

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 — ECONOMICS · THE PRICE OF FREE ROADS (Q1-Q5)

Nothing on a city map looks more generous than a road with no toll. It is open to all, charges nobody, and seems the very model of a public good freely given. Yet the economist notices what the map conceals: a free road is rarely free, and the fiction that it is exacts a price paid in a currency the driver never counts.

The price is time, and it is levied through congestion. When a road costs nothing to enter, each driver weighs only his own journey and ignores the small delay he imposes on everyone behind him. That delay is a real cost, but because no one is billed for it, no one economises on it. The road is used until it is barely usable, consumed to the point of near-worthlessness. Each driver acts sensibly; together they produce a jam that serves nobody.

This is why economists speak of congestion as an externality, a cost one person's choice imposes on others without their consent or even their awareness. The tragedy is not that drivers are selfish but that the road sends them no signal. A price is information; its absence is misinformation. Told the road is free, the driver behaves as though his trip were costless to society, when in fact he has just made a thousand strangers a minute later to their destinations.

The remedy is counter-intuitive and unpopular: charge for the road at the hours it is scarce. A congestion charge does not raise the true cost of driving; it merely reveals it, moving the cost out of the hidden ledger of wasted time into the visible one of money. Faced with a price, some drivers travel earlier, some share a car, some stay home, and the road, no longer over-consumed, begins to flow. What looked like a tax on movement turns out to be a subsidy to it.

The lesson reaches beyond traffic. Wherever a scarce thing is offered at no price, it will be crowded until it is spoiled, and the generosity of 'free' will have been an illusion all along.

1. Which one of the following best states the central idea of the passage?

- ☐ A. City planners ought to build far more roads than they currently do, since the fundamental cause of urban traffic congestion is simply an ongoing shortage of available road space.
- ☐ B. Drivers who use toll-free public roads are behaving selfishly, and congestion is best understood as a kind of collective punishment that such widespread selfishness has justly earned for itself.
- ☐ C. A scarce resource offered without a price is consumed until it is nearly worthless, so charging for it can reveal a concealed cost and let the resource work again for everyone.
- ☐ D. Congestion charges are, on close and honest inspection, really no more than an ordinary tax on movement dressed up in the borrowed and flattering language of economic efficiency.

2. It can most reasonably be inferred that the author regards the belief that a toll-free road is 'free' as

- ☐ A. broadly accurate, since the driver genuinely pays nothing at the very moment when he chooses to enter the road and set out upon his particular journey.
- ☐ B. mistaken, because the driver still pays a real cost in wasted time, one that is hidden from him precisely because no money ever changes hands at the roadside.
- ☐ C. harmless enough, given that the individual delays involved are in truth far too small for any single ordinary driver ever to notice them or to act sensibly upon them.
- ☐ D. deliberately fostered by planners who wish to keep the true financial cost of building and maintaining the roads safely and quietly concealed from the taxpaying public.

3. The author's attitude toward the congestion charge is best described as

- ☐ A. favourable, presenting it as a sensible remedy that reveals a cost rather than adding a new one.
- ☐ B. hostile, dismissing it throughout as an unfair and regressive burden imposed on ordinary working motorists.
- ☐ C. indifferent, describing it in wholly neutral terms without expressing any evaluation of its actual merits.
- ☐ D. alarmed, warning that it will bring the whole of city traffic to a complete and lasting standstill.

4. As used in the passage ('A price is information; its absence is misinformation'), the word 'misinformation' most nearly means

- ☐ A. a deliberate and calculated lie told by the authorities to the driver about exactly how much his own particular journey is going to cost him.
- ☐ B. a technical clerical error in the official published figures that record the true daily volume of city traffic on the busiest routes.
- ☐ C. idle gossip or rumour about road conditions that spreads among anxious drivers rather faster than the authorities can ever manage to correct it.
- ☐ D. a false signal that leads the driver to act as though his trip were costless to others when in truth it is not costless at all.

5. The final paragraph ('The lesson reaches beyond traffic...') functions chiefly to

- ☐ A. retract the passage's earlier claims by conceding, at the very last, that congestion pricing has after all only a narrow, limited and merely local application in practice.
- ☐ B. generalise the argument, extending the particular road example outward into a broader principle about almost any scarce thing that is offered to people without a price.
- ☐ C. introduce, for the very first time in the passage, the detailed statistical evidence on which the entire preceding argument had until that point silently been depending.
- ☐ D. soften the earlier criticism of drivers by admitting, somewhat belatedly, that their behaviour was in the circumstances b~+h perfectly reasonable and wholly free of blame.

READING COMPREHENSION — LAW & SOCIETY · THE USES OF LEGAL FICTION (Q6-Q10)



The law is full of statements that everyone knows to be false and no one is much troubled by. A company is called a 'person', though it has no body to imprison and no conscience to prick. An adopted child is deemed to have been 'born' to parents who were strangers at his birth. These are legal fictions: propositions the law asserts not because they are true but because treating them as true yields a result the law wants.

To the outsider such fictions look like dishonesty, a system caught inventing facts. But the fiction is rarely a lie, because it deceives no one. Everyone in the courtroom knows the company has no lungs. It is better understood as a shorthand, a way of importing a familiar body of rules into a new situation without writing them afresh. Call the company a person, and centuries of law about how persons may contract, sue and be sued become available at a stroke.

Fictions also let the law change while pretending it has not. A judge who feels an old rule works an injustice cannot always repeal it; that is the legislature's task. But he can sometimes 'find' a fiction that quietly routes the case around the rule, preserving the letter while defeating the mischief. The law thus grows by increments, its continuity intact even as its substance shifts underneath. What looks like reverence for the past is often reform in disguise.

The danger is equally plain. A fiction is a servant that can become a master. Deem a company a person often enough and one may forget that it is not, extending to it protections meant for beings that can actually suffer. The convenience that began as a shorthand can harden into a dogma, and the 'as if' quietly loses its quotation marks. Wise use of fictions therefore requires a double memory: to use them for the real work they do, and to remember, always, that they are fictions. The law's honesty lies not in refusing to pretend, but in never forgetting that it is pretending.

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

- ☐ A. Legal fictions are essentially dishonest inventions, and a mature legal system ought to work steadily and deliberately toward eliminating every last one of them from its everyday practice.
- ☐ B. The single most important legal fiction is the treatment of a company as a person, and from that one device nearly all the other fictions in modern law can ultimately be derived.
- ☐ C. Legal fictions are useful devices that import ready-made rules and enable quiet reform, but they must always be used with an awareness that they nonetheless remain fictions.
- ☐ D. Judges rely upon legal fictions chiefly as a convenient way of seizing, for the courts themselves, a power to change the law that properly belongs to the elected legislature alone.

7. It can most reasonably be inferred that the author considers a legal fiction not to be a lie primarily because

- ☐ A. it deceives no one, since everyone involved in the case understands perfectly well that the asserted proposition is not literally true.
- ☐ B. it is always eventually written down in a formal statute, a step which converts the original pretence into a genuine and binding legal truth.
- ☐ C. it produces outcomes that happen, in the great majority of the cases actually decided by the courts, to align tolerably well with what is just.
- ☐ D. it is a device used only by judges of long experience, whose considerable seniority effectively guarantees that the fiction can never be abused.

8. The author's overall attitude toward legal fictions is best described as

- ☐ A. wholly admiring, treating them as quite the single greatest achievement of the entire legal imagination.
- ☐ B. deeply suspicious, regarding them as a slow corruption that steadily erodes the basic honesty of the law.
- ☐ C. purely historical, concerned only to catalogue various old examples without offering any present-day view at all.
- ☐ D. appreciative but cautious, valuing their usefulness while warning against their misuse.

9. As used in the passage ('the "as if" quietly loses its quotation marks'), the image of losing 'quotation marks' most nearly conveys that

- ☐ A. the courts have quietly begun to write their judgments in a far less formal and much less carefully punctuated style than they had once been accustomed to.
- ☐ B. a proposition once openly acknowledged to be a mere pretence comes over time to be mistaken for a literal, settled and quite unquestioned truth.
- ☐ C. the original wording of some old statute has been lost, so that no one is now able to quote its exact terms with any real confidence.
- ☐ D. lawyers increasingly borrow one another's arguments without ever properly attributing them to whichever advocate it was who first happened to advance them.

10. The sentence 'A fiction is a servant that can become a master' serves primarily to

- ☐ A. concede that legal fictions, when everything is weighed up, in fact do a great deal more harm than the passage's earlier paragraphs had been at all willing to admit.
- ☐ B. restate, only in rather plainer and more memorable words, the immediately preceding claim that fictions allow the law to change while pretending that it has not.
- ☐ C. mark the passage's turn from the uses of legal fictions to the danger that their very convenience will, in time, harden into an unexamined dogma.
- ☐ D. introduce a specific and unusual historical example that the remainder of the paragraph will then go on to examine in close, patient and careful detail.

SECTION — CRITICAL REASONING

CRITICAL REASONING — HEALTH POLICY · THE CASE FOR LOCKING UP ANTIBIOTICS (Q11-Q15)

Antibiotics are among the few medicines whose usefulness is a shared and exhaustible resource. Each time the drug is taken, the bacteria it fails to kill grow a little more resistant, and that resistance, once bred, spreads to strangers who never took the drug at all. A course of antibiotics is therefore not a private transaction between a patient and a pharmacist. It is a small withdrawal from a common account on which everyone depends, and the account is running low.

In many countries, however, antibiotics may still be bought across a counter without a prescription, for a cough that a doctor would at once recognise as viral and wholly untouched by them. The buyer feels better, or believes he does, and the pharmacist mal Neither has reason to weigh the cost that matters most: the marginal loss of the drug's power for everyone who will need it I cost is real, but it falls on the future and on strangers, and so it is ignored.



The obvious remedy is to make prescription mandatory, closing the over-the-counter route. Critics object that this will burden the poor, who use pharmacies precisely because they cannot easily reach a doctor, and that many will simply go untreated. The concern deserves respect, but it argues for widening access to prescribers, not for leaving the drugs on open sale. A remedy that preserves a genuinely sick person's access while ending casual, unsupervised use is not cruelty; it is stewardship.

The deeper truth is that open access to antibiotics is a false generosity. It offers a cheap cure today at the price of a far dearer helplessness tomorrow, when the routine infection no longer yields to any drug we possess. We already ration many things that are scarce and shared. Antibiotics, whose scarcity we ourselves create with every needless dose, belong on that list. To require a prescription is not to deny people medicine. It is to ensure the medicine still works when the alternative would be a denial imposed not by any rule, but by the bacteria themselves.

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

- ☐ A. Antibiotic resistance is, most unfortunately, a wholly natural and quite unstoppable biological process that no public policy of any conceivable kind could realistically hope to slow.
- ☐ B. The poor in many countries rely upon their local pharmacies for medicines chiefly because they are so often unable to reach a properly qualified doctor either easily or affordably.
- ☐ C. Every single time a full course of antibiotics is taken by a patient, the bacteria that happen to survive grow more resistant, and that new resistance then spreads to other people.
- ☐ D. Antibiotics should be available only on prescription, ending casual over-the-counter sale while still preserving the access of those who are genuinely sick and truly in need of them.

12. The argument depends on which one of the following assumptions?

- ☐ A. The great majority of the people who currently buy antibiotics over the counter are in fact suffering from bacterial infections that those very antibiotics could easily have cured.
- ☐ B. Pharmacists who sell antibiotics without any prescription are all fully and clearly aware that they are contributing to resistance, and choose nonetheless to do so purely for the profit.
- ☐ C. Requiring a prescription would reduce casual, unsupervised antibiotic use without denying access to those who are genuinely sick, rather than merely shifting the same overuse elsewhere.
- ☐ D. No country that has kept its antibiotics on open over-the-counter sale has ever managed to achieve a rate of drug resistance lower than that recorded by its stricter neighbours.

13. Which one of the following, if true, would most weaken the argument?

- ☐ A. In countries that made antibiotics prescription-only, overall antibiotic consumption did not fall at all, because prescribers proved willing to supply the drug on demand for the same minor complaints.
- ☐ B. Some patients who obtain their antibiotics over the counter nonetheless go on to complete the entire recommended course exactly as a careful doctor would have instructed them to do.
- ☐ C. The particular bacteria responsible for several of the most common minor infections have shown remarkably little measurable change in their resistance over the whole of the past decade.
- ☐ D. Pharmacies in a good many rural districts are, in practice, considerably easier for the poorer patients to reach on foot than is the nearest qualified prescribing doctor.

14. Which one of the following, if true, would most strengthen the argument?

- ☐ A. Surveys show that most people who currently buy antibiotics over the counter would in fact strongly prefer to consult a doctor first, if only one were readily available to them nearby.
- ☐ B. Regions that ended over-the-counter antibiotic sales, while expanding access to prescribers, later recorded slower growth in drug-resistant infections than comparable regions that made no such change.
- ☐ C. The total quantity of antibiotics manufactured across the world has risen fairly sharply over the last twenty years, and across nearly every recognised category of the drug at that.
- ☐ D. Many common bacterial infections, if they are left altogether untreated, will nonetheless resolve entirely on their own within a week or two in adults who are otherwise reasonably healthy.

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

- ☐ A. assumes, without offering any real support for the claim, that antibiotics are the only medicines whose overuse could ever manage to breed a genuinely dangerous form of resistance.
- ☐ B. relies entirely upon the plainly disputed claim that the poor face no real difficulty whatsoever in reaching a properly qualified doctor whenever they happen to fall genuinely ill.
- ☐ C. treats antibiotic resistance throughout as though it were a problem neatly confined within a single country, rather than one that plainly crosses national borders quite freely.
- ☐ D. recommends mandatory prescription while assuming, rather than actually showing, that prescribers will not simply go on to supply the drug just as freely as the pharmacists now do.

CRITICAL REASONING — SOCIETY & CULTURE · THE PAPER CEILING (Q16-Q20)

A degree was once a signal. It told an employer that its holder had a rare and useful competence, and because the signal was rare, it was worth paying for. Today, in many fields, the same degree tells the employer almost nothing, because almost everyone applying has one. The signal has not grown stronger; it has merely grown universal, and a signal everyone can send is no signal at all.

This is credential inflation, and like the monetary kind it quietly robs people while appearing to enrich them. As more candidates acquire a qualification, employers raise the bar, demanding a master's where a bachelor's once sufficed, or a degree for work that never truly required one. Each individual, seeing the bar rise, reasonably invests in more schooling to clear it. But when everyone does so, no one gains an advantage; the whole cohort simply spends more years and more money to stand exactly where it stood before. The private logic is sound and the collective result is waste.

Defenders answer that more education is good in itself. Perhaps. But this changes the subject. The question is not whether learning has value, which no one denies, but whether requiring ever-higher credentials for unchanged work is an efficient way to obtain it.

The costs are not evenly shared. The years of extra study and the fees they demand fall hardest on those who can least spare a device once imagined as a ladder becomes, for many, a wall. The able candidate without the paper is turned away not because



do the work but because he cannot prove it in the now-required form. We call this a meritocracy, but it increasingly rewards the capacity to endure schooling rather than to do the job.

None of this is an argument against learning. It is an argument against mistaking credentials for competence, and against a quiet, collective agreement to keep raising a bar that measures less and less of what it claims to measure.

16. Which one of the following best expresses the main conclusion of the argument?

- ☐ A. Higher education has no real value at all to a modern society, and the widespread popular pursuit of academic degrees should therefore be actively discouraged by policymakers wherever possible.
- ☐ B. The chief cause of steadily rising credential requirements is the quite deliberate desire of employers everywhere to exclude the poorer applicants from the better-paid positions now on offer.
- ☐ C. Requiring ever-higher credentials for unchanged work wastes resources and rewards the endurance of schooling rather than competence, and it should not be mistaken for genuine merit.
- ☐ D. A master's degree has by now completely and permanently replaced the ordinary bachelor's degree as the accepted minimum qualification demanded right across almost every field of employment.

17. The argument's claim that credential inflation produces 'waste' depends on which one of the following assumptions?

- ☐ A. The additional years of schooling that candidates undertake in order to clear the higher bar do not, on the whole, make them correspondingly better at the actual work itself.
- ☐ B. Employers who demand the higher qualifications are, as a rule, entirely and completely indifferent to whether their newly hired recruits can actually perform the real duties of the job.
- ☐ C. The monetary form of inflation and the educational form of it share not merely a convenient name but one identical underlying economic mechanism in every last respect that matters.
- ☐ D. No individual candidate anywhere ever derives even a brief or temporary competitive advantage from acquiring a given qualification a little before his various rivals have managed to do so.

18. Which one of the following, if true, would most weaken the argument?

- ☐ A. In fields where employers raised their credential requirements, independent measures of on-the-job performance rose correspondingly, suggesting the extra schooling did in fact impart genuinely useful skills.
- ☐ B. Many students report that they personally found their own years of higher study to be intellectually enjoyable and rewarding quite apart from any later effect the study had upon their careers.
- ☐ C. The total number of universities and colleges actually operating in most countries has grown very considerably over the past several decades of steadily expanding student enrolment everywhere.
- ☐ D. Some employers do continue, here and there, to hire a small handful of candidates who happen to lack the formally required paper qualification for the particular role in question.

19. Which one of the following, if true, would most strengthen the argument?

- ☐ A. Public opinion surveys consistently find that a large majority of ordinary citizens now firmly believe that holding a university degree is an essential prerequisite for any respectable career.
- ☐ B. Studies of jobs whose actual day-to-day duties have not changed find that, as the share of degree-holding applicants rose, employers raised requirements without any measurable gain in hires' performance.
- ☐ C. Universities in a great many countries have in recent years expanded the range of vocational and professional courses that they are willing to offer to their enrolling students.
- ☐ D. The average length of time that students now spend in full-time formal education before finally entering the workforce for the first time has increased fairly steadily in recent years.

20. The argument's reasoning, that each person's sensible response to a rising bar leaves the whole group worse off, is most closely paralleled by which one of the following?

- ☐ A. A farmer plants the very crop that fetched the highest price last season, only to discover that the weather, and not his choice of crop at all, is what decides his fortune this year.
- ☐ B. A diligent student revises harder than all her classmates and, because the others do not trouble to, secures for herself one of the very few available places at a prestigious college.
- ☐ C. A shopkeeper lowers his prices in order to undercut a rival, the rival soon matches him, and after a lean period both of them raise their prices again to exactly where they had first begun.
- ☐ D. Each spectator at a match stands up for a better view; when all stand, no one sees any better than before, and yet no one can now afford to be the only person left sitting down.

RAPID FIRE — ONE-LINE RECALL

22 quick questions · not negatively marked

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| 1. In economics, what is an 'externality'? _____ | 12. Define 'assumption' in critical reasoning. _____ |
| 2. Define 'the tragedy of the commons' in one line. _____ | 13. Health policy: what is 'antimicrobial resistance'? _____ |
| 3. What is 'congestion pricing'? _____ | 14. Vocab: 'stewardship' means? _____ |
| 4. One word: a good everyone can use without paying, like street lighting. _____ | 15. Define 'credential inflation'. _____ |
| 5. Legal term: what is a 'legal fiction'? _____ | 16. One word: a system that rewards ability and effort rather than birth. _____ |
| 6. Why is a company called a 'juristic' or 'legal person'? _____ | 17. In logic, what is a 'necessary condition'? _____ |
| 7. Latin: 'ratio decidendi' means? _____ | 18. Which fallacy assumes B was caused by A merely because B followed A? _____ |
| 8. Latin: 'stare decisis' means? _____ | 19. What is a 'collective action problem'? _____ |
| 9. Reading skill: what does a 'tone' question test? _____ | 20. Vocab: a 'zero-sum' situation is one where? _____ |
| 10. What must a 'weaken' answer do? _____ | 21. Reading skill: a 'main idea' question asks for? _____ |
| 11. What must a 'strengthen' answer do? _____ | 22. Which fallacy attacks the arguer instead of the argument? _____ |

