

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 · COUNTING INTO BEING: THE CENSUS AND THE COLUMN (Q1-Q6)

When the colonial state in India set out to count its subjects, it believed it was taking a photograph. The first all-India enumeration, conducted unevenly between 1867 and 1872, and the synchronous census of 1881 that followed it, were imagined as exercises in pure description: officials would record what was already there, and the resulting tables would tell administrators whom they governed. Yet a census is never only a photograph. To count people one must first decide what kinds of people there are, and that decision, made in an office and printed on a schedule, has a way of travelling back into the very world it claims merely to describe.

Caste was the category in which this return journey proved most consequential. Before the census, caste identities across much of the subcontinent were layered, local and negotiable; a community might describe itself one way to a neighbouring village and another way to a temple or a court. The schedule allowed no such fluidity. Each household had to supply one name, and the name had to fit a column. When Herbert Risley, as Census Commissioner for 1901, resolved to arrange castes in an order of social precedence, the effect was dramatic. Caste associations sprang up to petition the superintendents, submitting genealogies, claiming higher varna status and demanding to be recorded under more prestigious names. An enumeration intended to measure hierarchy became an arena in which hierarchy was contested and, in being contested, hardened.

It would be too simple to conclude that the census invented caste; the petitions themselves show that people already cared intensely about rank. What the census changed was the form of that caring. A distinction that had once been argued locally, face to face, was now argued before the state, in writing, and with an eye to a printed table that would be cited for decades. Historians who read the census reports as a window onto nineteenth-century society therefore face a peculiar problem: the window partly painted the scene it shows. The lesson is not that official statistics are worthless, but that the act of classification is itself a historical event, and must be read as one.

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

- ☐ A. The colonial census created caste as a social institution in regions of India where no notion of rank had existed before the 1870s
- ☐ B. The census, conceived as neutral description, reshaped the identities it recorded, so its classifications must be read as historical events
- ☐ C. Census reports are of no value to historians, because colonial officials systematically falsified the caste returns submitted to them
- ☐ D. Herbert Risley's ranking of castes in 1901 was the first occasion on which Indians began to take an interest in questions of social rank

2. It can most reasonably be inferred from the passage that the caste associations of 1901 petitioned the superintendents because:

- ☐ A. colonial officials had secretly organised them in order to lend public legitimacy to a ranking that had already been settled in advance
- ☐ B. they wished to abolish the practice of recording caste altogether, regarding any official enumeration of caste as degrading to every community
- ☐ C. every community that petitioned was certain in advance of securing the higher varna status it claimed before the superintendents
- ☐ D. they expected that a ranking fixed in an official printed table would carry weight long after the enumeration itself was over

3. The author's attitude towards the view that the census merely 'took a photograph' of Indian society is best described as:

- ☐ A. measured revision, rejecting that view while also declining the equally simple claim that the census invented caste
- ☐ B. polemical condemnation, accusing colonial officials of deliberately manufacturing divisions among their subjects
- ☐ C. uncritical endorsement, treating the census tables as the most faithful record of nineteenth-century society
- ☐ D. weary resignation, concluding that no reliable knowledge of the colonial past can be recovered from any record

4. As used in the second paragraph, the word 'negotiable' most nearly means:

- ☐ A. capable of being transferred to another person in exchange for payment, in the manner of a bank draft
- ☐ B. able to be crossed or travelled over safely, in the way a river ford or a mountain pass might be
- ☐ C. open to adjustment according to the context in which, and the audience to whom, it was stated
- ☐ D. subject to formal bargaining between rival parties before an arbitrator appointed by the state

5. The third paragraph functions chiefly to:

- ☐ A. qualify the preceding account by rejecting an overstated reading of it and restating its point more precisely
- ☐ B. introduce fresh archival evidence that overturns the account of Risley's ranking given in the second paragraph
- ☐ C. move the discussion from caste to a separate concern about the accuracy of colonial population totals
- ☐ D. summarise the earlier paragraphs without adding any claim that they had not already made quite explicit

6. Which of the following situations is most closely analogous to the process the passage describes in its second and third paragraphs?

- ☐ A. A weather station records rainfall with a faulty gauge, so that its published district totals understate the real rainfall for several years
- ☐ B. A state declares a new public holiday with no basis in any earlier custom, and citizens gradually begin to mark it with festivities of their own
- ☐ C. A ranking that lists college departments by publication counts leads departments, already rivals for prestige, to lobby its compilers and recast their work
- ☐ D. A museum curator arranges ancient coins strictly by their date of minting, and visitors find the history of the kingdom to follow as a result



READING COMPREHENSION — ARTS & CULTURE · THREE MINUTES A SIDE (Q7-Q12)

When Gauhar Jaan sang into a recording horn in Calcutta in 1902, she was asked to do something no court musician had been asked before: to finish, and to finish quickly. A khayal performance in the salons of the period might unfold for an hour or more, the singer lingering over the phrases of the alap until the character of the raga had been coaxed fully into view. The shellac disc allowed roughly three minutes a side. At the close of each recording she announced her name, partly so that engineers in distant factories could label the matrix correctly, and the announcement has since become one of the most famous signatures in the history of Indian music.

The compression the disc demanded was not merely a matter of cutting. A musician who simply recorded the first three minutes of an hour-long performance would offer listeners an introduction with no destination. What the early recording artists developed instead was a miniature: a performance that gestured at the slow unfolding, moved briskly through the composition and arrived at a climax within the time available. Critics of the period often regarded these records as souvenirs, pale echoes of the real thing heard in a mehfil. Yet the miniature was a genuine form with its own disciplines, and it reached listeners who would never have been admitted to a patron's salon.

The longer consequence was subtler. Gramophone records, and later radio, made the voice of a particular performer reproducible and comparable. A student in Lahore could study the phrasing of a singer in Bombay without ever meeting her; a listener could replay a passage until it was memorised. Gharana loyalties, once sustained by the closed transmission of knowledge from teacher to disciple, began to compete with a public archive that anyone with a gramophone could consult. Some guardians of tradition saw in this a dilution, the guarded knowledge of a lineage turned into merchandise sold over a shop counter. Others saw an enlargement, a music released from the patronage of a few households. Both were partly right, and the question the three-minute disc first posed, whether a tradition survives by being guarded or by being heard, has not been settled by the longer formats that followed it.

7. The primary purpose of the passage is to:

- ☐ A. argue that early gramophone records degraded Hindustani music and deserve to be regarded only as souvenirs of it
- ☐ B. recount the career of Gauhar Jaan and assess her standing among the leading singers of her own generation
- ☐ C. show how a technical limit of early recording produced a new form and unsettled older modes of transmission
- ☐ D. explain the engineering process by which shellac discs were manufactured and labelled in distant factories

8. The author's attitude towards the critics who regarded early records as 'souvenirs' is best described as:

- ☐ A. disagreement, since the author holds that the miniature was a genuine form with disciplines of its own
- ☐ B. agreement, since the author endorses their judgement that records were pale echoes of the live mehfil
- ☐ C. contempt, since the author treats their view as mere snobbery unworthy of any serious reply at all
- ☐ D. neutrality, since the author reports their opinion without ever indicating a view of its merits

9. In the third paragraph, the phrase 'closed transmission' refers to:

- ☐ A. the sealed packaging in which fragile shellac discs were shipped from the factories to their buyers
- ☐ B. the practice of performing only in the private salons of patrons, and never in public concert halls
- ☐ C. the refusal of gharana musicians to permit their performances to be broadcast over the early radio
- ☐ D. the handing down of musical knowledge within a lineage, from a teacher to the disciples he chose

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

- ☐ A. The longer recording formats that followed the disc have finally resolved whether a tradition should be guarded or heard
- ☐ B. Both those who feared dilution and those who welcomed enlargement identified a real effect of reproducible recording
- ☐ C. Gharana loyalties disappeared entirely once gramophone records became widely available across the subcontinent
- ☐ D. The spoken announcement of the singer's name was the most significant musical innovation of the early recordings

11. The reference to 'a student in Lahore' who studies 'a singer in Bombay' serves mainly to:

- ☐ A. show that Lahore had become the leading centre of Hindustani music in the first decades of the century
- ☐ B. suggest that students who learned from records lacked the discipline of those taught in person by a guru
- ☐ C. prove that gramophone records cost far less at the time than lessons with an established gharana teacher
- ☐ D. illustrate how recording allowed a performer's style to be studied without any personal contact at all

12. Each of the following is stated or implied in the passage EXCEPT:

- ☐ A. the early recording artists generally recorded just the opening minutes of a full-length performance and stopped there
- ☐ B. the spoken announcement at the close of a recording served partly to help engineers label the matrix correctly
- ☐ C. recorded miniatures reached listeners who would never have been admitted to the private salon of a patron
- ☐ D. some guardians of tradition regarded the sale of records as turning a lineage's knowledge into merchandise

SECTION — CRITICAL REASONING

CRITICAL REASONING — LAW & RIGHTS · THE PRICE OF WALKING OUT (Q13-Q18)

The law of bail in India is, on paper, generous to the poor. Section 485 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, carrying forward the language of the old Code, directs that the amount of every bond be fixed with due regard to the circumstances of the case and that it shall not be excessive. Courts have repeated for decades that bail is the rule and jail the exception. Yet prison statistics tell a different story. The great majority of those held in Indian prisons are undertrials, and a substantial number of them remain inside after bail has been granted, because they cannot furnish the surety the order demands.

The reason lies in a habit that has outlived its justification. Magistrates routinely attach to a bail order the condition that the accused produce one or two solvent local sureties, persons of property who will stand liable for a fixed sum if the accused absconds. The condition is meant to secure attendance at trial. For an accused with a settled family and propertied acquaintances, it is a formality completed in an afternoon. For a migrant labourer arrested far from home, with no landowning relative within a hundred kilometres, it is a wall. Two people charged with the same offence and released by the same order walk out on different days, or one of them does not walk out at all, and the only difference between them is what they own and whom they know.

The Supreme Court recognised this as early as Hussainara Khatoon in 1979, observing that a bail system which assesses risk by the wealth of the accused operates harshly against the poor. The surety condition does not measure the likelihood that a person will appear in court; it measures access to property. A person bound by her own bond, with reporting obligations and, where the facts require, non-monetary conditions, gives the court a guarantee aimed at the actual risk rather than at her bank balance. It follows



personal bond, not the surety, should be the default form of bail, and that a surety should be demanded only where the court records specific reasons why nothing less will secure the attendance of the accused.

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

- ☐ A. Section 485 of the new Sanhita should be amended to abolish every monetary condition of bail for all categories of offence
- ☐ B. Undertrials outnumber convicts in Indian prisons chiefly because magistrates refuse to grant bail even in the most minor cases
- ☐ C. Migrant labourers should be released on bail automatically, whatever the nature of the offence of which they are accused
- ☐ D. Personal bonds should be the default form of bail, with sureties required only where a court records specific reasons

14. The argument relies on which of the following assumptions?

- ☐ A. Magistrates who attach surety conditions do so with the deliberate intention of keeping poor accused persons in custody
- ☐ B. The risk that an accused will abscond is not substantially lower when a property-owning surety stands liable for her
- ☐ C. No undertrial prisoner who has been granted bail has ever been unable to furnish a personal bond in her own name
- ☐ D. The ruling in Hussainara Khatoon has been formally written into the text of the new criminal procedure code

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

- ☐ A. Some accused persons released on personal bonds have attended every one of their hearings without a single lapse
- ☐ B. Many magistrates already add a sentence or two to the bail order explaining why they have imposed a surety
- ☐ C. Among comparable accused, those released on personal bonds absconded several times as often as those with sureties
- ☐ D. Prison overcrowding in India also results from slow trials, frequent adjournments and vacancies among judges

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

- ☐ A. Accused released with sureties failed to appear no less often than comparable accused released on personal bonds
- ☐ B. The sum fixed in most surety bonds has risen steadily over the past decade, broadly in line with general inflation
- ☐ C. Several High Courts have publicly expressed concern about the number of undertrials held in their states' prisons
- ☐ D. Migrant labourers are arrested more often than other groups for offences against property in India's large cities

17. Which of the following arguments is most similar in its reasoning to the argument in the third paragraph?

- ☐ A. A college that admits students on entrance marks alone should add interviews, since a single bad day can distort a candidate's marks
- ☐ B. A rule that borrowers show a guarantor's land deeds tests family property rather than ability to repay, so lenders should judge the borrower's own income
- ☐ C. A city that charges a fee for parking permits should raise that fee, since the present fee is too low to keep cars out of the crowded centre
- ☐ D. A hospital that sees patients in order of arrival should triage by severity instead, since the earliest arrivals are often the least seriously ill

18. Which of the following principles, if valid, would most help to justify the conclusion drawn in the final paragraph?

- ☐ A. No accused person should face any condition of release whatsoever, since the presumption of innocence forbids every restraint before conviction
- ☐ B. Bail conditions long settled in practice should be retained, since a settled condition embodies the accumulated experience of trial courts
- ☐ C. Orders passed by magistrates in bail matters should be inspected at regular intervals by the High Court of the state in which they sit
- ☐ D. A condition imposed to secure a legitimate aim should be fitted to the risk that aim concerns, and a heavier one should need stated reasons

CRITICAL REASONING — ENVIRONMENT · FREE POWER, FALLING WATER (Q19-Q24)

In much of north-western India the water table is falling year after year, by a metre or more in the worst-affected blocks, and the Central Ground Water Board's assessments classify a large share of Punjab's blocks as over-exploited. The familiar explanation is that farmers grow too much paddy, a thirsty crop poorly suited to the region's climate. The familiar remedy is exhortation, supplemented by regulation of the calendar: campaigns urging diversification into maize or pulses, and laws such as Punjab's Preservation of Subsoil Water Act of 2009, which forbids transplanting paddy before mid-June so that less water is lost to the fierce heat of early summer.

These measures treat the symptom. The deeper cause is the price of pumping, which for most farmers is zero. Electricity for agricultural tube wells is supplied free or at a flat charge unrelated to consumption, so the cost of drawing one more hour of water is nothing but the farmer's own time. A farmer who knows that the water he leaves in the ground will simply be pumped by his neighbour has no reason to leave it there; a farmer who pays nothing for power has no reason to economise on it either. The result is a race to the bottom of the aquifer, in which the prudent farmer merely subsidises the imprudent one. Under these conditions, asking farmers to conserve is asking each of them to bear a private cost for a public benefit that others will capture.

Pilot schemes point the way out. Where farmers have been offered a fixed entitlement of units and paid in cash for every unit they leave unused, consumption has fallen, and the farmers have been no worse off, because the value of the subsidy to them is unchanged. The lesson is that the subsidy need not be withdrawn; it must merely be decoupled from use. A farmer who can convert saved power into cash now faces, for the first time, a real price for every hour his pump runs. Until the cost of pumping to the farmer reflects the scarcity of what is pumped, no crop campaign and no calendar rule will halt the decline, because every incentive the farmer faces points the other way.

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

- ☐ A. Groundwater decline will not be halted until the cost of pumping to the farmer reflects the scarcity of the water
- ☐ B. Farmers in Punjab should abandon paddy entirely and grow maize or pulses on all of their land in its place
- ☐ C. The 2009 law delaying paddy transplanting has had no effect whatsoever on the water lost in early summer
- ☐ D. Free electricity for agriculture should be withdrawn at once and replaced by full commercial tariffs

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

- ☐ A. Paddy is the only crop in Punjab that draws on groundwater for its irrigation during the summer months
- ☐ B. Farmers in the region are unaware that the water table beneath their own fields is falling every year



- ☐ C. Farmers' pumping decisions respond materially to the cost they bear for each unit of power they use
- ☐ D. The cash paid for unused units in the pilot schemes came from sources outside the state's own budget
- 21. Which of the following, if true, would most seriously weaken the argument?**
- ☐ A. Some farmers in the pilot villages declined to enrol, preferring to keep the existing flat-charge arrangement
- ☐ B. Where farmers in a neighbouring state pay full metered tariffs, the water table is falling just as fast
- ☐ C. Recharge of groundwater from monsoon rainfall varies considerably from one year to the next in the region
- ☐ D. Installing a meter on every agricultural tube well would cost the distribution companies a substantial sum
- 22. The statement that a farmer 'who knows that the water he leaves in the ground will simply be pumped by his neighbour has no reason to leave it there' plays which role in the argument?**
- ☐ A. It is the main conclusion, which the remainder of the argument is offered in order to support
- ☐ B. It is evidence drawn from the pilot schemes confirming that decoupling the subsidy actually works
- ☐ C. It is an objection to the author's position that the author raises and then goes on to rebut
- ☐ D. It is a consideration explaining why exhortation to conserve is unlikely to succeed on its own
- 23. Which of the following would be most useful to know in evaluating the argument's reliance on the pilot schemes?**
- ☐ A. Whether the electricity supplied to the pilot villages was generated from coal or from renewable sources
- ☐ B. Whether the cash for unused units was credited to the farmers' accounts monthly or once in a year
- ☐ C. Whether the farmers who volunteered differed from typical farmers in how easily they could pump less
- ☐ D. Whether the pilot schemes were announced by the state government or by the power distribution utilities
- 24. If the statements in the passage are true, which of the following is most strongly supported by them?**
- ☐ A. Farmers who enrolled in the pilot schemes ended up with a larger total income from the subsidy than they had received under the old flat charge
- ☐ B. A farmer on a flat agricultural charge who pumps fewer hours does not thereby reduce the amount he pays for electricity in that season
- ☐ C. Delaying paddy transplanting to mid-June raises the total quantity of groundwater that farmers in Punjab pump over the whole season
- ☐ D. If free agricultural power were withdrawn entirely, the fall in the water table across Punjab would come to an end almost immediately

RAPID FIRE — ONE-LINE RECALL

45 quick questions · not negatively marked

- In which year was the first synchronous all-India census held? _____
- Who was Census Commissioner for the 1901 census in the passage? _____
- Per the passage, what did the census change about caste? _____
- 'Negotiable' (of an identity) means? _____
- 'Precedence' means? _____
- Who recorded in Calcutta in 1902, announcing her name at the end? _____
- Roughly how long did one side of an early shellac disc last? _____
- A 'gharana' is? _____
- A 'mehfil' is? _____
- The slow, unmetred opening of a raga is the? _____
- Which BNSS section says a bail bond shall not be excessive? _____
- Which 1979 case first flagged the plight of undertrials? _____
- To 'abscond' means? _____
- An 'undertrial' is a prisoner who is? _____
- A 'solvent' surety is one who? _____
- Punjab's 2009 water law regulates the timing of? _____
- Which body classifies blocks as 'over-exploited' for groundwater? _____
- 'Decoupled' means? _____
- 'Exhortation' means? _____
- Name the CR question type: 'what must be true for the argument to hold?' _____
- Between which years was the first, uneven all-India enumeration conducted? _____
- What did the colonial state believe a census was, per the passage's metaphor? _____
- Before the census, caste identities were described as layered, local and? _____
- How many caste names could each household supply on the census schedule? _____
- What did Risley resolve to arrange castes by in 1901? _____
- What did caste associations submit to the superintendents to support their claims? _____
- Petitioning castes claimed a higher status in which traditional fourfold order? _____
- By being contested in the census, hierarchy did what, per the passage? _____
- Does the author hold that the census invented caste? _____
- The census 'window', says the author, partly did what to the scene? _____
- Per the passage, what must be read as a historical event? _____
- 'Enumeration' means? _____
- 'Synchronous' means? _____
- 'Consequential' means? _____
- In which city did Gauhar Jaan make her 1902 recordings? _____
- Into what device did early singers perform for recording? _____
- Early gramophone discs were made of which material? _____
- Why did Gauhar Jaan announce her name at the end of each record? _____
- Which vocal form might last an hour or more in the salons? _____
- What form did early recording artists develop for the three-minute limit? _____
- Critics of the period dismissed early records as what? _____
- Which broadcast medium followed the gramophone in making voices reproducible? _____
- A student in which city could study a singer in Bombay through records? _____
- What competed with gharana loyalties once records spread? _____
- Guardians of tradition feared records caused what? _____

