

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 — LITERARY FICTION · THE CARTOGRAPHER'S WIDOW (Q1–Q5)

The maps arrived in crates, sixty-three of them, each rolled in oiled paper and bound with string that smelled of cedar and distance. Meena had not known what to do with them when they came, two months after her husband Rajan died on the slopes of the Nilgiris. She had expected grief to be simple — a hollow where warmth had been. Instead it arrived disguised as logistics: death certificates, insurance forms, and now these relics of a life she had shared without fully understanding.

Rajan had spent thirty years charting the interiors of forests. Not the forests themselves — anyone with a satellite could do that — but the knowledge embedded in them: which root cured fever, where the deer crossed the stream in October, the name of the ridge that only the Toda community pronounced correctly. His maps were custodial documents, he had told her once. They were meant to protect places from the people who made other kinds of maps.

She spread one across the kitchen table and recognised almost nothing. The handwriting was his — angular, impatient — but the symbols were a private language she had never been invited to learn. She felt not jealousy exactly, but something adjacent to it: the realisation that a person you love can be made of rooms you have never entered.

The collector who called three weeks later was polished and reasonable. The maps, he explained, had significant archival value. A university in Bengaluru had expressed interest. There would be proper cataloguing, digitisation, preservation. He used the word 'legacy' several times, as though it were a kindness and not a transaction.

Meena listened and said she would think about it. After she put down the phone, she walked to the crates again. She pulled out a map at random — it showed the northeastern corner of a forest she did not recognise — and noticed, in the margin, a sentence in Rajan's hand: "Ask Govinda what this boundary was before 1962." She did not know who Govinda was. She understood now that she never would, and that this not-knowing was itself a kind of inheritance.

She began to roll the map back into its paper, more carefully than before.

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

- ☐ A. The commercial exploitation of indigenous geographic knowledge by academic institutions, illustrated by the collector's attempt to transfer Rajan's life's work to a university
- ☐ B. A widow's reckoning with the private dimensions of a life she shared but did not entirely know
- ☐ C. The difficulty of preserving archival documents after the death of a specialist
- ☐ D. The tension between traditional ecological knowledge and modern satellite-based cartographic methods

2. What can be inferred from Rajan's remark that his maps were 'custodial documents'?

- ☐ A. He believed maps should only be made by government surveyors with legal authority over the relevant territory
- ☐ B. He distrusted digital mapping technologies and preferred paper-based records because they were harder to replicate
- ☐ C. He intended his maps to be formally donated to a national archive and had arranged for this before his death
- ☐ D. He saw his work as a form of protection for the communities and places he documented

3. When the passage says Meena felt 'not jealousy exactly, but something adjacent to it,' what is the author most likely conveying about her emotional state?

- ☐ A. A grief complicated by the discovery that even deep intimacy cannot guarantee complete knowledge of another person
- ☐ B. A diffuse resentment toward the indigenous communities who had shared specialised knowledge with Rajan that she was never made party to
- ☐ C. A recognition that her husband had deliberately and systematically concealed his professional world from her over the course of their marriage
- ☐ D. A fear that the collector's evident expertise and scholarly interest would expose how little she had understood about Rajan's work while he was alive

4. As used in the passage, the word 'custodial' most nearly means:

- ☐ A. Related to legal guardianship over a minor
- ☐ B. Concerned with the cleaning and maintenance of a building
- ☐ C. Official or formally sanctioned by a government body
- ☐ D. Protective or preservative in purpose and function

5. Why does the author end the passage with Meena rolling the map 'more carefully than before'?

- ☐ A. To show that Meena has decided, after reflection, to reject the collector's offer and retain all sixty-three maps in her own possession rather than allow their transfer to a university
- ☐ B. To suggest that Meena intends to teach herself Rajan's private cartographic language so she can understand what he was really documenting
- ☐ C. To indicate that the marginal note has transformed the maps from inert objects into something she now feels a responsibility to preserve
- ☐ D. To signal that professional respect for Rajan's work has finally displaced her personal grief and given her a clearer sense of purpose

READING COMPREHENSION — PHILOSOPHY & IDEAS · THE UNVERIFIABLE SELF (Q6–Q10)

There is a peculiar asymmetry at the centre of our moral lives: we hold ourselves accountable for who we are, even though we did not choose the conditions that made us so. A child raised in a household of casual cruelty does not choose her dispositions to any more than a child raised among gentle people chooses her patience. Yet the law punishes the first child and rarely the se



ordinary moral intuition broadly agrees. The self that is held responsible is, in some important sense, a self that was built by forces outside itself.

This is not a new observation. Philosophers from Hume to Strawson have traced the fault lines between causal determinism and the felt necessity of blame. What is less often noted is that the problem does not dissolve when we move from hard determinism to softer accounts of human agency. Even compatibilists — those who hold that freedom and causation are not in conflict — tend to define freedom as the capacity to act in accordance with one's own desires, without asking whether those desires are themselves the product of conditions that brook no resistance.

The question matters because our systems of punishment are built on assumptions about desert: the idea that a person who does wrong has, in some irreducible sense, chosen to do wrong and therefore merits the suffering that follows. Rehabilitation-focused penology gestures toward a different model, but even it retains a residual moralism — the person must want to change, must accept responsibility, must perform contrition that is legible to others.

What would it mean to take seriously the possibility that the self is genuinely unverifiable — that we cannot be certain, from the inside, whether our sense of having chosen freely is an accurate report or a post-hoc story we tell ourselves about the movement of neurons? It would not mean the end of accountability. It might mean, instead, a shift from punitive to genuinely corrective models — not because wrongdoers are pitied, but because the logic of desert quietly rests on a premise we have never been able to confirm.

This is uncomfortable. Moral life is organised around the feeling that people could have done otherwise. Perhaps the most honest thing to say is that this feeling is indispensable and unverified in equal measure.

6. Which of the following best states the central argument of the passage?

- ☐ A. Punishment should be abolished in its entirety because determinism and modern neuroscience together prove that no person truly chooses their actions, characters, or the dispositions that lead them to act wrongly
- ☐ B. Compatibilism offers the most satisfying philosophical resolution to the tension between free will and causation
- ☐ C. The feeling of freedom is a neurological illusion that science can now fully account for
- ☐ D. Systems of punishment rest on a desert-based assumption about choice that the problem of self-formation leaves without secure foundation

7. With which of the following statements would the author of this passage most likely agree?

- ☐ A. Rehabilitation-based penology has, by shifting its focus to correction and change, fully escaped all the moral assumptions that underlie punitive systems of blame and desert
- ☐ B. The work of philosophers from Hume to Strawson has successfully and definitively resolved the central problem of how moral responsibility can coexist with causal determinism
- ☐ C. The legal system's assignment of blame and desert accurately reflects our best philosophical understanding of human agency and the nature of free choice
- ☐ D. The feeling that a person could have done otherwise is both indispensable to moral life and impossible to independently verify

8. What does the author imply about compatibilism?

- ☐ A. It is internally consistent but practically irrelevant to questions about punishment, penology, and the design of criminal justice systems
- ☐ B. It successfully overcomes the problem of determinism by demonstrating, through the concept of higher-order desires, that freedom and causal necessity are not genuinely in conflict
- ☐ C. It sidesteps the deeper problem by defining freedom in terms of desires that may themselves be the product of unchosen conditions
- ☐ D. It represents the dominant approach in contemporary penology and directly informs most rehabilitation and restorative justice programmes

9. As used in the passage, 'residual' most nearly means:

- ☐ A. Remaining after the main or primary element has been removed or transformed
- ☐ B. Relating to or derived from the scientific analysis of physical or chemical residue in a laboratory setting
- ☐ C. Deep-seated, strongly entrenched, and resistant to change over a sustained period of time
- ☐ D. Formally sanctioned, officially recognised, and explicitly authorised by a relevant institution

10. What is the primary function of the final paragraph?

- ☐ A. To introduce a new argument drawn from contemporary neuroscience that the author intends to develop in a subsequent section of the essay
- ☐ B. To contradict the main argument by demonstrating through the example of moral life that hard determinism leads to impractical and socially damaging conclusions
- ☐ C. To provide a definitive and satisfying resolution to the philosophical problem of moral responsibility that the preceding four paragraphs carefully raised
- ☐ D. To acknowledge the argument's limits by conceding that the moral feeling of choice cannot simply be discarded even when it cannot be confirmed

SECTION — CRITICAL REASONING

CRITICAL REASONING — LAW & RIGHTS · THE BAIL DEFAULT AND ITS CONSTITUTIONAL FAULT (Q11-Q15)

The proposition that an undertrial prisoner is innocent until proven guilty has long sat at the centre of constitutional criminal law. Yet in India, the practical operation of the bail system has steadily inverted this principle. The majority of those in prison on any given day have not been convicted of anything. They await trial — sometimes for years — in conditions that differ from punishment in name only. The Supreme Court has intervened repeatedly, most recently in *Satender Kumar Antil v. CBI*, directing courts to apply bail liberally, yet the overcrowding of prisons with undertrials continues. Judicial pronouncements, it seems, do not survive contact with institutional inertia.

The problem is structural, not behavioural. Bail decisions are shaped by the categories the legislature has created: bailable offences, and a further tier of offences under special statutes that impose a 'twin conditions' requirement — court grant bail unless they are satisfied that there are reasonable grounds to believe the accused is not guilty and is unlikely to reoffend.



test is, in practice, nearly impossible to satisfy before evidence has been heard. The effect is to make pre-trial detention the default for large classes of accused, regardless of the actual flight risk or danger they pose.

The defence that this framework prevents serious offenders from intimidating witnesses or absconding is not without merit. But it proves too much. The twin-conditions test applies categorically to offences listed under statutes like the PMLA and UAPA, not to individual assessments of the accused. A first-time accused with no criminal history, a fixed address, a family to support, and no apparent capacity to influence witnesses is treated identically to a habitual offender. The legislature's assumption that all accused persons in these categories are equally dangerous to the process is precisely the kind of generalisation that constitutional scrutiny should reject.

Bail, in its original conception, is not a privilege extended to the deserving; it is the liberty that belongs to every person unless a specific, individual finding justifies its removal. The reform required is not judicial exhortation but a statutory presumption in favour of bail, rebuttable only by evidence specific to the accused before the court. Until then, the gap between constitutional promise and institutional reality will continue to be measured in years of a person's life.

11. What is the main conclusion of the author's argument?

- ☐ A. A statutory presumption in favour of bail, rebuttable only by evidence specific to the individual accused, is required to correct the structural inversion of the innocence principle
- ☐ B. The Supreme Court should directly supervise all bail decisions made in cases brought under special statutes such as the PMLA and UAPA to prevent continued institutional inertia
- ☐ C. Judges across the country collectively lack the willingness to apply the bail jurisprudence that the Supreme Court has painstakingly developed through successive decisions over many years
- ☐ D. The twin-conditions test should be removed entirely from Indian statute books, with no special or modified legislative provisions for offences classified as serious

12. Which of the following assumptions does the argument most rely on?

- ☐ A. Pre-trial detention is never constitutionally justified in any offence category that does not directly or necessarily involve physical violence against another person
- ☐ B. The majority of undertrial prisoners currently held in Indian jails are factually innocent of the specific offences for which they were arrested and charged
- ☐ C. A categorical legislative rule that ignores individual circumstances cannot be reconciled with constitutional protections for personal liberty
- ☐ D. The Supreme Court has, on balance, fundamentally failed to fulfil its constitutional role as the ultimate guardian of fundamental rights across its bail jurisprudence decisions

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

- ☐ A. The Supreme Court's directions in *Satender Kumar Antil v. CBI* produced a statistically measurable and sustained reduction in undertrial populations across several states within two years of the judgment
- ☐ B. Several accused persons released on bail in PMLA cases have been found to have destroyed key digital evidence immediately after release
- ☐ C. Studies in comparative jurisdictions show that statutory bail presumptions reduce flight risk without increasing witness interference
- ☐ D. An individual risk-assessment of each accused, examining flight risk and witness-tampering potential case by case, produces identical bail outcomes to a statutory presumption in favour of bail

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

- ☐ A. The twin-conditions test was introduced in PMLA and UAPA statutes at the recommendation of a parliamentary standing committee on national security
- ☐ B. An empirical study of bail applications under the PMLA shows that courts grant bail at roughly the same rate regardless of the individual characteristics of each accused
- ☐ C. The Supreme Court has held in several judgments that undertrial detention is constitutionally permissible where the offence carries a penalty exceeding seven years
- ☐ D. Prison overcrowding in India is caused primarily by delays in the framing of charges rather than by bail refusals at the application stage

15. The author argues that the twin-conditions test 'proves too much.' Which of the following best identifies the logical flaw the author is pointing to?

- ☐ A. The test conflates the seriousness of a listed offence with the dangerousness of a specific accused, applying a categorical restriction without any assessment of the individual's actual risk profile
- ☐ B. The test is constitutionally invalid because it was enacted without any prior consultation with the judiciary, the Bar Council of India, or other stakeholders affected by pre-trial detention
- ☐ C. The test is self-defeating because courts that are barred from granting bail may simply acquit accused persons at an early stage to avoid imposing prolonged and unjustified pre-trial detention on them
- ☐ D. The test is unworkable in practice because the phrase 'reasonable grounds' is too imprecise and vague to be applied consistently by different High Courts exercising their bail jurisdiction under the same statute

CRITICAL REASONING — ENVIRONMENT · CARBON MARKETS AND THE PERMANENCE PROBLEM (Q16-Q20)

Carbon offset markets rest on a simple arithmetic: a tonne of carbon emitted in one place can be neutralised by a tonne sequestered somewhere else. A factory in Germany buys credits generated by a forest in the Amazon, and the planet's carbon account balances. The elegance of the mechanism has made it attractive to governments and corporations alike. Yet the logic contains a concealed asymmetry that undermines the entire enterprise: the emissions that the offset is meant to cancel are permanent, while the sequestration it relies on is not.

When a tonne of fossil carbon is burned, it enters the atmosphere and remains there for decades, often centuries. When a forest sequesters a tonne of carbon, it holds that carbon only for as long as the trees stand. A forest can burn, be cleared, or die in a fire. The REDD+ mechanism, which pays developing nations to avoid deforestation, has produced exactly this problem at scale: so many forests for which credits were sold have subsequently been cleared, either because the incentive payments stopped, because



conditions changed, or because wildfire — intensified by the very warming that offsetting was meant to address — destroyed them. Credits issued for carbon that is no longer sequestered continue to circulate in the market, authorising emissions that no longer have a corresponding sink.

Proponents of reform argue that better standards, longer permanence periods, and buffer pools of reserved credits can solve this problem. But these reforms address the symptom rather than the cause. The cause is the assumption that biological carbon storage is equivalent to the permanent removal of fossil carbon from circulation. It is not. The appropriate baseline for a credible offset is not 'we kept a forest standing for thirty years' but 'we removed carbon from the atmosphere and locked it away in a form that cannot return to the atmosphere on any human-relevant timescale.' By that standard, almost no existing offset qualifies.

The practical consequence is that offset markets, as currently structured, allow large emitters to continue burning fossil fuels while generating the statistical appearance of climate action. A genuine carbon market would trade only in verified geological or mineralogical sequestration, and would price biological carbon at a deep discount that reflects its impermanence. Until then, the offset market is less a climate solution than a mechanism for deferring the reckoning that real emission reductions require.

16. What is the main conclusion of the author's argument?

- ☐ A. The REDD+ mechanism should be immediately suspended because it functions as the primary driver of accelerated deforestation and forest degradation in tropical regions where carbon credits are generated
- ☐ B. Carbon offset markets should be abolished entirely and replaced with direct mandatory government regulation of industrial greenhouse gas emissions from fossil fuel combustion and industrial processes
- ☐ C. Existing carbon offset markets are not genuine climate solutions because they treat impermanent biological sequestration as equivalent to permanent geological storage, enabling continued fossil fuel use
- ☐ D. Developing nations should decline to participate in international carbon markets because the underlying incentive structures they create are perverse, counterproductive, and ultimately harmful to long-term development goals

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

- ☐ A. The IPCC has recommended carbon offsetting as a supplementary tool to be used alongside — not instead of — deep emission reductions
- ☐ B. Carbon capture and storage technology that permanently mineralises CO₂ currently costs ten times as much per tonne as forest-based offsets
- ☐ C. Several large corporations that purchase carbon offsets have also reduced their absolute emissions by twenty per cent over the same period
- ☐ D. A recent independent audit found that thirty per cent of REDD+ credits issued over the past decade correspond to forests that have since been degraded or cleared

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

- ☐ A. Wildfire frequency has increased significantly in offset forests in regions experiencing above-average warming since 2000
- ☐ B. A new class of biochar-based offsets demonstrates verified carbon stability of over ten thousand years, and these offsets now constitute forty per cent of the voluntary carbon market
- ☐ C. Several major economies have announced plans to phase out carbon offset credits from their national emissions inventories by 2030
- ☐ D. The price per tonne of carbon in the EU Emissions Trading System has risen steadily over the past five years, reducing demand for cheaper voluntary offsets

19. Which of the following assumptions is the author's argument most relying on?

- ☐ A. Corporations that purchase carbon offsets do so in bad faith, knowing that the sequestration promised will not be delivered
- ☐ B. Geological sequestration is always more cost-effective than biological sequestration when the full lifecycle is considered
- ☐ C. Climate change cannot be adequately addressed without reducing absolute fossil fuel emissions, and offset accounting cannot substitute for that underlying reduction
- ☐ D. International carbon markets are inherently incapable of adequate oversight and should be replaced by bilateral state-to-state agreements

20. Which of the following scenarios most closely parallels the logical structure of the author's core argument about carbon offsets?

- ☐ A. A hospital reduces its surgical error rate by adopting a new checklist, but does not track whether errors eliminated in surgery reappear during post-operative care
- ☐ B. A city offsets the air pollution from one industrial district by planting trees in another district prone to drought, so the trees are likely to die within twenty years
- ☐ C. A government reduces its reported emission figures by reclassifying certain industrial activities as agricultural, without changing the actual volume of gases released
- ☐ D. An insurance company sells flood-damage policies that exclude claims filed during declared national emergencies, leaving most flood events uncompensated

