

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.

Free daily practice — clatgurukul.com/daily · Pass this sheet to a friend.

PASSAGE 1 (RC) — THE CARTOGRAPHY OF GRIEF (PHILOSOPHY / PHENOMENOLOGY)

Q1-5

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

Grief has long been theorised as a journey — an arc that moves through identifiable stages before arriving at some promised shore of acceptance. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross gave this arc its most famous cartography: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and finally acceptance, arranged as if on a railway timetable where emotional life obeys the discipline of schedule. Yet the metaphor of the journey, however consoling, misrepresents the phenomenology of loss in a fundamental way. A journey presupposes a destination, and the traveller, however wearily, is always moving toward something. Grief moves toward nothing. It circles back on itself, doubles over old wounds with new occasion, and erupts without warning in the middle of a Tuesday afternoon when someone else is laughing nearby. To grieve is not to travel but to inhabit a terrain that keeps reshaping itself underfoot. The philosopher Thomas Nagel once argued that what makes death bad is not the fact of non-existence but the curtailment of a particular point of view on the world. By extension, grief is bad not merely because it hurts but because it involves the loss of a relational perspective — the way one existed for another person, the precise register of being seen. We do not mourn only the dead; we mourn the particular self that existed in their gaze. This reflexive dimension of grief — its concern with what the mourner has lost of themselves — is almost entirely absent from the stage-model tradition, which positions grief as a task to be completed rather than a condition to be inhabited. There is something politically convenient about this framing. A culture oriented around productivity finds comfort in grief that has a deadline, grief that eventually gets filed and concluded. Bereavement leave policies are rarely written to accommodate grief that returns, unscheduled, three years later. The sociologist Zygmunt Bauman observed that in liquid modernity, all bonds are provisional and all losses are expected to be absorbed quickly into the onward current of experience. Grief that lingers is pathologised — diagnosed as 'complicated', as if the alternative were simple. But perhaps what is diagnosed as complication is merely fidelity: an insistence on taking seriously what was taken seriously before. The cartography of grief, if it must exist, ought to be drawn not with the clean lines of a rail map but with the contour lines of a mountain range — full of elevation and return, of ridgelines that look like summits until you reach them and discover the next ascent already waiting.

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

- ☐ A. condemned on moral grounds by mainstream social institutions
- ☐ B. acknowledged sympathetically as a natural human response to loss
- ☐ C. treated as a medical or psychological disorder requiring correction
- ☐ D. studied scientifically to understand its neurological underpinnings, on the facts as presently stated

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

- ☐ A. Stage-based grief models impose an inappropriate linearity on an experience that is recursive and self-reflexive, and this distortion serves cultural rather than therapeutic purposes.
- ☐ B. The Kübler-Ross model is scientifically flawed and should be replaced with Bauman's theory of liquid modernity as the dominant framework for grief counselling.
- ☐ C. Grief is ultimately a philosophical problem about mortality and should be studied by phenomenologists rather than psychologists or sociologists.
- ☐ D. Modern bereavement leave policies are inadequate and need legislative reform to account for the non-linear nature of grief.

3. The author's reference to Thomas Nagel primarily serves to

- ☐ A. introduce the idea that grief involves losing a version of oneself, not merely mourning an external absence
- ☐ B. provide philosophical authority for rejecting the stage-based model of grief entirely
- ☐ C. contrast an analytic philosophical view of death with the phenomenological tradition
- ☐ D. argue that death is objectively harmful because it deprives the world of a unique perspective

4. The tone of the passage can best be described as

- ☐ A. detached and scholarly, presenting multiple theories of grief without endorsing any
- ☐ B. critically analytical, with an undertow of moral advocacy for taking grief seriously on its own terms
- ☐ C. polemical and dismissive, ridiculing stage-based grief models as intellectually dishonest
- ☐ D. elegiac and personal, suggesting the author has experienced significant loss firsthand

5. Which of the following, if true, would most weaken the author's claim that stage-based grief models serve cultural productivity rather than therapeutic needs?

- ☐ A. Bereavement leave in most countries averages fewer than five days, far below what grief researchers typically recommend as adequate recovery time.
- ☐ B. Anthropologists have documented societies with extended mourning rituals lasting years, suggesting grief norms are culturally variable rather than biologically fixed, on the facts as presently stated, in the absence of any agreement to the contrary.
- ☐ C. Longitudinal clinical studies show that patients guided through the Kübler-Ross stages report faster restoration of social function and lower rates of depression than those who receive no structured framework.
- ☐ D. Zygmunt Bauman's analysis of liquid modernity has been criticised by several sociologists for over-generalising about consumer culture.

PASSAGE 2 (RC) — THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF SALT (HISTORY / POLITICAL ECONOMY)

Q6-10

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



There is perhaps no commodity that has served as a more reliable index of state power than salt. Cheap, ubiquitous, and physiologically non-negotiable, salt seems an unlikely vehicle for political drama — yet across centuries and civilisations, it has repeatedly become the terrain on which the claims of authority and the grievances of subjects collide with uncommon violence. The Roman soldier's *salarium*, from which the word 'salary' derives, was not always paid in salt itself, but the association reveals how early empires understood the strategic value of controlling what every body requires. To tax salt was to tax breath. The French *gabelle* — an inequitable salt tax that varied wildly by region and exempted the clergy and nobility — became one of the most viscerally resented features of the ancien régime. Historians who have studied the *cahiers de doléances*, the grievance registers submitted to the Estates-General on the eve of the Revolution, consistently note that complaints about the *gabelle* appear with a frequency and bitterness that rival even the land tax. The salt smuggler, far from being a figure of marginal criminality, was often romanticised as a folk hero — someone whose transgression was not merely economic but existential, a refusal to let the state commodify survival. What the *gabelle* illustrates, and what salt monopolies across South Asia, China, and colonial Africa similarly illuminate, is a recurring logic: fiscal desperation leads states toward taxing necessities, and taxing necessities inevitably generates a legitimacy crisis, because it reveals that the state views its subjects not as citizens whose welfare grounds its authority, but as revenue sources whose needs are irrelevant except as leverage. The British salt monopoly in India offers the starkest modern instance. By the early twentieth century, the Salt Acts prohibited Indians from collecting or selling salt independently, forcing them to purchase it from government stockists at artificially inflated prices. Gandhi's selection of salt as the target of civil disobedience in 1930 was therefore not sentimental or theatrical — it was a precise act of political economy. The Dandi March exposed, in a form legible to every Indian regardless of literacy or caste, that colonial rule was not merely unjust but metabolically predatory: it imposed a tax on the body's chemistry. When Gandhi lifted a fist of salt from the sea-shore, he was not merely breaking a law; he was making visible an entire structure of extraction that ordinarily hid behind administrative opacity. The power of the act lay in its simplicity — a philosopher-politician who understood that the most devastating critiques of power are those that need no translation.

6. The word 'metabolically' as used in the passage most closely means

- ☐ A. systematically, in the sense that colonial extraction operated through interconnected institutions
- ☐ B. chemically, referring to the specific mineral compounds that make salt nutritionally necessary
- ☐ C. at the level of the body's basic biological functioning, not merely its economic or civic life
- ☐ D. historically, suggesting that the salt tax had roots in pre-colonial metabolic practices

7. What is the primary purpose of the passage's extended treatment of the French *gabelle*?

- ☐ A. To argue that the French Revolution was caused primarily by resentment of commodity taxes rather than land inequality
- ☐ B. To trace the historical origins of the concept of salary and its link to Roman imperial resource management
- ☐ C. To provide a European counterpoint that makes Gandhi's salt campaign appear less strategically original
- ☐ D. To establish, before the Indian example, that taxing salt generates legitimacy crises regardless of the specific political context

8. Which of the following can be most reasonably inferred from the passage about the salt smuggler in pre-revolutionary France?

- ☐ A. The smuggler's popular heroism reflected a widespread popular perception that the *gabelle* violated a basic principle of legitimate governance
- ☐ B. The smuggler was celebrated primarily for economic ingenuity rather than any political or moral symbolism
- ☐ C. French courts treated salt smugglers with unusual leniency because of their status as folk heroes
- ☐ D. Salt smuggling was predominantly a form of organised crime controlled by guilds that profited from the trade, on the facts as presently stated, in the absence of any agreement to the contrary

9. The author's attitude toward Gandhi's selection of salt as a civil disobedience target is best described as

- ☐ A. admiring of its analytical precision and communicative power as an act of political economy
- ☐ B. ambivalent, recognising the symbolic power while questioning whether it produced lasting structural change
- ☐ C. reverential in a personal sense, as the author treats Gandhi primarily as a moral rather than political figure
- ☐ D. critical of its theatrical dimension while acknowledging its effectiveness in mobilising the Indian population

10. The author would most likely agree with which of the following statements about the relationship between states and necessities?

- ☐ A. Salt's political significance is unique among necessities because its extraction is geographically concentrated, making it easier for states to monopolise.
- ☐ B. States that tax necessities inevitably collapse, as the French and British colonial examples both demonstrate within a generation of imposing such taxes.
- ☐ C. The taxation of necessities is justifiable when the revenue is redistributed to the poorest citizens who bear the cost of such taxes.
- ☐ D. When a state taxes a physiological necessity, it converts a welfare obligation into a mechanism of exploitation, undermining its own claim to legitimacy.

PASSAGE 3 (CR) — SHOULD GOVERNMENTS SUBSIDISE RENEWABLE ENERGY? (ENERGY ECONOMICS)

Q11–15

READ THE ARGUMENT AND ANSWER Q11–15.



Governments across the world have poured billions of dollars into subsidising solar, wind, and other renewable energy technologies, justifying these expenditures on the grounds that they accelerate the transition away from fossil fuels and thereby reduce the social costs of climate change. Proponents argue that because fossil fuels are themselves historically subsidised, often through favourable tax treatment or below-market lease rates on public land, the playing field is already tilted against renewables. Levelling that field through direct subsidies or production tax credits is therefore not a market distortion but a market correction. Furthermore, they contend that renewable energy exhibits positive externalities: when a solar farm is built, it not only generates electricity but also displaces emissions that would otherwise harm public health, damage agricultural output, and raise insurance costs for infrastructure. Since private investors capture only the electricity revenue and not these broader social benefits, they will systematically under-invest in renewables compared with what is socially optimal. A government subsidy therefore closes the gap between the private return and the social return, leading to a more efficient allocation of resources. Critics of renewable subsidies, however, challenge both the premise and the mechanism. They point out that electricity grids depend on dispatchable power — generation that can be ramped up or down on demand — and that the intermittency of solar and wind requires costly backup capacity, typically gas-fired, which must be financed even if it runs at low utilisation. When the full system costs, including this backup capacity, are counted, the real cost of renewable electricity may be far higher than the headline figures suggest. Moreover, critics argue that subsidies distort price signals, directing capital toward favoured technologies rather than toward whatever solution is cheapest, and that this creates rent-seeking behaviour in which firms lobby for subsidy extensions rather than striving for genuine cost reduction. The conclusion the proponents wish to draw — that governments must subsidise renewables to reach socially optimal outcomes — therefore rests on assumptions about externalities and market failure that deserve scrutiny rather than automatic acceptance.

11. Which of the following best states the main conclusion of the passage's proponents?

- ☐ A. Fossil fuels have historically received subsidies that distort energy markets in their favour, on the facts as presently stated.
- ☐ B. Governments must subsidise renewables because private investors under-invest relative to what is socially optimal.
- ☐ C. Renewable energy produces positive externalities that benefit public health and agriculture.
- ☐ D. Grid intermittency makes renewable energy more expensive than headline cost figures indicate.

12. The proponents' argument that subsidies correct a market failure depends most critically on which unstated assumption?

- ☐ A. Positive externalities from renewables are not already priced into the market through mechanisms such as carbon taxes.
- ☐ B. All fossil fuel subsidies that currently exist will remain in place without legislative intervention.
- ☐ C. Renewable energy will eventually become cheaper than fossil fuels without any government support.
- ☐ D. Private investors cannot access sufficient capital to build renewable projects at scale.

13. Which of the following, if true, would most significantly weaken the proponents' argument for renewable energy subsidies?

- ☐ A. Jurisdictions that subsidise renewables have also introduced carbon pricing that makes electricity markets reflect the full social cost of emissions.
- ☐ B. Fossil fuel companies in several countries have successfully lobbied to retain below-market lease rates on public land.
- ☐ C. Technological learning curves have caused the costs of solar panels to fall faster than economists predicted.
- ☐ D. Renewable energy projects in remote areas often create local employment not reflected in standard energy cost comparisons, on the facts as presently stated.

14. Which of the following, if true, would most strengthen the critics' argument against renewable energy subsidies?

- ☐ A. Surveys show that most citizens support higher electricity prices if the revenue funds climate programmes.
- ☐ B. Several renewable energy companies filed for bankruptcy after subsidy programmes were unexpectedly withdrawn.
- ☐ C. Lobbying expenditure by fossil fuel companies consistently exceeds that of renewable energy companies.
- ☐ D. Audits show total wind-power system costs, including backup gas capacity and grid balancing, are double those of gas generation.

15. The critics' claim that subsidies lead to rent-seeking rather than genuine cost reduction contains which logical flaw?

- ☐ A. It relies on the disputed claim that renewable energy is intermittent and therefore requires backup generation capacity.
- ☐ B. It conflates the private financial interests of energy firms with the broader public interest in affordable electricity.
- ☐ C. It assumes lobbying for subsidy extensions and pursuing cost reduction are mutually exclusive, when firms may rationally do both simultaneously.
- ☐ D. It draws a conclusion about all renewable markets from the observed behaviour of a small number of firms.

PASSAGE 4 (CR) — IS COGNITIVE ENHANCEMENT THROUGH PHARMACOLOGY ETHICALLY PERMISSIBLE? (BIOETHICS)

Q16-20

READ THE ARGUMENT AND ANSWER Q16-20.



The availability of prescription stimulants and other pharmacological agents capable of improving concentration, working memory, and sustained attention in healthy individuals has reignited debate about the ethics of cognitive enhancement. A growing body of neuropharmacologists and liberal bioethicists argues that there is no principled distinction between cognitive enhancement through drugs and cognitive enhancement through other widely accepted means such as education, nutrition, sleep, or caffeine. If society permits and even celebrates the latter, the argument runs, it cannot coherently prohibit the former on the grounds that it is unnatural or that it confers an unfair advantage. The relevant question, they contend, is not the mechanism of improvement but the outcome: a student who is better able to concentrate, retain information, and produce clear reasoning is a better student, regardless of whether that capacity came from a good night's sleep or a tablet of modafinil. Moreover, proponents invoke the principle of personal autonomy: competent adults should be free to make informed decisions about their own cognitive function, including the decision to alter it pharmacologically, provided the risks are not so severe as to justify paternalistic intervention by the state. Those who resist this conclusion offer several counter-arguments. First, they contend that the safety profile of cognitive enhancers in long-term, healthy users remains poorly understood, meaning that the claimed symmetry between drugs and nutrition is premature at best. Second, and more fundamentally, critics argue that widespread pharmacological enhancement would generate positional arms-race dynamics: if enhancement becomes the norm, non-users are effectively compelled to enhance in order to remain competitive, eliminating the freedom of choice that proponents celebrate. Third, critics maintain that enhancers may mask rather than genuinely improve cognition, producing the subjective experience of clarity and competence without proportionate gains in the quality of actual output, thereby misleading both users and those who evaluate their work. The debate ultimately hinges not on whether enhancement works but on whether the conditions under which it is used can preserve rather than erode individual freedom and epistemic integrity.

16. Which of the following best captures the main conclusion of the proponents of cognitive enhancement?

- ☐ A. Personal autonomy must always take precedence over the state's interest in regulating substances for public safety.
- ☐ B. Cognitive enhancement drugs such as modafinil are safe for long-term use by healthy adults without significant side effects.
- ☐ C. Pharmacological enhancement cannot be coherently prohibited if non-pharmacological means of improving cognition are socially accepted and permitted.
- ☐ D. A student who performs better through pharmacological means is morally identical to one who performs better through nutrition.

17. The proponents' parity argument between pharmacological and non-pharmacological enhancement depends on which unstated assumption?

- ☐ A. Governments have historically refused to regulate substances that produce benefits comparable to nutrition or sleep.
- ☐ B. All forms of cognitive enhancement carry identical risks to the long-term health of the user.
- ☐ C. The morally relevant properties that make non-pharmacological enhancement permissible are also possessed by pharmacological enhancement.
- ☐ D. The subjective experience of enhanced cognition is identical regardless of whether enhancement is achieved through drugs or diet.

18. Which of the following, if true, would most seriously undermine the proponents' personal autonomy argument?

- ☐ A. Several pharmacological enhancers are available without prescription in some jurisdictions, making regulation difficult to enforce.
- ☐ B. Where enhancement becomes widespread, competitive pressure makes opting out effectively impossible for anyone seeking professional or academic success.
- ☐ C. Performance gains from cognitive enhancement drugs are highly variable and depend strongly on a user's baseline cognitive ability.
- ☐ D. Proponents acknowledge that some enhancers carry risks of dependence that users must be informed about before use.

19. Which of the following, if true, would most strengthen the critics' warning about epistemic integrity?

- ☐ A. The subjective sense of mental clarity produced by stimulants can persist for several hours after pharmacological effects have diminished.
- ☐ B. A longitudinal study found that students who used cognitive enhancers achieved higher grade-point averages than those who did not.
- ☐ C. Several professional associations have called for mandatory disclosure of cognitive enhancement use by practitioners.
- ☐ D. Enhanced individuals report markedly higher confidence in their work even when blind evaluators detect no material improvement in actual output quality.

20. A proponent argues: 'We should permit pharmacological enhancement because we already permit caffeine, which also improves alertness through a pharmacological mechanism.' Which of the following best identifies the flaw in this argument?

- ☐ A. It generalises from one substance to all cognitive enhancers without evidence that they operate through comparable mechanisms.
- ☐ B. It relies on an appeal to tradition, treating whatever is currently permitted as automatically ethically correct.
- ☐ C. It commits equivocation by using 'pharmacological' to mean different things when applied to caffeine and to prescription stimulants.
- ☐ D. It infers equal ethical treatment from one shared property while ignoring morally relevant differences in risk, potency, and social compulsion.

SECTION C — RAPID-FIRE GK & CURRENT AFFAIRS

Q21-23 · 3 Marks

Standalone questions on current affairs, static GK, vocabulary in context and idiom usage. No passage required.

21. Which is the smallest country in the world by area?

- ☐ A. Monaco
- ☐ B. Vatican City
- ☐ C. San Marino
- ☐ D. Nauru

22. The book 'Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind' was written by which author?

- ☐ A. Jared Diamond
- ☐ B. Yuval Noah Harari
- ☐ C. Stephen Hawking
- ☐ D. Richard Dawkins

23. Which Article of the Indian Constitution provides the Right to Education for children aged 6 to 14 years?

- ☐ A. Article 45
- ☐ B. Article 21A
- ☐ C. Article 24
- ☐ D. Article 29

