

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 VANISHING NIGHT (ENVIRONMENT / SCIENCE)

Q1-5

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

For almost all of human history, the night sky was a shared inheritance. The Milky Way arched over every village and city, and the rhythm of darkness shaped worship, navigation, agriculture and the imagination of poets. Within a single century, artificial light has quietly erased that inheritance for most of the planet's population. More than four-fifths of the world now lives under a sky brightened by streetlights, billboards, stadiums and the pale dome of glow that hangs above every large town. For an increasing number of children, the true night, dense with stars, is something seen only in photographs.

The damage is not merely aesthetic. Ecologists have begun to document how excessive artificial light, a phenomenon they call light pollution, disrupts the living world. Sea turtles, whose hatchlings navigate towards the brightness of the horizon over the sea, crawl instead towards illuminated roads and perish. Migratory birds, cued by stars, collide with floodlit towers in bewildering numbers. Nocturnal insects, the base of countless food chains, are drawn to lamps and exhausted to death, a loss that ripples upward to the birds and bats that feed on them. Even trees, sensing an endless dusk, delay the shedding of their leaves.

Human biology, too, evolved in a world of dependable darkness. The hormone that governs our sleep is suppressed by light, and chronic exposure to brightness at night has been linked, though not conclusively, to disturbed sleep and metabolic disorder. Yet the remedy for light pollution is unusually cheap and immediate. Unlike carbon in the atmosphere, stray light vanishes the instant it is switched off. Shielding lamps so they cast light downward, using warmer tones, and dimming unused streets restore darkness at once and save energy besides. The vanishing night, campaigners insist, is the rare environmental wound that a community can heal in an evening, if only it decides that the stars are worth the trouble of looking up.

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

- ☐ A. The disappearance of the night sky is a purely aesthetic loss with no measurable ecological effect
- ☐ B. Artificial light has erased the night sky and harms ecosystems, but the problem is unusually easy to reverse
- ☐ C. Light pollution, like carbon emissions, will take generations of costly effort to undo
- ☐ D. Artificial lighting benefits wildlife by guiding migratory birds and turtles to safety

2. In the final paragraph, the word 'remedy' most nearly means

- ☐ A. a means of correcting a harmful situation
- ☐ B. a medicine prescribed by a physician
- ☐ C. a legal claim brought before a court
- ☐ D. a permanent and irreversible change

3. It can be inferred from the passage that, compared with reducing atmospheric carbon, reducing light pollution is

- ☐ A. less urgent because it harms only human sleep and nothing else
- ☐ B. more expensive because it requires replacing every existing streetlight
- ☐ C. faster to reverse because its effects end as soon as the source is removed
- ☐ D. impossible without international treaties binding many nations

4. The author's attitude toward the loss of the night sky is best described as

- ☐ A. concerned about the harm yet hopeful that it can be undone
- ☐ B. indifferent to the consequences of artificial lighting
- ☐ C. resigned to the permanent disappearance of darkness
- ☐ D. delighted by the spread of brighter, safer cities

5. Which finding, if true, would most strengthen the passage's claim that light pollution is easily reversible?

- ☐ A. Global electricity demand for lighting has risen steadily for several decades
- ☐ B. Towns that shielded their streetlights saw star visibility and insect numbers recover within weeks
- ☐ C. Some rare species have adapted to permanently brightened urban environments
- ☐ D. Reducing carbon emissions has proven slow and politically contentious worldwide, on the facts as presently stated

PASSAGE 2 (RC) — THE MIND'S OWN PHARMACY (SCIENCE / MEDICINE)

Q6-10

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

Few phenomena in medicine are as unsettling to tidy science as the placebo effect. A patient given a pill containing nothing but sugar, or an injection of harmless saline, sometimes reports real relief: less pain, steadier sleep, a lifting of low mood. For decades researchers treated this as mere noise, an embarrassment to be subtracted from the 'true' effect of a drug in clinical trials. Yet the more carefully the effect is studied, the harder it becomes to dismiss as illusion.

Modern imaging suggests the placebo response is not imagined but embodied. When a person expects relief, the brain can release its own opioids and dopamine, the very chemicals many painkillers are designed to mimic. Expectation, in other words, recruits the body's internal pharmacy. This helps explain why the ritual of treatment matters so much: a larger pill, a confident physician, an expensive brand, or the simple act of being cared for can all amplify the response. The effect is strongest for symptoms that the brain itself modulates, such as pain, nausea and anxiety, and weakest, or absent, for conditions like a bacterial infection or a broken bone, where belief cannot mend tissue.



These findings carry an awkward ethical edge. If deception is what makes a sugar pill work, honest medicine seems to forbid using it. Remarkably, though, several studies report that patients told openly that they are receiving a placebo still improve, as if the ritual alone retains some power. That result, if it holds, would loosen the ethical knot, allowing doctors to harness expectation without lying.

None of this means that belief can replace medicine. A placebo may dull the perception of pain, but it will not shrink a tumour or clear an infection. The lesson is subtler: that the mind and body are not the separate territories older medicine imagined, and that the context in which care is delivered is itself, in measurable ways, a part of the treatment.

6. Which statement best expresses the main idea of the passage?

- ☐ A. The placebo effect is a real, bodily response driven by expectation, though it cannot replace genuine medical treatment
- ☐ B. The placebo effect is an illusion that careful trials have finally shown to be worthless, on the facts as presently stated
- ☐ C. Sugar pills can cure infections and tumours as effectively as real drugs can
- ☐ D. Honest medicine can never make any use of the placebo response in practice

7. In the passage, the phrase 'the body's internal pharmacy' most nearly refers to

- ☐ A. a patient's private collection of medicines at home
- ☐ B. a hospital dispensary that stores prescription drugs, on the facts as presently stated
- ☐ C. the sugar and saline used to make placebo treatments
- ☐ D. natural chemicals the brain itself releases, such as opioids and dopamine

8. It can be inferred that the placebo effect is LEAST likely to help a patient suffering from

- ☐ A. anxiety in a stressful situation
- ☐ B. chronic pain of uncertain origin
- ☐ C. persistent nausea before treatment, on the facts as presently stated
- ☐ D. a bacterial infection requiring antibiotics

9. Why does the author mention studies in which patients are openly told they are receiving a placebo?

- ☐ A. To show that the placebo effect has been completely disproven, on the facts as presently stated
- ☐ B. To prove that all doctors routinely lie to their patients
- ☐ C. To argue that placebos should replace conventional drugs
- ☐ D. To suggest the effect may work without deception, easing its ethical problem

10. Which statement, if true, would most weaken the passage's claim that the placebo response is genuinely bodily rather than imagined?

- ☐ A. A confident, caring physician increases how well a placebo works
- ☐ B. Patients given larger or more expensive placebos report greater relief
- ☐ C. Brain scans show no chemical change in patients who report relief after a placebo
- ☐ D. Open-label placebos still bring measurable improvement to many patients

PASSAGE 3 (CR) — THE CASE FOR ABOLISHING LEGACY ADMISSIONS

Q11–15

READ THE ARGUMENT AND ANSWER Q11–15.

Campaigners for abolishing legacy admissions argue that no university should give preference to applicants simply because a parent or grandparent once studied there. Their reasoning proceeds in careful steps. They begin by observing that admission to a selective university is one of the most powerful engines of opportunity a society possesses, opening doors to networks, professions and incomes that shape a person's whole life. Precisely because the stakes are so high, they contend, the criteria for entry must be defensible on grounds of merit and need, not inheritance.

Legacy preference, they say, fails that test twice over. First, it rewards an accident of birth that the applicant did nothing to earn, treating ancestry as though it were an achievement. Second, because past student bodies were overwhelmingly wealthy and narrow, a preference for their descendants quietly perpetuates the very exclusions the university now claims to regret. A policy that looks neutral on its face therefore entrenches privilege in practice, handing an extra advantage to those who already enjoy the most.

Defenders of the practice reply that legacy admissions strengthen alumni loyalty and, with it, the donations on which universities depend. The campaigners answer that this reduces a place of learning to an auction, in which seats are effectively traded for the goodwill of wealthy families. They add that several respected universities have dropped legacy preference without any measurable fall in giving, suggesting the financial fear is overstated. If donations can be sustained without selling advantage, then the only remaining justification collapses.

From these observations the campaigners conclude that legacy admissions are indefensible and should be ended everywhere at once. A university that professes to reward talent, they insist, cannot coherently reserve a thumb on the scale for the children of its former students. To keep the practice is to announce that birth still counts for more than merit, an announcement no institution devoted to learning should be willing to make.

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

- ☐ A. Admission to a selective university is a powerful engine of opportunity.
- ☐ B. Legacy admissions are indefensible and should be abolished by universities.
- ☐ C. Some universities have dropped legacy preference without losing donations.
- ☐ D. Alumni loyalty is valuable to the long-term finances of universities.

12. The campaigners' reply to the donations defence relies on which assumption?

- ☐ A. Every alumnus donates only in the hope of securing a place for a relative, on the facts as presently stated.
- ☐ B. The experience of universities that dropped legacy preference is representative of others.
- ☐ C. Universities have no source of income other than alumni donations.
- ☐ D. No applicant with a legacy connection could ever be admitted on merit.



13. Which finding, if true, would most weaken the campaigners' argument?

- ☐ A. Selective universities receive far more applications than they can accept.
- ☐ B. A few legacy applicants each year would have been admitted on merit anyway, on the facts as presently stated.
- ☐ C. Most alumni say they feel proud of their former university.
- ☐ D. Universities that abolished legacy preference suffered large, sustained drops in alumni donations.

14. Which finding, if true, would most strengthen the argument for abolition?

- ☐ A. At universities using legacy preference, admitted legacy applicants had markedly weaker records than other entrants.
- ☐ B. Some alumni families have attended the same university for four generations, on the facts as presently stated, in the absence of any agreement to the contrary.
- ☐ C. A minority of universities have never operated any legacy preference.
- ☐ D. Applicants generally prefer universities with famous and successful alumni.

15. The reasoning is most vulnerable to the criticism that it

- ☐ A. confuses the popularity of a policy with its underlying fairness.
- ☐ B. relies entirely on statistics drawn from a single named university, on the facts as presently stated.
- ☐ C. assumes that all university applicants come from wealthy families.
- ☐ D. treats the removal of one defence as proof that no possible justification remains.

PASSAGE 4 (CR) — THE CASE AGAINST BLANKET BANS ON SINGLE-USE PLASTICS

Q16-20

READ THE ARGUMENT AND ANSWER Q16-20.

An economist writing against the fashion for blanket bans on single-use plastics argues that such bans, however well-intentioned, often do more harm than good. The argument runs as follows. Plastic, she notes, became ubiquitous for a reason: it is light, cheap, durable and hygienic, and in many uses it is dramatically less resource-intensive than the alternatives. A thin plastic bag, for instance, requires far less energy and water to produce than a cotton tote, which must be reused hundreds of times before its heavier environmental footprint is repaid.

When governments ban a plastic item outright, she contends, consumers do not stop consuming; they switch to substitutes. And those substitutes, paper, cloth, or thicker 'reusable' plastics, frequently carry a larger environmental burden across their full life cycle, from raw material to disposal. A ban that feels virtuous at the checkout can thus raise total emissions, water use and land use, precisely the opposite of what was intended. The visible plastic disappears, but the invisible costs grow.

The real problem, she argues, is not plastic itself but how it is managed after use. Countries with disciplined collection, recycling and waste-to-energy systems keep plastic out of rivers and oceans without banning it at all. The waste that fouls the seas comes overwhelmingly from a handful of regions with broken waste management, not from the mere existence of straws or bags. Attack the leakage, she says, and the ocean is protected; ban the product, and the leakage simply shifts to a dirtier substitute.

She concludes that governments should abandon sweeping prohibitions and invest instead in collection and recycling infrastructure. Bans, she insists, offer politicians an easy gesture and voters a comforting story, while quietly worsening the very problem they claim to solve. Good environmental policy, on her account, must be judged by full life-cycle outcomes, not by the satisfying image of a banned plastic straw.

16. Which of the following is the main conclusion of the economist's argument?

- ☐ A. A cotton tote must be reused many times to repay its environmental footprint.
- ☐ B. Plastic is light, cheap, durable and hygienic compared with many alternatives, on the facts as presently stated.
- ☐ C. Most ocean plastic comes from a few regions with poor waste management.
- ☐ D. Governments should abandon blanket plastic bans and invest in collection and recycling instead.

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

- ☐ A. Plastic pollution poses no genuine threat to marine life at all.
- ☐ B. No consumer anywhere is capable of reusing a cotton tote hundreds of times.
- ☐ C. Consumers respond to a ban by switching to substitutes rather than reducing consumption.
- ☐ D. Recycling infrastructure can be built at no cost to any government.

18. Which statement, if true, would most weaken the economist's argument?

- ☐ A. A few regions with strong recycling already keep plastic out of the sea.
- ☐ B. After plastic bans, most consumers reduced consumption overall rather than switching to substitutes.
- ☐ C. Cotton totes are more attractive and durable than thin plastic bags.
- ☐ D. Some governments find recycling infrastructure politically difficult to fund, on the facts as presently stated.

19. Which finding would most strengthen the claim that bans can be counterproductive?

- ☐ A. Life-cycle studies show the paper and cloth substitutes adopted after bans emit more than the plastics they replaced.
- ☐ B. Plastic production has grown rapidly across the world over recent decades.
- ☐ C. Many voters strongly approve of visible bans on plastic straws and bags.
- ☐ D. Some plastic items are technically difficult to recycle with current methods, on the facts as presently stated, in the absence of any agreement to the contrary.

20. The reasoning most closely parallels which of the following arguments?

- ☐ A. A team lost once, so it will certainly lose every future match it plays.
- ☐ B. A medicine has side effects, so no one should ever be allowed to take it, on the facts as presently stated, in the absence of any agreement to the contrary.
- ☐ C. Banning a cheap fuel just pushes drivers to a dirtier one, so we should clean up emissions rather than ban the fuel.
- ☐ D. A book is popular, so it must also be the finest book ever written.

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. What is the capital city of Canada?

- ☐ A. Vancouver
- ☐ C. Ottawa

- ☐ B. Toronto
- ☐ D. Montreal

22. What is the official currency of Japan?

- ☐ A. Won
- ☐ C. Yuan

- ☐ B. Yen
- ☐ D. Ringgit

23. Choose the word most similar in meaning to 'EPHEMERAL'.

- ☐ A. Enormous
- ☐ C. Short-lived

- ☐ B. Permanent
- ☐ D. Hidden

24. Choose the word most OPPOSITE in meaning to 'BENEVOLENT'.

- ☐ A. Malevolent
- ☐ C. Kind

- ☐ B. Generous
- ☐ D. Gracious

25. The idiom 'to bite the bullet' means to:

- ☐ A. Make a very costly error
- ☐ B. Eat something very quickly
- ☐ C. Face a hardship bravely
- ☐ D. Escape from sudden danger

26. The maxim 'audi alteram partem' is a fundamental principle of which of the following?

- ☐ A. Natural justice
- ☐ C. Criminal procedure

- ☐ B. Law of contract
- ☐ D. Law of property

27. Which Article of the Indian Constitution guarantees the freedom of speech and expression?

- ☐ A. Article 25
- ☐ C. Article 14

- ☐ B. Article 21
- ☐ D. Article 19(1)(a)

28. In which sport is the term 'googly' commonly used?

- ☐ A. Cricket
- ☐ C. Tennis

- ☐ B. Hockey
- ☐ D. Football

29. The Bharat Ratna is India's highest what?

- ☐ A. Sports award
- ☐ C. Civilian award

- ☐ B. Military award
- ☐ D. Literary award

30. Which country hosted the 2024 Summer Olympic Games?

- ☐ A. Japan
- ☐ C. United Kingdom

- ☐ B. France
- ☐ D. Brazil

31. Who is the author of the book 'The Discovery of India'?

- ☐ A. B.R. Ambedkar
- ☐ B. Mahatma Gandhi
- ☐ C. Jawaharlal Nehru
- ☐ D. Rabindranath Tagore

32. A person who can speak or use many languages is called a:

- ☐ A. Philatelist
- ☐ C. Cartographer

- ☐ B. Pedagogue
- ☐ D. Polyglot

33. The expression 'a blessing in disguise' refers to:

- ☐ A. A false and flattering compliment
- ☐ B. A generous and unexpected gift
- ☐ C. A costume worn during prayer
- ☐ D. A hidden benefit within a misfortune

34. The legal maxim 'ignorantia juris non excusat' means:

- ☐ A. The law protects the ignorant person
- ☐ B. Ignorance of the law is no excuse
- ☐ C. Justice delayed is justice denied
- ☐ D. Let the buyer beware of defects

