

**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 HIDDEN KINGDOM OF FUNGI (SCIENCE / ECOLOGY)**

**Q1-5**

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

For most of human history, fungi were filed away as a strange sort of plant—rooted, silent, and faintly suspect. The truth is stranger and grander. Fungi constitute their own kingdom of life, more closely related to animals than to the plants among which they grow. Unlike plants, they cannot manufacture their own food from sunlight; unlike animals, they do not hunt and swallow. Instead, they digest the world externally, secreting enzymes that dissolve matter before absorbing it. A fungus is, in essence, a stomach turned inside out, feeding upon whatever it can reach.

What we casually call a mushroom is merely the fruiting body, the fleeting reproductive bloom of a vast underground organism. The true creature is the mycelium: a filigree of threadlike hyphae that may sprawl for kilometres beneath a single forest, knitting the soil into a living fabric. Through these threads, fungi perform the planet's least glamorous yet most indispensable labour. As decomposers, they break down fallen wood, leaf, and carcass, releasing the locked nutrients back into circulation. Without them, the forest would suffocate beneath its own accumulated dead.

Yet decomposition is only half the story. Many fungi enter into intimate partnership with plants, sheathing or penetrating their roots in an arrangement called mycorrhiza. The fungus ferries water and scarce minerals to the plant; the plant, in return, pays in sugar drawn from the sun. More remarkably, these fungal networks can link separate trees into a shared web of exchange—the so-called 'wood wide web'—along which nutrients, and possibly chemical warnings, may travel from one plant to another.

Humanity has long harvested this kingdom without understanding it. Yeasts leaven our bread and ferment our wine; moulds yield penicillin and a pharmacy of other drugs; truffles and mushrooms grace our tables. Today researchers probe fungi for everything from biodegradable packaging to medicines that may reshape psychiatry. The hidden kingdom, it turns out, has been quietly running the world all along—and we are only beginning to learn its language.

1. As used in the second paragraph, the word 'filigree' most nearly describes the mycelium as something that is
  - A. delicately and intricately interwoven across a wide area
  - B. brightly coloured and conspicuous upon the open forest floor
  - C. fragile and likely to collapse under its own weight
  - D. rigid and arranged in strictly geometric patterns
2. Which statement best captures the central idea of the passage?
  - A. Fungi are a misclassified form of plant that humans have exploited
  - B. Mushrooms are the most economically valuable product of forests
  - C. Fungi form a distinct, vital kingdom whose role we underestimate
  - D. Decomposition is the single most important process in any forest
3. It can be inferred from the passage that, without fungal decomposers, a forest would
  - A. rapidly evolve plants capable of digesting their own dead
  - B. lose access to nutrients trapped in accumulating dead matter
  - C. become dependent entirely on animals alone for the recycling of nutrients
  - D. grow faster because competition for sunlight would decline
4. The author's attitude toward fungi throughout the passage is best described as
  - A. cautious and faintly suspicious of their hidden influence
  - B. detached and strictly clinical about their biological role
  - C. nostalgic for an era when fungi were better understood
  - D. admiring of their overlooked importance and complexity
5. Which finding, if true, would most strengthen the passage's claim about the 'wood wide web'?
  - A. Trees of one species were shown to transmit chemical alarm signals to neighbours through linked fungal threads
  - B. Mycorrhizal fungi were found to absorb sugars from plant roots without offering minerals in return over a single growing season
  - C. Certain mushrooms were discovered to fruit only after unusually heavy seasonal rainfall arrives
  - D. Some forest soils were found to contain fungal threads stretching across several kilometres

**PASSAGE 2 (RC) — THE SLOW DEATH OF THE HANDWRITTEN LETTER (CULTURE / COMMUNICATION)**

**Q6-10**

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

There was a time when to write a letter was to commit an act of patience. One sat down, chose words that could not be unsent, and surrendered them to days or weeks of silence before any reply could return. The letter was slow by nature, and in that slowness lay a peculiar discipline. The writer, knowing the cost of paper, postage, and time, weighed each sentence; the reader, holding the very sheet the other had touched, received not merely information but a small physical relic of another life.

That ritual is now nearly extinct. Email, and after it the still briefer dialects of the text and the message, have made correspondence instantaneous, abundant, and almost weightless. We write more words to one another than any generation before us, yet we deliberate over fewer of them. The medium rewards speed over reflection; we fire off replies between meetings, half-attending, and the words evaporate as quickly as they arrive, leaving no drawer of yellowing envelopes for anyone to discover.

Something particular is lost in this exchange, and it is worth naming precisely. First, deliberation: the handwritten letter forced a pause between feeling and expression that the keyboard has abolished. Second, materiality: a letter is an object, marked by a specific hand, capable of being kept, smelled, and reread decades later. Third, and most quietly, the archive of the self—the slow accumulation of letters that once allowed a person, or a biographer, to trace a life in its own evolving handwriting.

It would be foolish, however, to mourn without honesty. The old correspondence was a privilege of the literate and the leisured; the poor and the distant were often shut out of it entirely. Today a grandmother in one country can see her grandchild's face across an ocean in seconds, and a message of grief or joy need no longer wait a fortnight to arrive. Speed and reach are real gifts, not mere distractions.

Perhaps, then, the right posture is neither nostalgia nor triumph. We have traded depth for breadth, permanence for immediacy, and like all bargains it has both enriched and impoverished us. The letter is not quite dead; it lingers in the occasional card, the considered note. But we might ask, now and then, whether something worth keeping is quietly slipping through our fingers.

**6. As used in the first paragraph, the word 'relic' most nearly means a**

- A. tangible surviving trace of another person's life
- B. worthless object kept only out of dull habit
- C. sacred religious item solemnly venerated by its devoted owner
- D. deliberately discarded fragment of waste paper

**7. The primary purpose of the passage is to**

- A. argue that digital messaging should be abandoned for letters
- B. weigh what is lost and gained as letter-writing declines
- C. explain the technical history of postal communication systems
- D. celebrate the unqualified superiority of instant communication

**8. It can be inferred that the author believes the speed of modern messaging has**

- A. made people incapable of writing any words at all
- B. eliminated all genuine emotional contact between people
- C. guaranteed that future biographers will have richer records
- D. reduced the care and reflection given to each message

**9. The author's tone in the final paragraph is best described as**

- A. bitterly resentful of all modern technological change
- B. smugly confident that the letter will soon fully revive
- C. coldly indifferent to whatever the future may bring
- D. reflective and balanced, weighing gains against losses

**10. With which statement would the author most likely agree?**

- A. Convenience often comes at a cost that deserves honest acknowledgement
- B. Any technology that increases speed is automatically a moral good for us
- C. The past was uniformly superior to the present in every respect
- D. Written communication has no real value once it has been read

**PASSAGE 3 (CR) — SHOULD STANDARDISED TESTING BE ABOLISHED IN UNIVERSITY ADMISSIONS? (EDUCATION / POLICY)**

**Q11–15**

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

Standardised admission tests, such as aptitude examinations administered nationally, are routinely defended as neutral instruments that let universities compare candidates on a single, objective scale. This defence, however, collapses under scrutiny, and the only honest conclusion is that such tests ought to be abolished altogether from university admissions.

Consider first the question of equity. A student's score on these examinations correlates powerfully with the income of her household. Wealthier families purchase months of specialised coaching, mock papers, and private tutoring; poorer families cannot. Two students of identical underlying ability therefore arrive at the examination hall already separated by their parents' bank balances, and the test faithfully records that separation rather than any difference in talent. A measure that simply re-describes existing privilege cannot be called a measure of merit at all.

Second, the very industry of coaching demonstrates that the tests reward a trainable trick rather than genuine capacity. If scores can be lifted substantially by drilling pattern-recognition under time pressure, then what the test captures is responsiveness to drilling, not the analytical depth a university education demands. The skill being certified is the skill of taking the test.

Third, and most damning, longitudinal studies of admitted cohorts repeatedly find that entrance scores are a feeble predictor of how students actually perform once enrolled. School-leaving grades, sustained across years of varied work, track later academic success far more closely than a single high-stakes morning. An instrument that fails at its one job, prediction, has no claim on our continued loyalty.

Defenders reply that abolishing the tests would leave admissions officers drowning in incomparable school records. But this concern, even if real, is an argument about administrative convenience, not about fairness or accuracy. Convenience cannot justify retaining a device that entrenches inequality, certifies coaching, and predicts nothing. The conclusion follows inexorably: standardised testing should be removed from the admissions process entirely.

**11. Which one of the following most accurately states the main conclusion of the argument?**

- A. Wealthier families can afford coaching that poorer families are simply unable to purchase.
- B. School-leaving grades predict later academic success more closely than entrance scores do.
- C. Standardised tests ought to be abolished entirely from the university admissions process.
- D. Coaching shows that the examinations reward a trainable trick rather than genuine ability.

12. The argument's reasoning depends on which one of the following assumptions?

- A. The purpose of an admissions instrument is to identify genuine merit, not merely existing privilege.
- B. No university currently relies on school-leaving grades when admitting its incoming students during each academic admission year.
- C. Private coaching is available in every region where the national examination is administered.
- D. Admissions officers prefer convenient procedures over procedures that are fair and accurate.

13. Which one of the following, if true, most weakens the argument?

- A. Some wealthy families decline to purchase coaching despite being able to afford it easily when sitting for the examination.
- B. School-leaving grades are themselves inflated unevenly across schools of differing resources.
- C. A few universities abroad have recently reinstated entrance tests after dropping them.
- D. Coaching raises scores only for students who already possess strong underlying analytical ability.

14. Which one of the following, if true, most strengthens the argument?

- A. Some admissions officers report that comparing varied school records is genuinely laborious work in day-to-day practice.
- B. Among coached and uncoached students of equal grades, entrance scores still fail to predict outcomes.
- C. Several coaching institutes have expanded their operations into smaller towns this past year.
- D. A handful of low-income students achieve very high entrance scores without any paid coaching.

15. The argument is most vulnerable to the criticism that it

- A. assumes that whatever is administratively convenient must therefore also be fair and accurate.
- B. treats a single counterexample as sufficient to overturn a broad statistical generalisation.
- C. relies, for a key step, on testimony from parties with a financial interest in its conclusion.
- D. infers that because a measure is imperfect at one task, it has no legitimate use whatever.

**PASSAGE 4 (CR) — IS SPACE EXPLORATION A JUSTIFIABLE USE OF PUBLIC FUNDS? (SCIENCE / Q16-20)**

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

Whenever a national space agency announces a costly new mission, the same objection surfaces: the money would be better spent on hospitals, schools, or relief at home. The objection is understandable, but it rests on a narrow accounting that ignores what space programmes actually deliver. Properly weighed, public spending on space exploration is plainly justified.

Begin with the technologies such programmes generate. The demands of operating in space, where failure is unforgiving and resources are scarce, force engineers to invent solutions that later spread far beyond the launch pad. Water-purification systems, lightweight materials, advances in medical imaging, and the miniaturised electronics now in every household trace their lineage to problems first posed by spaceflight. A rupee directed at space, on this view, returns to the public not once but repeatedly, through industries it seeds on the ground.

There is also a longer horizon to consider. Any species confined to a single planet is hostage to that planet's catastrophes, whether an asteroid strike, a runaway climate, or a pandemic. Developing the capacity to operate, and eventually to live, beyond Earth is therefore not a luxury but a form of insurance for the survival of humanity itself. No domestic programme, however worthy, addresses a risk of that magnitude.

Finally, space exploration inspires. The sight of a successful launch or a photograph of a distant world draws a generation toward science, mathematics, and engineering. Nations that explore cultivate the scientific talent on which every other public good, including better hospitals and schools, ultimately depends.

The critic protests that these benefits are speculative while the unmet needs at home are immediate and certain. Yet almost every transformative public investment looked speculative at its outset; judged only by what is immediate, no society would ever build for its future. Spin-off technology, long-term survival, and the cultivation of scientific ambition together make the case decisive: funding space exploration is a justifiable, even prudent, use of public money.

16. Which one of the following most accurately states the main conclusion of the argument?

- A. Public spending on space exploration is a justifiable use of public funds.
- B. Technologies developed for spaceflight later spread into many ground-based industries.
- C. A species confined to one planet remains hostage to that planet's catastrophes.
- D. Successful launches draw a new generation toward science, mathematics, and engineering.

17. The argument relies on which one of the following assumptions?

- A. Every technology used in modern hospitals originated directly within a national space programme over recent decades of progress.
- B. Space agencies spend more on each mission than national health ministries spend annually.
- C. The benefits a space programme yields are not outweighed by the domestic goods its funding displaces.
- D. Citizens who watch launches invariably choose careers in science rather than in other fields.

18. Which one of the following, if true, most weakens the argument?

- A. The same spin-off technologies would have emerged from cheaper, purely terrestrial research programmes.
- B. Some citizens find photographs of distant worlds less inspiring than the argument supposes.
- C. A few space missions have overrun their announced budgets by considerable and embarrassing margins.
- D. Asteroid strikes capable of threatening humanity occur only once across the long sweep of geological time.

19. Which one of the following, if true, most strengthens the argument?

- A. Several countries without space programmes have nonetheless built excellent public hospital systems.
- B. Economists estimate that each unit spent on space research returns several units to the wider economy.
- C. A recent launch attracted record television audiences across several different continents.
- D. Spaceflight engineers often hold advanced degrees in physics and aerospace engineering disciplines.

20. The reasoning in the argument is most closely paralleled by which one of the following?

- A. This bridge is costly, but every great bridge was costly; therefore this bridge is worth building.
- B. Most voters favour the new park, so building the new park is clearly the right public decision.
- C. The medicine cured one patient, so it will surely cure every patient who suffers the disease.
- D. Early vaccines seemed speculative yet proved transformative, so this speculative venture will prove worthwhile too.

**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 'Dirham' is the official currency of which of the following countries?

- A. Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
- B. State of Qatar
- C. United Arab Emirates
- D. State of Kuwait

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

- A. Long-lasting
- B. Short-lived
- C. Spacious
- D. Generous

23. The 'Thomas Cup' is the premier international team championship associated with which sport?

- A. Lawn Tennis
- B. Squash
- C. Badminton
- D. Table Tennis

24. Which writ is issued by a superior court to quash an order passed by a lower court that has acted beyond its jurisdiction?

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

25. What does the idiom 'to bury the hatchet' mean?

- A. To start a fight
- B. To make peace
- C. To hide evidence
- D. To dig deeper

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

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

27. The International Day of Yoga, observed recently, is marked every year on which date?

- A. 21 June
- B. 5 June
- C. 14 June
- D. 1 July

28. The Strait of Hormuz, frequently in the news, connects the Persian Gulf to the:

- A. Red Sea
- B. Mediterranean Sea
- C. Caspian Sea
- D. Gulf of Oman

29. Which Part of the Indian Constitution contains the Fundamental Rights?

- A. Part II
- B. Part III
- C. Part IV
- D. Part IV-A

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

- A. Munificent
- B. Cheerful
- C. Malevolent
- D. Honest