at present.

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

- A. A handful of wealthy individuals have stated in published interviews that they personally would prefer not to receive any basic income, and would quietly return the money to the government if paid.
- B. Some welfare schemes have application forms that many applicants find rather complicated and time-consuming.
- C. Recipients in one small pilot reportedly used part of their unconditional cash to buy livestock and seed.
- D. Studies show that where unconditional cash is given universally, the tax system fails to recover payments from the rich, and overall poverty reduction is smaller than under well-targeted schemes.

14. The author supports the claim that a basic income will not make people idle chiefly by:

- A. appealing to evidence from pilot programmes in India and abroad.
- B. citing a provision of the Constitution that guarantees employment.
- C. quoting the opinions of wealthy business leaders.
- D. relying on a historical analogy to the abolition of older taxes.

15. Which one of the following arguments is most parallel in its reasoning to the passage's response to the 'idleness' objection?

- A. Opponents say the bridge is unsafe; but the engineer who designed and built it is very highly respected across the whole profession, so the structure that he has produced must surely be perfectly safe.
- B. Opponents say cheap public transport will be abused by joyriders; but data from cities that introduced it show ridership rises mainly among commuters and students, so the fear is unfounded.
- C. Opponents say the new medicine is harmful and dangerous; but since it happens to be quite expensive to buy, it is therefore in all probability a thoroughly effective and worthwhile treatment.
- D. Opponents say the policy will certainly fail in practice; but since it has never once been tried anywhere before, no one at all is in a position to prove that it will actually fail.

PASSAGE 4 (CR) — SHOULD NATIONS PRIORITISE ECONOMIC GROWTH OVER ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION? (ECONOMICS / ENVIRONMENT)

Q16–20

READ THE ARGUMENT AND ANSWER Q16–20.

A government minister recently argued that a developing nation must put economic growth first and leave environmental protection for later, once the country is rich enough to afford it. His reasoning ran as follows. The most urgent problem facing a poor country is poverty itself — the hunger, disease and early death that come from want. Growth, by creating jobs and raising incomes, is the only proven cure for mass poverty. Environmental regulation, by contrast, raises the cost of building factories and power plants, and so slows the very growth that the poor most need. Therefore, the minister concluded, a responsible government should pursue growth now and clean up later, just as today's wealthy nations did during their own industrial revolutions.

The argument has a surface plausibility, but it rests on shaky ground. Its central assumption is that growth and environmental protection are opposites, so that more of one must mean less of the other. This is far from obvious. Polluted air and water themselves impose enormous economic costs: they fill hospitals, cut the working lives of labourers, and destroy the fisheries and farmland on which the poor most directly depend. A child whose lungs are scarred by factory smoke is not a price worth paying for a factory job; she is a future worker lost. On this view, protecting the environment is not a luxury that competes with growth but an investment that sustains it.

The minister's appeal to history is also misleading. The wealthy nations that polluted freely did so in ignorance of the harm they caused; we do not have that excuse. Nor did they face the accumulated, planet-wide damage that two centuries of such behaviour have since produced. To repeat their mistakes knowingly, and on a far larger scale, is not to follow their path to prosperity but to court a catastrophe they never had to imagine. 'Grow now, clean up later' assumes there will always be a later in which the cleaning up is still possible — and that is precisely the assumption that a damaged planet may not allow us to make.

16. What is the main conclusion that the author (as opposed to the minister) is arguing for?

- A. Economic growth is the only proven cure for mass poverty.
- B. Wealthy nations polluted freely during their industrial revolutions.
- C. The claim that a nation should prioritise growth and postpone environmental protection is poorly founded.
- D. Environmental regulation always raises the cost of building factories, at least as the argument has actually been framed here.

17. The author's central criticism of the minister's argument is that it wrongly assumes:

- A. that economic growth and environmental protection are necessarily opposed to each other.
- B. that poverty is not a serious problem in developing countries.
- C. that wealthy nations never industrialised at all.
- D. that environmental regulation is always cheaper than pollution, at least as the argument has actually been framed here.

18. Which of the following, if true, would most strengthen the author's position?

- A. A survey reports that most ministers, when asked privately and off the record, personally dislike environmental regulation and would much rather not be made to enforce it within their own departments.
- B. A large body of studies finds that countries which cut pollution early enjoyed higher long-run growth because of healthier, longer-working populations.
- C. Some factories, depending on their location and design, turn out to be considerably more expensive to build and to run than various other factories elsewhere.
- D. Wealthy industrialised nations generally happened to have substantially larger working populations at the time of their own nineteenth-century industrial revolutions.

19. The author responds to the minister's appeal to history primarily by arguing that:

- A. the wealthy nations of today never in fact became prosperous through industrialisation at all, and their riches must therefore have come from some entirely different source altogether.
- B. history is in every case an utterly unreliable guide to any policy decision whatsoever, and ought to be set aside completely whenever a government is choosing its future course of action.
- C. the situation today differs because we now know the harm and face accumulated, planet-wide damage the early industrialisers never faced.
- D. developing nations today should simply go ahead and copy, in exact and precise detail, whatever it was that the already-wealthy nations happened to do during their own development.

20. The argument's final sentence ('Grow now, clean up later' assumes there will always be a later ...) functions to:

- A. concede that the minister's position is ultimately correct, at least as the argument has actually been framed here.
- B. introduce statistical evidence about pollution levels.
- C. change the subject to an unrelated question of taxation.
- D. expose a hidden assumption in the minister's slogan and suggest it may be false.

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

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

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

- A. Generous
- B. Charitable
- C. Malevolent
- D. Kindly

23. Select the correct meaning of the idiom 'to bite the bullet'.

- A. To eat a meal far too quickly and carelessly
- B. To make a careless and easily avoidable mistake
- C. To start a long and bitter argument
- D. To endure a painful situation with courage

24. Which landmark case is famously associated with the 'basic structure doctrine' of the Indian Constitution?

- A. Kesavananda Bharati v State of Kerala
- B. Maneka Gandhi v Union of India
- C. A. K. Gopalan v State of Madras
- D. Golaknath v State of Punjab

25. The G20 Summit in 2023, where the African Union was admitted as a permanent member, was hosted by which country?

- A. Indonesia
- B. Brazil
- C. India
- D. Italy

26. Which Article of the Indian Constitution abolishes 'untouchability' and forbids its practice in any form?

- A. Article 15
- B. Article 18
- C. Article 23
- D. Article 17

27. Choose the option that correctly fills the blank: 'The committee's findings were so ____ that even its critics could not dispute them.'

- A. incontrovertible
- B. ambiguous
- C. tentative
- D. negligible

28. Who holds the constitutional power to appoint the Chief Justice of India?

- A. The Prime Minister of India
- B. The President of India
- C. The Law Minister
- D. The Vice-President of India

29. The 'Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023' replaced which colonial-era statute?

- A. The Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973
- B. The Indian Evidence Act, 1872
- C. The Civil Procedure Code, 1908
- D. The Indian Penal Code, 1860

30. Choose the correctly spelt word.

- A. Conscientious
- B. Concientious
- C. Consciencious
- D. Conscientous