

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 — POLITICS & GOVERNANCE · THE ROMANCE OF DECENTRALISATION (Q1-Q5)

The romance of decentralisation rests on a deceptively simple promise: move power closer to the people, and government grows more responsive, more accountable, more just. For much of the late twentieth century this promise hardened into orthodoxy. International lenders made the devolution of authority a condition of assistance; constitutional reformers across Asia, Africa and Latin America carved once-unitary states into tiers of local councils. The intuition was that a village headman who must meet his neighbours at the well will govern more honestly than a distant bureaucrat insulated by a thousand kilometres of paperwork.

Yet the record is stubbornly mixed. Where decentralisation has coincided with strong local courts, a free vernacular press and genuinely competitive local elections, services have often improved. Where those preconditions were absent, devolution has merely relocated the site of capture. Powers transferred to a district council are powers transferred to whoever already dominates that district, frequently a landed family or a patronage network whose reach the central state had, however imperfectly, once checked. The reformer's diagram of crisp administrative tiers conceals a messier truth: authority does not flow into an institutional vacuum but into a pre-existing distribution of social power.

There is a subtler difficulty. Accountability presupposes that citizens can attribute outcomes to decisions, but multi-tier government blurs precisely this line. When a road crumbles, is the fault with the panchayat that built it, the state that funded it, or the union ministry that wrote the specifications? Each layer can plausibly blame the others, and the voter, denied a clear target, punishes no one. Decentralisation can thus dilute the very responsibility it was meant to sharpen.

None of this is an argument for the centralised state, whose pathologies are real and familiar. It is an argument against treating any single architecture of power as a universal remedy. Institutions are not machines that produce the same output wherever installed; they are wagers on the society that surrounds them. The honest question is never whether to decentralise in the abstract, but whether, in a particular place, the local conditions that make devolution liberating rather than merely rearranging happen to obtain.

1. Which one of the following best captures the central argument of the passage?

- ☐ A. Decentralisation consistently improves governance and should be adopted by every state that still concentrates authority in a distant capital.
- ☐ B. The centralised state, despite its familiar pathologies, remains a more reliable architecture of power than any scheme of devolution yet attempted.
- ☐ C. Whether devolving power improves governance depends on pre-existing local conditions, so no single architecture of power works as a universal remedy.
- ☐ D. Multi-tier government is objectionable chiefly because it makes it impossible for ordinary citizens to attribute any outcome to any particular authority.

2. It can most reasonably be inferred that the author would expect a decentralisation programme to backfire in a district that has which one of the following features?

- ☐ A. A recently established but genuinely competitive slate of local elections that unseated the previous council.
- ☐ B. An entrenched landholding family that already dominates local commerce and faces no independent local court or press.
- ☐ C. A vernacular newspaper whose editors routinely investigate and publicise the misdeeds of the district council.
- ☐ D. A union ministry that writes detailed specifications the panchayat is legally obliged to follow when building roads.

3. The author's attitude toward decentralisation as an ideal is best described as

- ☐ A. sceptical of its universal claims while conceding it can genuinely work under the right conditions.
- ☐ B. enthusiastically committed to it as the surest route to responsive and accountable government.
- ☐ C. dismissive of it as a fashionable slogan that has never produced any measurable benefit.
- ☐ D. indifferent to the debate, since in the author's view the centralised state is equally flawed.

4. As used in the second paragraph ("relocated the site of capture"), the word "capture" most nearly means

- ☐ A. the physical seizure of council premises by an armed group during a bitterly contested and closely fought local election.
- ☐ B. the mechanical recording of administrative decisions so that citizens can later inspect them.
- ☐ C. the emotional hold that a charismatic local leader exerts over an admiring rural electorate.
- ☐ D. the domination of public institutions by private interests that turn official power to their own ends.

5. The metaphor that institutions "are wagers on the society that surrounds them" functions in the final paragraph primarily to

- ☐ A. concede that the author's own preference for local government cannot be defended by any evidence at all.
- ☐ B. crystallise the argument that an institution's results are contingent on its social setting rather than fixed by its design.
- ☐ C. introduce a fresh objection to centralisation that the preceding paragraphs had deliberately withheld from the reader.
- ☐ D. soften the earlier criticism of district councils by suggesting their failures were merely a matter of bad luck.

READING COMPREHENSION — POPULAR SCIENCE · THE RECONSTRUCTIVE MIND (Q6-Q10)

We tend to imagine memory as a vast archive: experiences filed away intact, awaiting retrieval by a diligent inner clerk. The metaphor is comforting and almost entirely wrong. Decades of research now suggest that remembering is less like reading a stored record than like reconstructing a building from a handful of surviving bricks and a strong sense of what such buildings usually look like. Each act of recollection is an act of rebuilding, and each rebuilding subtly alters what will be recalled next time.

The evidence is unsettling. In laboratory studies, participants confidently "remember" words that were never shown to them; those words fit the theme of a list they did study. Others, gently fed misleading details after witnessing a staged event, later recall those details with the same certainty they attach to genuine ones. Most strikingly, the mere act of retrieving a memory renders



malleable, a window, called reconsolidation, during which the trace can be updated, strengthened, or corrupted before it settles again. The memory you revisit most often is, paradoxically, the one most edited.

Why would evolution build so unreliable a device? The likely answer is that the brain was never designed to be a court stenographer. Its task is not to preserve the past faithfully but to help an organism act sensibly in the future. A memory system that extracts the gist of experience, blends it with expectation and updates flexibly is far more useful for prediction than one that hoards inert transcripts. Reconstruction is not a bug tacked onto an otherwise faithful recorder; it is the feature for which the whole apparatus was built.

The implications reach well beyond the laboratory. Legal systems still lean heavily on eyewitness testimony delivered with an air of certainty, yet certainty and accuracy, the research shows, are only loosely related. To take memory seriously as science is to hold our own recollections a little more humbly, to recognise that the vividness of a memory is a poor guarantee of its truth, and that the confident witness, ourselves included, may be sincerely, elaborately wrong.

6. Which one of the following best expresses the main idea of the passage?

- ☐ A. Because memory can be so readily manipulated under controlled laboratory conditions, eyewitness testimony ought to be banned outright from every criminal courtroom.
- ☐ B. Human memory is deliberately designed to store an exact and permanent transcript of experience for later faithful retrieval.
- ☐ C. Memory works by reconstruction rather than replay, an arrangement that serves future action even as it makes recollection unreliable.
- ☐ D. Evolution produced a flawed memory system only because a faithful recording device would have been too costly to build.

7. It can most reasonably be inferred from the passage that a memory a person rehearses very frequently is likely to be

- ☐ A. more accurate than a rarely recalled one, because repeated practice reinforces the original details.
- ☐ B. more altered than a rarely recalled one, because each retrieval reopens the window in which the trace can change.
- ☐ C. permanently sealed after the first recollection, since reconsolidation locks the trace against any later editing.
- ☐ D. identical in content to the day it formed, because rehearsal merely copies the trace without touching it.

8. The tone of the passage is best described as

- ☐ A. measured and informative, presenting counter-intuitive findings without alarmism.
- ☐ B. mournful and resigned, lamenting that human knowledge can never be trusted.
- ☐ C. combative and mocking, ridiculing those who still believe in reliable memory.
- ☐ D. detached and indifferent, reporting facts with no interest in their significance.

9. As used in the third paragraph, the word "gist" most nearly means

- ☐ A. a verbatim transcript retained in full and available for word-for-word playback.
- ☐ B. the essential substance of an experience abstracted from its literal particulars.
- ☐ C. an emotional residue that survives after all factual content has faded away.
- ☐ D. a deliberate distortion inserted by the brain to mislead the person recalling.

10. The reference to the brain as "a court stenographer" in the third paragraph serves chiefly to

- ☐ A. prove that eyewitness testimony is legally inadmissible in any properly run modern court of law.
- ☐ B. suggest that neuroscientists should be formally consulted before any verdict is reached in a trial.
- ☐ C. name the very role the memory system was not built to play, so as to explain why it reconstructs.
- ☐ D. concede that, for legal purposes at least, memory really does function as a faithful verbatim record.

SECTION — CRITICAL REASONING

CRITICAL REASONING — POLITICAL ECONOMY · THE CASE AGAINST THE RIBBON-CUTTERS (Q11–Q15)

The revival of industrial policy has acquired an almost ecumenical appeal. Governments of the left promise green jobs; governments of the right promise strategic self-reliance; and both reach for the same instrument, the targeted subsidy that lures a favoured industry to favoured shores. The spectacle of ministers cutting ribbons at a new semiconductor plant is politically irresistible. It is also, on the evidence, a poor way to spend public money.

Consider what the subsidy actually buys. To justify a grant, an industry must claim it would not have invested without one. Yet the firms best able to make that claim persuasively are precisely those on the margin of viability, the ventures least likely to prosper unaided and most likely to require a second subsidy, and a third, once the first has been consumed. The state, having advertised its willingness to pay, invites every subsequent entrant to bargain for the same terms. What began as a one-off inducement becomes a standing subscription.

Nor are the costs merely fiscal. Capital and skilled labour are finite; a rupee and an engineer drawn into the subsidised sector are a rupee and an engineer denied to some unsubsidised rival that might, unassisted, have grown faster. Because the firms that lose out are diffuse and the beneficiary is concentrated and photogenic, the political ledger flatters the policy even as the economic ledger indicts it. The seen jobs are counted; the unseen ones, never created, are not.

Defenders reply that some industries generate benefits, clusters of expertise, supply chains, national security, that private investors cannot capture and therefore under-provide. The point is fair in principle. But it licenses a scalpel, not a fire hose: a narrow correction for a specific, demonstrated spillover, not the sprawling programmes now in vogue, which subsidise whatever industry is fashionable this decade. Until governments can show that a particular subsidy corrects a particular market failure larger than its own considerable costs, the presumption should run the other way. The burden of proof belongs on the ribbon-cutters, and they have not discharged it.

11. Which one of the following most accurately states the main conclusion of the argument?

- ☐ A. In the absence of a demonstrated market failure that a subsidy corrects at bearable cost, the presumption should be against granting it.
- ☐ B. Industrial policy is popular across the political spectrum because both left and right can dress it in language that flatters their supporters.
- ☐ C. Every industrial subsidy inevitably generates demands for further subsidies from later entrants seeking identical terms from the state.
- ☐ D. National security and supply-chain resilience are the only benefits that could ever justify a government in subsidising a



12. The argument that a subsidised sector draws capital and labour away from unsubsidised rivals depends on which one of the following assumptions?

- ☐ A. Ministers derive greater political benefit from visible ribbon-cuttings than from any diffuse gains spread across the wider economy.
- ☐ B. Every firm that applies for a subsidy is in truth on the margin of viability and would fail the moment the grant expired.
- ☐ C. The pool of capital and skilled labour available to the economy is not so elastic that the subsidised sector's demand simply expands it.
- ☐ D. Private investors are, as a rule, better than governments at identifying which industries will prove strategically important in future.

13. Which one of the following, if true, would most weaken the author's argument against subsidies?

- ☐ A. Ministers who open subsidised plants tend to enjoy a measurable rise in their personal approval ratings for several months.
- ☐ B. Studies of subsidised sectors find that they typically draw in workers who were previously unemployed rather than poached from rival firms.
- ☐ C. The industries most often subsidised are also the ones whose products attract the most enthusiastic coverage in the national press.
- ☐ D. Firms that receive an initial subsidy frequently return within a few years to request a second and larger grant from the state.

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

- ☐ A. Public enthusiasm for industrial policy has grown steadily and visibly over the past decade across many countries of very different political and economic traditions.
- ☐ B. A review of past subsidy programmes finds that firms which received grants were, on average, no more productive than comparable unsubsidised firms years later.
- ☐ C. Semiconductor plants are among the most capital-intensive facilities that any modern government can be persuaded to help finance.
- ☐ D. Governments of both the left and the right have at times justified the same subsidy using entirely different public rationales.

15. The author's reasoning is most vulnerable to the objection that it

- ☐ A. assumes without argument that ministers are motivated solely by the desire to be photographed at ceremonial openings of new plants.
- ☐ B. treats the fiscal cost of a subsidy as identical to its economic cost, ignoring that the two are measured in different ways.
- ☐ C. concedes that genuine spillovers can justify a narrow subsidy, yet offers no way to tell in advance which programmes are the justified narrow ones.
- ☐ D. relies entirely on the popularity of industrial policy as evidence that industrial policy must therefore be economically mistaken.

CRITICAL REASONING — ENVIRONMENT · A CURRENCY PRINTED WITHOUT RESTRAINT (Q16-Q20)

Every time an airline invites passengers to "offset" the carbon of their flight for the price of a coffee, it trades on a seductive proposition: that a tonne of carbon dioxide emitted in one place can be cancelled by a tonne avoided or absorbed in another. On paper the arithmetic is impeccable. In practice, the voluntary offset market has become a machine for manufacturing the appearance of climate action while the atmosphere keeps its grim accounts.

The trouble begins with the counterfactual. An offset is credited for an emission that would otherwise have occurred, a forest that would have been felled, a methane vent that would have leaked. But "would have" is unverifiable, and the incentive to exaggerate it is overwhelming. Investigations of forest-protection credits have repeatedly found that many protected the already-safe: woodland under no serious threat, dressed up as imperilled so its "rescue" could be sold. The buyer books a reduction that never happened; the seller pockets the fee; the forest stands exactly where it stood.

Even honest offsets face the problem of permanence. Carbon locked into a tree is released the moment the tree burns, and a warming world burns more forests each year. A tonne buried for a decade and freed in the eleventh has merely been lent to the atmosphere, not repaid. Yet credits are routinely sold as if the storage were eternal.

The deepest damage, however, is moral rather than technical. The very availability of a cheap offset weakens the resolve to cut emissions at source. A firm that could retool a factory instead buys credits and calls itself neutral; the hard, expensive, genuinely decarbonising investment is deferred another year. Offsets, sold as a complement to emission cuts, function in practice as a substitute for them.

None of this means that paying to protect forests is worthless; done with rigour, it can help. It means that offsetting cannot be what it is marketed as, a licence to emit that leaves the climate unharmed. A currency that is systematically over-issued loses its value, and the currency of carbon offsets has been printed without restraint.

16. Which one of the following best states the conclusion the author is driving at?

- ☐ A. Airlines should be legally prohibited from offering passengers the option to offset the carbon emissions of their flights.
- ☐ B. Protecting forests is a worthless activity that does nothing to slow the accumulation of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere.
- ☐ C. Carbon offsets cannot deliver what they are marketed as, a way to emit that leaves the climate genuinely unharmed.
- ☐ D. Emissions cut at the source are always cheaper for a firm to achieve than an equivalent quantity of purchased offset credits.

17. The claim that many forest-protection credits "protected the already-safe" relies on which one of the following assumptions?

- ☐ A. A credit issued for preserving a forest under no genuine threat represents a reduction in emissions that did not actually take place.
- ☐ B. Forests are the only category of natural asset for which carbon offset credits are currently generated and sold to buyers.
- ☐ C. Airlines are the largest single purchasers of voluntary offset credits in the global market for carbon reductions.
- ☐ D. The buyers of forest credits are generally aware, at the time of purchase, that the woodland they fund faced no real danger.

18. Which one of the following, if true, would most weaken the author's argument that offsets tend to displace emission cuts at source?

- ☐ A. Firms that purchase offsets are found, on average, to cut their own direct emissions faster than otherwise similar firms that do not.
- ☐ B. The price of a typical voluntary offset credit has fallen sharply and fairly steadily over the past several years as global supply rapidly expanded.



- ☐ C. Many forests enrolled in protection schemes are located in regions where the risk of wildfire is expected to rise.
- ☐ D. Some methane-capture projects issue credits for gas that would in fact have leaked in the absence of the project.

19. Which one of the following, if true, would most strengthen the author's case regarding the permanence of stored carbon?

- ☐ A. The voluntary offset market has grown rapidly as more airlines and consumer brands advertise carbon-neutral products.
- ☐ B. Surveys show that most travellers who pay to offset a flight believe they have fully cancelled its climate impact.
- ☐ C. Records show that a large share of forests credited as long-term carbon stores have since burned or been cleared within twenty years.
- ☐ D. Methane vents left unsealed release a greenhouse gas far more potent, tonne for tonne, than carbon dioxide over short periods.

20. The argument's closing image of "a currency that is systematically over-issued" works in the same way as which one of the following?

- ☐ A. A thermometer that reads a few degrees too high is discarded because no instrument can ever measure temperature with perfect accuracy.
- ☐ B. A coupon promised as an addition to a shopper's savings ends up replacing the discount she would otherwise have negotiated.
- ☐ C. A banknote loses its purchasing power once the treasury prints far more of it than the value of goods the economy produces.
- ☐ D. A bridge certified safe by inspectors collapses, proving that certification schemes of every kind are inherently untrustworthy.

RAPID FIRE — ONE-LINE RECALL

69 quick questions · not negatively marked

- Define the reading skill 'main idea' in one line. _____
- What is an 'inference' question testing? _____
- Vocab-in-context: 'capture' (state/institutional sense) means? _____
- Tone word: 'measured' describes prose that is...? _____
- Name the fallacy: counting only visible jobs and ignoring jobs never created. _____
- What must a 'weaken' answer do? _____
- What must a 'strengthen' answer do? _____
- Vocab-in-context: 'gist' means? _____
- Define 'assumption' in critical reasoning. _____
- Fallacy: 'the bridge collapsed, so all certification is worthless.' _____
- What is 'reconsolidation' in the memory passage? _____
- Tone word: 'ecumenical' (as in 'ecumenical appeal') means? _____
- Define 'counterfactual' as used in the offsets passage. _____
- One-word: reasoning from a general rule to a specific case is called? _____
- What does 'moral hazard' mean? _____
- Vocab: 'diffuse' (as in 'firms that lose out are diffuse') means? _____
- Fallacy name: attacking the person, not the argument. _____
- Reading skill 'structure/purpose' asks? _____
- Vocab: 'orthodoxy' means? _____
- Define 'additionality' in offset markets. _____
- Tone word: 'sceptical' means? _____
- Fallacy: treating a subsidy's popularity as proof it works economically. _____
- Vocab: 'malleable' means? _____
- What is 'parallel reasoning' asking you to match? _____
- Vocab: 'patronage network' means? _____
- Latin: 'prima facie' means? _____
- Vocab: 'photogenic' used figuratively for a policy means? _____
- Tone word: 'resigned' means? _____
- Define 'crowding out' in economics. _____
- Vocab: 'discharge' a burden of proof means? _____
- Fallacy: assuming what would have happened is known when it is unverifiable. _____
- The main point an author is driving at is the passage's? _____
- A conclusion drawn from evidence not stated outright is a(n)? _____
- The author's attitude or emotional colouring is the? _____
- An argument that attacks the person, not the claim, commits which fallacy? _____
- Assuming what you set out to prove is which fallacy? _____
- Treating a correlation as a cause is which fallacy? _____
- Misrepresenting an opponent's view to refute it is a? _____
- An either/or that ignores middle options is a? _____
- One who cannot be corrected or reformed (one word)? _____
- A remedy for all diseases or problems (one word)? _____
- Speech or writing that praises lavishly (one word)? _____
- Words that flatter to deceive show what quality? _____
- 'Arbitrary' most nearly means? _____
- 'Reticence' most nearly means? _____
- 'Coercion' most nearly means? _____
- 'Prerogative' most nearly means? _____
- 'Reprehensible' most nearly means? _____
- 'Legitimate' is the antonym of? _____
- 'Stringent' is the antonym of? _____
- A premise that, if added, best supports a conclusion, is said to ____ it? _____
- New evidence that undermines a conclusion is said to ____ it? _____
- An argument's logical error of reasoning is its? _____
- To 'proscribe' means? _____
- To 'prescribe' means? _____
- 'Dissent' most nearly means? _____
- 'Clandestine' most nearly means? _____
- 'Mitigate' vs 'militate' — which means 'to lessen'? _____
- 'Prosecute' vs 'persecute' — which is a legal action? _____
- 'Counsel' vs 'council' — which means advice/lawyer? _____
- An appeal to popular opinion as proof is which fallacy? _____
- A sweeping claim from too few cases is a? _____
- An assumption an argument depends on is a ____ assumption? _____
- 'Redress' most nearly means? _____
- 'Stringent' most nearly means? _____
- One who speaks many languages (one word)? _____
- A word/phrase opposite in meaning is a(n)? _____
- The unstated 'therefore' claim of an argument is its? _____
- 'Legitimate' most nearly means? _____

