

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.
Free daily practice — clatgurukul.com/daily · Pass this sheet to a friend.

SECTION — READING COMPREHENSION

READING COMPREHENSION — ECONOMICS · THE SURPLUS NO ONE EARNED (Q1-Q5)

Among the categories economists inherited from the classical school, none has proved more slippery, or more quietly subversive, than the idea of economic rent. In ordinary speech rent is what a tenant pays a landlord, but the technical sense is broader and stranger: rent is the portion of any payment that exceeds what was necessary to call forth the service in question. A surgeon who would still operate for a tenth of her fee earns, on the remaining nine-tenths, a rent; so does the owner of a city-centre plot who did nothing to make the location valuable save hold the title while a growing population pressed in around it.

What makes the concept subversive is the wedge it drives between reward and contribution. A payment that merely covers the supplier's next-best alternative is, in the classical view, the honest price of effort or abstinence. Rent is something else: a surplus extracted because the recipient controls something scarce that others need and cannot readily reproduce. The scarcity may be natural, as with fertile land or a mineral seam; it may be artificial, conjured by a patent, a licence, or a zoning rule that keeps competitors out. In each case the income flows not from doing but from holding, and the holder's wealth rises with no answering increase in what society has to enjoy.

The analytical point carries an edge the classical economists did not shrink from. If part of what the fortunate receive is rent, then taxing that part need not blunt their effort, for by definition the service would have been supplied at a lower reward. A tax on effort may discourage work; a tax on pure rent discourages nothing but the leisure of collecting it. This is the thread Henry George seized to argue that the unearned increment of land values could fund the state without deadening enterprise. Whether or not one follows him there, the distinction survives as a standing question put to every large fortune: how much of this was made, and how much merely captured? The question is uncomfortable precisely because, once asked, it cannot easily be unasked.

1. Which of the following best captures the central idea the passage develops about economic rent?

- ☐ A. Economic rent is simply the ordinary payment a tenant makes to a landlord for the use of property, examined here in unusually close technical detail
- ☐ B. Rent is the surplus a payment carries beyond what was needed to call forth the service, so it rewards the holding of something scarce rather than any contribution of effort
- ☐ C. Economic rent can arise only from natural scarcities such as fertile land or mineral seams, and never from arrangements that human institutions have deliberately created through law or custom
- ☐ D. The classical economists were mistaken to treat rent as distinct from the honest wages of labour, a confusion that later thinkers such as Henry George at last corrected

2. The passage calls the idea of economic rent 'subversive' chiefly because it implies that:

- ☐ A. the services that happen to generate rent would cease altogether the moment their providers were paid even slightly less than the full amount they now receive
- ☐ B. every large fortune in a modern economy is, on close inspection, composed overwhelmingly or even entirely of captured rent rather than of any genuine reward
- ☐ C. part of what the fortunate are paid corresponds to no answering contribution to what society has to enjoy
- ☐ D. natural scarcities and artificial ones, such as patents and zoning rules, ought in simple fairness to be regulated by the state in precisely the same manner

3. The author's attitude toward the distinction between earned income and rent is best described as:

- ☐ A. analytical but pointed, pressing a distinction the author regards as uncomfortable yet unavoidable once it has been drawn
- ☐ B. openly indignant, denouncing those who collect rent as parasites who have defrauded the very society that enriches them
- ☐ C. detached and purely expository, laying out a technical category while scrupulously declining to suggest that it carries any moral or political bearing whatever
- ☐ D. nostalgic, lamenting that the clarity achieved by the classical economists has been wholly lost to the modern discipline that succeeded them

4. In the phrase 'the honest price of effort or abstinence,' the word 'abstinence' is used to mean:

- ☐ A. a deliberate and principled refusal to consume alcohol or other indulgences, taken up as a matter of private moral discipline
- ☐ B. the recipient's complete withdrawal from economic life in order to avoid the taint of collecting any form of unearned surplus
- ☐ C. the scarcity, whether natural or artificial, that allows a holder to extract a payment larger than the service strictly required
- ☐ D. the forgoing of present consumption, for which, like effort, a payment that merely covers the next-best alternative is a legitimate reward

5. Which of the following best describes how the passage is organised?

- ☐ A. It narrates the historical development of a single idea from its origin in antiquity, through each of its successive revisions, down to the present day
- ☐ B. It advances a specific tax proposal at the very outset and then defends that proposal, in turn, against three distinct and separately named objections
- ☐ C. It defines a technical category, draws out the wedge that category opens between reward and contribution, and closes by turning it into a standing question about wealth
- ☐ D. It compares two rival schools of economic thought at considerable length and finally adjudicates between them in favour of the one it judges the more rigorous, setting out its criteria in detail

READING COMPREHENSION — LAW & SOCIETY · MIRROR OR CURRENT (Q6-Q10)



It is tempting to picture the law as a mirror held up to society, faithfully recording the moral consensus of the age and adjusting as that consensus shifts. The picture is not wholly false, but it flatters the law by crediting it with a passivity it rarely shows. Statutes and judgments do reflect prevailing attitudes; they also, and often in the same breath, work to constitute them. The relationship is less that of a mirror to a face than of a current to the channel it both follows and deepens.

Consider the phenomenon that sociologists of law call the gap between the law on the books and the law in action. A rule may be enacted with great ceremony and yet remain, for years, a dead letter, unenforced because the very officials charged with applying it share the prejudices it was meant to correct. Here the written law outruns society and waits, impotent, for behaviour to catch up. But the opposite also occurs. A practice may be widely tolerated until a single prosecution, seized upon by the press, transforms what was common into what is unthinkable; the law has not recorded a change in sentiment so much as triggered one. In neither case is the law a neutral register of what people already believe.

The deeper difficulty is that the two functions, reflecting and constituting, cannot be cleanly separated even in principle. When a court declares that a long-standing practice offends a right, it speaks as though it were merely recognising a wrong that was always there; yet the act of recognition is partly what makes the wrong visible as a wrong, giving a diffuse unease a name and a remedy. The declaration is at once a finding and a making. Those who insist that judges should only find, never make, are asking for a distinction the practice of law does not honour; while those who say judges merely impose their will ignore how tightly the making is bound to materials, precedent, text, principle, that the judge did not invent. The law neither simply follows society nor simply leads it; it is one of the instruments through which a society argues with itself about what it is becoming.

6. The passage's central claim about the relationship between law and society is that:

- ☐ A. law neither simply mirrors society nor simply leads it, but is one of the instruments through which a society argues with itself about what it is becoming
- ☐ B. law is best understood as a faithful mirror that records the settled moral consensus of an age and adjusts automatically whenever that consensus happens to shift
- ☐ C. the written law almost always lags well behind social sentiment and must wait, entirely powerless, until ordinary behaviour at last catches up with what it demands
- ☐ D. the distinction between judges who find the law and judges who make it is a sound one that the daily practice of the courts carefully and quite consistently honours

7. The example of a rule that remains 'a dead letter, unenforced' is offered to illustrate that:

- ☐ A. written law, once it has been enacted with sufficient ceremony, invariably reshapes the conduct of the very officials who are charged with the duty of applying it
- ☐ B. social sentiment always moves faster than the written law and therefore renders much formal legislation redundant almost as soon as it is passed by a legislature
- ☐ C. a prosecution seized upon by the press is the single most reliable mechanism by which a widely tolerated practice can be turned into an unthinkable one
- ☐ D. enacted law can run ahead of prevailing behaviour and sit inert, so its mere presence on the books does not by itself establish that society has changed

8. The author's stance toward those who insist that 'judges should only find, never make' is best described as:

- ☐ A. warmly approving, treating their position as the very one the passage has been written throughout to vindicate and recommend to its reader
- ☐ B. gently corrective, holding that they ask for a distinction the practice of law does not in fact honour
- ☐ C. fiercely contemptuous, dismissing their view as a transparent cover for the naked imposition of judicial will upon an unwilling and unconsulted public
- ☐ D. wholly indifferent, since the passage regards the entire question of finding versus making as a merely verbal quibble of no real consequence at all

9. When the author says statutes and judgments 'work to constitute' prevailing attitudes, 'constitute' most nearly means:

- ☐ A. to tabulate and formally record attitudes that are already fully and independently settled in the public mind before any law has spoken
- ☐ B. to make up the written membership or formal composition of a legislative body charged with debating and enacting new statutes
- ☐ C. to help bring those attitudes into being and give them shape, rather than merely registering them after the fact
- ☐ D. to authorise or empower a subordinate official to act, in the narrow technical sense the word carries in the law of delegated powers

10. Which of the following best characterises the movement of the argument across the three paragraphs?

- ☐ A. It opens with a firm thesis, offers a single extended example in its support, and then closes by conceding that the thesis cannot finally be sustained
- ☐ B. It presents two historical periods in strict sequence and argues that the law behaved purely as a mirror in the first and purely as a current in the second
- ☐ C. It poses a sharp question in the first paragraph, answers that question decisively in the second, and then devotes the whole of the third to rebutting a single named critic, point by patient point
- ☐ D. It unsettles a familiar image, shows the law running first ahead of society and then behind it, and deepens the point into the claim that reflecting and constituting cannot be cleanly separated

SECTION — CRITICAL REASONING

CRITICAL REASONING — POLITICAL ECONOMY · A LOW PRICE ON AN EMPTY SHELF (Q11-Q15)

In the aftermath of the storm, with bottled water and generators suddenly scarce, the legislature has moved to make 'price gouging' a criminal offence, fixing a penalty for selling an essential good at more than its pre-disaster price. The measure is popular, and its motive is decent: no one should profiteer from a neighbour's distress. But popularity and decency are not the same as efficacy, and on its own terms the law is likely to deepen the very shortage it deplores.

A price is not merely a sum demanded; it is a signal and an incentive. When the price of generators triples after a storm, the does two things at once. It tells buyers to take only what they truly need, so that the man who wants a generator to keep his in outbids the man who wants one for mere convenience. And it tells suppliers, including those three states away with a tri



spare, that it is worth the long haul to bring more in. Freeze the price at its pre-storm level and both signals fall silent. The first buyers clear the shelves, hoarding at yesterday's price what tomorrow's buyers will not find at any price, and the distant supplier, offered no premium for his trouble, stays home.

The defender of the law will say that rationing by price is unjust, since it favours the deep-pocketed over the needy. The objection has force, but it is an argument for a different remedy, direct public distribution, vouchers, a stockpile, not for a ceiling that suppresses supply while doing nothing to steer what remains to the most urgent uses. A poor family that can find no generator at the controlled price is not helped by the knowledge that, had one been available, it would have been cheap. The law offers the comfort of a low price printed on an empty shelf.

None of this denies that raw markets can be cruel, or that the state has a role when disaster strikes. It denies only that a price ceiling meets that role. A policy that feels like protection and functions like prohibition has confused the symbol of fairness with its substance.

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

- ☐ A. No one should ever be permitted to profit in any manner from selling essential goods to neighbours during the immediate aftermath of a serious natural disaster
- ☐ B. Rationing scarce goods by price is wholly just, because the buyer willing to pay the most for a generator is always the one whose need for it is in fact the most urgent
- ☐ C. The anti-price-gouging law is the wrong instrument, since by freezing the price it is likely to deepen the very shortage it is meant to relieve
- ☐ D. The state has no legitimate role of any kind to play in the distribution of essential goods whenever a storm or some comparable disaster has struck a community

12. The argument that a price ceiling deepens the shortage depends on which of the following assumptions?

- ☐ A. A higher price actually induces additional supply and more sparing use, so that suppressing the price removes a response that would otherwise have occurred
- ☐ B. The owners of generators and bottled water are, taken as a class, morally indifferent to the suffering of the very neighbours to whom they are selling their goods
- ☐ C. Direct public distribution of essential goods, whether through vouchers or through a stockpile, is administratively impossible for any government to organise after a disaster
- ☐ D. Buyers caught in a disaster are entirely unable to tell the difference between a good they genuinely need and one they merely want for the sake of convenience

13. Which of the following, if true, would most WEAKEN the author's argument?

- ☐ A. After previous storms, retailers who raised their prices steeply were widely condemned in the local press and lost a great deal of customer goodwill that took years to rebuild
- ☐ B. In the disaster zone the roads are impassable for weeks, so no additional supply can physically reach the area no matter what price sellers are permitted to charge
- ☐ C. Some of the buyers who cleared the shelves at the controlled price did in fact have urgent medical needs that the generators they bought were able to meet
- ☐ D. A neighbouring state passed an almost identical anti-price-gouging law many years ago and has retained it, with broad public approval, through several subsequent storms

14. Which of the following, if true, would most STRENGTHEN the author's argument?

- ☐ A. Surveys taken soon after the storm show that most residents regarded the sudden tripling of generator prices as deeply offensive and morally objectionable
- ☐ B. The legislature debated the anti-gouging measure for several weeks and consulted a number of professional economists before finally deciding to enact it into law
- ☐ C. The penalty attached to the new offence is modest, so that a determined seller could in principle pay the fine and still profit from charging the higher price
- ☐ D. In regions that allowed prices to rise after past storms, out-of-state suppliers arrived with trucked-in goods several days sooner than in regions that had capped prices

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

- ☐ A. A charity that feeds the hungry during a famine deserves praise, because relieving present suffering is a worthy end whatever longer-term effects the relief may happen to produce
- ☐ B. A cap on apartment rents, imposed to protect tenants, is self-defeating, because by holding rents below the market level it discourages new building and shrinks the very housing supply tenants need
- ☐ C. A tariff on imported steel should be welcomed by domestic producers, since it raises the price their foreign competitors must charge and thereby protects local jobs within the industry
- ☐ D. A speed limit on a dangerous road is justified even if a few drivers resent it, because the reduction in fatal accidents clearly outweighs the modest inconvenience the limit imposes

CRITICAL REASONING — SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY POLICY · CERTIFYING A SNAPSHOT (Q16-Q20)

A prominent advisory panel has proposed that artificial-intelligence systems be made subject to a licensing regime modelled on the approval of new medicines: before any system could be released to the public, its developer would have to demonstrate safety and efficacy to a regulator, as a pharmaceutical firm must for a drug. The proposal borrows the prestige of a familiar and largely trusted system, and that is precisely its weakness, for the analogy on which it rests does not hold where it matters most.

A drug is a fixed compound. Once its molecule is characterised and its trials are complete, what the patient swallows next year is chemically identical to what was tested, and the harms it can do, while serious, fall within a bounded and studied range. A general-purpose software system is none of these things. It is updated continuously, repurposed by users in ways its makers never foresaw, and combined with other systems to produce behaviours that no pre-release trial could have exhibited. To 'approve' such a system once, at the moment of release, is to certify a snapshot of something that will not stand still, and to grant the reassuring stamp of a regulator to a product whose risks mostly emerge in use.

There is a further disanalogy. Drug trials work because the relevant outcome, does the patient recover, does the tumour measurable within the trial and against a placebo. The harms that most worry the panel, the erosion of public trust, the auto



discrimination, the concentration of power, are diffuse, contested, and realised over years across whole populations. They are not the sort of thing a pre-market trial of a single product can detect, because they arise from how millions of deployments interact with institutions the trial cannot contain.

To say the medicine model is the wrong instrument is not to say that nothing should be done. It is to say that a regime built to certify a stable object at a single moment is poorly suited to a shifting one whose dangers are downstream and systemic. Fixing attention on a pre-release gate may even do harm, by licensing complacency about everything that happens after the gate has swung open.

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

- ☐ A. Artificial-intelligence systems pose no genuine risks to the public at all and therefore require no form of regulatory oversight of any kind whatsoever
- ☐ B. The approval system used for new medicines has worked so poorly in recent practice that it ought now to be abolished and replaced with something entirely new
- ☐ C. A drug-style pre-market approval regime is the wrong instrument for AI, because it is built to certify a stable object at a single moment
- ☐ D. The developers of artificial-intelligence systems should be left free to release whatever products they wish, since no regulator could ever grasp the technology well enough to judge it

17. The argument that approving a system 'once, at the moment of release' is inadequate depends on assuming that:

- ☐ A. the risks of such a system arise substantially from its continued updating and its use after release, and not merely from its state at the moment it is first certified
- ☐ B. the regulators who approve new medicines are considerably more competent and more diligent than any body that could realistically be assembled to oversee software systems
- ☐ C. software developers will always act in bad faith and will deliberately conceal the true capabilities of their systems from any regulator that is set over them
- ☐ D. the diffuse harms that worry the panel, such as the automation of discrimination, are in truth far less serious than the bounded harms that a single dangerous drug can cause

18. Which of the following, if true, would most WEAKEN the author's argument?

- ☐ A. Several of the large pharmaceutical firms that already operate under the existing drug-approval regime have expressed strong opposition to extending anything like it to the software industry
- ☐ B. The proposed licensing regime would in fact require a fresh approval after every significant update and would subject each system to continuous post-release monitoring by the regulator
- ☐ C. The advisory panel that made the proposal includes a number of distinguished computer scientists as well as several experts drawn from the field of public health
- ☐ D. Many general-purpose software systems are in practice updated far less frequently than their own developers' marketing materials would lead an outside observer to believe

19. The 'further disanalogy' the author raises in the third paragraph is that, unlike the outcomes of a drug trial, the harms that most worry the panel are:

- ☐ A. diffuse, contested, and realised over years across whole populations, rather than measurable within a trial and against a placebo
- ☐ B. entirely imaginary, having been invented by critics of the technology who wish only to see its further development halted on principle
- ☐ C. so immediate and so sharply defined that no competent regulator could possibly fail to notice them during even the briefest pre-release review
- ☐ D. confined to a small and readily identifiable group of early users who can easily be compensated after the fact should any injury happen to occur

20. The author writes that rejecting the medicine model 'is not to say that nothing should be done.' Including this sentence most helps the argument by:

- ☐ A. conceding that the medicine model is, after careful reflection, the correct approach to regulating AI after all, and quietly withdrawing the objection just raised against it
- ☐ B. introducing fresh empirical evidence, drawn from the long history of drug regulation, that pre-market gates reliably prevent the very harms their designers intend them to prevent
- ☐ C. proving conclusively that a regime of continuous post-release monitoring would certainly succeed in every case where the panel's proposed pre-market gate is bound to fail
- ☐ D. pre-empting the charge that the author opposes all regulation, so that the critique is confined to the suitability of one instrument rather than to the case for acting at all

RAPID FIRE — ONE-LINE RECALL

20 quick questions · not negatively marked

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. 'Economic rent' rewards the holder of what? _____ | 11. A 'regressive' tax falls hardest on? _____ |
| 2. Henry George is associated with a tax on? _____ | 12. 'Redress' means? _____ |
| 3. A 'moot' point is one that is? _____ | 13. Idiom: 'a level playing field' means? _____ |
| 4. 'Ostensible' authority means authority that is? _____ | 14. One-word: a government by the few. _____ |
| 5. Name the fallacy: attacking the person, not the argument. _____ | 15. 'Equitable' distribution is one that is? _____ |
| 6. 'Price gouging' laws cap prices during? _____ | 16. Fallacy: only two options offered when more exist? _____ |
| 7. One who studies the origin of words? _____ | 17. 'Onerous' terms are? _____ |
| 8. 'Salutary' means? _____ | 18. 'Augment' means? _____ |
| 9. The fallacy of assuming a cause from mere sequence? _____ | 19. A 'subsidy' is a payment to? _____ |
| 10. 'Perfunctory' effort is? _____ | 20. 'Justiciable' means capable of being? _____ |

