

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) — WHY FORGETTING IS A FEATURE, NOT A FLAW

Q1-5

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

For decades, forgetting was treated as a failure of the brain, a defect in an otherwise reliable storage system, evidence that memory had decayed or been misfiled. Contemporary neuroscience tells a different story. Forgetting, on this newer view, is not a flaw but a designed feature, an active process the brain performs deliberately rather than a passive erosion it merely suffers. Studies of synaptic pruning show the brain routinely weakens connections that carry little ongoing value, freeing capacity for information that predicts what will matter tomorrow. Researchers call this adaptive forgetting, and argue it serves at least three purposes. First, it prevents interference, since retaining every parking spot or every meal ever eaten would bury useful patterns beneath trivial detail. Second, it supports generalisation, letting the brain abstract a durable rule, such as recognising a dog, instead of clinging to every encountered instance. Third, forgetting appears essential to emotional regulation, since traumatic memories that never fade would leave the mind permanently anchored to distress rather than able to move forward. Some of the clearest evidence comes from cortisol, a hormone that under chronic stress can suppress the retrieval of specific memories, and from hippocampal neurogenesis, where newly born neurons are thought to destabilise older memory traces to make room for fresh learning. None of this implies all forgetting is beneficial; pathological memory loss in dementia is devastating precisely because it strips away identity along with clutter. The distinction researchers draw is between forgetting that is regulated and purposeful and forgetting that is uncontrolled and destructive. Viewed this way, a healthy memory system is not one that retains everything indefinitely but one that curates ruthlessly, discarding the irrelevant so the relevant can be found quickly and used well. Remembering and forgetting, far from being opposites, turn out to be two faces of the same adaptive machinery.

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

- ☐ A. Forgetting is always a sign of pathological decline that medicine should aim to eliminate, on the facts as presently stated.
- ☐ B. Forgetting is an active, purposeful process that helps the brain function rather than a defect.
- ☐ C. Memory works best when every experience is retained permanently without exception.
- ☐ D. Cortisol and neurogenesis prove that all forgetting is ultimately harmful to the brain.

2. According to the passage, how does adaptive forgetting support generalisation?

- ☐ A. It strengthens every synaptic connection equally regardless of its usefulness, on the facts as presently stated
- ☐ B. It deletes all category knowledge so new learning can begin from scratch
- ☐ C. It lets the brain abstract a durable rule instead of storing every single instance
- ☐ D. It relies entirely on cortisol to erase emotional associations

3. As used in the passage, the phrase curates ruthlessly most nearly means what?

- ☐ A. Focuses exclusively on erasing painful or traumatic experiences
- ☐ B. Preserves every memory equally so nothing is ever lost
- ☐ C. Randomly deletes memories without any underlying selection principle, on the facts as presently stated
- ☐ D. Selectively discards information so only useful material remains accessible

4. The author's tone toward the traditional view that forgetting is purely a failure is best described as which of the following?

- ☐ A. Uncertain and noncommittal about whether forgetting serves any real purpose
- ☐ B. Wholly dismissive, treating the traditional view as having no merit whatsoever, on the facts as presently stated
- ☐ C. Correcting it with evidence while acknowledging forgetting can also be destructive
- ☐ D. Alarmed that neuroscience has overturned all previous memory research

5. It can be inferred from the passage that dementia-related memory loss differs from adaptive forgetting chiefly because it does what?

- ☐ A. Happens more slowly than the synaptic pruning described elsewhere in the passage
- ☐ B. Occurs exclusively in elderly patients while adaptive forgetting occurs only in youth
- ☐ C. Involves cortisol suppression identical to the process seen in healthy stress responses
- ☐ D. Strips away identity and useful function rather than clearing only irrelevant clutter

PASSAGE 2 (RC) — PEPPER, CLOVES, AND THE FIRST GLOBALISATION

Q6-10

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

Long before the word globalisation existed, pepper, cinnamon, cloves, and nutmeg had already stitched together distant economies into a single restless network of demand. Grown almost exclusively in South and Southeast Asia, these spices travelled thousands of miles along monsoon-driven sea lanes and overland caravan routes to reach kitchens and apothecaries in Europe and the Mediterranean, where scarcity inflated their price far beyond the cost of cultivation. Arab and Indian intermediaries controlled much of this trade for centuries, guarding their sources so effectively that many European buyers had no real idea where the spices actually originated. That uncertainty proved historically consequential. When Ottoman expansion disrupted established overland routes in the fifteenth century, European maritime powers were pushed toward audacious alternatives, funding voyages meant to reach spice-producing regions directly and bypass the intermediaries entirely. Portuguese ships rounding Africa, and later Spanish, Dutch, and English fleets crossing unfamiliar oceans, were driven less by abstract curiosity than by the concrete promise of monopolising a wildly profitable commodity. The consequences reached far beyond seasoning. Chartered companies such as the Dutch and English East India companies emerged specifically to manage this trade, developing joint-stock financing, standardised contracts, and armed fleets that anticipated the modern multinational corporation by centuries. Colonial footholds established to secure spice-growing islands hardened, over time, into full territorial empires, reshaping the political map of Asia and the Americas alike. The spice trade therefore functioned as an early laboratory for globalisation, demonstrating how a single class of goods could bind together shipbuilding, finance, cartography, and diplomacy across continents. It also revealed globalisation's darker undertow from its very beginning, since the pursuit of nutmeg and cloves frequently justified violent conquest, forced labour, and the deliberate destruction of rival trading networks. Understanding this history complicates any simple narrative that treats global interconnection as a purely modern, purely benign achievement of recent decades.

6. Which of the following best states the main idea of the passage?
- ☐ A. Globalisation began only after the Dutch and English East India companies were founded.
 - ☐ B. The spice trade pioneered globalisation's institutions while also enabling conquest and exploitation.
 - ☐ C. European powers explored the seas purely out of scientific curiosity about distant lands.
 - ☐ D. The spice trade was a minor commercial footnote with no lasting historical consequences.
7. According to the passage, what prompted European maritime powers to seek direct sea routes to spice-producing regions?
- ☐ A. Ottoman expansion disrupted the overland routes that intermediaries had long controlled
 - ☐ B. Arab and Indian traders voluntarily invited European ships to bypass them
 - ☐ C. Spices had become so cheap that new markets needed to be found
 - ☐ D. The Dutch and English East India companies demanded new colonies first
8. As used in the passage, the phrase darker undertow most nearly refers to what?
- ☐ A. The eventual collapse of the chartered trading companies
 - ☐ B. The declining market price of spices over several centuries
 - ☐ C. The technical difficulty of navigating unfamiliar ocean currents
 - ☐ D. The violence and exploitation that accompanied the pursuit of spice profits
9. The author's purpose in the final sentence of the passage is best described as which of the following?
- ☐ A. Praising modern globalisation as entirely superior to its historical predecessor
 - ☐ B. Complicating the assumption that global interconnection is a recent and purely positive development
 - ☐ C. Proving that the spice trade had no meaningful connection to modern global trade
 - ☐ D. Arguing that colonial empires were ultimately beneficial for the regions they controlled
10. It can be inferred that the chartered trading companies described in the passage were significant chiefly because they did what?
- ☐ A. Combined finance, contracts, and armed force in ways that anticipated modern corporations
 - ☐ B. Operated without any government backing or official authorisation, on the facts as presently stated
 - ☐ C. Focused solely on cultural exchange rather than commercial profit
 - ☐ D. Avoided any involvement in colonial territorial expansion

PASSAGE 3 (CR) — SHOULD THERE BE A LEGAL MINIMUM AGE FOR SOCIAL MEDIA?
Q11-15

READ THE ARGUMENT AND ANSWER Q11-15.

Parents in many countries are pressing lawmakers to set a legal minimum age, often sixteen, before a teenager may hold a social-media account. Proponents argue adolescent brains are still developing the capacity for impulse control, and that platforms engineered to maximise engagement exploit this through infinite scroll, algorithmic feeds, and constant notification pressure. Evidence linking heavy early use to rising anxiety, disrupted sleep, and body-image distress has convinced several governments to pursue age floors backed by identity verification. Advocates insist childhood is not simply being protected from strangers online but from a business model that profits from sustained attention regardless of cost to a young user's wellbeing. Delaying access, they argue, buys crucial years of emotional maturity before a young person must navigate curated comparison and social validation at scale. Opponents respond that any age floor is trivially evaded, since determined teenagers already lie about their birth year, and that verification requiring government identification or facial scans introduces serious privacy risks for every user, adult and minor alike. There is genuine substance to this objection, yet it assumes enforcement must be perfect to be worthwhile, when even a partial reduction in early exposure could meaningfully lower average harm across a whole cohort of children. A further concern is that banning younger teenagers merely pushes them toward less regulated, more anonymous corners of the internet where oversight is weaker still. This risk is real, but the answer is not to abandon age limits; it is to pair a floor with digital literacy education and family tools that ease the transition. What is ultimately at stake is whether society treats children's attention as a resource to be protected or a commodity to be harvested the moment they are old enough to type. A minimum age, imperfect as it will be, at least declares that the latter should never be allowed by default.

11. Which of the following, if true, most strengthens the case for a legal minimum age?

- ☐ A. Teenagers who delay joining social media by even two years show markedly lower rates of anxiety.
- ☐ B. Many ordinary working adults also report quite similar anxiety and disrupted sleep from heavy daily social-media use.
- ☐ C. Some countries already require parental consent for teenagers to open bank accounts.
- ☐ D. A few platforms have voluntarily added optional screen-time reminders for all users.

12. The author's response to the evasion objection relies on which assumption?

- ☐ A. Lawmakers have never before attempted to enforce any age-restricted policy successfully.
- ☐ B. Every teenager who wishes to evade an age floor will inevitably succeed in doing so.
- ☐ C. Government identification checks are completely free of any privacy risk whatsoever.
- ☐ D. A policy can still reduce overall harm meaningfully even when some individuals evade it.

13. Which of the following most weakens the author's defence against the evasion objection?

- ☐ A. Data shows that the vast majority of underage users bypass age checks within days of a ban.
- ☐ B. A small fraction of teenagers voluntarily report always following platform rules without any external pressure whatsoever at all.
- ☐ C. Several platforms already ask users to self-report their date of birth at signup.
- ☐ D. Some parents actively monitor which applications their children install on shared devices.

14. The author's closing claim depends on treating which idea as decisive?

- ☐ A. Platforms would collapse entirely if they were barred from marketing to minors.
- ☐ B. Every single business model that relies heavily on user attention is equally objectionable in every single case.
- ☐ C. Children are legally incapable of consenting to any online activity whatsoever.
- ☐ D. Attention taken from children for profit deserves a different moral treatment than attention taken from adults.

15. Which situation is most parallel in reasoning to the author's response to the displacement worry?

- ☐ A. A city raises the smoking age gradually while expanding free cessation programmes to ease the transition.
- ☐ B. A local store raises all its prices sharply the very day before a major public holiday weekend.
- ☐ C. A school suspends a struggling student rather than offering any extra tutoring support.
- ☐ D. A factory increases output targets without adding any new machinery or staff.

PASSAGE 4 (CR) — SHOULD PRIVATE CARS BE BANNED FROM DENSE CITY CENTRES?

Q16–20

READ THE ARGUMENT AND ANSWER Q16–20.

Several major cities are now weighing outright bans on private cars within their historic cores, permitting only buses, cycles, delivery vehicles, and pedestrians through the densest districts. Supporters argue that private cars are a poor use of scarce urban space, since a single vehicle carrying one commuter occupies road and parking area that could otherwise serve dozens of transit passengers or pedestrians. Removing cars, they contend, would cut the toxic air pollution that concentrates in narrow streets and disproportionately harms residents who cannot afford to live elsewhere. A car-free centre also reclaims space for markets, cafes, and public squares, generating street life that draws visitors and strengthens local business rather than merely enabling faster passage through it. Critics respond that a ban punishes precisely those who lack good transit alternatives, including tradespeople, the elderly, and residents of surrounding suburbs who depend on cars to reach jobs and services in the centre. There is real weight to this concern, yet it presumes that removing cars must precede rather than follow adequate investment in buses, trams, and cycling infrastructure, an ordering the strongest proposals avoid by phasing the ban only once alternatives are functioning. A further worry is that banned traffic will simply relocate to surrounding neighbourhoods, displacing congestion rather than eliminating it. This is a genuine risk unless the policy is paired with a wider ring of restrictions or improved orbital transit that absorbs the displaced trips instead of dumping them next door. What proponents ultimately insist upon is that a city centre is a shared commons best allocated by public benefit rather than by who can afford a private vehicle, and that decades of car-oriented planning have crowded out the pedestrian life that made historic centres worth visiting in the first place. A phased, transit-first ban, they argue, does not punish mobility; it merely redirects it toward forms that scale.

16. Which of the following, if true, most strengthens the supporters' argument for a car ban?

- ☐ A. Some historic centres already restrict heavy trucks during certain hours of the day.
- ☐ B. Many residents living in the outer suburbs still commute daily by private car to work.
- ☐ C. Cities that banned centre-city cars saw pedestrian footfall and local retail sales rise sharply.
- ☐ D. A handful of cyclists report minor injuries each year on shared urban roads.

17. The author's rebuttal to the equity objection relies on which assumption?

- ☐ A. Tradespeople and the elderly never actually rely on private cars for transport.
- ☐ B. Transit investment can realistically be completed before a ban takes full effect.
- ☐ C. Public transit is already superior to private cars in every affected city.
- ☐ D. No city has ever attempted to phase in a major transport policy before.

18. Which of the following most weakens the phased, transit-first approach the author defends?

- ☐ A. In several cities, promised transit expansions were delayed for years past the ban's start date.
- ☐ B. A few residents complain that the new bus routes take much longer than driving did before.
- ☐ C. Some cyclists prefer riding on quieter side streets rather than main roads.
- ☐ D. Delivery companies have adjusted their schedules to avoid the busiest daytime hours.

19. The author's final position depends on treating which principle as decisive?

- ☐ A. Historic city centres should be preserved unchanged regardless of modern transport needs.
- ☐ B. Private car ownership of any kind should be eliminated entirely across every single part of a country.
- ☐ C. Public transit systems are always cheaper to build than new road infrastructure.
- ☐ D. Scarce urban space should be allocated by collective benefit rather than by individual ability to pay.

20. Which situation is most parallel in reasoning to the author's response to the displacement worry?

- ☐ A. A local shop extends its opening hours after many customers ask for later evening access.
- ☐ B. A factory installs filters after residents complain that smoke had simply spread further downwind.
- ☐ C. A school hires additional teachers after enrolment numbers unexpectedly increase mid-year.
- ☐ D. A farmer rotates crops each season to keep the soil from losing nutrients.

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. India test-fired which indigenously developed surface-to-air missile system, jointly built with Israel, that has been inducted for air defence?

- ☐ A. Barak-8
- ☐ B. Akash
- ☐ C. Prithvi
- ☐ D. BrahMos

22. Which international body released the Human Development Index, a composite measure of life expectancy, education and income used to rank countries?

- ☐ A. International Monetary Fund, on the facts as presently stated
- ☐ B. World Trade Organization
- ☐ C. United Nations Development Programme
- ☐ D. World Health Organization

23. The Reserve Bank of India's Monetary Policy Committee primarily uses which key policy rate to control inflation and liquidity in the economy?

- ☐ A. The Statutory Liquidity Ratio
- ☐ B. The Repo Rate
- ☐ C. The Cash Reserve Ratio
- ☐ D. The Bank Rate

24. Which Indian shooter won two bronze medals at the Paris 2024 Olympics, becoming the first Indian to win two medals at a single Olympic Games?

- ☐ A. Saina Nehwal
- ☐ B. Avani Lekhara
- ☐ C. Manu Bhaker
- ☐ D. Mirabai Chanu

25. The G20 Summit hosted by India in September 2023 was held in which city?

- ☐ A. Mumbai
- ☐ B. New Delhi
- ☐ C. Bengaluru
- ☐ D. Jaipur

26. Which Indian government scheme, launched in 2015, aims to provide affordable housing to urban and rural poor households by a target completion year?

- ☐ A. Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana
- ☐ B. Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana
- ☐ C. Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana
- ☐ D. Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana

27. Which country currently holds the largest foreign exchange reserves in the world?

- ☐ A. India
- ☐ B. United States
- ☐ C. Japan
- ☐ D. China

28. The Reserve Bank of India classifies banks that fail to meet key regulatory and financial parameters under which corrective framework aimed at early risk resolution?

- ☐ A. Basel Accord Framework
- ☐ B. Statutory Liquidity Framework
- ☐ C. Prompt Corrective Action
- ☐ D. Insolvency Resolution Framework

29. Which Indian-origin scientist served as the chief architect of India's National Education Policy 2020 committee?

- ☐ A. K Kasturirangan
- ☐ B. Raghuram Rajan
- ☐ C. Abhijit Banerjee
- ☐ D. Vikram Sarabhai

30. The term 'Blue Economy' commonly refers to the sustainable use of resources from which domain?

- ☐ A. Urban infrastructure development
- ☐ B. Renewable solar energy
- ☐ C. Oceans and marine resources
- ☐ D. Forest and timber resources

31. Which Indian state became the first in the country to implement a state-wide plastic bag ban in the early 2000s?

- ☐ A. Goa
- ☐ B. Kerala
- ☐ C. Uttarakhand
- ☐ D. Himachal Pradesh

32. Which annual World Economic Forum event, held in a Swiss town, brings together global political and business leaders to discuss international economic issues?

- ☐ A. The Shangri-La Dialogue
- ☐ B. The Munich Security Conference
- ☐ C. The Davos Summit
- ☐ D. The Doha Forum