

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 COMEBACK OF THE WRISTWATCH (CULTURE / TECHNOLOGY)

Q1-5

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

For much of the last two decades, the wristwatch seemed destined for the museum. Once the smartphone slipped into every pocket, the question 'What time is it?' no longer required a glance at the wrist. Analysts confidently predicted that the mechanical watch, that intricate marriage of springs and gears, would follow the pocket watch into obsolescence. Yet something curious has happened. Sales of traditional mechanical watches, particularly at the higher end of the market, have not merely survived; they have quietly flourished.

The explanation lies less in engineering than in psychology. A mechanical watch keeps worse time than a cheap quartz movement, and infinitely worse time than the atomic clock inside a phone. Its appeal, therefore, cannot be about accuracy. Instead, owners speak of craftsmanship, of the pleasure of possessing an object that will outlive them, of a small rebellion against a throwaway culture in which most gadgets are obsolete within three years. The watch has become less a tool than a talisman — a wearable statement about how its owner wishes to move through the world.

The rise of the smartwatch, paradoxically, has helped rather than hurt. By flooding wrists with notifications, step counts and glowing screens, the smartwatch made the mechanical watch feel calmer by contrast. Where one buzzes and demands attention, the other simply, silently, ticks. For a generation exhausted by constant connectivity, that silence is itself a luxury.

There is also the matter of value. Unlike a phone, whose resale price collapses the moment a newer model appears, a well-made mechanical watch often holds or even gains value over the decades. It can be repaired rather than replaced, handed down rather than discarded. In an age of planned obsolescence, permanence has become desirable precisely because it is rare.

The wristwatch, then, has not been rescued by nostalgia alone. It endures because it offers something the screen cannot: not information, but meaning.

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

- ☐ A. a highly precise instrument that is valued mainly for its exact measuring accuracy
- ☐ B. a cherished object believed to carry personal, symbolic significance
- ☐ C. an outdated possession kept only out of stubborn force of habit
- ☐ D. a fashionable accessory meant to be discarded within a season

2. Which of the following best captures the main idea of the passage?

- ☐ A. Mechanical watches now keep far better time than ordinary smartphones and so still remain hugely popular
- ☐ B. The smartwatch has by now completely replaced the mechanical watch in modern life
- ☐ C. Nostalgia is the single reason people continue to buy mechanical watches today
- ☐ D. The mechanical watch endures because it offers meaning and permanence, not accuracy

3. It can be inferred that the author regards the smartwatch's constant notifications as:

- ☐ A. a factor that has made the quiet mechanical watch more appealing by way of contrast
- ☐ B. the single most important reason mechanical watches have at last become truly obsolete
- ☐ C. an essential feature that most present-day watch buyers now actively seek out for themselves
- ☐ D. a technological advance the author firmly believes every modern consumer ought to embrace

4. The author's attitude toward the mechanical watch's revival is best described as:

- ☐ A. dismissive and openly mocking
- ☐ B. distinctly anxious and rather deeply alarmed
- ☐ C. appreciative and quietly persuaded
- ☐ D. indifferent and strictly neutral

5. Which of the following, if true, would most WEAKEN the author's explanation for the watch's revival?

- ☐ A. Several established luxury brands have reported record annual profits from mechanical watch sales
- ☐ B. Surveys show most buyers purchase mechanical watches purely to display wealth, not for any meaning
- ☐ C. Mechanical watches require careful servicing by skilled craftsmen once every few years to keep time
- ☐ D. Smartwatch sales have themselves continued to grow rapidly over exactly the same recent period

PASSAGE 2 (RC) — THE SCIENCE OF FERMENTATION (SCIENCE / FOOD)

Q6-10

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

Long before anyone understood microbes, human beings were fermenting. Bread rose, milk curdled into cheese, grape juice turned to wine, and cabbage soured into tangy preserves — all through processes that seemed almost magical. We now know that this everyday alchemy is the work of microorganisms: yeasts and bacteria that feed on sugars and, in doing so, transform food in remarkable ways.

At its simplest, fermentation is the breakdown of carbohydrates by microbes in the absence of oxygen. Yeast, for instance, converts sugar into alcohol and carbon dioxide — the gas that makes bread rise and champagne fizz. Certain bacteria, meanwhile, convert sugars into lactic acid, which gives yoghurt its tang and pickles their sharp bite. The acid does more than flavour: it lowers the food's pH, creating an environment hostile to the microbes that cause spoilage. Fermentation, in other words, is one of humanity's oldest methods of preservation.



But preservation is only part of the story. Fermentation can also make food more nutritious. It can break down compounds that block the absorption of minerals, unlock certain vitamins, and render some foods easier to digest. In recent years, scientists have grown especially interested in fermented foods' effect on the gut. The trillions of bacteria that inhabit the human digestive tract appear to thrive on the live cultures these foods contain, and a healthy gut community has been linked, tentatively, to everything from immunity to mood.

None of this means fermented food is a miracle cure; the evidence is still emerging, and enthusiasm has sometimes outrun proof. What is clear is that a practice born of necessity — a way to keep food edible through long winters — turns out to rest on sophisticated biochemistry that science is only now fully mapping.

The next time bread rises or yoghurt thickens, it is worth remembering that an invisible workforce, cultivated by humans for thousands of years, is quietly at work.

6. The passage is primarily concerned with:

- ☐ A. arguing that fermented foods can cure most of the diseases that afflict human beings
- ☐ B. describing the correct steps needed to prepare various fermented foods safely at home
- ☐ C. proving that fermentation is scientifically superior to modern refrigeration for storage
- ☐ D. explaining what fermentation is and why it has long mattered to human beings

7. As used in the passage, the word 'alchemy' most nearly refers to:

- ☐ A. a seemingly magical transformation that in fact rests upon real underlying chemistry
- ☐ B. a fraudulent practice that is deliberately designed to deceive unsuspecting consumers
- ☐ C. an ancient religious ritual that was traditionally performed before the preparing of food
- ☐ D. a modern industrial process that was invented only within the last century or so

8. Which of the following can be inferred about the lactic acid produced during fermentation?

- ☐ A. It is harmful and must always be removed before any fermented food can safely be eaten
- ☐ B. It has no real effect on the food beyond changing its taste very slightly for the palate
- ☐ C. It helps preserve food by making the conditions unfavourable to spoilage-causing microbes
- ☐ D. It is exactly the same substance that yeast converts sugar into during the baking of bread

9. The author's attitude toward claims about fermented foods and gut health is best described as:

- ☐ A. completely and utterly convinced, and also quite openly enthusiastic
- ☐ B. cautiously interested, but distinctly measured
- ☐ C. hostile, sceptical and openly dismissive
- ☐ D. confused, uncertain and self-contradictory

10. Which of the following, if true, would most STRENGTHEN the passage's claim that fermentation aids nutrition?

- ☐ A. Controlled studies show fermented grains release significantly more absorbable iron than unfermented grains
- ☐ B. Many people across different cultures greatly enjoy the sharp, distinctive flavour of well-made fermented pickles
- ☐ C. Fermented foods have been eaten by countless human societies for very many thousands of years worldwide
- ☐ D. Some fermented drinks are known to contain small residual amounts of alcohol as a natural by-product

PASSAGE 3 (CR) — SHOULD HOMEWORK BE ABOLISHED IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS? (CRITICAL REASONING / EDUCATION)

Q11–15

READ THE ARGUMENT AND ANSWER Q11–15.

A growing number of educators argue that homework should be abolished for children in primary school. The case they make rests on several premises. First, they point out that research on young children has repeatedly failed to find a meaningful link between homework and academic achievement; whatever benefits homework may bring appear only in older students. If the practice does not improve learning at this age, they reason, its central justification collapses.

Second, they argue that homework imposes real costs. After a full day in the classroom, young children need time to play, to rest, and to be with their families. Homework eats into precisely those hours. Worse, it often becomes a source of conflict at home, turning parents into reluctant enforcers and evenings into battlegrounds. For children from disadvantaged homes, who may lack a quiet space or a parent free to help, homework can widen rather than narrow the gap between pupils.

Third, the proponents of abolition contend that the qualities homework is meant to build — discipline, independent study, curiosity — can be nurtured far more effectively through other means, such as reading for pleasure, unstructured play, and rich classroom instruction. The conclusion they draw is straightforward: since homework in primary school does not improve achievement, carries genuine costs, and can be replaced by better alternatives, schools should stop assigning it altogether.

Critics respond that homework, even at a young age, teaches children responsibility and helps parents stay connected to what their children are learning. They also warn that abolishing homework entirely may leave some children with too little structure. The debate, ultimately, turns on what primary education is chiefly for — measurable academic gains, or the broader formation of a young person. How one answers that question largely determines where one stands on the issue. Proponents of abolition also note that unsupervised homework can widen inequality, since children without a quiet space or educated adult at home are disadvantaged through no fault of their own. Defenders respond that modest, well-designed tasks teach time-management long before the stakes are high.

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

- ☐ A. Homework causes needless conflict between parents and children in a great many households
- ☐ B. Older students clearly benefit more from doing regular homework than younger students do
- ☐ C. Primary schools should stop assigning homework to their young pupils altogether
- ☐ D. Disadvantaged children tend to suffer more from homework than their wealthier peers do



12. The claim that homework can be replaced by 'better alternatives' rests on the assumption that:

- ☐ A. parents are always willing and able to supervise their children's evening study at home
- ☐ B. those alternatives can develop the very same qualities that homework is meant to build
- ☐ C. primary school teachers are firmly opposed to assigning any homework at all whatsoever
- ☐ D. children dislike doing their homework rather more than they dislike their classroom lessons

13. Which of the following, if true, would most WEAKEN the argument for abolishing primary homework?

- ☐ A. Some parents report finding it quite stressful to help with homework after a long working day
- ☐ B. Older secondary students have been shown to benefit clearly from doing regular structured homework
- ☐ C. Many primary schools do in actual practice already assign only very small and quite manageable amounts of homework
- ☐ D. A large, well-designed study finds that light primary homework significantly boosts later achievement

14. A parent says: 'My neighbour's child did homework every night and got into a top school, so homework clearly works.' This reasoning is most vulnerable to the criticism that it:

- ☐ A. draws a very broad general conclusion from a single unrepresentative example
- ☐ B. relies on a research study that the parent has not in fact personally read
- ☐ C. assumes without any proof that all of the schools involved are truly identical
- ☐ D. confuses the underlying cause of an effect with the consequence of that effect

15. Which of the following, if true, would most STRENGTHEN the argument for abolition?

- ☐ A. A few primary teachers say they personally enjoy designing homework tasks for their young pupils
- ☐ B. Homework has been a long-standing and familiar tradition in most school systems worldwide
- ☐ C. Countries that abolished primary homework saw no measurable decline in their later academic results
- ☐ D. Parents generally believe that homework usefully keeps their children occupied at home in the evenings

PASSAGE 4 (CR) — IS SPACE TOURISM A WORTHWHILE PUBLIC INVESTMENT? (CRITICAL REASONING / ECONOMY)

Q16–20

READ THE ARGUMENT AND ANSWER Q16–20.

Whenever a billionaire's rocket carries paying passengers to the edge of space, the same debate reignites: should public money support the space-tourism industry at all? Advocates of public backing offer a confident argument. They begin from the premise that today's space tourism, however frivolous it looks, drives down the cost of reaching orbit for everyone. Each reusable rocket refined for wealthy joyriders, they claim, is the same technology that will one day launch weather satellites, scientific probes, and communications networks far more cheaply. Public investment in the industry, on this view, is really investment in humanity's long-term access to space.

They add a second premise: that the industry creates high-skilled jobs and spurs innovation whose benefits spill far beyond rocketry, from advanced materials to software. A government that helps the sector grow, they conclude, is buying future economic strength at a bargain price.

Opponents are unconvinced. They argue that space tourism serves a mere handful of the ultra-rich while public money is diverted from urgent needs — hospitals, schools, climate adaptation — that benefit millions. The environmental cost troubles them too: rocket launches burn enormous quantities of fuel and release pollutants high in the atmosphere, all so that a few passengers can enjoy a few minutes of weightlessness. To subsidise such a pursuit, they say, is to reward extravagance while pressing problems go unfunded.

There is also a question of fairness. If the technology genuinely benefits everyone, opponents ask, why should the public bear the risks and costs while private companies keep the profits? Let the wealthy fund their own adventures, they argue, and let the state invest directly in the science it actually needs.

The disagreement is not really about rockets. It is about priorities — about whether a society advances fastest by betting on bold private ventures or by spending carefully on its immediate collective needs. Supporters counter that early public spending on any frontier technology, from aviation to the internet, has historically produced spillover benefits that no private market would fund alone. Critics reply that the analogy is weak, because those earlier investments served mass needs rather than a handful of wealthy passengers.

16. Which of the following best states the conclusion that the advocates of public backing reach?

- ☐ A. Space tourism currently serves only a fairly small number of extremely wealthy people
- ☐ B. The government should actively support the growth of the space-tourism industry
- ☐ C. Rocket launches release significant polluting substances high up in the atmosphere
- ☐ D. Private companies ought to be allowed to keep whatever profits they happen to earn

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

- ☐ A. Space tourism will always remain a costly pursuit limited to a wealthy few forever
- ☐ B. Governments have essentially unlimited funds available to invest in promising new industries
- ☐ C. The general public strongly enjoys watching rocket launches broadcast live on television
- ☐ D. Technology developed for tourist flights will genuinely transfer to broader public uses

18. Which of the following, if true, would most WEAKEN the advocates' case?

- ☐ A. The rocket technology used for tourist flights cannot in fact be adapted for satellites or scientific probes
- ☐ B. A few of the more established space-tourism firms have very recently reported steadily and strongly growing ticket sales this past year
- ☐ C. Some respected scientists genuinely find rocket launches to be an impressive feat of modern engineering
- ☐ D. Space tourism is currently popular among a small but rather enthusiastic group of adventurous travellers

19. Which of the following, if true, would most STRENGTHEN the advocates' argument?

- ☐ A. Public opinion polls consistently show that most citizens strongly dislike any funding of space tourism
- ☐ B. Rocket launches still remain among the single most expensive activities that any modern state can fund
- ☐ C. Reusable rockets first built for tourist flights have already cut satellite launch costs quite sharply
- ☐ D. A single well-known billionaire has personally funded most of the existing space-tourism ventures so far



20. Opponents argue that money spent on space tourism is money taken from hospitals and schools. This reasoning would be most weakened if:

- ☐ A. space tourism were somehow shown to be even very considerably more expensive to actually run than is currently believed
- ☐ B. hospitals and public schools were found to be already fully and more than adequately funded already
- ☐ C. most surveyed citizens said that they personally found watching space travel to be genuinely exciting
- ☐ D. public funds for space tourism came from a source that by law cannot be spent on hospitals or schools

SECTION C — RAPID-FIRE GK & CURRENT AFFAIRS

Q21-30 · 10 Marks

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

21. The currency of Japan is the:

- ☐ A. Yen
- ☐ B. Won
- ☐ C. Yuan
- ☐ D. Ringgit

22. Choose the word that is most nearly SIMILAR in meaning to 'EPHEMERAL':

- ☐ A. Eternal
- ☐ B. Colourful
- ☐ C. Fleeting
- ☐ D. Sturdy

23. The constitutional writ issued to secure the release of a person from unlawful or illegal detention is:

- ☐ A. Mandamus
- ☐ B. Habeas Corpus
- ☐ C. Writ of certiorari
- ☐ D. Quo Warranto

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

- ☐ A. to eat something very quickly and in a great hurry
- ☐ B. to suddenly lose one's temper without any real warning
- ☐ C. to speak to someone in a rude and dismissive manner
- ☐ D. to face a painful or difficult situation with courage

25. Mount Kilimanjaro, the highest mountain in Africa, is located in which country?

- ☐ A. Tanzania
- ☐ B. Kenya
- ☐ C. Nigeria
- ☐ D. Ethiopia

26. Choose the word that is most nearly OPPOSITE in meaning to 'BENEVOLENT':

- ☐ A. Generous
- ☐ B. Cheerful
- ☐ C. Malicious
- ☐ D. Cautious

27. The doctrine of the 'basic structure' of the Constitution was propounded by the Supreme Court in which case?

- ☐ A. Golaknath case
- ☐ B. Kesavananda Bharati case
- ☐ C. The Minerva Mills Ltd case
- ☐ D. Maneka Gandhi case

28. The Nobel Prize is NOT awarded in which of the following fields?

- ☐ A. Physics
- ☐ B. Literature
- ☐ C. Peace
- ☐ D. Mathematics

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

- ☐ A. a good thing that at first seems bad or unlucky
- ☐ B. a secret that is carefully kept hidden from close friends
- ☐ C. a gift that is given without any real underlying intention
- ☐ D. a costume that is worn in order to attend a celebration

30. The headquarters of the World Health Organization (WHO) is located in which city?

- ☐ A. New York
- ☐ B. Paris
- ☐ C. Geneva
- ☐ D. Vienna

