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 — POPULAR SCIENCE · THE INFORMATION IN THE DARK (Q1–Q5)

Ask why the sky is dark at night and most people will suspect a trick question. The sun has set; that is the whole answer. Yet the question troubled astronomers for three centuries, and the answer they eventually reached is one of the most remarkable facts in science: the darkness between the stars is evidence that the universe has not existed, in its present form, for ever.

The puzzle is easiest to see in a forest. Stand among trees that go on without end in every direction, and every line of sight will sooner or later meet a trunk. Replace the trees with stars and the same reasoning applies. If the universe were infinite, unchanging and evenly filled with stars, every direction you looked would end on the surface of a star, and the whole sky would blaze as brightly as the face of the sun. Distance does not rescue the argument. A far star looks fainter, but there are proportionally more stars at that distance, and the two effects cancel. Johannes Kepler used reasoning of this kind to argue that the stars could not go on for ever; the puzzle later took the name of Heinrich Olbers, who discussed it in the 1820s.

The resolution, first glimpsed not by an astronomer but by the poet Edgar Allan Poe, is that light travels at a finite speed and the stars have not been shining for ever. When we look out, we see only as far as light has had time to travel since the first stars formed. Beyond that horizon the line of sight meets no star at all, only the dark. The expansion of the universe, which stretches and dims ancient light, deepens the darkness further.

What deserves attention is not the cosmology but the method. The decisive observation was available to every shepherd who ever lay on a hillside at night. It needed no telescope, only a refusal to treat the obvious as self-explaining. Science is often presented as the discovery of hidden things, of particles too small or galaxies too distant to see. Just as often it is the patient interrogation of things in plain view, which went unexamined precisely because everyone could see them. The dark sky was not a gap in the evidence. It was the evidence, waiting for someone to ask why it was there.

1. The primary purpose of the passage is to

- ◯ **A.** explain how the expansion of the universe dims ancient light until distant galaxies become hard to observe
- ◯ **B.** use the puzzle of the dark night sky to show that obvious observations can carry decisive evidence
- ◯ **C.** argue that poets and amateurs have contributed more to cosmology than astronomers equipped with instruments
- ◯ **D.** trace the history of a famous astronomical puzzle from the time of Kepler to the work of Olbers

2. In the final paragraph, 'a refusal to treat the obvious as self-explaining' most nearly means

- ◯ **A.** a reluctance to accept any observation of the sky that cannot be confirmed with a telescope
- ◯ **B.** a preference for the explanations offered by poets over those offered by trained astronomers
- ◯ **C.** a decision to doubt whether the night sky is genuinely as dark as it appears to observers
- ◯ **D.** an insistence on asking why a familiar fact holds instead of simply taking it for granted

3. It can be inferred from the passage that, if the universe were infinite in extent and age, unchanging and evenly filled with stars,

- ◯ **A.** the night sky would blaze in every direction, since every line of sight would end on a star
- ◯ **B.** distant stars would add no light at all, since their faintness would outweigh their greater number
- ◯ **C.** the night sky would still be dark, since light from the farthest stars could never reach the Earth
- ◯ **D.** only the nearest stars would be visible, since distance would dim all the rest below detection

4. Which of the following best describes the function of the second paragraph?

- ◯ **A.** It presents a resolution of the puzzle that the third paragraph goes on to reject as mistaken
- ◯ **B.** It offers evidence that the stars are unevenly spread through an infinite and unchanging universe
- ◯ **C.** It sets out the reasoning that makes a dark sky puzzling, and closes off one apparent escape
- ◯ **D.** It contrasts the view of a working astronomer with the view of a poet on the same question

5. Which of the following inquiries best illustrates the method the author praises in the final paragraph?

- ◯ **A.** Explaining why a straight stick looks bent where it enters water, a sight familiar from any pond
- ◯ **B.** Detecting a new subatomic particle by colliding protons at enormous energies in a large accelerator
- ◯ **C.** Photographing a galaxy billions of light years away with a telescope placed above the atmosphere
- ◯ **D.** Confirming a predicted planet by pointing a telescope at the exact spot that calculations had fixed

READING COMPREHENSION — PSYCHOLOGY & MIND · THE AUDIENCE THAT ISN'T THERE (Q6–Q10)

Most people have walked into a room with a stain on their shirt and spent the evening certain that everyone had noticed. Psychologists call this the spotlight effect: we overestimate how much attention others pay to our appearance and our slips. In experiments, students made to wear an embarrassing T-shirt into a room of peers guessed that a large share of them would remember it; far fewer actually did. The finding is usually passed on as comfort. Relax, the advice runs; nobody is watching you as closely as you think.

The comfort is real, but it hides the more interesting half of the finding. The error does not come from vanity. It comes from anchoring. We begin from our own experience, which is vivid and full of the stain, and then adjust towards the viewpoint of others; but the adjustment is almost always too small. We cannot easily imagine how little of our own world reaches anyone else, because we cannot switch off the part of the mind that is living in it.

If that is the cause, the same error should run in other directions, and it does. People who are nervous while giving a speech believe their anxiety is plain to the audience, which usually notices little. Negotiators who think their bluff is transparent give up concessions they do not need to make. And, less comfortably, people who believe they have made their feelings or instructions perfectly clear are oft

The manager who 'obviously' signalled that a deadline was serious, the friend who 'clearly' hinted at being hurt: each assumed that what was loud inside their own head was audible outside it.

This is why reassurance alone is a poor remedy. Telling an anxious person that nobody is looking may quiet the blush, but it leaves the underlying habit untouched, and the same habit will later persuade her that a vague email said everything it needed to say. The better lesson is not that others are indifferent but that they are occupied, each standing in a spotlight of their own. Understood in that way, the finding counsels both ease about our stains and effort in our sentences. We are less visible than we fear, and less legible than we assume, and the second fact deserves at least as much of our attention as the first.

6. Which of the following best captures the main point of the passage?

◯ **A.** The spotlight effect is a form of vanity, and its cure lies in thinking less often about ourselves
◯ **B.** Others notice our appearance far less than we fear, and so most social anxiety is groundless
◯ **C.** The bias inflating how visible we are also inflates how clear we seem, so reassurance is insufficient
◯ **D.** Experiments with embarrassing clothing show that most people are largely indifferent to one another

7. The author's explanation in the second paragraph implies that the spotlight effect would be

◯ **A.** hard to correct merely by learning about it, since its source is a starting point we cannot leave
◯ **B.** strongest in vain people, since they spend more of their time thinking about how they appear
◯ **C.** absent when the embarrassing detail is small, since only very vivid details are ever anchored upon
◯ **D.** reversed in large groups, where each person assumes that nobody at all has noticed the detail

8. In the final paragraph, the phrase 'less legible than we assume' suggests that

◯ **A.** our handwriting and appearance are harder for others to read than we would usually expect
◯ **B.** other people deliberately misread our intentions because they are busy with their own concerns
◯ **C.** we ought to hide our feelings more carefully, since others can usually read them with ease
◯ **D.** our intentions and meanings reach other people less clearly than they seem to us from inside

9. The examples in the third paragraph serve primarily to

◯ **A.** show that the spotlight effect is limited to situations in which people feel anxious or embarrassed
◯ **B.** test the anchoring account by showing the predicted error appearing outside matters of appearance
◯ **C.** argue that negotiators and managers suffer more from the spotlight effect than students usually do
◯ **D.** suggest that the comfort usually drawn from the T-shirt experiments was entirely mistaken

10. Which of the following findings, if true, would most weaken the author's account of what causes the spotlight effect?

◯ **A.** People who have been told about the spotlight effect still overestimate how many others noticed their shirt
◯ **B.** Nervous speakers still believe their anxiety showed even after watching a recording of their own speech
◯ **C.** Managers who send vague instructions usually assume their staff understood them, according to surveys
◯ **D.** Onlookers asked how many noticed a stranger's embarrassing shirt overestimate exactly as much as wearers do

SECTION — CRITICAL REASONING

CRITICAL REASONING — LAW & RIGHTS · THE PRICE OF A FINE (Q11–Q15)

A traffic fine of five thousand rupees is, in law, the same penalty for everyone who jumps the same signal. In fact it is nothing of the kind. For a daily-wage worker it may be a week's earnings; for a company director it is less than the cost of a dinner. The law that names one sum for both has treated them identically in form and very unequally in substance, and the inequality runs in the wrong direction: the person most able to bear the penalty is the person least deterred by it.

The usual defence of fixed fines is that equality before the law requires the same rule for all. But equality before the law has never meant identical treatment regardless of circumstance. Courts already fix compensation for an injured person by reference to the earnings that person has lost, and income tax rises with income without anyone thinking that the wealthy are denied equal treatment. What equality requires of a penalty is that it bear equally, that it take a comparable bite from each person who breaks the same rule.

A model exists. Several Nordic countries, Finland most famously, use day-fines for many offences. The authorities first decide how serious the offence is, expressed as a number of days; they then set the value of one day by reference to the offender's daily income. Two drivers caught at the same speed receive the same number of days, but the wealthy one pays far more in money. Finnish newspapers periodically report speeding fines running to tens of thousands of euros, and the public, far from finding them unjust, tends to find them fitting.

India should adopt day-fines for offences now punished by fixed sums, beginning with traffic violations, where the gap between offenders' means is widest and the volume of cases largest. The objection that income cannot be assessed is weaker than it sounds: tax returns, salary records and the declarations already made in maintenance proceedings give a workable base. A fine that costs the rich nothing is not a penalty but a fee, and a law that lets some citizens buy the right to break it has stopped treating them as equals.

11. Which of the following best expresses the main conclusion of the argument?

◯ **A.** India should replace fixed fines with fines scaled to income, starting with traffic offences
◯ **B.** Equality before the law has never required that every citizen be treated identically
◯ **C.** Finland's day-fine system has won public approval despite producing some very large fines
◯ **D.** Fixed fines deter poorer offenders much more strongly than richer offenders who break the same rule

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

◯ **A.** Most traffic offences in India are committed by people with high incomes that are easy to trace
◯ **B.** The Finnish public would continue to support day-fines even if fine levels were raised much further
◯ **C.** A fine's deterrent force depends on its size relative to the offender's means, not its rupee amount
◯ **D.** Courts that already fix compensation by a person's earnings would welcome the extra work of day-fines

13. Which of the following, if true, would most seriously weaken the case for beginning the reform with traffic violations?

◯ **A.** Traffic offences account for a larger number of fines than any other category of offence anywhere in India
◯ **B.** Most traffic fines are paid on the spot or online, without any hearing where income could be assessed
◯ **C.** Some wealthy offenders in Finland have publicly complained that their day-fines were excessive
◯ **D.** Fixed traffic fines were raised sharply some years ago without any lasting fall in violations

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14. The reference to income tax in the second paragraph plays which role in the argument?

- ◯ **A.** It is evidence that wealthy citizens already pay more than their fair share to the state each year
- ◯ **B.** It is a premise showing that day-fines could be collected through the existing income-tax system
- ◯ **C.** It is an objection to the argument which the author raises and subsequently proceeds to answer
- ◯ **D.** It is a parallel case meant to show that scaling a burden to means is consistent with equality

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

- ◯ **A.** Many wealthy drivers in India say they would drive more carefully if fines were raised for everyone
- ◯ **B.** After one country moved to income-scaled fines, repeat offences by its highest earners fell sharply
- ◯ **C.** Daily-wage workers in India commit traffic offences less often than salaried employees do
- ◯ **D.** Several countries that once used day-fines now keep them only for their most serious offences

CRITICAL REASONING — ENVIRONMENT · WHAT THE DRAIN REMEMBERS (Q16–Q20)

When a city bans thin plastic carry bags, its success is usually reported as a count: so many million bags not handed out, so many tonnes of plastic avoided. The count is easy to compile and pleasant to announce. It is also the wrong measure, and relying on it invites a damaging reply.

The reply comes from life-cycle studies, which tally the energy, water and emissions that go into making each kind of bag. By these tallies a thin plastic bag is a remarkably frugal object. A paper bag takes more energy to make and must be reused several times to match it; a cotton tote, whose fibre is thirsty and fertiliser-hungry, must be reused many times over, by some estimates more than a hundred. Measured by carbon, a city that swaps plastic for cotton totes used only a handful of times each may have made matters worse. If the case for the ban were climate, this reply would be close to fatal.

But the case was never climate. Thin bags are banned because of where they end up. They are light enough to blow out of bins, too flimsy to be worth collecting for recycling, and they do not rot. They gather in drains and culverts, and in a monsoon city a blocked drain turns a heavy shower into a flooded street. They are swallowed by cattle that forage in rubbish heaps, and they wash down rivers into the sea. None of this harm appears in a life-cycle tally of manufacturing emissions, because it happens after the bag has been used, in places the bag was never meant to go.

A ban justified by litter should be judged by litter. That means counting what is pulled out of drains before and after the ban, not what was not handed out at the shop counter. It also means designing the rule around escape rather than material: what matters is how likely a bag is to be dropped, blown away or left in a drain, and a thick bag that people keep and reuse escapes far less often than a thin one they discard within the hour. Cities that measure the right thing will make better rules, and will have an answer ready when the carbon accountants arrive.

16. Which of the following best expresses the main conclusion of the argument?

- ◯ **A.** Thin plastic bags cause less climate harm in manufacture than either paper bags or cotton totes
- ◯ **B.** Life-cycle studies are unreliable because they ignore what happens to products after they are used
- ◯ **C.** Cities should stop banning thin plastic bags until they have properly measured the carbon effects of the bans
- ◯ **D.** A thin-bag ban rests on litter harm and should be judged by litter, not by counting bags avoided

17. The author's recommendation to count what is pulled out of drains before and after a ban assumes that

- ◯ **A.** drains in monsoon cities are cleaned more frequently after a ban than during the years preceding it
- ◯ **B.** changes in drain litter after a ban can be traced, at least broadly, to the ban itself
- ◯ **C.** paper bags never reach the drains, because they break up in the first heavy rain of the season
- ◯ **D.** shopkeepers will under-report the number of thin bags they hand out once a ban is in force

18. Which of the following, if true, would most weaken the author's claim in the final paragraph that thick reusable bags are less of a menace than thin ones?

- ◯ **A.** Thick plastic bags cost more to manufacture than thin ones, so many shops are reluctant to stock them
- ◯ **B.** Life-cycle studies find that a thick plastic bag has a larger carbon footprint than a thin one
- ◯ **C.** Thick bags that shoppers intend to reuse are in practice thrown away almost as quickly as thin ones
- ◯ **D.** Cattle in many cities now forage in rubbish heaps less often than they did before collection improved

19. The author's treatment of life-cycle studies in the second and third paragraphs is best described as

- ◯ **A.** accepting their findings on manufacture while denying that those findings bear on the purpose of the ban
- ◯ **B.** rejecting their findings as exaggerated because they depend on estimates of how often bags are reused
- ◯ **C.** using their findings to show that cotton totes are the best replacement for thin plastic bags
- ◯ **D.** conceding that their findings are fatal to the ban and then proposing an entirely different policy instead

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

- ◯ **A.** Cotton totes are often handed out free at events, and many are never used even once afterwards
- ◯ **B.** In several cities, shops reported issuing far fewer carry bags in the year after a ban took effect
- ◯ **C.** Studies of urban flooding find discarded thin bags among the commonest causes of blocked drains
- ◯ **D.** Paper bags made from recycled pulp need fewer reuses than new paper bags to match thin plastic

RAPID FIRE — ONE-LINE RECALL

101 quick questions · not negatively marked

1. What answer do most people give when asked why the night sky is dark? _____
2. For roughly how long did the dark-sky question trouble astronomers? _____
3. What does the darkness between the stars show about the universe? _____
4. What analogy does the author use to explain the dark-sky puzzle? _____
5. In an endless forest, what does every line of sight eventually meet? _____
6. In an infinite, unchanging, star-filled universe, how bright would the sky be? _____
7. Why does distance not rescue the infinite-universe argument? _____
8. Which astronomer argued the stars could not go on for ever? _____
9. Whose name did the dark-sky puzzle later take? _____

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10. In which decade did Olbers discuss the puzzle?
11. Who first glimpsed the resolution of the dark-sky puzzle?
12. What two facts resolve the puzzle of the dark night sky?
13. How far out can we see, according to the passage?
14. What lies beyond the horizon set by light's travel time?
15. What does cosmic expansion do to ancient light?
16. What does the author say deserves attention more than the cosmology?
17. Who had access to the decisive dark-sky observation?
18. What instrument did the dark-sky observation NOT need?
19. Complete: 'a refusal to treat the obvious as ...'
20. How is science 'often presented', per the author?
21. Why did things in plain view go unexamined?
22. The dark sky was not a gap in the evidence; it was what?
23. 'Interrogation' of things in plain view means what here?
24. What is the primary purpose of 'The Information in the Dark'?
25. Which paragraph of the dark-sky essay states its lesson?
26. What do psychologists call overrating others' attention to us?
27. What did students wear in the spotlight-effect experiments?
28. Did more or fewer peers remember the shirt than the wearers guessed?
29. How is the spotlight finding usually passed on?
30. What does the author say the error does NOT come from?
31. What mental process causes the spotlight effect, per the author?
32. Where do we begin when judging what others notice?
33. What goes wrong with our adjustment towards others' views?
34. What part of the mind can we not switch off?
35. What do nervous speakers wrongly believe?
36. What do negotiators who think their bluff is transparent do?
37. What did the manager believe he had 'obviously' signalled?
38. What did the friend believe she had 'clearly' hinted?
39. What was loud inside their heads but not audible outside?
40. Why is reassurance alone a poor remedy?
41. What may reassurance quiet, according to the author?
42. What will the same habit later persuade a person about an email?
43. Others are not indifferent but what, says the author?
44. Each person stands in what, according to the passage?
45. The finding counsels ease about what?
46. The finding counsels effort in what?
47. Complete: 'less visible than we fear, and less ... than we assume'
48. 'Legible' in the passage figuratively means what?
49. What is the 'more interesting half' of the spotlight finding?
50. Which bias makes people think their inner states show plainly?
51. What traffic fine amount opens the day-fines argument?
52. For whom may a fixed fine equal a week's earnings?
53. For a company director the fine is less than what?
54. A fixed fine treats people identically in what, but unequally in what?
55. Under fixed fines, who is least deterred?
56. What is the usual defence of fixed fines?
57. Has equality before the law ever meant identical treatment?
58. How do courts already fix compensation for an injured person?
59. Which tax is cited as rising with income?
60. What does equality require of a penalty, per the author?
61. Which country is the most famous user of day-fines?
62. In a day-fine, how is the seriousness of an offence expressed?
63. How is the value of one day-fine set?
64. Two drivers at the same speed receive the same what?
65. Finnish speeding fines are reported running to how much?
66. How does the Finnish public tend to view large day-fines?
67. Which offences should India begin day-fines with?
68. Why start with traffic violations?
69. Which records does the author say give a workable income base?
70. A fine that costs the rich nothing is not a penalty but what?
71. What does a law do if it lets some buy the right to break it?
72. What role does the income-tax reference play in the argument?
73. Main conclusion of 'The Price of a Fine'?
74. Key assumption of the day-fines argument?
75. What would most weaken starting day-fines with traffic?
76. How is the success of a bag ban usually reported?
77. What does the author call the bag-count measure?
78. What do life-cycle studies tally?
79. How do life-cycle tallies describe a thin plastic bag?
80. Which bag needs more energy and several reuses to match plastic?
81. Why is a cotton tote costly to make?
82. By some estimates, how many reuses does a cotton tote need?
83. If the ban's case were climate, the life-cycle reply would be what?
84. What was the case for the bag ban, if not climate?
85. Why are thin bags not collected for recycling?
86. Name one property that makes thin bags blow out of bins.
87. Do thin plastic bags rot?
88. Where do thin bags gather in a city?
89. In a monsoon city, what does a blocked drain cause?
90. Which animals swallow thin bags in rubbish heaps?
91. Where do thin bags end up after washing down rivers?
92. Why does litter harm not appear in life-cycle tallies?
93. Complete: 'A ban justified by litter should be judged by ...'
94. What should cities count before and after a ban?
95. The rule should be designed around escape rather than what?
96. Which bag escapes less often, per the author?
97. How soon is a thin bag typically discarded?
98. Who does the author expect to 'arrive' with objections?
99. How does the author treat life-cycle findings?
100. What evidence would most strengthen the drain-litter argument?
101. Which poet first glimpsed the resolution of the dark-sky puzz

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