

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 CONSOLATIONS OF REREADING (LITERATURE / READING)

Q1-5

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

There is a peculiar pleasure in returning to a book one has already read. The first encounter with a story is driven by suspense: we turn the pages hungrily, eager to learn what happens next, and in our hurry we often miss a great deal. The rereader, by contrast, is freed from the tyranny of plot. Knowing already how the tale ends, she can attend to the things that matter more than mere event, the cadence of a sentence, the quiet planting of a detail that will bloom two hundred pages later, the slow architecture of a character's change.

Rereading, then, is not repetition but discovery. The book has not changed, but the reader has. A novel encountered at seventeen and again at forty is, in a real sense, two different novels, because the person holding it has lived two different lives. Lines that once seemed merely decorative now strike us as wise; characters we once dismissed as dull reveal an unbearable poignancy. The text becomes a measuring stick against which we register our own growth.

Some object that life is short and the unread books are many, that to reread is to squander scarce hours on the familiar. There is force in this complaint, and yet it mistakes quantity for nourishment. We do not eat a meal once and declare the matter of eating settled; we do not hear a piece of music a single time and move on forever. The works that reward us most are precisely those that cannot be exhausted in one reading, that hold something in reserve for the patient.

To reread is, finally, an act of intimacy and of trust. It is to say to a book: you have given me something before, and I believe you have more to give. In an age that prizes the new and the next, such loyalty is quietly radical.

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

- A. Rereading is valuable because the reader, having changed, finds fresh meaning in a text that has not changed.
- B. Rereading is largely a waste of one's strictly limited time, which would always be far better spent on the many unread books.
- C. The pleasure of any book lies chiefly in the suspense of discovering how its plot finally resolves.
- D. Books steadily improve in their actual quality each time a careful reader returns to them.

2. As used in the passage, the word 'tyranny' (in 'the tyranny of plot') most nearly means —

- A. a cruel and deeply oppressive system of government exercised by a single all-powerful ruler.
- B. the controlling, almost compelling, hold that something exerts over a person.
- C. a mild and easily ignored source of occasional and minor irritation.
- D. the gradual and quite welcome loss of one's interest in a subject.

3. It can most reasonably be inferred that the author believes a truly great book —

- A. is one whose ending can be guessed long before the reader reaches the final page.
- B. should be read as quickly as possible so that its plot retains its full force.
- C. contains more meaning than any single reading can ever fully exhaust.
- D. loses all of its value once the reader knows how the story concludes.

4. The author's attitude towards rereading can best be described as —

- A. sceptical and faintly dismissive of its supposed benefits.
- B. neutral and strictly factual, taking no side on the matter.
- C. anxious and openly defensive about an unpopular habit.
- D. appreciative and quietly persuasive in its favour.

5. Which of the following, if true, would most weaken the author's argument for rereading?

- A. Careful studies find that readers who reread gain no new insights and merely recall their earlier reactions.
- B. Many widely celebrated writers have openly admitted to rereading their own most favourite novels a great many times over.
- C. The number of new books published every year now far exceeds what any one person could read.
- D. Readers often report noticing fresh details in a film when they happen to watch it a second time.

PASSAGE 2 (RC) — THE LONG JOURNEY OF THE NUMBER ZERO (MATHEMATICS / HISTORY)

Q6-10

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

For most of human history, there was no zero. The great civilisations of antiquity counted, traded and built without any symbol for nothing, and they managed remarkably well. The Romans raised aqueducts and governed an empire using numerals that simply had no place for it. Yet the absence of zero carried a hidden cost: arithmetic remained clumsy, and the higher reaches of mathematics stayed firmly out of reach.

The breakthrough came in India. By the early centuries of the common era, Indian mathematicians had begun to treat zero not merely as a blank space but as a number in its own right, a quantity that could be added, subtracted and reasoned about. The scholar Brahmagupta, writing in the seventh century, set down rules for calculating with zero and with negative numbers, an astonishing leap for his age. What had been an empty placeholder became a full citizen of the number system.

From India the idea travelled west along trade routes, carried by Arab scholars who recognised its power and passed it on to a sceptical Europe. There it met resistance. Merchants and officials, comfortable with older methods, distrusted the strange new symbol; some cities even banned it, fearing it would make fraud easier. For centuries the new arithmetic and the old coexisted uneasily before the obvious advantages of the former won out.

It is hard, today, to grasp how radical zero once was. It made possible the place-value system on which all modern calculation rests, and without it there could be no algebra, no calculus, and no computer, whose every operation is built from ones and zeros. A symbol for nothing turned out to be one of the most powerful somethings ever devised. The history of zero is a reminder that the ideas we take most for granted were often, in their day, the hardest won.

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

- A. The Romans were poor mathematicians because they refused to adopt any numeral system at all.
- B. Zero, first treated as a true number in India, was a hard-won idea that transformed mathematics.
- C. European merchants were right to distrust zero, which did in fact make commercial fraud much easier.
- D. Brahmagupta single-handedly invented all of modern algebra, calculus and computing by himself.

7. As used in the passage, 'placeholder' most nearly refers to —

- A. a person who reserves a seat or a position on behalf of somebody else.
- B. a number that is larger in value than all the others in a sequence.
- C. a mark that holds an empty position without itself being treated as a number.
- D. a rule for performing addition and subtraction much more quickly than was previously possible.

8. It can be inferred from the passage that the place-value system —

- A. was invented in Europe long before it was ever known anywhere in India.
- B. was rejected by Indian mathematicians as being far too difficult to use.
- C. made negative numbers impossible to define or to calculate with at all.
- D. depends on having a symbol such as zero to mark an empty position.

9. The author's attitude towards the history of zero is best described as —

- A. admiring of how a difficult idea reshaped human thought over time.
- B. dismissive of its real importance to the development of mathematics.
- C. alarmed by the dangers that the new symbol is said to have introduced.
- D. indifferent to whether the new symbol was finally adopted or rejected.

10. Which of the following, if true, would most strengthen the claim that zero was resisted in Europe?

- A. The careful rules that Brahmagupta set down for calculating with zero were widely praised by mathematicians across India.
- B. Surviving records show several medieval European city governments formally prohibited the new numeral.
- C. Modern computers represent all of their information using only the two digits one and zero.
- D. Arab scholars very quickly recognised the great usefulness of the Indian system of numbers.

PASSAGE 3 (CR) — SHOULD SMARTPHONES BE BANNED IN SCHOOLS? (EDUCATION / TECHNOLOGY)

Q11-15

READ THE ARGUMENT AND ANSWER Q11-15.

Schools exist to help children learn, and anything that systematically obstructs learning has no place in the classroom. The smartphone, for all its uses elsewhere, is precisely such an obstruction. It should therefore be banned from schools during teaching hours.

Consider first the matter of attention. A phone in a pupil's pocket is a constant invitation to distraction: a buzzing notification, the pull of a game, the lure of social media. Studies of classroom behaviour repeatedly find that pupils with phones to hand check them many times an hour, and that even the effort of resisting the urge consumes mental energy that should be spent on the lesson. Learning demands sustained concentration, and the device is engineered to fragment exactly that.

Consider next the social cost. Where phones are permitted, the playground falls silent; children who might be talking, arguing and playing instead sit hunched over screens. The informal social skills that schools have always quietly taught, reading a face, settling a quarrel, simply being bored together, wither when every spare moment can be filled by a feed.

Defenders of the phone reply that it is a useful learning tool and that children must learn to manage technology responsibly. But a tool that demands constant supervision to prevent misuse is a poor bargain in a busy classroom, and the place to teach responsible use is not the one place where undivided attention matters most. Several schools that have introduced bans report calmer corridors, livelier break-times and, in some cases, improved results.

If the purpose of a school is to cultivate the capacity for deep, sustained thought, and surely it is, then it cannot at the same time welcome a device built to destroy that very capacity. The conclusion follows plainly: smartphones should be kept out of the school day.

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

- A. Smartphones are engineered so as to capture and then fragment the attention of their users.
- B. Children must somewhere learn how to manage modern technology in a responsible manner.
- C. Smartphones should be banned from schools during the hours set aside for teaching.
- D. Schools exist in order to help children learn and to develop their powers of thinking.

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

- A. No school anywhere in the entire world has ever previously attempted to ban smartphones from its own classrooms.
- B. Every single pupil who happens to own a smartphone uses it constantly throughout the school day.
- C. Teachers are, as a rule, personally incapable of delivering an interesting or engaging lesson.
- D. The benefits of allowing phones in school do not outweigh their cost to attention and to social skills.

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

- A. Well-designed lessons that build phones into class activities are shown to improve both attention and results.
- B. A small number of pupils admit that they sometimes feel tempted to check their phones in class.
- C. Some parents would prefer their children to be able to carry phones for use after school hours.
- D. Phones are also a genuinely significant source of distraction for a great many adults working in modern office workplaces today.

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

- A. A great many of the pupils say that they would personally much rather be allowed to keep their phones during lessons.
- B. Controlled trials find that removing phones from classrooms produces large and lasting gains in learning.
- C. Smartphones have on the whole become considerably more expensive over the last several years.
- D. A few teachers occasionally use their own phones to take the register at the start of class.

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

- A. relies entirely on the personal opinions of pupils who happen to dislike their own schools.
- B. assumes that whatever is true of adult office workers must also be true of schoolchildren.
- C. treats the phone's worst possible misuse as though it were its only possible use.
- D. concludes that phones are harmful merely on the ground that they are a recent invention.

PASSAGE 4 (CR) — IS A WEALTH TAX THE RIGHT WAY TO REDUCE INEQUALITY? (ECONOMICS / Q16-20)

READ THE ARGUMENT AND ANSWER Q16-20.

Inequality is a real and pressing problem, and the impulse to tackle it is honourable. But good intentions are not the same as good policy. A tax levied each year on the total wealth of the richest households, a so-called wealth tax, is, for all its appeal, the wrong instrument for the job.

Begin with the practical difficulties. Wealth, unlike income, is notoriously hard to measure. A salary arrives in regular, recorded payments; a fortune may sit in private companies, art, land and assets scattered across the world, whose value is a matter of guesswork and dispute. Tax authorities must either accept the figures the wealthy choose to declare or fight expensive battles over valuation. The result, wherever such taxes have been tried, is a flood of avoidance and a thin trickle of revenue.

Consider, too, the question of flight. Wealth is mobile in a way that ordinary income is not. The very rich can, and do, move themselves and their assets to friendlier jurisdictions. Several European countries that introduced wealth taxes later abolished them, having found that they raised little while driving capital and talent abroad. A tax that chiefly succeeds in making the wealthy leave does nothing for those left behind.

Supporters answer that the symbolism matters, that a wealth tax expresses society's commitment to fairness. But a policy should be judged by its effects, not its gestures, and a measure that collects little while encouraging evasion may breed cynicism rather than solidarity.

None of this means inequality should be ignored. There are better tools: taxing inheritance, closing loopholes on capital gains, and investing the proceeds in schools and health. These reach the same goal by surer roads. The wealth tax promises much and delivers little; we should reach instead for the tools that actually work.

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

- A. Inequality is not, on closer inspection, a genuine problem and may safely be ignored.
- B. Wealth is, as a general matter, much harder to measure accurately than ordinary income.
- C. Several European countries have at one time or another abolished their wealth taxes.
- D. A wealth tax is the wrong instrument for the task of reducing economic inequality.

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

- A. A policy that raises little revenue and invites widespread avoidance is not a good way to reduce inequality.
- B. No government anywhere has ever managed to measure any form of private wealth at all.
- C. The wealthy are morally entitled to keep every single rupee of the fortunes they hold.
- D. Reducing inequality is, in truth, a far less important social goal than the encouragement of new private investment.

18. Which of the following, if true, would most weaken the argument?

- A. A new international agreement now makes it practical to value assets and to stop the wealthy from fleeing abroad.
- B. Many ordinary citizens say that they strongly support the idea of taxing the very rich more heavily.
- C. Inheritance taxes have themselves sometimes been criticised as being rather difficult to collect.
- D. A few wealthy individuals have on occasion publicly volunteered to pay higher rates of tax.

19. Which of the following, if true, would most strengthen the argument?

- A. A fresh cross-country study finds every nation adopting a wealth tax saw revenue fall short and capital move abroad.
- B. A few economists regard rising inequality as the single most urgent issue of our present time.
- C. Wealth taxes are, on the whole, easier for the general public to understand than capital-gains rules.
- D. Some of the very rich own certain assets that would in fact be quite simple to value precisely.

20. The argument is most open to the objection that it —

- A. assumes that inequality is actually desirable and ought not to be reduced by any means at all.
- B. relies only on the stated opinions of the very wealthy people it happens to be describing.
- C. concludes that the tax is bad merely on the ground that it is a comparatively new idea.
- D. rejects the wealth tax for problems that better enforcement and design might largely cure.

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. Which city is the capital of Australia?

- A. Canberra
- B. Sydney
- C. Melbourne
- D. Perth

22. The official currency of Japan is the —

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

23. In which sport is the term 'love' used to denote a score of zero?

- A. Cricket B. Hockey
 C. Tennis D. Golf

24. Who wrote the play 'Hamlet'?

- A. Charles Dickens
 B. Robert Louis Stevenson
 C. Leo Tolstoy
 D. William Shakespeare

25. Which gas do green plants mainly absorb from the air during photosynthesis?

- A. Carbon dioxide B. Oxygen
 C. Nitrogen D. Hydrogen

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

- A. Generous B. Affectionate
 C. Malevolent D. Cheerful

27. The idiom 'to bite the bullet' means to —

- A. avoid a difficult task or an unpleasant duty entirely.
 B. face a hard or painful situation with courage.
 C. waste a lot of money on useless things.
 D. speak carelessly without thinking first.

28. The Right to Constitutional Remedies is guaranteed by which Article of the Constitution of India?

- A. Article 19 B. Article 21
 C. Article 14 D. Article 32

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

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

30. The 'basic structure' doctrine of the Constitution was laid down by the Supreme Court in which case?

- A. Maneka Gandhi case
 B. Indira Nehru Gandhi v. Raj Narain case
 C. Kesavananda Bharati case
 D. Minerva Mills case