

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 — POPULAR SCIENCE · REVOLUTIONS AT SEA: WHAT HUMPBACK SONG REVEALS ABOUT CULTURE BEYOND US (Q1-Q5)

For most of the twentieth century, the word culture was reserved, with a certain proprietary firmness, for human beings. Animals had instincts; people had traditions. The distinction survived early reports of chimpanzees using tools in locally distinctive ways, partly because such behaviour could always be explained away by differences in habitat: perhaps one group simply lived where the right stones lay about. It has survived rather less comfortably the study of humpback whale song.

Male humpbacks in a given population sing a long, structured song, built from repeated phrases arranged into themes, and at any moment nearly all the males in that population sing roughly the same version. The song is not fixed. It drifts gradually through the breeding season, with phrases shortened, elaborated or dropped, and every male tracks the drift. That alone suggests learning rather than inheritance, since no genetic change could spread through a population within months.

The more striking finding came from recordings made across the South Pacific over more than a decade. Researchers found that songs did not merely drift; now and then they were replaced wholesale. A new song would appear in one population, displace the old version completely within a season or two, and then turn up in the next population to the east, and the next, like a fashion crossing an ocean. The pattern ran consistently in one direction, from a large population towards smaller ones.

It is tempting to call these episodes cultural revolutions, and the researchers did. The label is apt in one respect and misleading in another. It is apt because nothing in the whales' surroundings changed to prompt the switch; the only credible explanation is that males copy novel songs they hear from others. It misleads if it implies that novelty is valued for its own sake, as a human audience might prize it. We do not know why a strange song should be so infectious, and several hypotheses, from female preference to simple conformity with the loudest singers, remain in play.

What the whales settle is narrower than it first appears, but not trivial. They do not show that animals have art. They show that the defining mechanism of culture, the transmission of behaviour by social learning within and between populations, is not a human monopoly. The more interesting question is no longer whether culture exists beyond us, but why it has taken such different forms.

1. Which of the following best expresses the main point of the passage?

- ☐ A. Humpback song proves that whales have an aesthetic sense comparable to ours, since males adopt novel songs chiefly because they are new.
- ☐ B. Humpback song shows that the social transmission of behaviour is not unique to humans, while leaving open why new songs spread.
- ☐ C. Humpback song changes in step with subtle shifts in the ocean, which is why one new song appears in population after population.
- ☐ D. Humpback song shows that large populations dominate smaller ones, so that whale culture is best understood as a form of conquest.

2. Which of the following can most reasonably be inferred from the account of songs travelling from one population to the next?

- ☐ A. Females in the smaller populations prefer songs composed by males of the large population to the songs of their own males.
- ☐ B. The songs of smaller populations are simpler than those of larger ones, which is why they are so easily displaced by newcomers.
- ☐ C. Every new song in the region originates in the large population and is never first composed within any of the smaller ones.
- ☐ D. Some whales must at some point come within hearing of members of a population other than their own during the year.

3. The author's attitude towards the researchers' description of song replacement as 'cultural revolutions' is best described as

- ☐ A. qualified acceptance: endorsing what the label says about copying while cautioning against a motive it may wrongly suggest
- ☐ B. dismissive scepticism: treating the label as publicity that plainly overstates what the recordings are able to demonstrate
- ☐ C. unreserved enthusiasm: welcoming the label as the most accurate description yet offered of humpback whale behaviour in the Pacific
- ☐ D. studied neutrality: reporting the label without indicating whether it is apt or misleading as a description of the data

4. As used in the first sentence of the passage, the word 'proprietary' most nearly means

- ☐ A. legally registered, in the manner of a patent or trade mark held by a company
- ☐ B. commercially valuable, in the manner of a trade secret guarded by a business
- ☐ C. possessive, as though the concept belonged to human beings by some right
- ☐ D. courteous but firm, in the manner of a settled and formal social convention

5. The reference to chimpanzees using tools in locally distinctive ways serves primarily to

- ☐ A. show why earlier evidence left the question open, and so why a case with no environmental trigger carries special weight
- ☐ B. offer a second instance of a cultural revolution, which the author later treats as parallel in every respect to whale song
- ☐ C. suggest that chimpanzee tool use is instinctive after all, a point the author uses to cast doubt on the findings about whales
- ☐ D. introduce the author's thesis that tool use, rather than song, is the proper test of whether any animal possesses culture

READING COMPREHENSION — POLITICS & GOVERNANCE · INSULATED AND ANSWERABLE: THE UNEASY BARGAIN OF THE INDEPENDENT REGULATOR (Q6-Q10)

Over the past four decades, governments across the democratic world have handed a remarkable share of their power to bodies that no voter chooses. Central banks set interest rates, competition authorities block mergers, and telecom and electricity regulate prices that households pay. The justification is usually put in the language of credibility. A minister facing an election



incentive to promise cheap money or cheap power today and leave the bill for a successor; an appointed board with a fixed tenure can take the longer view, and investors, knowing this, will trust its commitments.

The argument is powerful, and in monetary policy the evidence broadly supports it. But its success there has encouraged a habit of extending it to domains where its premises do not hold. Credibility matters most where the right policy is reasonably clear and the temptation to deviate is predictable. Setting a tariff for electricity, however, is not only a technical exercise; it decides who pays for the grid, whether rural consumers are subsidised, and how quickly the costs of cleaner generation are passed on. These are distributive choices, and insulating them from elected officials does not make them neutral. It merely relocates them.

Defenders reply that regulators are accountable in other ways: they publish reasons, face judicial review and appear before legislative committees. These channels are real, but they check the manner of a decision more than its substance. A court can ask whether a regulator followed its procedure and considered the relevant factors; it cannot ask whether the regulator struck the right balance between industrial and domestic users, because the statute gave that judgment to the regulator precisely so that nobody else would make it.

None of this is an argument for returning such decisions to ministers wholesale. The more defensible course is to separate what a regulator does into its parts. Where a question is technical, such as the cost of capital or the reliability standard for a network, insulation earns its keep. Where the question is who should bear a cost, the legislature should set the governing principle in advance, leaving the regulator to apply it to the facts. Independence, on this view, is a tool to be fitted to particular tasks, not a status to be conferred on institutions.

6. Which of the following best captures the central claim of the passage?

- ☐ A. Independent regulators have failed everywhere outside monetary policy, so their powers should be returned to ministers at once.
- ☐ B. Judicial review is an adequate substitute for electoral accountability, provided regulators publish reasons and face committees.
- ☐ C. Independence suits technical but not distributive questions, so its reach should be fixed task by task, not institution-wide.
- ☐ D. The credibility argument is mistaken in principle, because investors do not in fact trust appointed boards more than ministers.

7. With which of the following statements would the author most likely agree?

- ☐ A. A regulator's decision on sharing grid costs between rural and urban users could be procedurally flawless yet lack democratic warrant.
- ☐ B. A central bank's decisions on interest rates should be bound by legislative principles of the kind proposed for electricity tariffs.
- ☐ C. Legislative committees are better than courts at testing whether a regulator has reached the substantively correct balance of interests.
- ☐ D. Governments delegated power to regulators mainly to escape blame for unpopular decisions rather than to secure credible commitments.

8. The author's treatment of the defenders' reply in the third paragraph is best described as

- ☐ A. contemptuous, since the author regards the accountability channels as a deliberate deception practised on voters
- ☐ B. approving, since the author treats published reasons and review as fully answering the democratic objection
- ☐ C. indifferent, since the author regards accountability as irrelevant to the choice of institutional arrangement
- ☐ D. measured, since the author grants that the channels exist but denies that they reach the substance of decisions

9. In the final paragraph, the statement that for technical questions 'insulation earns its keep' most nearly means that insulation

- ☐ A. raises enough revenue in fees to meet the full running costs of the regulator itself
- ☐ B. yields benefits that justify what it costs in reduced democratic accountability
- ☐ C. keeps the regulator's decisions safely beyond the reach of any legal challenge
- ☐ D. retains its original form without being amended or diluted by the legislature

10. Within the passage's argument, the example of setting an electricity tariff functions chiefly to

- ☐ A. demonstrate that electricity regulators have in practice performed worse than the central banks whose model they borrowed
- ☐ B. illustrate the technical complexity that makes appointed experts better placed than ministers to take decisions of this particular kind
- ☐ C. show that credibility arguments fail only where the right policy is unclear, which the author then treats as their sole limit
- ☐ D. exhibit a decision whose distributive content defeats the assumption that insulating a choice from politics leaves it neutral

SECTION — CRITICAL REASONING

CRITICAL REASONING — ENVIRONMENT · CREDITS FOR TREES THAT WERE NEVER AT RISK (Q11–Q15)

Carbon credits for 'avoided deforestation' rest on a simple bargain. A project developer protects a forest, estimates how much of it would have been cleared without the project, and sells credits for the carbon thus kept out of the atmosphere. Buyers use the credits to offset their own emissions, often citing them in public pledges. The entire value of each credit therefore depends on a number that no one can observe: the deforestation that would have happened otherwise.

At present that number is supplied, in effect, by the seller. Developers project a baseline from historical clearing rates in a reference region of their own choosing, and the verification bodies they pay check mainly whether the chosen method was applied correctly. Neither party has any reason to question a baseline that pleases both. When independent researchers have compared such projects with statistically matched forests nearby that received no protection, they have repeatedly found that the unprotected forests lost far less cover than the projects' baselines predicted. The threat, in other words, had been inflated, and so had the credits.

It would be easy to conclude from this that forest credits are a fraud and should be abandoned. That conclusion does not follow, and acting on it would be costly: protected forests do store carbon, and some projects have plainly slowed clearing where the pressure on them was real. The defect lies not in the idea but in who draws the counterfactual. A baseline set in advance by an interested party will drift upward, not necessarily through dishonesty, but because every discretionary choice about reference areas and trend lines will tend to be resolved in the seller's favour.

The remedy, then, is to stop fixing the baseline in advance. Credits should be issued only after the fact, against the clearing observed in matched comparison forests over the same period, and the choice of comparison sites should belong to a body independent of anything from the volume of credits issued. A project that genuinely held back the chainsaw will still be paid for it. A project that protected trees nobody was going to fell will not. The rule rewards what the forest was spared, not what the developer feared.



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

- ☐ A. Forest credits should be issued only after the fact, against observed clearing in comparison forests chosen by a disinterested body.
- ☐ B. Forest credits are fundamentally fraudulent, and buyers should stop relying on them to offset their own emissions of carbon at all.
- ☐ C. Verification bodies should be paid by the buyers of credits rather than by developers, so that they check each project more strictly.
- ☐ D. Developers deliberately exaggerate projected clearing rates in order to sell more credits than their projects genuinely deserve.

12. The author's proposed remedy depends on which of the following assumptions?

- ☐ A. Most forest projects now operating have failed to reduce the clearing of trees within their own boundaries to any degree at all.
- ☐ B. Buyers would be willing to pay more for credits issued after the fact than for credits issued against a baseline fixed in advance.
- ☐ C. Clearing in matched unprotected forests is a fair guide to the clearing the protected forest would otherwise have suffered.
- ☐ D. Verification bodies lack the technical expertise needed to judge whether a developer's chosen method has been correctly applied.

13. Which of the following, if true, most seriously weakens the author's proposed method of issuing credits?

- ☐ A. Some developers who used reference regions of their own choosing produced baselines close to the clearing later observed nearby.
- ☐ B. Loggers shut out of a protected forest often move into nearby unprotected forests, the sites likeliest to serve as comparisons.
- ☐ C. Issuing credits only after the fact would delay payment to developers, some of whom rely on early revenue to fund patrols and staff.
- ☐ D. The researchers who compared projects with matched forests were funded partly by organisations that oppose carbon offsetting.

14. Which of the following, if true, most strengthens the author's claim that inflated baselines stem from who draws the counterfactual rather than from the idea of forest credits itself?

- ☐ A. Forests that store the most carbon per hectare are also, on average, the forests at the lowest risk of being cleared for farming.
- ☐ B. Several developers found to have inflated baselines had earlier been penalised for misreporting figures in other, unrelated industries.
- ☐ C. Demand for forest credits fell sharply after the independent comparisons were published, and credit prices declined accordingly.
- ☐ D. Where baselines for similar projects were set by an agency with no stake in credit volumes, they tracked matched forests closely.

15. Which of the following arguments is most similar in its reasoning to the author's argument?

- ☐ A. Some restaurants overstate their own hygiene scores, so hygiene grading should be abolished and diners left to judge for themselves.
- ☐ B. Examiners sometimes mark scripts too harshly, so every script should be marked twice and the higher of the two marks recorded.
- ☐ C. Contractors who estimate their own overruns overstate them, so overrun payments should follow costs audited by a flat-fee auditor.
- ☐ D. Insurance claims are sometimes exaggerated, so insurers are right to reject any claim exceeding the average payout for that loss.

CRITICAL REASONING — LAW & RIGHTS · CONSENT CANNOT CARRY THE WEIGHT (Q16–Q20)

Data protection law in most democracies is built on a single idea: that a person may authorise the use of information about herself, and that her consent makes lawful what would otherwise be a violation. The idea has an honourable pedigree. It treats the individual as the author of her own affairs, and it echoes the doctrine, familiar from medical law, that a surgeon may not touch a patient who has not agreed.

But the analogy with surgery conceals more than it reveals. A patient consents to a single procedure whose risks can be explained in one conversation. A user of a mobile application 'consents', by a tap, to a privacy notice of several thousand words that permits the collection of data she cannot enumerate, for purposes she cannot foresee, by parties she will never meet. She cannot bargain over the terms, and refusing them usually means going without the service. Studies of reading behaviour find that almost nobody reads such notices, and that reading every notice a typical person meets in a year would take weeks of working time. Consent obtained in these conditions is not a considered choice. It is a toll paid to enter.

The usual response is to demand better notices: shorter, plainer, layered. This misreads the problem. The difficulty is not that notices are badly drafted but that the decisions they ask for cannot be made well by anyone, however clear the prose. The harms of data use are cumulative and arise from combination: a single disclosure of location is trivial; a year of it, joined to purchase records, can reveal a person's health, faith and associations. No one can weigh, at the moment of a tap, the contribution that one disclosure will make to a profile assembled years later.

The law should therefore stop asking consent to do work it cannot do. Certain uses, such as inferring health conditions from behavioural data in order to price insurance, should be prohibited whatever the user has agreed to, just as the law already refuses to enforce a tenant's promise to waive the right to a habitable dwelling. Consent would remain, but only for decisions a person can actually make, such as whether to share a photograph with a friend.

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

- ☐ A. Privacy notices should be rewritten in shorter, plainer and layered forms so that users genuinely understand what they accept.
- ☐ B. Consent should be abolished as a basis for processing data, since users almost never read the notices they are asked to accept.
- ☐ C. The medical analogy shows that surgeons, like applications, routinely obtain consent that is rarely informed in actual practice.
- ☐ D. Some data uses should be barred regardless of consent, with consent kept for decisions that individuals are able to make well.

17. The author's dismissal of 'better notices' as a remedy rests on which of the following assumptions?

- ☐ A. Most users would go on ignoring privacy notices even if each were reduced to a single short and plainly worded paragraph.
- ☐ B. The harm a disclosure contributes depends on later data combinations that no notice written today could fully describe.
- ☐ C. Companies deliberately draft long privacy notices in order to discourage users from reading them or withholding consent.
- ☐ D. Legislatures are better placed than users to predict which combinations of data will eventually produce harmful profiles.

18. Which of the following, if true, most seriously weakens the author's argument?

- ☐ A. Users offered a standing choice to forbid combining their data across services made that choice deliberately and kept to it.
- ☐ B. Most users say they would prefer shorter privacy notices to the lengthy notices now presented by the applications they install.
- ☐ C. Medical patients also often fail to understand the risks of procedures they agree to, even after a detailed conversation.
- ☐ D. Some companies already refrain voluntarily from inferring health conditions from behavioural data, citing reputational

19. Which of the following, if true, would most strengthen the author's case for prohibiting certain data



irrespective of consent?

- ☐ A. Insurers that price policies using inferred health data currently offer lower premiums, on average, to their healthiest customers.
- ☐ B. Users who read privacy notices in full refuse consent noticeably more often than users who accept notices without reading them.
- ☐ C. Profiles combining location and purchase data have identified users' medical conditions years before the users disclosed them.
- ☐ D. Several legislatures now require every privacy notice to be accompanied by a one-page summary written in plain language.

20. The author's reasoning is most vulnerable to the criticism that it

- ☐ A. relies on studies of reading behaviour whose authors are said to have a financial interest in the regulation of personal data
- ☐ B. overlooks controls short of outright prohibition for uses that consent cannot legitimise, treating the two as the only options
- ☐ C. misrepresents the call for better notices as a claim that existing notices are already adequate, and then attacks that claim
- ☐ D. uses the word 'consent' in two incompatible senses, so that its conclusion does not follow from the premises offered for it

RAPID FIRE — ONE-LINE RECALL

89 quick questions · not negatively marked

1. 'Proprietary' (figurative sense)? _____
2. 'Explain away' means? _____
3. 'Wholesale' (as in 'replaced wholesale')? _____
4. 'Apt' means? _____
5. 'Infectious' (of an idea or song)? _____
6. 'Conformity' means? _____
7. 'In play' (of hypotheses)? _____
8. 'Monopoly' (figurative)? _____
9. What is 'social learning'? _____
10. 'Cultural transmission'? _____
11. 'Elaborate' (verb) means? _____
12. 'Credibility' (of a policy-maker)? _____
13. What is 'time inconsistency'? _____
14. 'Distributive' choice? _____
15. Judicial review checks mainly the ___ of a decision. _____
16. 'Substance' vs 'manner' of a decision? _____
17. 'Earns its keep' means? _____
18. 'Confer' means? _____
19. What is 'regulatory capture'? _____
20. 'Tenure' (of an official)? _____
21. 'Democratic warrant'? _____
22. What is a 'carbon offset'? _____
23. 'Additionality' (carbon credits)? _____
24. 'Leakage' (carbon credits)? _____
25. 'Baseline' (in a project claim)? _____
26. Ex ante vs ex post? _____
27. 'Disinterested' vs 'uninterested'? _____
28. 'Discretionary' means? _____
29. 'Matched comparison' group? _____
30. 'Pedigree' (of an idea)? _____
31. 'Enumerate' means? _____
32. 'Cumulative' means? _____
33. 'Toll' (figurative)? _____
34. 'Waive' a right means? _____
35. 'Habitable' means? _____
36. 'Informed consent'? _____
37. 'Notice and consent' model? _____
38. False dichotomy flaw? _____
39. Genetic / ad hominem flaw? _____
40. What do 'scare quotes' signal? _____
41. Best way to attack an argument by analogy? _____
42. RC inference rule? _____
43. 'Qualified' (tone) means? _____
44. Extreme-language trap in RC options? _____
45. 'Concession' in an argument? _____
46. 'Humpback whale' song is sung mainly by? _____
47. 'Horizontal transmission' of culture? _____
48. 'Vertical transmission' of culture? _____
49. 'Anthropomorphism'? _____
50. 'Convergent' vs 'divergent' evolution? _____
51. 'Parsimony' in science? _____
52. 'Replicate' a finding? _____
53. 'Correlation is not causation' - why? _____
54. 'Independent regulator' is insulated from? _____
55. 'Accountability' vs 'independence'? _____
56. 'Delegated legislation'? _____
57. 'Separation of powers'? _____
58. 'Fixed tenure' protects an official from? _____
59. 'Legitimacy' (of an institution)? _____
60. 'Technocracy'? _____
61. 'Revolving door' (regulation)? _____
62. 'Sunset clause'? _____
63. 'Afforestation' vs 'reforestation'? _____
64. 'Carbon sink'? _____
65. 'Permanence' (carbon credits)? _____
66. 'Verification' (carbon credits)? _____
67. 'Greenwashing'? _____
68. 'Counterfactual baseline'? _____
69. 'Polluter pays' principle? _____
70. 'Precautionary principle'? _____
71. Right to privacy was held a fundamental right in? _____
72. 'Data minimisation'? _____
73. 'Purpose limitation'? _____
74. 'Opt-in' vs 'opt-out' consent? _____
75. 'Consent fatigue'? _____
76. 'Asymmetry of information'? _____
77. 'Paternalism'? _____
78. 'Fiduciary' duty? _____
79. Main-point question: what to look for? _____
80. Author's-purpose question tests? _____
81. 'Function' question in RC? _____
82. Strengtheners in CR? _____
83. 'Sufficient assumption'? _____
84. 'Circular reasoning'? _____
85. 'Hasty generalisation'? _____
86. 'Slippery slope' flaw? _____
87. 'Appeal to authority' flaw? _____
88. 'Tu quoque'? _____
89. 'Nuanced' (tone)? _____

