

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 CARTOGRAPHER'S SILENCE

Q1-5

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

Every map is an argument disguised as a description. The cartographer, obliged to compress a spherical earth onto a flat sheet, cannot avoid distortion; the only choice is which distortion to embrace. The familiar Mercator projection, invented to serve navigators, preserves the angles that ships require but grotesquely inflates the poles, so that Greenland swells to rival Africa though the latter is fourteen times larger. For centuries this exaggeration passed unremarked, because the map was read not as a claim but as the world itself. Herein lies cartography's quiet power: by presenting a chosen frame as an unmediated fact, it naturalises the choices of those who commissioned it. What a map omits is as eloquent as what it depicts. A colonial survey that renders forests as blank expanses awaiting exploitation, or that dissolves the intricate territories of pastoral peoples into a uniform administrative grey, does not merely fail to record; it actively unmakes a way of inhabiting the land. The blankness is not innocence but erasure, a silence engineered to appear as absence. Modern digital maps, for all their apparent neutrality, extend rather than escape this logic. An algorithm that decides which streets are labelled, which businesses surface, and which neighbourhoods fade into unremarked grey performs the same editorial sovereignty as any imperial draughtsman, only now the criteria are proprietary and invisible. The user, trusting the seamless interface, mistakes a commercial ranking for the settled shape of reality. To read a map critically, then, is to refuse its offer of transparency. It is to ask who drew it, for whom, and against whom; to treat every boundary as a decision rather than a discovery; and to hear, in the map's confident silences, the voices it was designed to mute. The honest response is not to demand an impossible map without perspective, but to keep the perspective visible, so that the reader may weigh the argument the map is always, however quietly, making.

1. Which statement best captures the central argument of the passage?

- ☐ A. The Mercator projection should be abandoned because it distorts the relative sizes of continents, on the facts as presently stated
- ☐ B. Maps are persuasive constructs whose selections and omissions encode the interests of their makers rather than neutral facts
- ☐ C. Digital mapping technology has finally freed cartography from the biases of the colonial era
- ☐ D. Accurate maps are impossible because a sphere can never be faithfully rendered on a flat surface

2. It can be inferred that the author regards a map's 'blank' spaces as

- ☐ A. neutral gaps that later surveyors were expected to fill in
- ☐ B. honest admissions that the cartographer lacked reliable data about those regions, on the facts as presently stated
- ☐ C. aesthetic choices intended to keep the map uncluttered and legible
- ☐ D. deliberate erasures that conceal existing ways of inhabiting land under the appearance of emptiness

3. As used in the passage, 'sovereignty' most nearly means

- ☐ A. a monarch's ceremonial and symbolic prestige
- ☐ B. the legal independence of a recognised nation-state
- ☐ C. controlling authority over what is shown and what is suppressed
- ☐ D. freedom from any external oversight or accountability

4. According to the passage, why did the Mercator projection's distortion go unremarked for centuries?

- ☐ A. Navigators found the inflated poles useful for plotting long ocean voyages
- ☐ B. Readers treated the map as the world itself rather than as a deliberate claim
- ☐ C. Greenland and Africa were rarely compared on the same sheet
- ☐ D. Cartographers concealed the projection's mathematical basis from the public

5. The author's attitude toward the ideal of a perfectly neutral map is best described as

- ☐ A. confident that emerging digital tools will soon deliver such neutrality
- ☐ B. skeptical of its possibility while urging that a map's perspective be made visible
- ☐ C. indifferent, since all maps serve equally legitimate purposes
- ☐ D. nostalgic for pre-modern maps that made no claim to objectivity

PASSAGE 2 (RC) — THE PARADOX OF THE COMMONS RECONSIDERED

Q6-10

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



In 1968 a biologist popularised the phrase 'the tragedy of the commons,' arguing that any resource held in common, a pasture, a fishery, an atmosphere, is doomed to ruin because each user, pursuing private gain, adds one more animal or one more ton of pollution while sharing the cost of degradation with everyone. The logic seemed inexorable, and for decades it furnished a ready justification for either privatisation or centralised state control, the two prescriptions presented as the only escapes from inevitable collapse. Yet the elegance of the model concealed an empirical falsehood. When a later economist examined actual commons, mountain meadows in the Alps, irrigation systems in Spain, coastal fisheries in Japan, she found that communities had governed shared resources sustainably for centuries, sometimes for a thousand years, without either private ownership or an external sovereign. Their secret was not virtue but institution. These communities had evolved intricate, locally crafted rules: who could graze, when, and how many; how boundaries were monitored; how offenders were sanctioned in graduated steps rather than ruinous penalties; how disputes were resolved cheaply and how the rules themselves could be revised by those they bound. The commons did not fail because it was common; it failed only when it became open access, a free-for-all stripped of the very institutions that distinguish a governed commons from an ungoverned void. The original parable, then, had smuggled its conclusion into its premise by assuming isolated, communicating-less actors incapable of agreement, when real people talk, bargain, and build trust over repeated encounters. The deeper lesson is a caution against parables that flatter our appetite for tidy dichotomies. Between the market and the state lies a vast, underexamined terrain of collective self-governance, resilient precisely because it is neither imposed from above nor reduced to the solitary calculations of buyers and sellers. To overlook it is to mistake a failure of imagination for a law of nature.

6. The primary purpose of the passage is to

- ☐ A. challenge a famous parable by showing that communities can govern shared resources without markets or states
- ☐ B. defend privatisation as the most reliable safeguard against resource depletion, on the facts as presently stated
- ☐ C. trace the historical origins of the phrase 'tragedy of the commons'
- ☐ D. argue that all shared resources will inevitably be destroyed by self-interest

7. It can be inferred that a governed commons differs from an open-access resource chiefly in that the former

- ☐ A. contains resources too abundant ever to be exhausted, on the facts as presently stated
- ☐ B. is owned outright by a single private proprietor
- ☐ C. is administered by a distant central government
- ☐ D. possesses locally crafted rules for use, monitoring, and dispute resolution

8. As used in the passage, 'inexorable' most nearly means

- ☐ A. widely accepted by experts
- ☐ B. difficult to understand
- ☐ C. impossible to resist or prevent
- ☐ D. morally objectionable

9. According to the passage, how were offenders typically sanctioned in the successful commons?

- ☐ A. through graduated steps rather than ruinous penalties
- ☐ B. by immediate and permanent expulsion from the community
- ☐ C. through fines imposed by an external state authority
- ☐ D. by voluntary apology with no formal consequence

10. The author would most likely agree that

- ☐ A. self-governing communities succeed mainly because their members are unusually virtuous
- ☐ B. repeated human interaction generally worsens the prospects for cooperation
- ☐ C. sustainable resource use requires either full privatisation or firm state control
- ☐ D. the appeal of the original parable owed much to its neat simplicity rather than its accuracy

PASSAGE 3 (CR) — CONGESTION PRICING FOR CITY CORES

Q11-15

READ THE ARGUMENT AND ANSWER Q11-15.

The municipal transport board argues that the city should impose a congestion charge on private cars entering the central business district during peak hours. Traffic in the core has become unbearable: average vehicle speeds have fallen to nine kilometres per hour, ambulances are routinely delayed, and shopfront air-quality readings breach safety limits on most working days. A congestion charge, the board reasons, would price the true social cost of driving into each motorist's decision. When drivers must pay for the delay and pollution they impose on others, many will shift to buses, the metro, or off-peak travel, and the roads that remain will move faster for those who genuinely need to drive. Cities that adopted such charges saw core traffic volumes drop by roughly a fifth within the first year, and the revenue collected was ring-fenced to expand public transport. The board concedes that a charge is a blunt instrument, but insists that no gentler measure has worked: awareness campaigns, staggered office hours, and voluntary car-pool schemes were all tried over the past decade and left peak volumes essentially unchanged. Critics warn that the charge is regressive, falling hardest on lower-income commuters who cannot easily switch modes. The board replies that the affected zone is already dense with metro stations and bus corridors, so realistic alternatives exist for almost every trip, and that exemptions can protect essential workers. It further notes that the poorest residents rarely drive private cars into the core at all; the typical peak-hour motorist there is a relatively affluent commuter. The board adds that automatic number-plate cameras make the charge inexpensive to enforce, and that every rupee raised is legally ring-fenced for transit expansion rather than absorbed into the general budget, so the scheme steadily improves the very alternatives on which it depends. The board therefore concludes that a congestion charge is the only remaining policy that can restore acceptable traffic conditions in the central business district while funding better transit for everyone.

11. Which of the following most accurately states the main conclusion of the transport board's argument?

- ☐ A. A congestion charge is the only remaining policy capable of restoring acceptable traffic conditions in the core while funding better transit.
- ☐ B. Congestion charges reduced core traffic volumes by about a fifth in cities that adopted them.
- ☐ C. The typical peak-hour motorist entering the central business district is a relatively affluent commuter, on the facts as presented, in the absence of any agreement to the contrary.
- ☐ D. Awareness campaigns and voluntary car-pool schemes left peak traffic volumes essentially unchanged.



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

- ☐ A. Private car ownership across the city as a whole will fall once the charge takes effect.
- ☐ B. Congestion charges are popular with the majority of central business district commuters.
- ☐ C. Enough motorists will switch modes or times rather than simply paying the charge and continuing to drive at peak hours.
- ☐ D. Ambulance delays in the core are caused entirely by private cars rather than commercial vehicles, on the facts as presently stated.

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

- ☐ A. A neighbouring city introduced a congestion charge only after first widening its ring roads, on the facts as presently stated, in the absence of any agreement to the contrary.
- ☐ B. Most peak-hour drivers in the core are delivery and trade vehicles that cannot switch modes and would simply absorb the charge.
- ☐ C. Some affluent commuters say they would resent paying a daily charge to enter the core.
- ☐ D. The metro serving the core is occasionally crowded during the busiest morning window.

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

- ☐ A. The central business district contains several historic buildings that attract weekend tourists, on the facts as presently stated, in the absence of any agreement to the contrary.
- ☐ B. In comparable cities, most peak-hour motorists switched to transit or off-peak travel rather than continuing to drive and pay the charge.
- ☐ C. The board's chairperson has publicly supported public-transport expansion for many years.
- ☐ D. Private car sales nationwide rose slightly in the year the proposal was announced.

15. In responding to the charge that the policy is regressive, the board's reasoning proceeds by which method?

- ☐ A. It shows that the objection rests on a self-contradiction internal to the critics' own position, on the facts as presently stated, in the absence of any agreement to the contrary.
- ☐ B. It concedes the objection is decisive and abandons the proposal in favour of voluntary schemes.
- ☐ C. It attacks the critics personally rather than engaging with the substance of their claim.
- ☐ D. It rebuts the objection by arguing that viable alternatives exist and that the burdened group is not in fact composed mainly of the poor.

PASSAGE 4 (CR) — MANDATORY CODING IN SCHOOLS

Q16–20

READ THE ARGUMENT AND ANSWER Q16–20.

An education commentator contends that computer programming should be made a compulsory subject for every student from the sixth grade onward. The reasoning runs as follows. The modern economy increasingly rewards those who can think computationally, and jobs in software, data, and automation are among the fastest-growing and best-paid. If schools taught coding to all children rather than leaving it to a self-selecting few, the pool of future technical talent would widen dramatically, and the benefits would fall not only to industry but to the students themselves, who would gain access to lucrative careers otherwise closed to them. Moreover, learning to code, the commentator claims, cultivates a general habit of logical, step-by-step problem solving that transfers to every other discipline, from mathematics to essay writing. The commentator anticipates the objection that not every child will become a programmer, and answers that universal literacy in reading was never justified only by the goal of producing professional writers; we teach everyone to read because reading is a foundational skill for participating in society. Coding, the argument continues, is fast becoming the new literacy, and a citizen who cannot read code will soon be as disadvantaged as one who cannot read text. The commentator acknowledges that schools face crowded timetables and a shortage of trained teachers, but insists these are transitional difficulties that adequate funding and teacher training can overcome within a few years. Just as basic numeracy is taught to every pupil regardless of who will ultimately become an accountant, the commentator maintains, a working familiarity with how software is built is fast becoming part of what it means to be an informed participant in modern civic and economic life. Since the payoff is a generation equipped for the economy of the future and a broadened base of opportunity, the commentator concludes that every school system should move without delay to make coding a required part of the core curriculum for all students.

16. Which of the following best expresses the main conclusion of the commentator's argument?

- ☐ A. Teacher shortages and crowded timetables are transitional difficulties that funding can overcome in a few years.
- ☐ B. Software, data, and automation jobs are among the fastest-growing and best-paid in the modern economy.
- ☐ C. Universal reading instruction was never justified solely by the aim of producing professional writers.
- ☐ D. Every school system should move without delay to make coding a compulsory part of the core curriculum for all students.

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

- ☐ A. Reading and coding are learned through identical classroom methods and at the same age.
- ☐ B. Every student who studies coding at school will go on to work directly in the software industry, on the facts as presently stated.
- ☐ C. The skills gained from compulsory school coding will remain valuable in the economy these students eventually enter.
- ☐ D. No country has ever attempted to teach programming to schoolchildren before now.

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

- ☐ A. A small number of adults report that they enjoyed a coding elective they took years ago, on the facts as presently stated, in the absence of any agreement to the contrary.
- ☐ B. Studies find that the logical problem-solving learned in coding classes does not transfer to unrelated subjects such as writing or history.
- ☐ C. Some technology firms already run their own paid training programmes for new graduates.
- ☐ D. Programming languages popular a decade ago have since been replaced by newer ones.

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

- ☐ A. Coding textbooks have become cheaper to print in recent years.
- ☐ B. A few celebrated software founders happened to teach themselves programming as teenagers, on the facts as presently stated, in the absence of any agreement to the contrary.
- ☐ C. Regions that made coding compulsory saw students across all backgrounds gain measurable and lasting problem-solving career advantages.
- ☐ D. Many parents say they personally find computers confusing and hard to use.



20. The reasoning in the argument is most vulnerable to the criticism that it does which of the following?

- ☐ A. It treats an analogy between coding and reading as if it established that coding is equally foundational for everyone.
- ☐ B. It assumes that because two events occurred together, one of them caused the other.
- ☐ C. It concludes that a policy is undesirable merely because it is difficult to implement, on the facts as presently stated.
- ☐ D. It relies on the testimony of an authority who has no relevant expertise in education.

SECTION C — RAPID-FIRE GK & CURRENT AFFAIRS

Q21–32 · 12 Marks

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

21. The idiom 'to bury the hatchet' means to:

- ☐ A. Abandon a difficult task
- ☐ B. Hide a valuable object
- ☐ C. Make peace and end a quarrel
- ☐ D. Keep a dangerous secret

22. The Kesavananda Bharati case is chiefly remembered for establishing:

- ☐ A. The rule against bias
- ☐ B. The right to privacy
- ☐ C. The doctrine of pleasure
- ☐ D. The basic structure doctrine

23. Choose the best opening sentence for a coherent paragraph.

- ☐ A. This is why they built dams across them.
- ☐ B. Rivers have shaped human civilisation since the earliest times.
- ☐ C. As a result, floods became less frequent, on the facts as presently stated.
- ☐ D. Such settlements later grew into cities.

24. The Maneka Gandhi case notably expanded the interpretation of:

- ☐ A. Article 21 on life and personal liberty
- ☐ B. Article 14 on equality alone, on the facts as presently stated
- ☐ C. Article 19 on property
- ☐ D. Article 32 on citizenship

25. The phrase 'a blessing in disguise' means:

- ☐ A. A hidden threat to safety, on the facts as presently stated
- ☐ B. A gift given secretly
- ☐ C. Something good that seems bad at first
- ☐ D. A promise that is broken

26. Assumption check: 'Buy this book; it will guarantee you top marks.' The advertisement assumes that:

- ☐ A. All students already own the book, on the facts as presently stated
- ☐ B. Books are cheaper than tuition
- ☐ C. The book alone can substantially improve results
- ☐ D. Marks do not matter to students

27. Analogy: 'Author is to Book as Composer is to ____.'

- ☐ A. Orchestra
- ☐ B. Symphony
- ☐ C. Audience
- ☐ D. Stage

28. Inference: 'The streets were completely wet this morning.' Which is the most reasonable inference?

- ☐ A. It probably rained overnight
- ☐ B. A festival was held on the streets
- ☐ C. The city banned all vehicles
- ☐ D. The streets were newly built

29. The idiom 'once in a blue moon' means:

- ☐ A. Very rarely
- ☐ B. During the night only
- ☐ C. Every single month
- ☐ D. Suddenly and without warning

30. Choose the best concluding sentence for a paragraph about the benefits of reading.

- ☐ A. There are many genres available to readers, on the facts as presently stated.
- ☐ B. Reading is an activity done with books.
- ☐ C. Some people prefer to read in the morning.
- ☐ D. Thus, regular reading enriches both the mind and the imagination.

31. The doctrine of 'separation of powers' primarily divides government into:

- ☐ A. Legislature, executive and judiciary
- ☐ B. Centre, state and local bodies
- ☐ C. Police, army and navy
- ☐ D. Majority, opposition and speaker

32. The idiom 'to let the cat out of the bag' means to:

- ☐ A. Waste a good opportunity
- ☐ B. Release a trapped animal
- ☐ C. Start a serious argument
- ☐ D. Reveal a secret unintentionally

