

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 — ENVIRONMENT & NATURE · THE FOREST THAT WAS MADE TO SPEAK (Q1-Q5)

Under a temperate forest, fungal threads run through the soil in quantities that are hard to picture: many kilometres of filament in a single handful of earth. Some of these fungi live on the roots of trees in a trade that is genuinely ancient. The fungus takes sugars the tree has made in its leaves; the tree takes phosphorus, nitrogen and water that the fungus has drawn from pores too fine for any root to enter. Over the past three decades this partnership acquired a second and far more arresting description. Because the filaments of one fungus may touch the roots of several trees at once, the forest came to be described as wired: a network along which resources travel, seedlings are nursed by their elders, and warnings of insect attack pass from neighbour to neighbour.

Much of the underlying work is sound. Isotope labelling does show carbon atoms that entered one tree leaving it and appearing in another. What the label cannot show is the accounting. The quantities moved are, in most measurements, small beside what a tree manufactures for itself; the direction is not dependably from the large and old to the small and young; and carbon that leaves a root may be spent by the fungus rather than delivered anywhere at all. A tracer establishes a path. It does not establish a purpose, a budget, or a beneficiary.

The deeper trouble is grammatical. To say that a network moves resources is not yet to say that it exists in order to move them. The fungus is not a courier engaged by the forest; it is a third party with interests of its own, and one that in other conditions behaves less like a partner than like a tax collector, withholding nutrients until the terms of trade improve. A pipe is not a gift, and a channel is not a policy.

None of this restores competition as the whole story; forests are not merely arenas, and the old picture of trees as sealed individuals was wrong too. The objection is narrower and more exacting. A description that has become this popular this quickly should be made to earn each of its words, because those words have begun to work outside the laboratory, in harvest guidelines, in planting schemes, in the sentences that decide which trees are left standing. A metaphor cannot be refuted. It can only be budgeted.

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

- ☐ A. Recent isotope work has overturned the claim that fungi and trees exchange anything at all, leaving the older account of competition intact.
- ☐ B. The evidence for underground exchange is genuine, but the popular description reads purpose and generosity into it that the measurements do not carry.
- ☐ C. Forest management would improve considerably if planting schemes were redesigned around the nutrient flows the fungal network has been shown to carry.
- ☐ D. Because the fungus pursues interests of its own, the relationship between fungi and trees is better described as parasitism than as any sort of partnership.

2. Which of the following can most reasonably be inferred from the second paragraph?

- ☐ A. Isotope labelling is an unsuitable technique for any question concerning the movement of substances between living organisms.
- ☐ B. Most of the carbon a mature tree fixes in its leaves is passed underground to its neighbours before the growing season ends.
- ☐ C. Foresters who appeal to the network when arguing for the retention of the largest trees are relying on measurements that have since been formally withdrawn.
- ☐ D. Showing that a substance has travelled between two trees leaves open both how much travelled and who, if anyone, was served by the journey.

3. The author's attitude towards the 'wood wide web' description is best characterised as

- ☐ A. sceptical of its wording and its reach while accepting that the findings beneath it are genuine
- ☐ B. hostile to the research programme itself, which the author takes to have been built on results that nobody has replicated
- ☐ C. admiring of its explanatory power, with reservations only about how slowly the idea has travelled beyond its own specialists
- ☐ D. detached and expository, content to lay out rival positions without indicating which of them the present evidence favours

4. In the third paragraph, 'grammatical' is used to indicate that the problem lies in

- ☐ A. the technical vocabulary of soil science, which supplies terms that non-specialists routinely mispronounce and then misapply
- ☐ B. the prose of the papers reporting the results, which is too ornate for the modesty of what has actually been found
- ☐ C. the logical form of the claim, in what is being asserted of what, rather than in the accuracy of any measurement
- ☐ D. the translation of laboratory findings into the language of guidelines, where precision is invariably lost in transit

5. The final paragraph functions primarily to

- ☐ A. narrow the objection, conceding what the criticism does not claim before saying why the wording still matters
- ☐ B. summarise the experimental evidence given earlier and draw from it a testable prediction for future fieldwork
- ☐ C. withdraw the central criticism in the light of the practical benefits the metaphor has brought to forest management
- ☐ D. introduce a rival hypothesis about fungal behaviour that the preceding paragraphs had deliberately held in reserve

READING COMPREHENSION — PSYCHOLOGY & MIND · WHEN A HUNCH IS WORTH HAVING (Q6-Q10)

Ask whether expert intuition can be trusted and the honest answer is a question in return: intuition about what? A chess master glancing at a board and seeing that the position is lost is doing something a novice cannot do, and doing it in a second. A fund manager glancing at a market and feeling that it is about to turn is doing something that, over long records, cannot be told apart from guessing. Both report the same inner event, a judgement arriving whole and unaccompanied by reasons, and both report it with conviction.

Two conditions separate the cases. The first belongs to the world rather than to the person: the environment must contain regularities stable enough to be learned. Chess positions, burning buildings, the progress of an infection and the handling of an aircraft are lawful in this sense; the movement of asset prices over a week is not. The second condition belongs to the person, but only be



world permits it: there must have been long practice in which feedback arrived quickly and could not be argued with. The fireground commander who backs his men out of a building moments before the floor gives way has had thousands of such lessons. The forecaster who predicts the coming decade has had, at most, a handful, arriving too late and too muddled to teach anything.

What the two conditions together do not supply is a warning light. Confidence is not a signal of validity. The feeling that one knows is produced by the fluency with which a coherent story comes to mind, and a story can be perfectly coherent in an environment that is entirely unpredictable. Indeed it is easier to tell a smooth story about markets than about chess, because nothing in a market talks back within the hour. Long service in an irregular environment therefore produces practitioners who are confident without being accurate, and who are no less sincere for it.

The practical consequence is a change of address for the question. We should stop interrogating the expert and start interrogating the setting that made the expert: does this domain hold still long enough to be learned, and did this person receive the kind of feedback that could have taught them? Where the answer is no, seniority is a credential for very little, and the intuition of thirty years is worth about what the intuition of three is worth.

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

- ☐ A. Expert intuition is a myth produced by the ease with which coherent stories come to mind under pressure.
- ☐ B. Whether an intuition deserves trust turns on the regularity of the domain and the quality of the feedback it allowed.
- ☐ C. Confidence and accuracy diverge chiefly because experts are reluctant to admit the limits of what their training covered.
- ☐ D. The difference between a chess master and a fund manager lies in the number of hours each has given to deliberate practice.

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

- ☐ A. A novice given rapid feedback in a regular environment will match a master's judgement within a short period of training.
- ☐ B. Practitioners who express doubt about their own judgements are, for that reason alone, more likely to be right than confident ones.
- ☐ C. Two practitioners may be equally certain while only one works in an environment able to support the certainty.
- ☐ D. Markets would become predictable if analysts were given feedback that arrived quickly enough to correct their mistakes.

8. The tone of the final paragraph is best described as

- ☐ A. consoling, softening a finding that the author expects many readers to find personally discouraging
- ☐ B. ironic, since the author does not in fact believe that any real occupation supplies the two conditions that have just been set out
- ☐ C. tentative, offering the reframing as one possibility among several that the evidence still leaves open
- ☐ D. briskly prescriptive, turning the preceding analysis into a rule about where scepticism should be directed

9. In the second paragraph, environments called 'lawful' are those that are

- ☐ A. governed by written rules of conduct that every participant is formally required to observe
- ☐ B. regular enough that patterns repeat, so that what is learned on one occasion still applies on the next
- ☐ C. permitted by regulation, as against activities that a statute or a professional code forbids
- ☐ D. orderly in appearance, though the order proves on inspection to have been imposed by the observer rather than found

10. The pair of examples in the opening paragraph, the chess master and the fund manager, is introduced in order to

- ☐ A. isolate what the two cases share, so that the difference located later cannot be a difference in the inner experience
- ☐ B. establish that expertise in games transfers poorly to domains where money rather than position is what is at stake
- ☐ C. illustrate a contrast the author will later dissolve by showing that both judgements rest on one underlying mechanism
- ☐ D. concede an objection at the outset, namely that several celebrated experts have records no better than chance over long periods

SECTION — CRITICAL REASONING

CRITICAL REASONING — LAW & RIGHTS · WHAT THE SEALED ENVELOPE TAKES AWAY (Q11-Q15)

The court's order last month was brief. The government's material would be received in a sealed envelope; the petitioner, whose licence that material concerned, would not see it; the bench, having read it, was satisfied that the cancellation was justified. Defenders of the practice make two points, and both are fair as far as they go. The exception is narrow, invoked where disclosure would endanger a source or a life. And the judge remains independent, for nobody supposes that a bench simply accepts whatever it is handed.

Both points miss what adjudication is for. A judgment is not only an outcome that happens to be correct; it is an account of reasons that the losing party can carry away and test. That is why orders are written, why they are published, and why an appeal is possible at all. Where the operative reason sits inside an envelope, the losing party cannot say that the material was stale, or that it described a different person, or that its author had an interest in the outcome. Nor can the appellate court review the inference, since it must either open the envelope and repeat the exercise in the same silence, or defer.

The second defence fails for a related reason. Judicial independence describes the absence of an interest; it does not manufacture the information a judge lacks. The tests a court applies to evidence, contradiction and cross-examination and the production of a rival document, are not performed by the bench. They are performed by the party with the strongest motive to find the flaw, and the bench then weighs what that effort has produced. Remove the party and the exercise is not merely quicker; it is a different exercise, one in which the state's characterisation of its own file goes unopposed.

None of this requires that dangerous material be published. Other systems answer the difficulty with a redacted gist given to the party, or with a security-cleared advocate who may read the file and argue against it while disclosing nothing of what it says. Those devices are imperfect and slow. But they keep the shape of adjudication intact, which silence does not. The sealed cover injures the process even where the secret is real and the judge is beyond reproach, and it is precisely in those cases that the injury is hardest to notice.

11. Which of the following best states the main conclusion of the argument?

- ☐ A. Material whose disclosure would endanger a source or a life should never be placed before a court in any form at all.
- ☐ B. Appellate courts ought to decline to hear appeals in which the operative material was received in a sealed envelope.
- ☐ C. Judicial independence is a weaker safeguard than it is usually taken to be, in sealed-cover matters and in ordinary ones.
- ☐ D. The sealed cover damages adjudication itself, and does so even where the secrecy is warranted and the judge impartial.

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

- ☐ A. Governments that ask for a sealed cover are usually seeking to conceal the weakness of their own material from the cou



- ☐ B. A redacted gist and a security-cleared advocate together reproduce every protection that ordinary open proceedings provide.
- ☐ C. The value of adjudication is not exhausted by reaching the outcome a fully informed and impartial judge would have reached.
- ☐ D. Appeals against sealed-cover orders are, in the great majority of instances, dismissed without any examination of the file.

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

- ☐ A. In sealed-cover matters the bench routinely appoints independent counsel who reads the file and argues the absent party's case.
- ☐ B. Most petitioners in such matters would lack the technical expertise needed to identify defects in intelligence material.
- ☐ C. Judges who have received material in sealed cover describe the exercise as uncomfortable and say they would prefer open disclosure.
- ☐ D. The number of matters in which a sealed cover is invoked has fallen steadily in each of the last five years, and it is now rare.

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

- ☐ A. Sealed-cover material is more often classified for reasons of administrative convenience than because any real danger attends its release.
- ☐ B. Courts that receive material in a sealed cover take appreciably longer, on average, to dispose of the matters in which they do so.
- ☐ C. Several petitioners have said publicly that they would have abandoned their challenges had they known that such material existed.
- ☐ D. Errors later found in sealed material have typically been of a kind that only the affected party was placed to detect.

15. The reasoning in the argument is most closely paralleled by which of the following?

- ☐ A. An auditor defends a certificate by noting that the accounts were prepared by qualified staff; a critic replies that qualifications are unevenly distributed across firms.
- ☐ B. A journal defends withholding a paper's data by citing its expert referees; the reply is that refereeing cannot do what testing by outsiders does.
- ☐ C. A school defends an examination by noting that its questions were set by subject specialists; a critic replies that specialists often misjudge what pupils were taught.
- ☐ D. A regulator defends a licensing decision by pointing to the sheer volume of material it considered; a critic replies that volume is no substitute for relevance.

CRITICAL REASONING — ENVIRONMENT · THE SAVING THAT WENT SOMEWHERE ELSE (Q16–Q20)

The regulator's fifth-year review of the appliance standards programme reports a large success. Household lighting and cooling now draw, for each unit of service delivered, some forty per cent less electricity than they did before the standards, and the review converts that engineering gain into an avoided-emissions figure that has been entered in the national inventory.

The conversion is where the trouble begins. The figure is produced by multiplying the improvement in efficiency by the quantity of service that households used before the change. It therefore holds usage fixed, and usage is precisely what an efficiency gain disturbs. A lamp that costs a tenth as much to run is left burning in rooms nobody is sitting in; a cooler that is cheaper by the hour is run for more hours, and in the following year is replaced by a larger one whose running cost is still below that of the old small one; and the money the household genuinely saves is spent on something else, much of which also takes energy to make. Meter readings from the districts where the retrofit went deepest show total residential consumption flat rather than falling across the same period, while appliances per household rose.

None of this makes the standards a mistake. Those households are lighting more rooms and cooling more hours for the same outlay, which is a real gain in welfare and a perfectly respectable thing for a policy to buy. The name for what has happened is the rebound effect, and nobody disputes that it exists; the dispute is only ever about its size. The objection here is to the arithmetic, not to the programme. An avoided-emissions number computed on the assumption that behaviour does not answer to price is not a measurement of emissions avoided; it is a measurement of what would have been avoided in a population that does not exist.

The distinction matters because the number does not merely sit in a report. It is deposited in the inventory, netted against the shortfalls of other sectors, and used to argue that a further tightening of the standards will deliver a further slice of the same quantity. Where that slice fails to arrive, the shortfall surfaces years later in a sector that never made the claim. A programme may be worth every rupee it costs and still fail to do the one thing the ledger says it has done.

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

- ☐ A. The appliance standards have failed, and the programme that produced them ought to be withdrawn before it is tightened further.
- ☐ B. Households behave irrationally when they answer a fall in running costs by consuming more of the service than they did before.
- ☐ C. The programme's avoided-emissions figure does not measure emissions avoided, whatever else the standards may have achieved.
- ☐ D. Efficiency gains in lighting and cooling are systematically smaller than the engineering estimates of those gains suggest.

17. Which of the following is an assumption on which the argument relies?

- ☐ A. The households in the districts where the retrofit went deepest are representative, in income and appliance stock, of households everywhere else.
- ☐ B. No other sector's entry in the national inventory is computed by a method that holds the relevant behaviour fixed in the same way.
- ☐ C. The rise in hours of use was not due entirely to causes that would have raised consumption even had the old appliances stayed in place.
- ☐ D. The welfare gain from lighting more rooms and cooling more hours is smaller than the cost of the emissions that the extra use produces.

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

- ☐ A. Metered consumption stayed flat in those districts only because a new tariff brought unconnected households onto the grid in the same years.
- ☐ B. Some households replaced their old cooling units before the standards took effect and were therefore never counted within the programme.
- ☐ C. The engineering estimate was recomputed last year using a slightly lower figure for the efficiency of the older lighting stock.
- ☐ D. Other countries that adopted comparable standards have published avoided-emissions figures calculated on exactly the same assumption about usage.

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

- ☐ A. Surveys find that households underestimate the running cost of their older appliances by a wide margin before any retrofit is offered.



- ☐ B. Every other entry in the inventory is audited by an independent body, whereas the appliance figure is prepared and submitted by the regulator itself.
- ☐ C. Lighting accounts for a smaller share of household electricity than cooling does in most of the districts that were surveyed.
- ☐ D. Households given the new lamps raised their lit hours by a third over two years; matched households that kept the old lamps did not.

20. Which of the following arguments is most similar in its reasoning to the argument above?

- ☐ A. A hospital reports that a new drug halves the duration of an illness, although the trial measured only those patients who completed the whole course.
- ☐ B. A city claims its widened road saves each commuter twelve minutes, a figure got by applying the new speed to the old traffic volume that the widening has raised.
- ☐ C. A firm reports that its safety programme halved accidents, although the decline had begun two years before the programme started and has continued at the same rate.
- ☐ D. A ministry reports that a subsidy raised attendance, on the strength of registers kept by the very schools whose funding depends on the attendance they record.

RAPID FIRE — ONE-LINE RECALL

83 quick questions · not negatively marked

1. 'Mycorrhiza' means? _____
2. What does the fungus supply the tree? _____
3. What does the tree supply the fungus? _____
4. 'Filament' means? _____
5. 'Hypha' (plural hyphae)? _____
6. 'Mycelium' means? _____
7. 'Symbiosis' means? _____
8. 'Mutualism' vs 'parasitism'? _____
9. 'Commensalism'? _____
10. What is isotope labelling used for? _____
11. 'Tracer' in an experiment? _____
12. 'Photosynthesis' in one line? _____
13. A 'temperate' forest is? _____
14. 'Arresting', of a description? _____
15. 'Dependably' means? _____
16. 'Courier' means? _____
17. 'Withholding' means? _____
18. 'Terms of trade' means? _____
19. What does the passage say a metaphor can be, if not refuted? _____
20. 'Exacting' means? _____
21. 'Arena', used figuratively? _____
22. A 'stand' of trees? _____
23. Which two mineral nutrients does the passage name? _____
24. Three things a tracer cannot establish, per the passage? _____
25. 'Beneficiary' means? _____
26. 'Anthropomorphism' means? _____
27. 'Teleology' means? _____
28. 'Seedling' means? _____
29. 'Replicate' a study means? _____
30. 'Expository' writing does what? _____
31. 'Intuition', in one line? _____
32. Two conditions for trustworthy expert intuition? _____
33. Why must the environment come first? _____
34. 'Regularity' of an environment? _____
35. Why is confidence a poor guide to accuracy? _____
36. 'Fluency', in cognition? _____
37. 'Validity' of a judgement? _____
38. 'Deliberate practice'? _____
39. Why is a ten-year forecast hard to learn from? _____
40. 'Confounded' means? _____
41. What does a sincere but wrong expert show? _____
42. 'Heuristic' means? _____
43. 'Overconfidence effect'? _____
44. 'Hindsight bias'? _____
45. 'Illusion of validity'? _____
46. What does expert pattern recognition rest on? _____
47. 'Tacit knowledge'? _____
48. 'Seniority' vs 'expertise'? _____
49. 'Practitioner' means? _____
50. 'To interrogate', figuratively? _____
51. 'Domain', in this sense? _____
52. A judgement 'arriving whole' means? _____
53. 'Lawful', in the passage's sense? _____
54. 'Conviction' means? _____
55. 'A change of address for the question'? _____
56. 'Sealed cover' procedure? _____
57. 'Open justice' means? _____
58. 'Audi alteram partem'? _____
59. The two rules of natural justice? _____
60. 'Nemo iudex in causa sua'? _____
61. 'Ex parte' means? _____
62. 'In camera' proceedings? _____
63. 'Public interest immunity'? _____
64. 'Redacted' means? _____
65. A 'gist' given to a party? _____
66. 'Special advocate' / security-cleared counsel? _____
67. 'Adjudication' means? _____
68. A 'speaking order'? _____
69. Why are orders written and published? _____
70. What does cross-examination do? _____
71. 'Adversarial' system? _____
72. 'Inquisitorial' system? _____
73. 'Impartial' vs 'informed'? _____
74. 'Appellate review' means? _____
75. 'To defer', of a court? _____
76. 'Stale' evidence means? _____
77. 'Beyond reproach' means? _____
78. The 'operative reason' in a decision? _____
79. 'Characterisation' of a file? _____
80. 'Petitioner' means? _____
81. 'Rebound effect', in one line? _____
82. 'Jevons paradox'? _____
83. Direct vs indirect rebound? _____

