

ANSWER KEY — 14 OCTOBER 2026

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

READING COMPREHENSION

Q1 B Central idea identification in literary prose **HARD**

Option B is correct because the passage's primary movement is Meena's gradual discovery that Rajan had 'rooms she had never entered.' The crates of maps, the marginal note about Govinda, and the phrase 'this not-knowing was itself a kind of inheritance' all converge on the realisation that intimacy does not equal complete knowledge of another person. Option A is a misreading: while the collector's call introduces a commercial dimension, it is treated as an episode rather than the passage's concern — the collector is dismissed in a few lines. Option C addresses logistics that are mentioned only in the opening paragraph in passing. Option D describes Rajan's professional method but is not the passage's emotional or thematic focus; it provides context for who Rajan was, not what the passage is about.

Examiner's note — the trap: The trap is Option A — the collector's arrival and the mention of a university feel like a plot arc, but the author dismisses that call quickly. The passage's centre of gravity is the widow's interiority, not the eventual fate of the maps.

Q2 D Inferential reading from authorial statement **HARD**

The passage states that Rajan's maps were not ordinary cartography but recorded embedded knowledge — medicinal roots, animal crossings, indigenous place names — and that they were 'meant to protect places from the people who made other kinds of maps.' This directly supports Option D: his work was protective and preservative, aimed at guarding communities and ecosystems against the kind of mapping that serves extraction or development. Option A is unsupported; no mention of government surveyors or legal authority appears anywhere in the passage. Option B attributes a specific technological preference to Rajan that the passage does not state; his objection is to different purposes of mapping, not to technology. Option C is contradicted by Meena's uncertainty about what to do with the crates after his death — if he had intended donation, the passage would not present this as an open question.

Examiner's note — the trap: Option C is attractive because the passage ends with Meena deciding not to immediately hand over the maps, which might suggest Rajan pre-planned a donation. But the passage says no such thing. The inference must stay within what is directly stated or clearly implied.

Q3 A Tone and emotional nuance in literary fiction **HARD**

The passage explicitly says that what Meena felt was 'not jealousy exactly, but something adjacent to it.' The author immediately provides a gloss: 'the realisation that a person you love can be made of rooms you have never entered.' This is not resentment, fear, or a suspicion of deliberate concealment — it is the specific discovery that love and total knowledge are not synonymous, that a beloved person contains depths that shared life does not illuminate. Option A captures this precisely: it is a grief arising from the discovery that intimacy has limits. Option B imports the idea of deliberate concealment, which the passage does not assert — the symbols were 'a private language she had never been invited to learn,' which is different from being actively excluded. Option C attributes resentment toward indigenous communities that appears nowhere in the passage. Option D introduces a self-consciousness about the collector that the passage does not support.

Examiner's note — the trap: Option B is the most plausible wrong answer — 'husband deliberately concealed' sounds similar to 'rooms she had never entered.' The key distinction is that the passage frames this as a property of intimacy in general, not as a deliberate act by Rajan. Students who paraphrase too loosely will miss this.

Q4 D Vocabulary in context **MED**

In the passage, Rajan describes his maps as 'custodial documents' that were 'meant to protect places from the people who made other kinds of maps.' The word 'custodial' here functions to mean protective or preservative in purpose — the maps are guardians of a kind of knowledge. Option D best matches this contextual use. Option A (legal guardianship over a minor) is a specific legal sense not relevant here. Option B (cleaning and maintenance) is a common everyday usage of 'custodial' in Indian English — a 'custodian' is often a building caretaker — but this is clearly inapplicable in context. Option C (officially sanctioned) does not appear anywhere in Rajan's self-description of his work.

Examiner's note — the trap: The main distractor is Option B — 'custodian' in everyday usage often refers to a building caretaker, and some students will default to this sense without reading context. Option D is unambiguous once the surrounding sentence is considered.

Q5 C Structural and purposive reading in literary fiction ELITE

The final image — Meena rolling the map 'more carefully than before' — is the passage's concluding gesture, and it must be read against what immediately precedes it: the marginal note ('Ask Govinda what this boundary was before 1962'), Meena's recognition that she will never know who Govinda was, and her thought that 'this not-knowing was itself a kind of inheritance.' The careful rolling signals a shift in her relationship to the maps: they have become something she now feels accountable for, even without understanding them, because they carry traces of a life and a world that will not otherwise survive. Option C captures this transformation from inert objects to objects of responsibility. Option A overclaims — Meena has explicitly said she 'would think about it,' and the ending does not communicate a decision about the collector's offer. Option B implies a decoding project that is absent; the passage ends on not-knowing, not on the intention to know. Option D imposes a professional-versus-personal framing that the passage does not use.

Examiner's note — the trap: Options A and D both offer false resolutions — a decision made, or grief overcome. The passage pointedly refuses resolution; the careful rolling is an act of stewardship in the absence of understanding. Elite-level readers must resist reading the ending as a narrative turn that closes the passage's central question.

Q6 D Central argument identification in philosophical prose HARD

The passage does not argue for abolishing punishment (ruling out A) or claim that neuroscience has settled the free-will question (ruling out C). It argues that the systems of punishment we have built rest on an assumption — that wrongdoers deserve their suffering because they could have chosen otherwise — and that this assumption is exactly what 'we have never been able to confirm.' The author's pivot is the phrase 'the logic of desert quietly rests on a premise we have never been able to confirm.' This is a structural critique of punishment-as-desert, not a claim to have resolved the problem. Option D states this precisely. Option B misrepresents the author's treatment of compatibilism, which is presented as an unsatisfying way of sidestepping the problem rather than a satisfying resolution to it.

Examiner's note — the trap: Option A is the most dangerous trap: the passage's logic seems to trend toward abolishing punishment, but the author explicitly writes 'it would not mean the end of accountability.' Students who track the argument's drift without reading its qualifications will select A.

Q7 D Author agreement/disagreement inference in philosophical argument ELITE

The final paragraph states: '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.' Option D — that this feeling is both indispensable to moral life and impossible to independently verify — is a direct paraphrase of these two sentences. Option A is explicitly contradicted: the passage says rehabilitation 'retains a residual moralism,' meaning it has not fully escaped the assumptions of punitive systems. Option B is contradicted by the author's framing of the Hume-to-Strawson tradition as having 'traced the fault lines' — describing an ongoing problem, not a resolved one. Option C is contradicted throughout the passage, which argues that legal systems embody an unexamined and unconfirmed philosophical assumption.

Examiner's note — the trap: Option A is the main trap for students who recall that the passage favours rehabilitation over punishment. The author supports a move toward corrective models but explicitly notes that even rehabilitation retains a 'residual moralism.' Agreement with Option A would require the passage to say rehabilitation fully escapes those assumptions — it does not.

Q8 C Identifying implicit critique of a philosophical position HARD

The passage's treatment of compatibilism reads: '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.' This is precisely Option C: compatibilism sidesteps the deeper problem by defining freedom in terms of desires that may themselves be unchosen. Option A misreads the author — who does not call compatibilism irrelevant, only insufficient. Option B restates the compatibilist position itself, which is what the author critiques rather than endorses. Option D is unsupported; the passage makes no claim about compatibilism's influence on penology.

Examiner's note — the trap: Option B is the trap — it restates the compatibilist position without evaluating it critically. Students who do not track whether the author endorses or critiques a position will select it. The key word is 'without asking' — the author uses it to show that compatibilism stops its inquiry one step too early.

Q9 A Vocabulary in context EASY

The passage uses 'residual' in the phrase 'even it retains a residual moralism — the person must want to change, must accept responsibility, must perform contrition that is legible to others.' Here 'residual' means what remains after the primary shift has occurred — in this case, what survives of moralism even after penology has moved away from pure punishment toward rehabilitation. Option A ('remaining after the main or primary element has been removed or transformed') is a standard dictionary definition of 'residual' and fits the context perfectly. Option B invokes a scientific or chemical sense that is unrelated to the context. Option C ('deep-seated and strongly entrenched') is close to the opposite of 'residual' — residual implies something that persists in a diminished or vestigial form, not something deeply entrenched. Option D ('formally sanctioned') is entirely unrelated.

Examiner's note — the trap: The only distractor worth noting is Option C — students may associate 'moralism' with something strong and entrenched, and then assume 'residual' amplifies rather than qualifies it. But 'residual' specifically marks a surviving remnant, not a dominant feature.

Q10 D Identifying the function of a concluding paragraph MED

The final paragraph reads: '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.' Option D correctly identifies its function: the paragraph acknowledges the argument's own limits by conceding that the moral feeling of choice — which the argument critiques — cannot simply be discarded because it is 'indispensable.' This is a deliberately open-ended close that resists the resolution students might expect. Option A is wrong — no new neuroscientific argument is introduced. Option B is wrong — the paragraph does not contradict the preceding argument; it qualifies it by acknowledging what cannot be abandoned. Option C misreads the hedge: the word 'perhaps' and the word 'indispensable' signal acknowledgment of limits, not a definitive resolution.

Examiner's note — the trap: Option C is the most common wrong choice. Students read the final paragraph as the author's conclusion and assume that any last statement must be the answer. The passage's open-ended 'perhaps' and the admission of 'indispensability' signal something more nuanced — a reckoning with the limits of the argument itself.

CRITICAL REASONING

Q11 A Main conclusion identification in legal-editorial argument HARD

The passage's final paragraph states the conclusion directly: '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.' Option A captures this conclusion precisely. Option B misidentifies the proposed remedy as direct Supreme Court supervision of bail decisions — the author explicitly contrasts 'judicial exhortation' (which has failed) with 'statutory presumption' (which is needed), making B a mischaracterisation. Option C attributes the failure to judges' unwillingness, whereas the author argues the problem is structural: 'the problem is structural, not behavioural.' Option D goes further than the passage argues; the author never suggests removing all special bail provisions — only replacing the categorical twin-conditions test with an individual-evidence-based presumption.

Examiner's note — the trap: Option B is the most attractive wrong choice because the passage cites the Supreme Court's repeated interventions — students may infer that the solution must be more Supreme Court involvement. The passage explicitly rules this out: 'judicial pronouncements do not survive contact with institutional inertia.'

Q12 C Identifying the load-bearing assumption in a legal argument HARD

The argument's core move is to say that the twin-conditions test applies categorically to all accused in listed offences without individual assessment, and that this is 'precisely the kind of generalisation that constitutional scrutiny should reject.' This move depends on the assumption in Option C: that a categorical rule ignoring individual circumstances is incompatible with constitutional protections for personal liberty. Option A goes further than the argument — the passage is about the structure of the rule, not about the guilt or innocence of any group. Option B is not assumed — the argument works without claiming undertrials are innocent; it is about their right to liberty pending individual assessment. Option D mischaracterises the author's position — the passage says the court has tried but institutional inertia prevails, not that it has fundamentally failed as a rights-guardian.

Examiner's note — the trap: Option B is the most common wrong choice: it seems intuitive that an argument against keeping undertrials in prison must assume their innocence. But the author's argument is structural — it is about categorical rules versus individual assessments — not about the factual guilt or innocence of those detained.

Q13 D Identifying the most effective weakening evidence for a legal argument ELITE

The author argues that the twin-conditions test causes structural injustice because it applies a categorical rule without individual assessment, and that the remedy is a statutory presumption in favour of bail backed by individual evidence. Option D undermines this by showing that individual risk-assessment already produces identical bail outcomes to a statutory presumption — which would make the author's proposed statutory reform unnecessary and remove the difference the author attributes to the current system's categorical approach. Option A (reduction in undertrial populations following Satender Kumar Antil) weakens only the secondary claim about judicial inertia, not the primary structural critique. Option B (accused in PMLA cases destroyed evidence after bail) supports the existing framework's caution, but the author anticipates this by noting the defence 'proves too much' — it would need to apply to all categorically-detained accused, not some. Option C (comparative studies supporting statutory presumption) actually strengthens the argument.

Examiner's note — the trap: Option A is the most attractive wrong answer — if Supreme Court directions have worked, legislative reform seems less urgent. But this only weakens the secondary claim about inertia, not the structural claim about categorical rules that is the heart of the argument. Option D directly attacks the author's proposed remedy by making it redundant.

Q14 B Identifying strengthening evidence for a legal argument MED

The author argues that the twin-conditions test is applied without meaningful individual differentiation, treating all accused in listed categories identically regardless of their actual risk profile. Option B provides direct empirical confirmation: if courts grant bail at roughly the same rate regardless of individual characteristics, this demonstrates that the test is indeed applied categorically, as the author contends. Option A (a parliamentary committee recommended the test) provides legislative history but neither helps nor hurts the structural argument. Option C (courts may refuse bail for offences above seven years) is consistent with the author's critique but adds no new evidence. Option D (overcrowding caused primarily by charge framing delays) actually weakens the argument's implicit premise that bail reform would reduce overcrowding.

Examiner's note — the trap: Option D is the main trap: students who associate 'prison overcrowding' with bail reform may assume any evidence about overcrowding supports the argument. But Option D points to a different cause of overcrowding, undercutting the implied benefit of the author's proposed reform.

Q15 A Identifying a logical flaw in a legal argument **HARD**

The author uses the phrase 'proves too much' to identify a specific flaw: the twin-conditions test 'applies categorically to offences listed under statutes like the PMLA and UAPA, not to individual assessments of the accused,' so a first-time accused with no flight risk is 'treated identically to a habitual offender.' Option A identifies this flaw precisely: the test conflates the seriousness of the offence category with the dangerousness of the specific accused, applying a categorical restriction without individual assessment. Option B raises a constitutional-process objection the author does not make — the argument targets the substance of the test, not its legislative origin. Option C describes a hypothetical judicial response the author does not assert. Option D raises a vagueness point about the phrase 'reasonable grounds' that is not the author's objection — the argument is about categorical application, not linguistic imprecision.

Examiner's note — the trap: Option C is the trap for students who read the argument's logical consequences rather than its stated claims. The idea that courts might simply acquit to avoid detention seems like a plausible inference, but the passage makes no such argument and the question asks for the flaw the author names.

Q16 C Main conclusion identification in environmental editorial argument **HARD**

The passage concludes: 'the offset market is less a climate solution than a mechanism for deferring the reckoning that real emission reductions require.' This is reached through the argument that biological sequestration is impermanent while fossil emissions are permanent, making existing offsets structurally inadequate. Option C states this conclusion accurately. Option A is a sub-point about a specific mechanism (REDD+) in the Amazon, not the general conclusion about offset markets. Option B goes further than the passage — the author proposes what a 'genuine carbon market would' look like (geological sequestration only), which is a reform position, not an abolitionist one. Option D is a secondary observation about developing-nation participation, not the main conclusion.

Examiner's note — the trap: Option B is the most dangerous trap: the passage is so critical of existing offset markets that abolition seems like the logical endpoint. But the author explicitly sketches what a reformed market would look like, which means the argument is for structural reform, not abolition.

Q17 D Identifying strengthening evidence for an environmental argument **MED**

The author's central factual claim is that the impermanence problem is real and large-scale — that credits have circulated for carbon that is no longer sequestered. Option D provides direct empirical confirmation of this claim: if thirty per cent of REDD+ credits issued over a decade correspond to forests since degraded or cleared, the permanent-emissions-versus-impermanent-sinks asymmetry the author describes is demonstrated at scale. Option A (IPCC recommends offsetting alongside deep cuts) lends credibility to offsets as a supplementary tool, which would weaken rather than strengthen the author's critique. Option B (geological sequestration is more expensive) is a pragmatic obstacle to the author's preferred reform but does not support the factual permanence-asymmetry argument. Option C (corporations that buy offsets also cut emissions independently) reduces the harm of the offset market by showing real reductions still occur, which weakens the argument.

Examiner's note — the trap: Option A is the trap for students who recall that the IPCC supports offsetting as a supplementary measure. But the author's argument is not about whether offsetting should exist at all — it is about the structural inadequacy of biological sequestration as an equivalent to fossil emission removal. IPCC endorsement does not address this.

Q18 B Identifying the most effective weakening evidence for an environmental argument **ELITE**

The author's argument rests on the claim that biological carbon storage is not equivalent to the permanent removal of fossil carbon, and that 'almost no existing offset qualifies' by the standard of carbon locked away 'in a form that cannot return to the atmosphere on any human-relevant timescale.' Option B directly challenges this by describing biochar-based offsets verified at over ten thousand years of carbon stability — which would satisfy the author's own stated standard — and if these constitute forty per cent of the voluntary market, the claim that almost no existing offset qualifies is substantially and specifically refuted. Option A (wildfires in offset forests are increasing) strengthens the author's permanence argument. Option C (planned phase-outs of offset credits) is a future policy measure that does not challenge the current factual claim. Option D (rising EU carbon prices) addresses a different market and does not engage the permanence-asymmetry argument.

Examiner's note — the trap: Option C is the most common wrong choice: students assume that policies removing offset credits from national inventories weaken the offset market and therefore weaken the argument that offset markets are harmful. But the question asks what weakens the author's argument — not what limits the market's reach. Option B uniquely targets the author's core scientific claim.

Q19 C Identifying the load-bearing assumption in an environmental argument **HARD**

The author argues that offset markets allow large emitters to 'continue burning fossil fuels while generating the statistical appearance of climate action' and concludes that this defers 'the reckoning that real emission reductions require.' This argument only works if the underlying assumption is that the fundamental task is reducing actual fossil fuel emissions — not managing carbon accounts across sectors — and that no offset mechanism can substitute for that underlying reduction. Option C states this assumption. Option A (corporations buy in bad faith) is not assumed — the argument works even if every actor is sincere, because the equivalence the system relies on is factually wrong. Option B (geological sequestration is more cost-effective) is the opposite of what the passage

acknowledges, noting that geological storage is currently not the market norm. Option D (international markets are inherently unregulatable) is not assumed — the argument is that even a well-regulated market using the wrong equivalence will fail.

Examiner’s note — the trap: Option A is the most seductive wrong choice: the passage’s language about ‘statistical appearance’ and ‘deferring the reckoning’ sounds like an accusation of bad faith. But the logical structure of the argument does not require bad faith. It works even if every actor sincerely believes the offset is valid, because the underlying scientific equivalence is false.

Q20 **B** **Parallel reasoning identification in environmental argument** **MED**

The author’s core argument is: a permanent harmful action (fossil fuel emission) is paired with a temporary compensatory action (biological sequestration), and when the compensatory action fails, the credit authorising the original harm remains in circulation. This is a mismatch between a permanent causal action and an impermanent remedy, where the accounting treats them as equivalent when they are not. Option B parallels this structure exactly: a city offsets the air pollution from one district by planting trees, but the trees are in a drought-prone region and likely to die within twenty years — the offset is temporary while the pollution authorised is ongoing, and the equivalence was false at the moment it was drawn. Option A describes a gap within a single process (surgery to post-operative care), not an equivalence between permanent harm and temporary remedy. Option C describes statistical misclassification without any change in real emissions — misreporting, not a permanent-versus-impermanent equivalence failure. Option D describes an insurance exclusion involving coverage gaps — a different logical structure entirely.

Examiner’s note — the trap: Option C is the trap for students who read the passage’s rhetoric about ‘statistical appearance of climate action’ and look for an option about statistical manipulation. But the author’s structural argument is about the permanent-versus-impermanent mismatch in the equivalence logic, not about fraudulent reporting. Option B maps onto this structure directly.