

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 TREE THAT FRUITS OUT OF TURN (Q1-Q6)

Walk through a tropical forest in the lean months, when most trees have finished fruiting and the next flush is weeks away, and you may come upon one tree loud with birds. Hornbills, barbets and bulbuls crowd its crown, fruit bats arrive at dusk, and below it macaques and civets pick through the fallen crop. The tree is very often a fig. Ecologists describe figs as keystone resources, species whose importance to a community is far out of proportion to their abundance, and the explanation lies in an odd partnership and the timetable it imposes.

Each of the roughly eight hundred species of fig depends on tiny wasps for pollination, and in most cases each fig species has a wasp of its own. The 'fruit' is really an enclosed bowl of flowers, the syconium, which a female wasp enters through a narrow opening, pollinating the flowers as she lays her eggs. Her offspring mature inside and mate, and the females fly out dusted with pollen in search of a receptive fig. Adult wasps live only a day or two. A wasp population can therefore persist only if, somewhere within flying range, some tree is ready to receive it at almost every moment, and so a fig population cannot afford to flower all at once. Individual trees fruit on their own schedules, out of step with their neighbours and often with the seasons.

What keeps the wasp alive is what feeds the forest. Because some fig is nearly always in fruit, frugivores have a fallback when other food fails. A fig crop is not especially nourishing; figs tend to be watery and low in fat compared with, say, the oily fruits of laurels. Their value lies in reliability rather than richness, and during the dry season in some Asian forests figs make up the bulk of what hornbills eat.

This carries a lesson for restoration that is easily missed. Planting schemes are usually judged by the number of saplings that survive, and a fast-growing timber species scores well on that measure. But a replanted patch that fruits in a single synchronised burst offers animals a feast followed by a famine, and the seed-dispersers a forest needs to rebuild itself may not stay. A handful of figs, scattered and left to keep their own irregular time, may do more for the return of a forest than a thousand uniform trees.

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

- ☐ A. Figs are the most nourishing fruit open to forest animals and should therefore dominate every single replanted patch
- ☐ B. Figs sustain forests because their pollination forces staggered fruiting, which gives animals a dependable food
- ☐ C. Fig wasps are the true keystone species of tropical forests, since without them no forest tree could set fruit
- ☐ D. Restoration schemes fail chiefly because planters choose fast-growing timber over slow-growing native trees

2. It can be inferred from the passage that if every fig tree of one species within a wasp's flying range flowered at the same moment, then:

- ☐ A. the fruit-eating birds of that forest would at once turn to the oily fruits of laurels to meet their needs
- ☐ B. the trees would bear larger and more nourishing crops, since all their pollinators would arrive together
- ☐ C. the wasp would survive by entering the figs of another species, since most fig species share their wasps
- ☐ D. the wasp population could die out in the gap before those trees were next ready to receive the insects

3. The author mentions 'the oily fruits of laurels' primarily in order to:

- ☐ A. show by contrast that the worth of figs to animals lies in their constancy rather than their nourishment
- ☐ B. suggest that laurels, not figs, should be the first species planted in any forest restoration scheme
- ☐ C. explain why hornbills prefer laurel fruit to figs whenever both happen to be available at the same time
- ☐ D. show that frugivores need fat in their diet and so cannot survive on figs alone during the long dry season

4. As used in the third paragraph, the word 'fallback' most nearly means:

- ☐ A. a decline in numbers
- ☐ B. a delayed harvest season
- ☐ C. a reserve to rely on
- ☐ D. a lesser reward

5. Which of the following best describes the organisation of the passage?

- ☐ A. A striking observation is posed, a biological mechanism explains it, and a lesson for practice is drawn
- ☐ B. A popular theory is stated, the evidence against it is weighed, and the theory is finally rejected outright
- ☐ C. Two rival explanations are compared, the weaker one is dismissed, and further research is proposed
- ☐ D. A practical failure is described, its many causes are listed, and the blame is placed on the planners

6. Which of the following findings, if true, would most undermine the recommendation in the final paragraph?

- ☐ A. Some fast-growing timber species also bear fruit that hornbills and bats will eat when nothing else is left
- ☐ B. In several replanted patches sapling survival was high even though no fig trees had been planted at all
- ☐ C. Fig trees in many forests grow more slowly than timber species and take several years to bear a first crop
- ☐ D. Figs planted in isolated patches seldom set fruit, because their own wasps cannot reach them from afar

READING COMPREHENSION — PSYCHOLOGY & MIND · WHY THE ESSAY IS ALWAYS LATE (Q7-Q12)

Ask a student how long an essay will take and she will usually give an answer that is too short. Ask her how long her last three essays took, and she will often recall, quite accurately, that each ran well past its estimate. Yet when the fourth essay comes along, she predicts once more that this one will be different. Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky gave the pattern a name in 1979, the planning fallacy: the tendency to underestimate the time, cost and risk of a future task even while knowing that similar tasks have overrun before.

What makes the error interesting is that it is not ignorance. The relevant evidence sits in memory; it simply is not consulted. People forecast, they construct a scenario of how the work will go, step by step, from the first sentence to the final full stop. That view is vivid and specific, and that is its weakness. A scenario imagines the task going as planned. It has no room for the i



corrupted file or the source that turns out to be useless, because no single one of those mishaps is likely. What is likely is that some mishap or other will occur, and a step-by-step story has no way of representing that.

Experiments bear this out. In one well-known series of studies, students asked to predict when they would finish a thesis were, on average, far too optimistic, and even those asked for a 'worst case' estimate often finished later than that. Tellingly, people are considerably better at predicting how long other people's projects will take. An observer, lacking the planner's rich scenario, falls back on what usually happens.

The remedy that follows is less a matter of trying harder than of asking a different question. Instead of asking how this task will unfold, the forecaster asks how long tasks of this kind have taken for people in a similar position. This 'outside view', formalised in large projects as reference-class forecasting, deliberately sets aside the details that make one's own case feel special. It is uncomfortable, because those details are precisely what we believe distinguishes our plan from all the plans that failed. But the failed planners believed the same thing.

7. The passage is primarily concerned with:

- ☐ A. showing that people forecast poorly because they cannot recall how long their earlier tasks actually took
- ☐ B. arguing that worst-case estimates should replace ordinary estimates in every form of personal planning
- ☐ C. explaining why people underestimate their own tasks and how consulting comparable cases corrects this
- ☐ D. describing the experiments through which Kahneman and Tversky first discovered the planning fallacy

8. According to the passage, an observer predicts another person's project more accurately because the observer:

- ☐ A. has no detailed scenario of the task and so relies on how such projects usually turn out
- ☐ B. has more experience of similar projects than the person who will actually carry them out
- ☐ C. is free of the optimism that comes from wanting the project to be finished very quickly
- ☐ D. is usually asked for a worst-case estimate rather than for the most likely finishing date

9. Which of the following can most reasonably be inferred from the passage's account of the 'inside view'?

- ☐ A. A planner who pictures her task in finer detail will produce a more accurate forecast of how long it takes
- ☐ B. Forecasts go wrong mainly because single mishaps such as illness are far more likely than people suppose
- ☐ C. People who have overrun on past tasks will in time learn to correct their own estimates unaided by others
- ☐ D. A forecast can come out too short even if each possible delay, taken alone, is rightly judged improbable

10. The author's attitude towards the 'outside view' is best described as:

- ☐ A. eager approval of a method that, once learned, makes forecasting both effortless and comfortable
- ☐ B. endorsement of a method, tempered by awareness that it asks planners to discount what feels unique
- ☐ C. guarded scepticism about a method that ignores the particular details on which good plans depend
- ☐ D. neutral description of a method whose merits the author declines to judge in one way or the other

11. The final sentence of the passage ('But the failed planners believed the same thing') serves mainly to:

- ☐ A. concede that the outside view, like the inside view, rests in the end on what a planner happens to believe
- ☐ B. suggest that every plan is bound to overrun whichever forecasting method its author decides to employ
- ☐ C. answer the objection that the details of one's own case make it an exception to the usual pattern
- ☐ D. show that the students in the thesis studies already knew about the planning fallacy before they began

12. Which of the following practices best applies the remedy the author recommends?

- ☐ A. A firm asks each engineer to list every step of a new project and to add one spare day for each step listed
- ☐ B. A council costs a new flyover from the actual overruns on the last twenty flyovers built in the same state
- ☐ C. A student plans her essay hour by hour and then asks a classmate to confirm that the timetable looks sound
- ☐ D. A builder asks his most experienced foreman to imagine everything that could possibly go wrong on site

SECTION — CRITICAL REASONING

CRITICAL REASONING — SOCIETY & CULTURE · SMALLER HOUSES, SAME FAMILIES (Q13-Q18)

Each round of the census and the large household surveys reports the same trend: the average Indian household is getting smaller. The share of households with six or more members has fallen, and the share of one- and two-person households has risen, most sharply in the cities. Commentators routinely read these figures as an obituary for the joint family, and from there it is a short step to lamenting the decline of kin obligation itself: the elderly abandoned, the young cut adrift, the old web of mutual support unravelling into isolated nuclear units.

The inference does not survive a closer look at what a household is. For statistical purposes, a household is a group of people who normally live together and share a common kitchen. It is a unit of residence and cooking, not of affection, money or duty. When a son takes a job in a distant city while his parents stay in their village, the survey records two households where once there was one. Nothing in that record tells us whether he sends money home every month, whether he telephones his mother daily, or whether he will return to nurse his father through an illness. Studies of migrant workers suggest that, very often, he does all three. Remittances sent by internal migrants run into very large sums each year, and much of that money flows to parents and siblings in the households the migrants have left behind.

What the census has measured, then, is a change in where families sleep, not in what family members owe one another. Indeed, the separation is frequently undertaken for the sake of the family: the son moves precisely so that the household he has left can be kept afloat. To treat the shrinking household as proof that kin bonds are weakening is to mistake a change of address for a change of heart. The decline of the joint household is real. The decline of the joint family, in any sense that ought to worry us, has not been shown, and the figures most often cited as proof of it are not capable of showing it.

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

- ☐ A. The joint family in India is in fact growing stronger as more young people leave home for work in cities
- ☐ B. Census figures on household size are unreliable and ought not to be used in any study of Indian family life
- ☐ C. Remittances from internal migrants are now the main source of income for parents living in rural India
- ☐ D. Falling household size does not show that the obligations family members owe one another are weakening



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

- ☐ A. Most migrant workers who leave their parents' household eventually return to live in that household again
- ☐ B. Ties such as the money sent home and regular calls are a fair indicator of the obligations kin feel
- ☐ C. The census definition of a household was recently changed so as to leave out members living elsewhere
- ☐ D. Joint households were, in earlier decades, places in which the elderly were always well looked after

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

- ☐ A. Most elderly people living alone receive neither money nor regular visits from children living elsewhere
- ☐ B. Many migrants who send money home earn far less in the city than they had expected before they moved
- ☐ C. The share of one-person households in Indian cities remains lower than in most countries of Europe
- ☐ D. Some joint households in villages still share one kitchen while their members work in separate fields

16. Which of the following arguments contains reasoning most similar to the commentators' reasoning that the passage criticises?

- ☐ A. A stadium sold fewer tickets this year at unchanged prices, so the club's ticket income must have fallen
- ☐ B. Most car owners surveyed want better roads, so most people in the country must also want better roads
- ☐ C. Fewer letters are posted each year than before, so people must be writing to one another less often
- ☐ D. Crime fell after streetlights were put up in the town, so the streetlights must have caused the fall

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

- ☐ A. One-person households have multiplied in cities faster than the number of migrant workers has grown
- ☐ B. Surveys of rural parents whose children work elsewhere find most receive regular money and care from them
- ☐ C. Many commentators who write about the joint family themselves live in nuclear households in big cities
- ☐ D. The census asks each household to report the age and sex of every person who shares its kitchen

18. The statement that a household is 'a group of people who normally live together and share a common kitchen' plays which role in the argument?

- ☐ A. It supplies a definition on which the author's distinction between residence and obligation depends
- ☐ B. It is the main conclusion, which the rest of the argument is offered to support in some detail
- ☐ C. It is a claim made by the commentators which the author goes on to reject as wholly inaccurate
- ☐ D. It is evidence that the joint household, as distinct from the joint family, has in fact steadily declined

CRITICAL REASONING — HEALTH POLICY · A BED IS NOT A WARD (Q19–Q24)

When a state government wants to show that it is investing in public health, it announces beds. A new district hospital adds two hundred; a medical college opens with five hundred; the annual report records that the state now has so many beds per thousand people and that the figure is climbing towards the target. Beds are easy to count, easy to photograph and easy to compare across districts. That is precisely why they have become the wrong thing to count.

A hospital bed treats no one. What treats a patient is the care delivered at it, and most of that care, the observation, the medication, the dressing of wounds and the early noticing that a patient is getting worse, is delivered by nurses. Studies in several countries have found that when each nurse is responsible for more patients, mortality after common surgery rises. A bed added without the nurses to staff it does not raise a hospital's capacity. At best it stands empty; at worst it is filled, so that the same nurses are spread across more patients and the care given at every bed in the ward grows thinner. In many public hospitals the number of sanctioned nursing posts lies well below what the bed count requires, and a significant share of those posts stand vacant.

The bed target, in other words, does not merely fail to measure what matters. It pulls money towards the part of the system that is cheap to build and away from the part that is expensive to keep. Construction is a one-time cost that a government can announce once and claim for years. A nurse is a salary that recurs every month, for decades, and features in no ribbon-cutting ceremony. A health department that is judged on beds will, quite rationally, build beds.

The remedy is to change what is counted. Funding and targets for public hospitals should be tied to staffed beds, meaning beds with enough nurses to run them at a safe ratio, rather than to beds that merely exist. A smaller hospital that is fully staffed will save more lives than a larger one that is not, and a target that cannot tell the two apart is steering money in the wrong direction.

19. Which of the following most accurately states the main conclusion of the argument?

- ☐ A. Hospital funding and targets should rest on beds that are safely staffed, not on beds that merely exist
- ☐ B. State governments should stop building new hospital beds until every vacant nursing post has been filled
- ☐ C. Bed counts mislead because many of the beds that governments announce are never in fact built at all
- ☐ D. Nurses deliver most of the care that patients receive in public hospitals, much more than doctors do

20. The claim that 'a health department that is judged on beds will, quite rationally, build beds' functions in the argument as:

- ☐ A. the main conclusion of the argument, which the earlier paragraphs are offered in order to support
- ☐ B. a concession that the author's critics are right to defend the building of new hospital beds
- ☐ C. an explanation of why the bed target distorts spending, offered in support of changing the measure
- ☐ D. evidence drawn from the studies of nurse staffing that the second paragraph of the argument cites

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

- ☐ A. Most patients in public hospitals would prefer treatment in a private hospital if they could afford it
- ☐ B. A target framed on staffed beds would be harder for a department to meet merely through construction
- ☐ C. The national target for beds per thousand people was set without any regard to the number of nurses
- ☐ D. Nurses in public hospitals are, on the whole, less thoroughly trained than nurses in private hospitals

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

- ☐ A. Some private hospitals in the same states display their bed numbers prominently in their advertising
- ☐ B. The cost of building a hospital bed has risen steadily over the past decade in most states of India
- ☐ C. Several states have recently announced recruitment drives meant to fill their vacant nursing posts
- ☐ D. Hospitals that add new beds find nurses easier to recruit, as nurses prefer larger, well-equipped places



23. Which of the following principles, if valid, would most help to justify the author's remedy?

- ☐ A. Public money should be spent only on things that can be counted, photographed and compared with real ease
- ☐ B. Hospitals should be judged by the number of patients they admit rather than by the care they provide
- ☐ C. Health spending should always favour projects whose costs fall once rather than recurring every year
- ☐ D. A public body should be measured by the capacity it can actually deliver, not by the assets it holds

24. Which of the following would be most useful to know in evaluating the claim in the final paragraph that a smaller, fully staffed hospital will save more lives?

- ☐ A. Whether the beds in newly built district hospitals are of the same design as those in the older hospitals
- ☐ B. Whether medical colleges in the state charge higher fees than medical colleges in neighbouring states
- ☐ C. Whether patients refused admission by a smaller hospital would find safe care elsewhere or none at all
- ☐ D. Whether the national target for beds per thousand people has been revised at all in the last decade

RAPID FIRE — ONE-LINE RECALL

66 quick questions · not negatively marked

1. Roughly how many species of fig are there, per the passage? _____
2. What is the enclosed bowl of fig flowers called? _____
3. How long do adult fig wasps live, per the passage? _____
4. What do ecologists call species important far beyond their abundance? _____
5. Per the passage, figs' value to frugivores lies in reliability rather than? _____
6. 'Frugivore' means? _____
7. A replanted patch that fruits in one burst offers animals a feast followed by? _____
8. Who named the planning fallacy, and in which year? _____
9. The vivid step-by-step scenario of one's own task is called the? _____
10. Forecasting from how similar tasks actually went is called the? _____
11. Per the passage, who predicts project durations better: planners or observers? _____
12. In the thesis studies, were 'worst case' estimates reliable? _____
13. Statistically, a household is people who live together and share a common? _____
14. Money sent home by migrant workers is called? _____
15. Per the author, smaller households mistake a change of address for a change of? _____
16. Per the passage, who delivers most of the care given at a hospital bed? _____
17. What does the author want hospital funding tied to? _____
18. Per the passage, a nurse is a cost that recurs; construction is a cost that is? _____
19. 'Sanctioned' posts means posts that are? _____
20. Name the CR question type: 'which principle would justify the conclusion?' _____
21. Name three birds the passage says crowd a fruiting fig. _____
22. Which animals pick through fallen figs below the tree? _____
23. At what time of day do fruit bats arrive at the fig, per the passage? _____
24. Which insect pollinates figs? _____
25. Does each fig species usually have its own wasp? _____
26. How does the female wasp enter the syconium? _____
27. What do female wasps carry as they fly out of the fig? _____
28. Why can't a fig population flower all at once? _____
29. Per the passage, are figs especially nourishing? _____
30. Which fruits are cited as oily, in contrast to figs? _____
31. In some Asian forests, figs form the bulk of whose dry-season diet? _____
32. By what measure are planting schemes usually judged, per the passage? _____
33. Which species type scores well on sapling survival? _____
34. What may fail to stay in a patch that fruits in a single burst? _____
35. 'Synchronised' means? _____
36. 'Lean months' refers to a period of? _____
37. 'Out of step' means? _____
38. 'Keystone' in ecology means? _____
39. What does the student keep predicting about her fourth essay? _____
40. The planning fallacy underestimates which three things? _____
41. Per the passage, is the planning fallacy caused by ignorance? _____
42. Which three mishaps does the passage say a scenario has no room for? _____
43. Per the passage, what IS likely when forecasting a task? _____
44. Who were the subjects of the thesis-prediction studies? _____
45. What does an observer fall back on, per the passage? _____
46. Why is the outside view uncomfortable? _____
47. 'Formalised' means? _____
48. 'Tellingly' means? _____
49. Who also believed their plans were special, per the last line? _____
50. Which household sizes have grown in share, per the passage? _____
51. Where has the rise in small households been sharpest? _____
52. Commentators read shrinking households as an obituary for what? _____
53. A household is a unit of residence and what else? _____
54. Per the author, a household is NOT a unit of affection, money or? _____
55. Name three things the migrant son may still do, per the passage. _____
56. Why does the son often move away, per the author? _____
57. Does the author accept that the joint household has declined? _____
58. What has the census measured, per the author? _____
59. 'Obituary' in the passage figuratively means? _____
60. 'Cut adrift' means? _____
61. 'Kin' means? _____
62. How many beds does the new district hospital add, in the passage? _____
63. How many beds does the new medical college open with? _____
64. Name three reasons beds are easy to use as a measure. _____
65. What rises when each nurse has more patients, per studies cited? _____
66. At best, an unstaffed new bed does what? _____

