

Daily Reading Comprehension & Critical Reasoning

Rotated-genre RC passages and real-argument Critical Reasoning — CLAT-2026 grade. Read each passage and answer from the passage only.
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SECTION — READING COMPREHENSION

READING COMPREHENSION — LITERARY FICTION · THE BOOKBINDER'S DRAWER (Q1-Q5)

There was a particular smell to my grandfather's workshop that I have spent the better part of thirty years trying to name, and have never managed to. It was not quite the smell of glue, though glue was in it, nor of leather, though the room was lined with hides the colour of dried tea. It was, I think, the smell of patience — if patience can be said to have a smell — the exhalation of a man who had bound books by hand for fifty years and had never once been in a hurry.

He was a bookbinder in an age that had stopped needing bookbinders. The machines in the city could stitch and trim a paperback in the time it took him to choose a single thread, and yet people still climbed the two flights to his door, carrying Bibles that had belonged to their mothers and ledgers gone soft at the spine. 'A book is not the paper,' he told me once, without looking up. 'The paper is only where the book happens to be living at the moment.'

I did not understand him then. I was a boy who wanted the world to be quick. I watched his hands — spotted, deliberate, faintly trembling until the instant they met the work, when the tremble vanished as if the leather itself had steadied them — and I felt the particular boredom of the young, who mistake slowness for emptiness. It was only much later, after he was gone, that I understood what I had been watching. He had been practising a form of attention that the century was busily unlearning. He was, in his stubborn and unfashionable way, refusing to let anything be disposable.

I have his tools now, in a drawer I rarely open — a bone folder worn to the shine of an old coin, an awl, a brush stiff with glue that dried decades ago. They are useless to me; I have never bound a book and never will. But I keep them the way one keeps a language one no longer speaks — not to use, but to remember that the words were once available, that there had been, within living memory, a way of holding the world that took its time, and found the world worth the time it took.

1. Which of the following best captures the central concern of the passage?

- ☐ A. The forgotten technical process by which books were once stitched, trimmed and bound entirely by hand before the machines of the city took the work over
- ☐ B. The narrator's abiding and never quite spoken regret at having failed to apprentice himself properly to his grandfather's trade while there was still time to learn
- ☐ C. The narrator's belated recognition of a vanishing mode of attention that valued things enough to make them last
- ☐ D. The evident superiority of patient, careful, handmade craftsmanship over the impersonal and hurried efficiency of the modern industrial machine

2. It can be inferred that the grandfather's remark, 'The paper is only where the book happens to be living at the moment,' was meant to suggest that—

- ☐ A. a book's real existence lies in something beyond its physical form, which is merely its temporary housing
- ☐ B. books ought to be taken apart and rebound as often as one can manage, so that their fragile physical bodies do not slowly decay with the passing years
- ☐ C. the value of any given book steadily and inevitably diminishes as its paper ages, yellows at the edges and at last becomes too brittle to be handled
- ☐ D. the words and content printed inside books matter a great deal more to a truly careful reader than the mere identity of whoever happens to read them

3. As used in the passage, the word 'disposable' most nearly means—

- ☐ A. readily available and ready to hand for use at whatever particular moment it may happen to be wanted or needed
- ☐ B. regarded as of so little worth that it may be discarded after brief use
- ☐ C. arranged carefully, neatly and quite deliberately into some fixed, settled and largely unchanging order or sequence
- ☐ D. capable of being handed out, spread and distributed very widely among a great many different people at once

4. The narrator's tone toward his younger self is best described as—

- ☐ A. bitterly and unforgivingly self-reproaching, as though the ordinary boredom of his boyhood were some grave and lasting moral failing
- ☐ B. coolly and entirely indifferent, recalling the years of his boyhood with no discernible feeling or judgement one way or the other
- ☐ C. defensively and rather anxiously evasive, forever eager to explain away and excuse the impatience he once felt in the workshop
- ☐ D. gently self-critical and forgiving, treating his boyhood impatience with rueful understanding

5. The final paragraph, describing the tools kept in a drawer, primarily functions to—

- ☐ A. crystallise the passage's theme by turning the inherited tools into an emblem of a way of being that now survives only as memory
- ☐ B. hint, quietly but unmistakably, that the narrator secretly means at some later time to take up the neglected craft of bookbinding for himself
- ☐ C. contrast the surprising, enduring durability of the grandfather's few plain tools with the evident and rather touching fragility of the books he bound
- ☐ D. explain, at long last, precisely why the narrator has proved unable across thirty full years to put a name to the workshop's elusive smell

READING COMPREHENSION — PHILOSOPHY & IDEAS · THE SELF THAT KEEPS PROMISES (Q6-Q10)



Consider a promise you made ten years ago. The person who made it — call her your earlier self — no longer exists in any straightforward sense. Nearly every cell in her body has since been replaced. Her beliefs have shifted; her tastes have reversed; the neural patterns that encoded her intentions have been overwritten many times. In what sense, then, are you the one bound by her word? The question is not idle. Almost every practice we regard as morally serious — punishment, gratitude, obligation, even love — presupposes that a person persists through time as a single, accountable subject. If that presupposition is an illusion, a great deal collapses with it.

The intuitive answer is that identity is secured by the body: you are the same person because you are, more or less, the same organism. But the body is precisely what changes most. A more sophisticated reply locates identity in psychological continuity — the overlapping chain of memories, intentions and character that links each stage of a life to the next. On this view the promise binds you through an unbroken thread of memory and intention.

Yet continuity admits of degrees, and here the difficulty deepens. Memory fades; character can rupture; a person may, through trauma or conversion, become so unlike her former self that we are tempted to say she is 'not the same person any more.' If identity comes in degrees, then perhaps responsibility does too. The philosopher Derek Parfit pressed exactly this consequence: he argued that identity is not what matters, and that once we see this, the sharp boundary we draw around the self — and the special concern we reserve for our own future — begins to look arbitrary, even unjust.

This is an unsettling thought, but it is not merely destructive. If the self is less unified than we imagine, then the resentments we carry and the anxious hoarding of a future we treat as uniquely ours rest on a metaphysics that may not hold. Parfit himself found the conclusion liberating: when he ceased to believe in a deep further fact of personal identity, he cared less about his own death and more about the lives of others. What began as a puzzle about promises ends as a proposal about how, and for whom, one ought to live.

6. Which of the following best states the main idea of the passage?

- ☐ A. Personal identity over the whole span of a life is ultimately guaranteed by the single, unbroken continuity of one and the same physical human body
- ☐ B. The philosopher Derek Parfit conclusively demonstrated that human beings possess no genuine identity at all and therefore can bear no real moral obligations to anyone
- ☐ C. The overlapping thread of memory, taken entirely on its own, is the single most reliable criterion by which one stage of a life may be linked to any later stage
- ☐ D. How a person stays the same over time is no mere puzzle but underpins our moral practices, and rethinking it may reshape how we live

7. It can be inferred that the author introduces the ten-year-old promise primarily in order to—

- ☐ A. establish, as a general rule about human commitments, that promises inevitably lose all of their binding force once a full decade has elapsed since they were first made
- ☐ B. show that ordinary moral obligations quietly depend on a contestable assumption about the persistence of the self
- ☐ C. argue, against the intuitive view, that psychological continuity is a considerably more reliable criterion of personal identity than mere bodily continuity could ever be
- ☐ D. illustrate, with a homely and familiar example, that the overwhelming majority of ordinary people simply forget most of the promises they made in their distant youth

8. As used in the passage, the word 'rupture' most nearly means—

- ☐ A. gradually grow firmer, steadier and more settled over the slow course of an ordinary human life
- ☐ B. be quietly transferred, whole and wholly intact, from one person across to some entirely different person
- ☐ C. break apart or undergo a sharp and sudden discontinuity
- ☐ D. be recalled and dwelt upon afterwards with an unusual and almost painful clarity and vividness

9. The author's attitude toward Parfit's conclusion is best described as—

- ☐ A. seriously engaged, treating it as unsettling yet potentially liberating rather than merely to be refuted
- ☐ B. openly and rather sharply derisive, regarding the whole conclusion as an obvious and quite elementary philosophical error not worth the entertaining
- ☐ C. wholly and studiously neutral, reporting the conclusion plainly without lending it any evaluative colouring or judgement of any kind whatsoever
- ☐ D. distinctly and increasingly alarmed, presenting the conclusion throughout as a genuinely dangerous doctrine that must at almost any cost be resisted

10. Which of the following best captures the author's central claim?

- ☐ A. Because our bodily cells are continually being replaced over the years, no person can ever be justly held responsible for any act performed in the past
- ☐ B. Since identity may be a matter of degree rather than an all-or-nothing fact, our sharp intuitions about the self may need rethinking
- ☐ C. Psychological continuity, once it is properly and carefully understood, completely solves the ancient problem of personal identity and firmly secures all moral responsibility
- ☐ D. The very concept of personal identity ought to be abandoned altogether, once and for all, as a bare illusion possessing no genuine practical use of any kind whatever

SECTION — CRITICAL REASONING

CRITICAL REASONING — SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY POLICY · AUDITING THE MACHINES (Q11-Q15)

Advocates of a light regulatory touch argue that mandatory pre-deployment audits for advanced artificial-intelligence systems would smother the very innovation they aim to protect. Their reasoning runs as follows. Auditing a frontier model is enormously expensive, and only the largest firms can absorb the cost. Impose such a requirement, and smaller entrants will be driven from the field, leaving a handful of incumbents to dominate. A concentrated market, in turn, tends to be a complacent one: with rivals shut out, the surviving giants face little pressure to improve their systems' safety. Therefore, the argument concludes, mandatory audits would ultimately make AI systems less safe, not more.



The inference is seductive but rests on a fragile foundation. It assumes that competitive pressure is the principal engine driving firms to make their systems safer. Yet the recent history of the sector suggests otherwise: firms have repeatedly shipped systems with known vulnerabilities precisely because competition rewarded speed to market over caution. Consider how, in the rush to seize a new market, firms have launched systems whose weaknesses were flagged internally long before release, gambling that whatever harm followed could be patched after the fact. Races to release, not the absence of rivals, have produced the field's most notorious failures. If rivalry pushes firms toward recklessness rather than restraint, then reducing the number of competitors need not reduce safety at all — and might even raise it.

There is a further difficulty. Even granting that audits impose real costs, the argument treats those costs as fixed and unavoidable. But a well-designed regime could scale audit requirements to a firm's size and a model's capability, sparing small entrants the heaviest burdens while concentrating scrutiny where the risks are gravest. Regulators might, for instance, tie the depth of required scrutiny to the computing power used to train a model, so that a small firm refining a modest system would face a light checklist while the few laboratories building the most powerful models would shoulder the fullest examination. The choice, in other words, is not between blanket audits and none at all; a whole spectrum of graduated designs lies between those poles. Once that false alternative is set aside, the claim that regulation must entrench incumbents loses much of its force. The case against pre-deployment audits, however intuitively appealing, has not been made.

11. Which of the following best expresses the main conclusion the author is driving at?

- ☐ A. Mandatory pre-deployment audits of the most advanced systems would, in the end, make artificial intelligence distinctly less safe rather than more safe for the public
- ☐ B. Only a small number of the very largest technology firms can realistically absorb the substantial and rising cost of auditing a single frontier model
- ☐ C. Competitive pressure among rival firms is, on balance, the principal force that reliably leads those firms to keep improving the safety of their systems
- ☐ D. The argument that mandatory audits would entrench incumbents and reduce safety has not been successfully established

12. The light-touch argument that the author criticises depends on which of the following assumptions?

- ☐ A. Smaller and newer firms, as a class, tend to produce artificial-intelligence systems that are inherently and measurably safer than those built by the largest firms
- ☐ B. Government regulators are, in almost every case, wholly incapable of designing any workable audit regime whatsoever under any realistic set of conditions
- ☐ C. Competition among firms is the main mechanism that drives them to make their systems safer
- ☐ D. Frontier artificial-intelligence models in fact pose no genuine safety risks of any kind that could ever justify subjecting them to external oversight

13. Which of the following, if true, would most weaken the author's position?

- ☐ A. Across comparable regulated industries, even audit regimes carefully scaled to firm size have in practice forced the great majority of small entrants out of the market
- ☐ B. A small number of large AI firms have already committed, on an entirely voluntary basis and without any legal compulsion, to safety-testing their most capable models before public release
- ☐ C. Auditing the very largest frontier models is known to demand highly specialised technical expertise that is, at the present moment, in extremely short supply across the world
- ☐ D. A recent survey reports that many ordinary consumers say they would willingly pay somewhat more for AI products that carry certification as safe from an independent outside auditor

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

- ☐ A. Several small artificial-intelligence startups have, over the last two years, succeeded in raising unusually large sums of investment capital from venture funds
- ☐ B. A study of the sector finds that the firms facing the fiercest competition were the most likely to release models with unpatched safety flaws in order to beat rivals to market
- ☐ C. Regulators in one large and influential jurisdiction have publicly announced that they will not require any pre-deployment audits from any firm operating there at all
- ☐ D. The cost of the enormous computing power needed to train the largest frontier models has fallen quite appreciably over the course of the past single year

15. The author suggests that the light-touch argument is flawed principally because it—

- ☐ A. relies, from beginning to end, on statistics that are drawn from an unrepresentative, self-selected and rather carelessly chosen sample of technology firms
- ☐ B. quietly and repeatedly confuses the genuine safety of an AI system with the sheer market profitability of whichever firm happens to build and sell it
- ☐ C. leans heavily on the mere authority of a few established industry incumbents in the place of any genuine, independent supporting evidence at all
- ☐ D. presents only two options — blanket audits or none — when a graduated, size-sensitive regime is also available

CRITICAL REASONING — LAW & RIGHTS · THE PRICE OF LIBERTY (Q16–Q20)

Reformers who wish to abolish cash bail often argue that the practice is indefensible because it jails the poor while releasing the rich for identical offences. A wealthy defendant posts bond and walks free; an indigent one, charged with the same crime, sits in a cell for months awaiting trial simply because she cannot pay. Since the two are, in the eyes of the law, equally presumed innocent, the reformers conclude that a system which separates them by wealth alone violates the basic promise of equal justice and must therefore be dismantled.



The moral force of this argument is undeniable, but as a case for abolition it moves too quickly. Its central claim is that wealth is the only thing distinguishing the detained defendant from the released one. That is precisely what an opponent may deny. Bail, at least in principle, is not a price on liberty but a device for securing a defendant's return to court; the amount is meant to track the risk of flight, not the depth of the pocket. A defendant with deep roots in the community, a family and a livelihood that cannot easily be moved, may pose little risk of absconding; another, with both the means and the motive to vanish abroad, may pose a great deal, and a figure calibrated to that risk would treat the two differently for reasons that have nothing to do with wealth as such. Where it is set with that purpose, two defendants charged alike may still differ in the one respect the system claims to care about — their likelihood of absconding before trial.

The reformers might reply, with considerable evidence, that in practice bail is routinely set without any serious inquiry into flight risk, so that wealth does the decisive work after all. That reply may well be correct. But notice what it shows. If it is sound, the objection is not to bail as such but to bail administered arbitrarily — and the remedy it supports is reform of how bail is set, not the wholesale abolition of the institution. To leap from 'the practice is abused' to 'the practice must be abolished' is to assume that a tool corrupted in its use cannot be corrected, only discarded. That assumption is doing the real work in the argument, and it has not been defended.

16. Which of the following best captures the author's main conclusion?

- ☐ A. The abolitionist argument fails as it stands because it assumes, without ever defending the point, that an abused practice cannot be corrected but only discarded
- ☐ B. Cash bail ought to be abolished outright and without delay, because it jails the poor while freeing the rich for one and the very same offence
- ☐ C. Bail amounts in current practice are, taken as a whole, set with careful, conscientious and individualised attention to each separate defendant's real risk of flight
- ☐ D. The presumption of innocence, properly understood, has no genuine bearing at all on the question of whether a defendant may lawfully be detained before trial

17. The abolitionist argument, as the author reconstructs it, rests on which assumption?

- ☐ A. Wealthy defendants are, as a general and reliable rule, considerably more likely than poorer ones to flee the jurisdiction entirely before their trial can begin
- ☐ B. The presumption of innocence in law properly applies only to those particular defendants who can, in fact, afford to post the bail that has been set
- ☐ C. Wealth is the only relevant difference between the defendant who is detained and the one who is released
- ☐ D. Judges quite deliberately set bail at very high amounts specifically in order to punish indigent defendants for the fact of their poverty

18. Which of the following, if true, would most weaken the author's defence of bail?

- ☐ A. A small handful of jurisdictions have already begun, on a limited and cautiously monitored experimental basis, to replace the traditional cash-bail system with computerised statistical risk-assessment tools of several competing kinds
- ☐ B. Empirical studies show that, even where judges are formally required to assess flight risk, the bail amounts they set correlate almost entirely with defendants' wealth and not with any measure of flight risk
- ☐ C. Some wealthy defendants do, from time to time, flee the jurisdiction entirely even after comfortably posting the full amount of bond required of them
- ☐ D. Holding a defendant in pre-trial detention for months on end is, on average, a good deal more expensive for the state to administer than releasing them would be

19. Which of the following, if true, would most strengthen the author's position?

- ☐ A. Public opinion across most of the surveyed regions now appears to favour, quite strongly and with steadily growing insistence, the complete and immediate abolition of the entire cash-bail system as it presently stands
- ☐ B. A clear majority of the defendants who are held in detention before their trial are, in the event, eventually acquitted of the charge against them
- ☐ C. The wholesale abolition of cash bail would, by all credible estimates, substantially reduce the chronic overcrowding now seen in local and district jails
- ☐ D. In jurisdictions that reformed how bail is set — tying amounts strictly to assessed flight risk — the wealth gap in pre-trial detention shrank dramatically without bail being abolished

20. The author contends that the abolitionist argument commits a particular error. Which of the following arguments contains the most closely similar flaw?

- ☐ A. This old stone bridge has never once collapsed in living memory; therefore it must surely be perfectly safe for anyone at all to cross whenever they please
- ☐ B. Most highly respected doctors now recommend the newly approved vaccine; therefore the vaccine must certainly be effective against the disease it was designed to prevent
- ☐ C. Some surgeons have used the scalpel to harm their patients; therefore scalpels should be banned from operating rooms altogether, not merely kept out of careless hands
- ☐ D. Every single swan that I myself have personally happened to see has been white in colour; therefore it plainly follows that absolutely all swans everywhere must be white

