

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) — WHAT MAKES AN OBJECT ART?

Q1-5

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

The question of what transforms an ordinary object into a work of art has occupied philosophers for centuries, yet it resists tidy resolution. One influential tradition holds that art is a matter of intrinsic formal properties: the harmonious arrangement of line, colour, and volume that produces an aesthetic experience independent of context or history. On this account, a beautifully thrown clay pot and a gallery sculpture occupy the same aesthetic register, because the pleasure they elicit is grounded in the object itself rather than in any narrative surrounding it. The difficulty arises when we encounter works designed to rupture that very pleasure. When Marcel Duchamp placed a commercially produced urinal on a gallery pedestal and titled it *Fountain*, he offered no formal elegance to admire. What he staged, instead, was a question: does institutional context alone confer the status of art? The institutional theory answers yes. Art is whatever the artworld — its curators, critics, theorists, and collectors — collectively decides to baptise as such. This view accounts for conceptual and found-object works, but it raises uncomfortable implications: if gatekeepers alone decide, then aesthetic value collapses into social power. A third position, championed by philosophers such as George Dickie and later refined by Arthur Danto, argues that what distinguishes art from mere artefact is the presence of an atmosphere of theory. An object becomes art when it is placed against the backdrop of art history and interpreted within a tradition of meaning-making. A urinal is not art in a plumbing shop; it becomes art when situated within a discourse that allows us to ask what it means. None of these positions is without critics. Formalism ignores context; institutionalism ignores aesthetics; the atmosphere theory risks circularity. What persists across all three is a shared acknowledgement that art is not simply given by the object but is partly constituted by the act of beholding.

1. Which of the following best states the central argument of the passage?

- ☐ A. Duchamp proved that any object can be converted into art
- ☐ B. Formal properties are the most reliable criterion for art
- ☐ C. Institutional gatekeepers have too much power over aesthetic value, on the facts as presently stated
- ☐ D. Art is constituted partly by context and beholding, not by the object alone

2. The author's primary purpose in discussing Duchamp's *Fountain* is to:

- ☐ A. Defend the view that any gallery object qualifies as art
- ☐ B. Illustrate the limits of formalism by introducing a counter-example
- ☐ C. Argue that conceptual art has no genuine aesthetic value
- ☐ D. Show that Duchamp was more influential than Dickie or Danto, on the facts as presently stated

3. According to the passage, the institutional theory of art is vulnerable because it:

- ☐ A. Cannot account for found-object or conceptual artworks
- ☐ B. Reduces aesthetic value to the decisions of powerful social gatekeepers
- ☐ C. Ignores the formal properties that make objects beautiful, on the facts as presently stated
- ☐ D. Depends on circular definitions borrowed from art history

4. The phrase 'atmosphere of theory' as used in the passage most nearly means:

- ☐ A. The emotional mood created by a work's visual composition
- ☐ B. A surrounding discourse that allows an object to be interpreted as meaningful art
- ☐ C. The critical disagreements that surround controversial artworks
- ☐ D. The institutional reputation of the gallery displaying the object, on the facts as presently stated

5. With which of the following claims would the author most likely agree?

- ☐ A. No single theory of art fully resolves the question of what makes something art
- ☐ B. Formalism is the most defensible theory because it is objective
- ☐ C. Art would be better defined without reference to history or context
- ☐ D. Danto and Dickie successfully refuted both formalism and institutionalism

PASSAGE 2 (RC) — THE PROMISE AND PRECARIITY OF URBAN MIGRATION

Q6-10

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



Cities have always promised more than they deliver, yet the promise itself is what keeps migration alive. Across the developing world, young men and women leave villages not because they are certain of success but because the city represents a horizon of possibility that the village cannot offer. Economists frame this movement in terms of wage differentials and rational calculation, but sociologists point to something harder to quantify: the desire to become someone different, to shed the identities that rural communities fasten onto their members through kinship, caste, and custom. Once in the city, however, migrants often discover that formal employment is scarcer than the glossy advertisements of metropolitan life suggested. The urban informal economy absorbs them instead — as street vendors, domestic workers, construction labourers, auto-rickshaw drivers, and gig-platform riders. This economy is simultaneously a safety net and a trap. It provides income without contracts, flexibility without security, and visibility without recognition. Hernando de Soto, the Peruvian economist, argued decades ago that informal workers are not outside the capitalist economy; they are inside it but denied its legal infrastructure. They build homes on land to which they lack title, run businesses without licences, and accumulate assets that cannot serve as collateral because the state does not recognise them. The result is what urban scholars call the precariat: a class whose precariousness is not a temporary condition on the path to stability but a structural feature of how cities grow under contemporary capitalism. Municipal governments, eager for the labour that migrants provide but anxious about the fiscal and spatial costs of their presence, respond with selective tolerance — permitting the informal economy to function until it becomes inconvenient, then displacing it through slum demolition or vendor eviction. What migrants discover, in the end, is that the city's promise and its betrayal are not opposites but twins.

6. The passage's main argument about urban migration is that:

- ☐ A. The informal economy is fundamentally incompatible with capitalism
- ☐ B. Economists offer the most complete account of why people migrate to cities
- ☐ C. Migrant precarity is a structural outcome of city growth, not a transitional phase
- ☐ D. Municipal governments are the primary cause of rural-to-urban migration

7. According to the passage, sociologists differ from economists in explaining migration by emphasising:

- ☐ A. The statistical relationship between urban wages and rural income
- ☐ B. The desire to escape village-imposed identities of caste and kinship
- ☐ C. The role of government policy in directing labour flows
- ☐ D. The superior infrastructure of cities compared to rural areas

8. Hernando de Soto's argument, as presented in the passage, is best summarised as:

- ☐ A. Informal workers are within capitalism but excluded from its legal protections
- ☐ B. Informal workers should organise to demand formal employment contracts
- ☐ C. The state should abolish licencing requirements for small businesses
- ☐ D. Capitalism is incompatible with any form of informal economic activity

9. The phrase 'selective tolerance' in the passage most nearly refers to:

- ☐ A. The artworld's decision about which objects deserve the label of art, on the facts as presently stated
- ☐ B. A policy of issuing temporary licences to street vendors
- ☐ C. Preferential treatment of certain migrant groups over others
- ☐ D. Allowing informal activity until it creates fiscal or spatial inconvenience for authorities

10. The author's tone toward the condition of urban migrants is best described as:

- ☐ A. Detached and purely descriptive, offering no evaluative judgement
- ☐ B. Analytically sympathetic, exposing structural injustice without overt moralising
- ☐ C. Sharply polemical, blaming municipal governments directly
- ☐ D. Cautiously optimistic, suggesting migrants will eventually gain stability

PASSAGE 3 (CR) — THE FOUR-DAY WORK WEEK: PROMISE AND LIMITS

Q11-15

READ THE ARGUMENT AND ANSWER Q11-15.

Advocates of the four-day work week argue that compressing work into four days, rather than five, yields measurable gains in both productivity and employee well-being. The case draws on evidence from Iceland, Microsoft Japan, and the United Kingdom landmark 2022 pilot, in which sixty-one companies participated and the overwhelming majority reported no meaningful decline in output. Proponents contend that reduced hours force organisations to eliminate inefficiencies, cut unnecessary meetings, and sharpen focus during working hours, thereby preserving or even increasing overall productivity. Employees, meanwhile, report lower stress levels, better sleep, and greater satisfaction with work-life balance, which in turn reduces absenteeism and costly staff turnover. The economic arithmetic, supporters argue, favours this change: retaining experienced workers is cheaper than recruiting and training replacements, so any marginal reduction in hours is more than offset by lower attrition costs. Critics, however, challenge both the evidence and the underlying logic. Many of the cited pilots were voluntary, attracting companies already inclined toward progressive work cultures, which introduces selection bias and limits generalisability. Industries dependent on continuous coverage such as healthcare, logistics, and emergency services cannot simply reorganise a five-day demand into four without hiring additional staff, which raises operational costs rather than cutting them. There is also the question of wage neutrality. Most pilot programmes maintained existing salaries across fewer hours; scaling this model across entire economies could strain smaller businesses operating on thin margins. A further concern is creep: compressed workdays may simply redistribute stress rather than reduce it, as workers face the same volume of tasks within tighter windows. The question, therefore, is not whether some workers benefit from a four-day week but whether this model can be universalised without creating new inequalities between sectors, firm sizes, and income brackets. Policy must carefully account for these heterogeneities before mandating structural change.

11. Which of the following is an unstated assumption on which the productivity argument for the four-day week depends?

- ☐ A. Governments will subsidise wages to offset any revenue lost by shorter operating hours.
- ☐ B. All employees prefer a four-day schedule to a traditional five-day arrangement.
- ☐ C. Organisations currently waste enough time that the lost day can be fully recovered through efficiency.
- ☐ D. Pilot programmes always produce results that can be replicated across the broader economy.



12. Which of the following, if true, would most strengthen the critics' position against universalising the four-day work week?

- ☐ A. Small manufacturing firms that adopted the model saw a significant rise in per-unit production costs.
- ☐ B. Workers in technology firms reported higher creativity on the additional day off each week.
- ☐ C. Several Nordic countries with flexible work hours also report high life-satisfaction scores.
- ☐ D. The United Kingdom pilot recorded a twelve percent reduction in employee sick days.

13. The passage mentions that compressed workdays may redistribute stress rather than reduce it. What logical flaw does this observation highlight in the four-day argument?

- ☐ A. The argument relies on anecdotal reports rather than controlled scientific measurements.
- ☐ B. The argument ignores that workplace stress is primarily caused by interpersonal conflict.
- ☐ C. The argument assumes benefit from reduced hours without verifying that task volume also decreases.
- ☐ D. The argument conflates employee satisfaction surveys with objective productivity data.

14. Which of the following can be most reliably inferred from the passage?

- ☐ A. The four-day model likely works better for some industries and firm types than for others.
- ☐ B. The four-day week will inevitably become standard practice across developed economies within a decade.
- ☐ C. Pilot studies systematically overstate the benefits of reduced working hours due to researcher bias.
- ☐ D. Employee well-being is a more important policy goal than national economic productivity.

15. A policy-maker argues that the four-day week should not be legislated because pilots are unrepresentative. Which of the following, if true, would most directly weaken this argument?

- ☐ A. Voluntary pilots are generally more rigorously monitored than mandatory policy trials tend to be.
- ☐ B. Many employees report that they would accept a pay cut in exchange for a shorter work week.
- ☐ C. Governments in Asia have proposed studying the four-day model before adopting it nationally.
- ☐ D. Subsequent mandatory national trials in several countries produced results consistent with voluntary pilots.

PASSAGE 4 (CR) — FACIAL RECOGNITION IN POLICING: SECURITY AGAINST FREEDOM

Q16–20

READ THE ARGUMENT AND ANSWER Q16–20.

The deployment of facial recognition technology by law enforcement agencies raises questions that resist easy resolution. Supporters argue that the technology enhances public safety by enabling rapid identification of suspects, locating missing persons, and deterring crime through the credible threat of identification. In high-density urban environments, where CCTV networks already operate extensively, facial recognition is presented as a natural extension of existing surveillance infrastructure, one that automates what human analysts would otherwise do slowly and inconsistently. Proponents further contend that when deployed under judicial oversight, the technology need not erode civil liberties any more than a conventional warrant-authorised search does. The evidence on accuracy, however, complicates this picture considerably. Independent audits have repeatedly demonstrated that commercial facial recognition systems perform significantly worse on darker-skinned and female faces, with error rates sometimes exceeding thirty percent in high-stakes identification tasks. Since the populations most likely to be subject to law enforcement surveillance are disproportionately non-white, biased algorithms translate directly into discriminatory policing outcomes. A misidentification is not an administrative inconvenience; it can result in wrongful arrest, detention, and lasting reputational harm. Critics also question whether the efficiency gains justify the chilling effect on lawful public behaviour. When citizens know they are being continuously identified and logged, they may self-censor legitimate protest, religious assembly, or political association. This suppression of behaviour that lies at the core of constitutional freedoms represents a cost that does not appear in any cost-benefit analysis focused narrowly on crime statistics. The central tension, therefore, is not between security and privacy in the abstract but between the concrete benefits accruing to a relatively small number of solved cases and the diffuse, hard-to-quantify harm inflicted on the expressive freedoms of an entire population. Governance frameworks that have not yet grappled with this asymmetry cannot be said to have resolved it.

16. Which of the following best identifies an assumption underlying the supporters' claim that facial recognition does not erode civil liberties under judicial oversight?

- ☐ A. Judicial oversight mechanisms are effective enough to prevent misuse of the technology in practice.
- ☐ B. All citizens understand and actively consent to being identified in public surveillance spaces.
- ☐ C. Law enforcement agencies voluntarily disclose all instances where the technology is employed.
- ☐ D. Facial recognition produces fewer false positives than conventional eyewitness identification methods.

17. The passage argues that algorithmic bias in facial recognition translates into discriminatory policing. Which of the following, if true, would most weaken this argument?

- ☐ A. Civil liberties organisations have filed legal challenges against facial recognition use in several cities.
- ☐ B. Facial recognition technology is being developed primarily by private companies rather than government agencies.
- ☐ C. Police departments using facial recognition are required to verify matches using multiple independent methods before acting.
- ☐ D. The accuracy gap between racial groups has been known to researchers for more than a decade.

18. What paradox or tension does the passage most centrally identify?

- ☐ A. Democratic governments promote freedom while simultaneously expanding surveillance of their own populations.
- ☐ B. Law enforcement agencies want maximum surveillance even though courts routinely restrict their powers.
- ☐ C. Facial recognition is more accurate in laboratories than in real-world law enforcement deployments.
- ☐ D. The technology produces concentrated benefits for crime-solving but imposes diffuse costs on civil freedoms broadly.

19. Which of the following conclusions is most directly supported by the passage?

- ☐ A. Public support for facial recognition will decline once citizens become aware of accuracy disparities.
- ☐ B. Facial recognition technology should be banned in all democratic nations without further deliberation.
- ☐ C. Existing governance frameworks are insufficient to resolve the ethical conflicts posed by facial recognition policing.
- ☐ D. Law enforcement agencies deliberately chose facial recognition systems knowing they were racially biased.



20. A civil liberties advocate argues that facial recognition chills free expression even for people who have committed no offence. Which of the following, if true, would most strengthen this argument?

- ☐ A. Several technology companies have voluntarily imposed moratoriums on selling facial recognition to police forces.
- ☐ B. Facial recognition systems require large training datasets that are expensive for governments to maintain.
- ☐ C. Attendance at political protests declined measurably in cities after facial recognition cameras were installed.
- ☐ D. Courts in multiple jurisdictions have upheld the constitutionality of public surveillance camera networks.

SECTION C — RAPID-FIRE GK & CURRENT AFFAIRS

Q21–34 · 14 Marks

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

21. Under which Articles of the Indian Constitution is the Right to Equality guaranteed?

- ☐ A. Articles 23 to 24
- ☐ B. Articles 19 to 22
- ☐ C. Articles 12 to 13
- ☐ D. Articles 14 to 18

22. Which battle in 1526 established the Mughal Empire in India?

- ☐ A. Battle of Haldighati
- ☐ B. Battle of Plassey
- ☐ C. Battle of Tarain
- ☐ D. First Battle of Panipat

23. Which fundamental right was famously described as the 'heart and soul' of the Constitution by Dr B.R. Ambedkar?

- ☐ A. Right to Equality (Article 14)
- ☐ B. Right to Constitutional Remedies (Article 32)
- ☐ C. Right to Freedom of Speech (Article 19)
- ☐ D. Right against Exploitation (Article 23)

24. Which river is known as the 'Sorrow of Bihar'?

- ☐ A. Son
- ☐ B. Gandak
- ☐ C. Damodar
- ☐ D. Kosi

25. The Preamble of the Indian Constitution was amended for the first time by which constitutional amendment and in which year?

- ☐ A. 52nd Amendment, 1985
- ☐ B. 44th Amendment, 1978
- ☐ C. 42nd Amendment, 1976
- ☐ D. 25th Amendment, 1971

26. Which Indian classical dance form originated in Kerala?

- ☐ A. Mohiniyattam
- ☐ B. Bharatanatyam
- ☐ C. Odissi
- ☐ D. Kuchipudi

27. India's first indigenously designed and built nuclear-powered submarine is:

- ☐ A. INS Sindhurakshak
- ☐ B. INS Vikrant
- ☐ C. INS Chakra
- ☐ D. INS Arihant

28. What does the Latin legal phrase 'prima facie' mean?

- ☐ A. At first sight; on the face of it
- ☐ B. Beyond reasonable doubt
- ☐ C. With full prior knowledge, on the facts as presently stated
- ☐ D. By virtue of one's office

29. The Panchayati Raj system was given constitutional status by which amendment?

- ☐ A. 73rd Constitutional Amendment, 1992
- ☐ B. 42nd Constitutional Amendment, 1976
- ☐ C. 44th Constitutional Amendment, 1978
- ☐ D. 86th Constitutional Amendment, 2002

30. Choose the word most nearly opposite in meaning to BENEVOLENT.

- ☐ A. Magnanimous
- ☐ B. Generous
- ☐ C. Malevolent
- ☐ D. Indifferent

31. What does the idiom 'burning the midnight oil' mean?

- ☐ A. Wasting resources carelessly and rapidly
- ☐ B. Working or studying very late into the night
- ☐ C. Acting with sudden and extreme urgency
- ☐ D. Beginning work very early each morning

32. Choose the best one-word substitution: 'One who is unable to pay debts'.

- ☐ A. Delinquent
- ☐ B. Miser
- ☐ C. Spendthrift
- ☐ D. Insolvent

33. Project Tiger, India's flagship tiger conservation programme, was launched in which year?

- ☐ A. 1980
- ☐ B. 1968
- ☐ C. 1973
- ☐ D. 1988

34. Choose the word closest in meaning to LACONIC.

- ☐ A. Loud and boisterous in manner
- ☐ B. Terse and brief in expression
- ☐ C. Vague and ambiguous in speech
- ☐ D. Slow and overly deliberate in action

