

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 — HISTORY · THE HOUR THAT WAS AGREED UPON (Q1-Q5)

Before the railways, time was a local fact. Noon was the moment the sun stood highest over a particular steeple, and since the sun does not arrive everywhere at once, a town a hundred miles to the west kept a clock some minutes behind its neighbour to the east. Each place was right. Nothing moved fast enough for the difference to be felt, and the few travellers who noticed it simply reset their watches on arrival, much as one adjusts to a change of accent, and thought no more about the matter.

The railway made the difference expensive. A timetable printed for a line that crossed a dozen local noons was either wrong along most of its length or true at a single station. Companies responded by imposing one clock on the whole route, and the telegraph, which carried a signal faster than any train could run, made that single clock technically possible. Station platforms acquired the famous double-handed dials, one hand for the town and one for the line, and for a generation those two hands were a picture of an unsettled question.

Older histories treat what followed as the victory of accuracy over muddle. A later generation of historians has objected that muddle is the wrong word. Local time was not inaccurate; it was accurate to the sun, which had been the standard for as long as there had been clocks at all. What altered was not precision but jurisdiction, which is to say whose clock counted and who was obliged to keep it. Some corporations held out for years, their town halls insisting on a parochial hour against the hour of the line, and their obstinacy reads less as superstition than as a reasonable question about authority, politely asked in brass and glass.

The temptation now is to choose between the two accounts, progress or imposition. The archive rewards a plainer reading. Coordination is genuinely valuable, and its value is not distributed evenly. Those who travelled, shipped and speculated gained a great deal; those who did none of these things gained the convenience of a timetable they seldom used, and gave up a practice that had served them perfectly well. That is neither a scandal nor a triumph. It is the ordinary shape of standardisation, which asks somebody to abandon a working arrangement so that a larger arrangement can work at all.

1. Which of the following best expresses the central claim of the passage?

- ☐ A. The railways replaced an inaccurate patchwork of town clocks with a measurement of time that was scientifically correct.
- ☐ B. Standard time settled a question of authority rather than of accuracy, and its gains fell unevenly on those affected.
- ☐ C. The telegraph, rather than the railway, was the decisive instrument in persuading towns to abandon their own clocks.
- ☐ D. Towns that resisted the railway hour were defending a superstition that the historical record has since comprehensively exposed.

2. Which of the following is best supported by the passage?

- ☐ A. Two towns could each be keeping correct time by the same standard and still disagree about what hour it was.
- ☐ B. Travellers before the railways generally failed to notice that clocks differed between one town and the next.
- ☐ C. Railway companies adopted a single clock for a route only after governments obliged them by statute to do so.
- ☐ D. The double-handed station dials were installed chiefly to help passengers convert fares between rival companies.

3. The author's attitude towards the corporations that held out against the railway hour is best described as

- ☐ A. amused by an eccentricity that could not have lasted and did not deserve to.
- ☐ B. indignant on their behalf, treating the railway hour as plain expropriation.
- ☐ C. detached, recording their objection without indicating whether it had any merit.
- ☐ D. sympathetic to the question they were raising, without making heroes of them.

4. In the third paragraph, the word 'parochial' is used to mean

- ☐ A. narrow-minded, and hostile to the interests of people who came from elsewhere.
- ☐ B. derived from the parish church, and therefore religious in the authority it claimed.
- ☐ C. belonging to the locality itself rather than to the wider network crossing it.
- ☐ D. outdated, in the sense of having been overtaken by more reliable instruments.

5. The third paragraph functions in the passage chiefly to

- ☐ A. supply the technical detail that the second paragraph had deliberately withheld from the reader.
- ☐ B. replace one account of the change by reinterpreting what was actually at stake in it.
- ☐ C. concede the strongest objection to the author's thesis before going on to dismiss it.
- ☐ D. introduce the documentary evidence on which the first paragraph's central claim rests.

READING COMPREHENSION — ARTS & CULTURE · CLEANING THE PICTURE, CHOOSING THE PAINTING (Q6-Q10)

A painting is not the object the painter left behind. Varnish, applied to saturate the colour and protect the surface, yellows and clouds within decades; grime settles into it; earlier restorers repaint losses in a manner their successors find intolerable. Every generation therefore inherits not a picture but a picture plus its history, and must decide how much of that history to keep.

The great cleaning controversies of the last century were fought over exactly this. When a gallery stripped the brown bloom from a celebrated altarpiece and revealed a palette of astonishing sharpness, critics protested that the brilliance was a fiction, that the master had glazed and toned his surface deliberately, and that the scrubbing had carried away his final judgements along with the dirt. The conservators answered, with evidence, that the tone removed was varnish applied long after the painter's death, and that what the objectors were defending was the taste of the intervening centuries for a mellow and golden antiquity.

Both parties were arguing about the same difficulty from opposite ends. There is no single original state to return to. A picture has a life: painted over months, altered by the painter, dulled by candle smoke, cut down to fit a wall, cleaned, retouched, cleaned, conserve is to arrest that life at a chosen moment and then to present the choice as a discovery. Modern practice has grov



about this. Its governing principles are minimal intervention, reversibility and documentation, which do not resolve the question so much as record how it was answered, and by whom, so that the next generation may disagree in an informed way.

That honesty is the real advance, and it is worth more than the polemics it replaced. A label reading only oil on panel conceals an argument; one that names the campaign, its date and its reasoning invites the visitor into it. The public, told that it is being shown an interpretation, does not lose confidence. It gains a way of looking. What the cleaning quarrels finally established was not who had been right about one altarpiece, but that the condition of a painting is itself a historical document, and that erasing it quietly is the one option no longer available. Conservation has become, in this narrow respect, a more honest discipline than the connoisseurship that once presumed to sit in judgement on it.

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

- ☐ A. Nineteenth-century restorers damaged more paintings than they saved, and modern conservators have reversed most of their work.
- ☐ B. The critics of the great cleanings were vindicated once the chemistry of aged varnish came to be properly understood.
- ☐ C. Museums should leave old paintings untouched, because any intervention destroys evidence that a later age may need.
- ☐ D. No original state exists to recover, so conservation's real achievement is making its own choices explicit.

7. It can be inferred from the second paragraph that

- ☐ A. whether the critics' objection held depended on a factual question about when the toning was applied.
- ☐ B. the conservators accepted that the altarpiece had been toned by the painter himself and cleaned it even so.
- ☐ C. paintings that have never been varnished present conservators with no difficult choices of any kind.
- ☐ D. museum labels were shortened to 'oil on panel' in order to conceal the disputed cleaning campaigns.

8. The author's attitude towards modern conservation practice is best described as

- ☐ A. enthusiastic, presenting its principles as having finally resolved the old quarrel.
- ☐ B. sceptical, suggesting that its new candour is mainly a way of deflecting criticism.
- ☐ C. approving of its candour, while noting that candour settles nothing by itself.
- ☐ D. nostalgic for the confidence of the restorers whose work its rules displaced.

9. In the third paragraph, 'to arrest that life' most nearly means

- ☐ A. to halt it and hold it still at a chosen point.
- ☐ B. to take formal custody of it under a legal power.
- ☐ C. to capture and hold the attention of a viewer.
- ☐ D. to reverse it, returning the object to its beginning.

10. The third paragraph does which of the following?

- ☐ A. It adjudicates between the two parties by showing which of them had the better evidence.
- ☐ B. It identifies the shared premise that made the quarrel impossible to settle as posed.
- ☐ C. It supplies a chronology of the cleaning campaigns to which the second paragraph referred.
- ☐ D. It leaves the dispute aside and turns to the separate question of how museums are funded.

SECTION — CRITICAL REASONING

CRITICAL REASONING — POLITICAL ECONOMY · THE FALL WAS ALREADY COMING (Q11-Q15)

The central bank has begun to describe the last two years as a vindication. Prices were rising at seven per cent when it began to raise its policy rate; eighteen months later the figure was near three; the committee has concluded that its tightening brought the rise down, and that the same instrument should be reached for as readily the next time. The sequence is real. The inference drawn from it is not.

Consider first what pushed prices up. The surge was concentrated in energy, freight and food, items whose cost is set in world markets that had been disrupted by war and by the aftermath of a long shutdown. Those disruptions eased on their own schedule. Shipping rates had fallen by four-fifths from their peak before the second rate rise could have taken effect, and gas prices fell further still. An index that rose because a handful of traded goods became dear was always going to fall when those goods became cheap again, whatever the committee did.

Consider next the timing. The bank's own published research holds that a change in the policy rate reaches consumer prices with a lag of between one and two years. On that estimate most of the tightening had not yet arrived when the disinflation was already well advanced. A remedy cannot be credited with a recovery that preceded the dose. The committee cannot have it both ways: either the lag is real, in which case the early fall belongs to something else, or the lag is wrong, in which case the research on which the framework rests needs revisiting.

Consider finally the comparison. Several economies with similar import baskets, whose central banks moved far later or far less, recorded falls of almost the same size over the same months. If the medicine explains the cure here, something else must explain the identical cure there, and whatever that something is, it was available in this economy too.

None of this shows that the rate rises did nothing at all. They may well have held expectations in place, and expectations matter. It shows something narrower and more useful: that the fall in the headline figure is not evidence of the policy's power, and that a committee which treats it as evidence will misjudge the dose the next time prices move. The claim deserves the test it has not yet been given, rather than the applause it has awarded itself.

11. Which of the following is the main conclusion of the argument?

- ☐ A. Raising the policy rate has no effect on consumer prices in an economy that is open to world trade.
- ☐ B. The committee should have begun raising its policy rate earlier, and by more than it eventually did.
- ☐ C. The fall in inflation is not good evidence that the tightening was what brought the rise down.
- ☐ D. World commodity prices, and not monetary policy, ought to be the target of the inflation framework.

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

- ☐ A. That the committee published its lag estimate in order to claim the credit for the disinflation.
- ☐ B. That expectations play no part in setting the path of consumer prices over a two-year horizon.
- ☐ C. That energy and food carry a larger weight in the index than any other group of items does.
- ☐ D. That the published lag applies to the tightening whose effects the author is dating here.



13. Which of the following, if true, most weakens the argument from comparison?

- ☐ A. The comparison economies import a considerably larger share of the food they consume than this economy does.
- ☐ B. Credit conditions in those economies track this economy's policy rate, which their banks follow closely.
- ☐ C. Two of the comparison economies did raise their own policy rates slightly, though a good deal later.
- ☐ D. Shipping rates serving the comparison economies fell some months later than they fell for this one.

14. Which of the following, if true, most strengthens the argument?

- ☐ A. Prices of services insulated from world trade kept rising at their earlier pace throughout the period.
- ☐ B. The bank's own staff had forecast a slower fall in inflation than the fall that actually occurred.
- ☐ C. Energy prices in world markets still remain well above the level that was recorded before the surge began.
- ☐ D. The committee raised its policy rate in smaller steps than several comparable central banks chose to.

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

- ☐ A. denies that the rate rises exerted any influence at all on the path that prices took.
- ☐ B. accepts a lag estimate that the committee itself has published and continues to rely upon.
- ☐ C. treats a fall in one published price index as though it were a fall in the cost of living.
- ☐ D. rests its comparison on economies whose relevant likeness is asserted rather than shown.

CRITICAL REASONING — SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY POLICY · THE TOLL MOVED; IT DID NOT GO (Q16–Q20)

For twenty years the case for open access was made in the language of readers. Research paid for by the public should not sit behind a subscription that only wealthy libraries can afford; a doctor in a small hospital, a schoolteacher, a curious citizen ought to be able to read what taxpayers financed. Funders eventually agreed, and made free-to-read publication a condition of their grants. Publishers complied. They did not, however, give the work away. They moved the charge to the other end of the transaction and began billing the author, or the author's grant, a processing fee that now commonly runs into four figures for a single article, payable whether or not anybody ever reads the result.

That was not a small adjustment. Under the old arrangement, access to the literature was rationed by library budgets; under the new one, entry into the literature is rationed by research budgets. The first kind of rationing kept people from reading. The second keeps people from publishing, and the two are not equivalent, because a paper unread can still be found later, while a paper unwritten leaves no trace that anyone can later go and find.

The evidence is beginning to accumulate. In the journals that converted earliest, the share of articles whose corresponding author works at an institution with no dedicated publication fund has fallen steadily since the mandates took effect. Waiver schemes exist, and publishers cite them often, but a discretionary favour is not the same thing as a right: the applicant must declare an inability to pay to the very editors who will judge the manuscript, and many will decline the humiliation and send the work elsewhere, or not write it up at all. A right that must be begged for is exercised by the confident and forgone by everybody else, which is precisely the group the mandates were framed to help.

The stated purpose of the mandates was to widen the circle of people the scholarly record serves. Measured against that purpose, they have narrowed the circle of people by whom the record is written. A policy that swaps one gate for another has not abolished the gate. It has only changed which side of the desk the payment is made from, and decided, without ever saying so, that the person who writes matters less than the person who reads.

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

- ☐ A. Publishers have profited from the open-access mandates at the direct expense of university libraries.
- ☐ B. The mandates have narrowed who writes the scholarly record rather than widening whom it serves.
- ☐ C. Article processing charges ought to be abolished and the subscription model restored in full.
- ☐ D. A paper that is never written does more harm to science than a paper that is never read.

17. The argument assumes which of the following?

- ☐ A. That every author without a publication fund has at some point applied to a publisher for a waiver.
- ☐ B. That publishers set their processing charges with the deliberate intention of excluding poorer authors.
- ☐ C. That the falling share is not explained by causes operating independently of the charge itself.
- ☐ D. That readers outside wealthy libraries have not in fact gained any access to the converted literature.

18. Which of the following, if true, most weakens the argument?

- ☐ A. Authors without publication funds now satisfy the mandates by depositing manuscripts in free repositories.
- ☐ B. Several converted journals have raised their processing charges twice since the mandates first took effect.
- ☐ C. Waiver applications are read by administrative staff rather than by the editor handling the manuscript.
- ☐ D. Libraries at wealthy universities have not reduced their acquisition budgets since the subscriptions ended.

19. Which of the following, if true, most strengthens the argument?

- ☐ A. Processing charges have risen faster than the general price level in every year since the mandates.
- ☐ B. Most converted journals now publish rather more articles each year than they did before converting.
- ☐ C. Readers at small hospitals report consulting the converted journals far more often than they once did.
- ☐ D. In comparable journals that kept subscriptions, that same share held steady over the same years.

20. Which of the following is a flaw in the argument's reasoning?

- ☐ A. It assumes that a charge levied on authors must always be passed on to the reading public.
- ☐ B. It treats the purpose stated for a policy as the only standard by which the policy may be judged.
- ☐ C. It generalises about the scholarly record as a whole from the journals that converted earliest.
- ☐ D. It confuses the number of papers a journal publishes with the quality of the work they report.

RAPID FIRE — ONE-LINE RECALL

112 quick questions · not negatively marked

1. 'Local mean time' means? _____

3. What made line-wide synchronisation technically possible? _____

2. Why did a railway need one clock for a whole line? _____

4. 'Solar noon' is? _____



5. A 'time zone' is? _____
6. Greenwich Mean Time takes its name from? _____
7. 'Standardisation' means? _____
8. 'Parochial', in the passage's sense? _____
9. 'Obstinacy' means? _____
10. 'Jurisdiction' means? _____
11. 'Muddle' means? _____
12. 'To speculate', in trade? _____
13. 'Historiography' means? _____
14. 'Revisionist' history? _____
15. 'The archive', for a historian? _____
16. 'Anachronism' means? _____
17. 'Primary' vs 'secondary' source? _____
18. 'Steeple' refers to? _____
19. 'Coordination problem', in one line? _____
20. 'Network effect' means? _____
21. 'Uniform' vs 'accurate'? _____
22. 'Varnish' is applied to a painting to? _____
23. 'Patina' means? _____
24. A 'glaze' in oil painting? _____
25. 'Retouching' means? _____
26. 'Reversibility' in conservation? _____
27. 'Minimal intervention' means? _____
28. 'Provenance' of an artwork? _____
29. 'Altarpiece' means? _____
30. 'Conservation' vs 'restoration'? _____
31. 'Palette' means? _____
32. 'Oil on panel' tells you? _____
33. 'Polemic' means? _____
34. 'Candour' means? _____
35. 'To arrest' a process? _____
36. 'Mellow', of a tone? _____
37. 'Intolerable' means? _____
38. 'Documentation' in conservation? _____
39. 'Connoisseurship' means? _____
40. 'To saturate' a colour? _____
41. 'Attribution' of a painting? _____
42. 'Grime' means? _____
43. 'Disinflation' vs 'deflation'? _____
44. 'Headline' vs 'core' inflation? _____
45. 'Policy rate' means? _____
46. 'Monetary transmission lag'? _____
47. 'Anchored expectations' means? _____
48. 'Supply shock' vs 'demand shock'? _____
49. 'Import basket' means? _____
50. 'Freight rate' means? _____
51. 'Base effect' in an inflation figure? _____
52. 'Tightening' means? _____
53. 'Price level' vs 'inflation rate'? _____
54. 'Pass-through' of world prices? _____
55. 'Vindication' means? _____
56. 'Terms of trade'? _____
57. 'Commodity cycle' means? _____
58. 'Non-tradable services' are? _____
59. 'Open access' publishing? _____
60. 'Article processing charge'? _____
61. 'Subscription model' in journals? _____
62. 'Green' vs 'gold' open access? _____
63. 'Preprint' means? _____
64. 'Institutional repository'? _____
65. 'Corresponding author'? _____
66. 'Peer review', in one line? _____
67. 'Waiver' means? _____
68. 'Mandate', as a funder's condition? _____
69. 'Paywall' means? _____
70. 'Embargo period' on a paper? _____
71. 'Predatory journal'? _____
72. 'Scholarly record' means? _____
73. 'Discretionary favour' vs 'right'? _____
74. 'Rationing' by budget means? _____
75. 'Confounding variable'? _____
76. 'Survivorship bias'? _____
77. 'Regression to the mean'? _____
78. 'Cherry-picking' evidence? _____
79. Composition fallacy? _____
80. Division fallacy? _____
81. 'Natural experiment'? _____
82. 'Absence of evidence' vs 'evidence of absence'? _____
83. 'Reversed causation' flaw? _____
84. 'Alternative cause' objection? _____
85. Why is a temporal gap fatal to a causal claim? _____
86. What does a concession do in an argument? _____
87. 'Scope shift' means? _____
88. 'Control case' in a causal argument? _____
89. 'Sampling frame'? _____
90. 'Selection on the outcome'? _____
91. 'Attribution' of a policy outcome? _____
92. 'Necessary' vs 'contributing' cause? _____
93. 'Meridian' means? _____
94. 'Longitude' fixes what? _____
95. 'Telegraph' mattered to timekeeping because? _____
96. 'Timetable' as a coordination device? _____
97. 'Convention', in the sense of an agreed rule? _____
98. 'Uniformity' means? _____
99. 'Provincial' (of an attitude)? _____
100. 'Patina' on an old painting? _____
101. 'Varnish' is applied to a painting to? _____
102. 'Restoration' vs 'conservation'? _____
103. 'Provenance' of an artwork? _____
104. 'Attribution' of a painting? _____
105. 'Connoisseurship' means? _____
106. 'Irreversible' intervention? _____
107. 'Aesthetic' judgement? _____
108. 'Disinflation' vs 'deflation'? _____
109. 'Monetary transmission lag'? _____
110. 'Base effect' in an inflation figure? _____
111. 'Counterfactual' in policy evaluation? _____
112. 'Credit-claiming' by an institution? _____

