

ANSWER KEY — 12 OCTOBER 2026

Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10
C	A	D	B	A	C	D	B	C	A
Q11	Q12	Q13	Q14	Q15	Q16	Q17	Q18	Q19	Q20
D	B	A	C	B	D	C	A	B	D
Q21	Q22	Q23	Q24						
A	C	B	D						

READING COMPREHENSION

Q1 C Main idea **HARD**

The passage moves through three stages. The first two paragraphs show that night has lost its darkness and that the resulting harm is 'easy to underestimate, because it is quiet', citing fewer insect visits to flowers and less seed. The third paragraph insists that pollination after dark is 'part of the ordinary machinery' of ecosystems, not a problem 'for moths alone'. The last two paragraphs turn to the remedy: light pollution 'stops the moment the switch is turned', and shielding, dimming and warmer bulbs can cut it without 'a return to darkness'. The option combining quiet but important ecological harm with an unusually easy remedy captures both halves. The option about most flowering plants exaggerates: the passage says only that 'some plants' set less seed. The benefits option states the framing the author calls misleading. The bee option inverts the point; the author says bees 'cannot simply take up the slack', not that they are declining.

Examiner's note — the trap: The benefits option attracts because the author mentions 'the obvious human benefits of a lit street', but only to criticise the framing that sets them against the moths.

Q2 A Purpose of a detail **HARD**

The sentence comes immediately after the claim that 'the damage done by this light is easy to underestimate, because it is quiet'. A felled forest or a poisoned river is visible and dramatic; a lamp produces no such spectacle. The very next word, 'Yet', introduces the moth that circles a bulb 'until it is exhausted or eaten' and the meadows that set less seed. The detail therefore explains why the harm escapes notice while the following sentences insist that it is real, which is the correct option. The 'less serious' option misreads the contrast: the author is comparing how visible the harms are, not ranking their gravity, and the rest of the passage argues that the harm matters. The legal-protection option introduces law, which the passage never discusses. The 'only insects' option contradicts the third paragraph, which says night pollination also feeds 'bats' and 'birds'.

Examiner's note — the trap: The 'less serious' option attracts because the sentence does contrast lamps with dramatic harms, but the contrast concerns visibility, and the 'Yet' that follows asserts real damage.

Q3 D Inference **HARD**

The passage says the daytime bees 'cannot simply take up the slack, because many flowers are visited by different insects at different hours'. If the flowers that lose their night visitors are ones that depend on insects active at night, then extra bee activity during the day cannot fully compensate. The option stating that some flowers rely on visitors at particular hours, so night losses are not made good by day, follows directly. The efficiency option contradicts the passage: it claims bees could replace moths, which the author denies, and the passage never compares efficiency. The street-lamp option attaches the moth's behaviour to bees, which the passage says nothing about; bees are described as daytime insects. The honey option offers a reason for the attention bees receive, but the passage only notes that they 'receive most of the attention' and gives no reason at all, so this is imported knowledge.

Examiner's note — the trap: The honey option attracts because it sounds like common knowledge about why bees are famous, but the passage gives no reason for their attention, so it cannot be inferred.

Q4 B Author's attitude **MED**

The fourth paragraph opens with 'The encouraging feature of light pollution', noting that, unlike most harms, it 'stops the moment the switch is turned' and can be cut by shielding, dimming and warmer bulbs, none of which 'requires a return to darkness'. That is plainly hopeful. The final paragraph adds a condition: what the remedy 'does require is a change of habit among those who plan towns', who have long treated more light as 'an unqualified good'. Hope tempered by a condition is qualified optimism, the correct option. Resigned pessimism ignores the word 'encouraging' and the practical remedies listed. Unreserved enthusiasm overstates the tone and invents a fact: the passage never says darkness has already been restored anywhere; it says a dark night must now be travelled to. Detached neutrality fails because the author clearly judges the remedies to be workable and calls the situation encouraging.

Examiner's note — the trap: Unreserved enthusiasm attracts because the remedies are described warmly, but the author adds a condition about planners' habits and never claims any success has been achieved.

Q5 A Meaning in context HARD

The phrase comes right after the report that lit meadows see 'sharp falls in the number of visits that nocturnal insects pay to flowers' and that some plants 'set noticeably less seed'. Something is now missing: the pollination the night insects used to perform. To 'take up the slack' is to make up for work that someone else has stopped doing, and the sentence says bees 'cannot simply' do this because flowers are visited 'by different insects at different hours'. The correct option, making up for the lost night pollination, fits. The 'relax their efforts' option reads 'slack' as idleness and reverses the meaning; it also contradicts the context, since moths are doing less, not enough. The seed-gathering option confuses pollination with seed dispersal, which the passage does not discuss. The option about attracting insects assigns bees a role that belongs to flowers and makes no sense in the sentence.

Examiner's note — the trap: The 'relax their efforts' option attracts students who link 'slack' with looseness or laziness, but the idiom means compensating for a shortfall, which is the passage's concern.

Q6 C Weaken - RC (Stretch) ELITE

The claim is that light pollution, 'unlike most environmental harms', ends as soon as the light does: 'No residue lingers in the soil'. The author uses this to argue that the problem is unusually easy to fix. To weaken it, one must show that the harm outlasts the light. If insect numbers near areas lit for a long time stay low for several seasons after the lamps are removed, then switching off does not immediately end the damage; the depleted population is a kind of residue. That is the correct option. The cost option bears on how cheaply the remedy can be applied, not on whether the harm stops when light stops. The safety option repeats the human benefit the author already acknowledges and is irrelevant to persistence. The warmer-bulb option raises a practical drawback of one remedy, but it says nothing about what happens to the harm once lights are turned off.

Examiner's note — the trap: The cost option attracts because it seems to undercut the author's optimism, but the claim under attack is about whether harm ends with the light, not about the price of remedies.

Q7 D Main idea HARD

The first paragraph states the finding: memory 'does not add up moments' but weights 'the most intense moment, and the way the experience ended'. The second supports it with medical and cold-water studies. The third introduces the experiencing and remembering selves, and the last two ask which self should matter, concluding that 'there is no neutral answer'. The option combining the peak-and-end finding with the question of whose interests count covers the whole passage. The lengthening option turns an awkward implication into a recommendation the author never makes; the passage says only that improving endings could make memories kinder and that whether this is real improvement is unsettled. The 'distrust memory' option is too broad and adds advice the author does not give. The option ranking the experiencing self above the remembering self contradicts the author's explicit refusal to rank them.

Examiner's note — the trap: The option ranking the experiencing self attracts because the closing sentence hints that our choices fail our days, but the author explicitly says 'There is no neutral answer'.

Q8 B Purpose of a detail MED

The second paragraph first reports the medical studies: patients whose longer procedure ended mildly remembered it as less unpleasant than patients whose shorter procedure ended at its worst. It then adds that 'Laboratory experiments with hands held in cold water produced the same pattern'. The words 'the same pattern' show that the experiments are offered as confirmation in a second, controlled setting, which is the correct option. The 'contradict' option reverses the relationship stated in the text. The tolerance option compares volunteers with patients on a quality the passage never measures. The 'always prefer' option overstates the finding in two ways: the passage says 'many volunteers', not all, preferred the longer trial, and their preference was for a longer trial 'with the gentler ending', not for longer unpleasant experiences in general. The examiner is testing whether you notice the qualifiers that limit a claim.

Examiner's note — the trap: The 'always prefer' option attracts because volunteers did choose the longer trial, but the passage says 'many', not all, and the choice depended on the gentler ending.

Q9 C Inference HARD

The second paragraph compares exactly this patient with another. Patients whose longer procedure had milder final minutes 'later rated the whole ordeal as less unpleasant than patients whose shorter procedure ended at its most painful point', and they 'were more willing to return for a repeat'. It follows that the patient with the painful ending would be less willing to repeat the procedure than the patient with the gentle ending, the correct option. The 'milder rating' option applies the logic of total suffering, which is precisely what the passage says memory ignores; the short-procedure patients rated their ordeal as worse. The 'accurately' option assumes shortness protects memory from distortion, an idea the passage never offers; its point is that memory weights the ending regardless of length. The 'prefer to repeat' option contradicts the finding that the gentle-ending group, not this one, was more willing to return.

Examiner's note — the trap: The 'milder rating' option attracts because the shorter procedure involved less total pain, but the passage's whole point is that memory does not count totals.

Q10 A Inference - figurative meaning HARD

An accountant's job is to add up figures accurately. The author explains the metaphor in the next two sentences: memory 'does not add up moments of pleasure and pain and divide by the time they lasted. Instead it gives special weight to two points: the most intense

moment, and the way the experience ended.' Memory is a 'poor' accountant because it does not total the whole experience but leans on a few moments, the correct option. The option claiming memory records pain accurately but forgets pleasure introduces an asymmetry the passage never mentions. The exaggeration option is contradicted by the evidence: patients with the gentler ending remembered less suffering than they actually endured, so memory understated rather than inflated the cost. The 'numbers' option takes the metaphor too literally; the problem is not that memory cannot recall duration but that its summary 'largely ignores how long anything lasted' when judging.

Examiner's note — the trap: The 'numbers' option attracts by reading 'accountant' literally, but the author's point is about how memory weighs moments, not about recalling figures.

Q11 D Author's attitude (HARD)

The third paragraph opens: 'It would be easy to call this a simple error, a defect to be trained away. The more interesting view is that two different selves are at work.' The word 'easy' signals that the author finds the error reading too quick, and 'more interesting' shows a preference for the two-selves account. That is scepticism grounded in a richer explanation, the correct option. The approving option attributes to the author the 'trained away' view that the author sets aside. The hostile option goes too far: the author does not deny that memory distorts experience; the passage itself shows memory understating total suffering. The indifferent option is contradicted by the rest of the passage, which spends two paragraphs on the practical implications for hospitals, schools and government offices. The skill tested is reading the evaluative words that frame a view the author is about to replace.

Examiner's note — the trap: The hostile option attracts because the author does reject the 'simple error' label, but rejecting a label is not claiming memory is never wrong.

Q12 B Application - RC (Stretch) (ELITE)

The tendency is that memory judges an experience largely by its peak and its ending, so that improving the last minutes makes people remember the whole more kindly, 'even while leaving the bulk of it unchanged'. A dentist who finishes a painful session with a few minutes of gentle polishing is doing exactly that: the session's ending, not its total discomfort, is improved, and the patient is likelier to remember it well and return. That is the correct option. The clinic option reduces total discomfort, which serves the experiencing self and does not rely on the peak-end tendency at all. The school option lowers the peak by spreading stress evenly; it does not exploit the ending and is aimed at the experience itself. The hotel option addresses complaints at the start of a stay and is a commercial remedy unrelated to how memory weighs endings.

Examiner's note — the trap: The clinic option attracts because it also reduces discomfort, but it works on total duration, which the passage says memory largely ignores; it does not exploit the ending.

CRITICAL REASONING

Q13 A Main conclusion - CR (HARD)

The final paragraph begins 'It follows that', the clearest signal of a conclusion: 'a corporate apology unaccompanied by any such cost is not really an apology at all'. Everything earlier supports this. The second paragraph says an apology's value lies in a commitment; the third says costless words cannot reveal whether the commitment is real; the fourth says only costly acts can. The correct option restates that conclusion. The legal-compensation option goes beyond the argument: the author praises firms that compensate 'without waiting for a court' and proposes no law. The option comparing individual and corporate sincerity is not argued; the passage uses personal apologies only to explain what an apology is meant to do. The specialists option distorts a supporting detail: hiring specialists is mentioned to show that words cannot be trusted, not to describe a change in style over time.

Examiner's note — the trap: The legal-compensation option attracts because compensation is the author's leading example of a costly act, but the argument recommends public scepticism, not legislation.

Q14 C Assumption - CR (Stretch) (ELITE)

The premises establish an epistemic point: because costless words can come from sincere and insincere firms alike, 'the statement cannot tell us which kind we are dealing with'. The conclusion, however, is not that we cannot tell; it is that such an apology 'is not really an apology at all'. A sincere firm that apologised without bearing any cost would, on the second paragraph's own definition, still be accepting the wrong and committing not to repeat it. To move from 'unverifiable' to 'not an apology', the author must assume that an apology's status depends on whether outsiders can verify its commitment, the correct option. Negate it and the conclusion collapses. The 'most companies' option is not needed; the argument works even if many firms are sincere. The specialists option compares writers, which is irrelevant. The 'most costly act' option is unnecessary, since any significant cost will do.

Examiner's note — the trap: The 'most companies' option attracts because the passage is suspicious of firms, but the argument never needs insincerity to be common, only that it cannot be told apart.

Q15 B Weaken - CR (HARD)

The argument's key premise is that costly acts separate sincere from insincere firms because an insincere firm 'wants the reputational benefit of contrition without the expense' and so 'would not choose' to pay. If firms that plan no reform regularly pay voluntary compensation because the goodwill it buys is worth more than it costs, then insincere firms do bear costs, and a costly act no longer shows that 'the commitment is real'. That undermines the only test the author offers, so it weakens the argument most, the correct option. The 'moved customers' option is consistent with the author's view that wording can be moving yet uninformative. The court-orders option concerns compelled compensation, which the author already sets aside by stressing payment 'without waiting for a court'. The executive-pay option concerns pay tied to performance, not to the promised reform, so it does not touch the argument.

Examiner's note — the trap: The court-orders option attracts because it concerns compensation, but the author's test is voluntary payment; compelled payment was already excluded.

Q16 D Strengthen - CR **HARD**

The argument holds that only costly acts can show that an apology's commitment, not to repeat the wrong, is real, while costless words cannot. Evidence that firms which paid voluntary compensation were far less likely to repeat the harm supports exactly this link: bearing a cost tracks the genuine commitment that apologies are supposed to express. The correct option therefore strengthens the argument. The option about longer, more emotional apologies is consistent with the author's view that wording has become polished, but it says nothing about whether wording or cost reveals sincerity. The option about people not reading apologies concerns attention, not sincerity, and if anything suggests the wording problem matters little. The salary option is irrelevant; what specialists earn does not show whether costless apologies are reliable signals. The skill tested is finding evidence that links the premise to the outcome the conclusion depends on.

Examiner's note — the trap: The 'longer, more emotional' option attracts because it echoes the passage's complaint about scripted regret, but it does not show that cost, rather than wording, tracks sincerity.

Q17 C Role of a statement - CR **HARD**

The third paragraph argues that words of regret cost a firm 'almost nothing', that sincere and insincere firms 'can say the same things', and therefore that 'the statement cannot tell us which kind we are dealing with'. The next sentence, beginning 'Indeed', adds the specialists: a firm can pay experts to make insincere regret sound sincere. 'Indeed' marks reinforcement, so the statement supports the claim that words cannot reveal sincerity, the correct option. It is not the main conclusion, which appears in the final paragraph after 'It follows that'. It is not a counter-argument; the author endorses it. It is not offered to show that most apologies are dishonest; the argument's point is that sincere and insincere apologies are indistinguishable, which does not require insincerity to be common. Students should track signal words such as 'Indeed', 'It follows' and 'however' to place each sentence.

Examiner's note — the trap: The 'most are dishonest' option attracts because the statement mentions insincere regret, but the author uses it to show indistinguishability, not prevalence.

Q18 A Principle - CR (Stretch) **ELITE**

The principle is that a commitment becomes credible only when the person making it bears a cost that an insincere party would refuse to bear; costless words, which anyone can produce, prove nothing. A lender who trusts a promise more when it is backed by property the borrower will lose on default applies exactly this principle: the pledge is a cost that a borrower with no intention of repaying would not willingly accept. That is the correct option. The teacher relies on past record, not on a cost borne now, which is a different basis for trust. The shopper does the opposite of what the principle advises, trusting moving language, the very thing the author says tells us 'almost nothing'. The voter distrusts all promises without distinguishing them; the author's principle does not reject every commitment, only those not backed by a costly act.

Examiner's note — the trap: The voter option attracts because it shares the author's scepticism, but the principle discriminates by cost; blanket distrust of every promise ignores that test.

Q19 B Main conclusion - CR **HARD**

The author announces the conclusion at the end of the first paragraph: 'The effect, I will argue, is to harm most the very students moderation is meant to help.' The following paragraphs supply the steps: inflated marks stop separating applicants; universities turn to entrance tests; such tests reward costly coaching; poorer students lose the route the board examination once gave them. The final recommendation, to keep moderation modest, follows from that conclusion. The correct option restates it. The abolition option proposes a remedy for universities that the author never suggests; the author's advice is addressed to boards. The coaching option reverses the passage's causal story: the author says examinations became less useful because marks were inflated, not harder. The fairness option overgeneralises a comparative remark that board examinations put coached and uncoached students on 'more equal terms' into an absolute claim about 'any' entrance test.

Examiner's note — the trap: The abolition option attracts because entrance tests are the villain of the third paragraph, but the author's recommendation is aimed at boards, not universities.

Q20 D Assumption - CR **HARD**

The conclusion concerns the students moderation 'is meant to help', described in the first paragraph as 'weaker candidates'. The evidence of harm, however, concerns a different group: students from families that cannot pay for coaching. For harm to the second group to count as harm to the first, the author must assume that the weaker candidates are largely those who cannot afford coaching, the correct option. Negate it, so that weaker candidates are mostly well-off and coached, and the argument shows harm to someone other than its intended beneficiaries. The 'every university' option is too strong; the passage says entrance tests decide 'most admissions to sought-after courses', which suffices. The fee option is unnecessary, since existing prices already exclude many families. The awareness option is irrelevant to whether the students are harmed; the argument works whether or not they know their marks were adjusted.

Examiner's note — the trap: The 'every university' option attracts because the argument relies on entrance tests replacing board marks, but it needs only most sought-after admissions, not every university.

Q21 A Weaken - CR HARD

The argument claims that by pushing admissions towards entrance tests, generous moderation has narrowed the route that poorer students once had into good colleges. If low-income students now win a larger share of sought-after seats than when board marks decided admission, then the shift to entrance tests has not harmed them; the predicted effect is absent. That strikes at the conclusion directly, so it is the correct option. The published-rules option matches the author's own recommendation and does not challenge the reasoning. The coaching option is consistent with the argument and may even support it, since it shows high scorers also buy coaching. The 'less popular courses' option is compatible with the passage, which says entrance tests decide 'most admissions to sought-after courses'; admissions to less popular courses were never part of the claim. The best weakener tests the outcome the argument predicts.

Examiner's note — the trap: The coaching option attracts because it mentions coaching, but it fits the author's account; only evidence that poorer students did not lose seats undermines the conclusion.

Q22 C Strengthen - CR HARD

A key link in the argument is causal: universities 'stopped relying on board marks and turned to entrance tests' because, faced with 'a crowd of near-identical marksheets', the marks no longer separated applicants. If the universities themselves cited the number of near-identical top scores as their reason for dropping board marks, that confirms the link between inflated moderation and the rise of entrance tests, the correct option. Without it, entrance tests might have arisen for other reasons, and moderation would not be responsible for the harm. The origins option explains why moderation began but does not bear on its effects. The stress option is irrelevant to admissions. The fee option, if anything, weakens the argument slightly, since cheaper coaching would reduce the disadvantage of poorer students. Strengtheners often shore up a causal claim by ruling out an alternative explanation.

Examiner's note — the trap: The origins option attracts because it is about moderation, but it describes why moderation began, not whether inflated marks caused the turn to entrance tests.

Q23 B Role of a statement - CR HARD

The argument proceeds in a chain. Inflated marks stop separating applicants, so universities turn to entrance tests. The third paragraph then opens with 'Entrance tests are not neutral ground', explaining that they 'reward a particular kind of preparation' sold by coaching institutes at prices many families cannot pay. This step is what connects the switch to entrance tests with the harm to uncoached students, so it is an intermediate conclusion, the correct option. It is not the main conclusion, which the author announces in the first paragraph ('harm most the very students moderation is meant to help'). It is not an objection; the author asserts and develops it rather than rejecting it. It is not idle background: remove it and nothing explains why the move to entrance tests disadvantages poorer students, so the conclusion would no longer follow. Identify a statement's role by asking what breaks if it is deleted.

Examiner's note — the trap: The main-conclusion option attracts because the sentence opens a paragraph forcefully, but it serves the larger claim stated earlier about harm to the intended beneficiaries.

Q24 D Parallel reasoning - CR (Stretch) ELITE

The passage's structure is distinctive: a well-meant inflation of a signal, intended to help the weak, destroys the signal's value; selectors then switch to another screen; that new screen favours people with resources, so the intended beneficiaries end up worse off. The hiring argument matches each step. Praising every applicant, to help the weak ones, makes praise meaningless; employers turn to personal contacts; contacts favour the well connected, so the unconnected applicants the practice meant to help are hurt. That is the correct option. The minimum-wage option simply extends a benefit and has no self-defeating mechanism. The cheap-loans option notes that some recipients misuse help, which is a leakage problem, not a signal losing its meaning. The school-meals option is a straightforward chain of benefits ending in a good outcome, the opposite of the passage's backfiring structure.

Examiner's note — the trap: The cheap-loans option attracts because it also concerns help that fails to reach its goal, but the failure comes from misuse, not from inflating a signal until selectors abandon it.

RAPID FIRE — ANSWERS

1. For most of history, what was night on land reliably? — **Dark**
2. How much dimmer than noon is the light night creatures evolved under? — **Many thousands of times dimmer**
3. In roughly how long has the dark night been undone? — **Little more than a century**
4. Name one source of light the author says spills into the sky. — **Street lamps, floodlit car parks or city glow**
5. What must a person now often do to find a truly dark night? — **Travel to find it**
6. Why is the damage from night light easy to underestimate? — **Because it is quiet**
7. Name one dramatic harm a lamp does NOT cause, per the author. — **Felling a forest or poisoning a river**
8. What does a moth do instead of moving between flowers? — **Circles a bulb until exhausted or eaten**

9. What fell sharply in meadows lit artificially at night? — **Visits by nocturnal insects to flowers**
10. What did some plants in lit meadows set less of? — **Seed**
11. Which insects 'receive most of the attention'? — **Daytime bees**
12. Why can't bees simply take up the slack? — **Flowers are visited by different insects at different hours**
13. Light pollution is wrongly treated as a problem for whom alone? — **Moths**
14. What is night pollination part of, per the author? — **The ordinary machinery of plant reproduction**
15. Name one animal fed by the work done at night. — **Bats or birds**
16. What is the 'encouraging feature' of light pollution? — **It stops the moment the switch is turned**
17. What does NOT linger in the soil after the lights go off? — **Any residue**
18. Why shield a lamp, per the passage? — **So it lights the road rather than the sky**

19. When may street lamps be dimmed? — **In the small hours when streets are empty**

20. What kind of bulbs draw fewer insects? — **Warmer bulbs**

21. Do the remedies require a return to darkness? — **No**

22. Whose change of habit is required? — **Those who plan towns**

23. How has more light long been treated? — **As an unqualified good**

24. Light, like what, is best used only where needed? — **Water**

25. Does memory average the days of a holiday? — **No**

26. What does the author call memory? — **A poor accountant**

27. Which two points does memory give special weight to? — **The most intense moment and the ending**

28. From studies of what did the finding emerge most strikingly? — **Uncomfortable medical procedures**

29. Whose longer procedure was remembered as less unpleasant? — **Patients whose final minutes were milder**

30. Which group endured more total suffering? — **The longer-procedure group**

31. Which group was more willing to return for a repeat? — **The longer procedure with the milder ending**

32. What did volunteers hold in cold water? — **Their hands**

33. Which cold-water trial did many volunteers prefer to repeat? — **The longer one with the gentler ending**

34. What view of the finding does the author call 'easy'? — **That it is a simple error**

35. How does the 'simple error' view propose to fix the defect? — **By training it away**

36. How many selves are at work, on the 'more interesting view'? — **Two**

37. Which self lives through each moment as it comes? — **The experiencing self**

38. Which self looks back and tells the story? — **The remembering self**

39. Which self has no voice once its moment has passed? — **The experiencing self**

40. Name one decision the remembering self makes. — **Which doctor, holiday or job to choose**

41. What does the remembering self's summary largely ignore? — **How long anything lasted**

42. Name one institution that could improve last few minutes. — **A hospital, school or government office**

43. Is there a neutral answer to which self matters more? — **No**

44. A policy minimising total suffering serves which self? — **The experiencing self**

45. A policy maximising good memories serves which self? — **The remembering self**

46. Which self do most of us quietly side with? — **The remembering self**

47. Name one line in the familiar corporate apology script. — **Deep regret, lessons learnt, or trust matters**