

CAT 2024 VARC Slot 3 Question Paper with Solutions

Q.1 Five jumbled up sentences (labelled 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5), related to a topic, are given below. Four of them can be put together to form a coherent paragraph. Identify the odd sentence and key in the number of that sentence as your answer.

1. To create a synapse, the neuron has specialized structures, often seen as tiny swellings, at its terminal end of the axon where it stores the chemicals that are emitted to transmit a signal to the next neuron.
2. This fetal warm-up act—the soldering of neural connections before the eyes actually function—is crucial to the performance of the visual system.
3. The reasons for this paring back of synapses is a mystery, but synaptic pruning is thought to sharpen and reinforce the “correct” synapses, while removing the weak and unnecessary ones.
4. Neural connections between the eyes and the brain are formed long before birth, establishing the wiring and the circuitry that allow a child to begin visualizing the world the minute she emerges from the womb.
5. During this rehearsal period, synapses—points of chemical connection—between nerve cells are generated in great excess, only to be pruned back during later development.

Answer: (1)

Solution:

By analyzing the coherence of the sentences, we find that Sentence 1 is the odd one out. It talks about the physical structure of synapses, whereas the other sentences discuss the process

of synapse formation and pruning. Therefore, the odd sentence is 1.

Quick Tip

When analyzing jumbled sentences, look for ideas that describe actions or events in a logical sequence. The odd sentence typically deviates from the topic or context of the others.

Q.2 The passage given below is followed by four alternate summaries. Choose the option that best captures the essence of the passage.

When the tradwife puts on that georgic, pinstriped dress, she is not just admiring the visual cues of a fantastical past. She takes these dreams of storybook bliss literally, tracing them backward in time until she reaches a logical conclusion that satisfies her. And by doing so, she ends up delivering an unhappy reminder of just how much our lives consist of artifice and playacting. The tradwife outrages people because of her deliberately regressive ideals. And yet her behaviour is, on some level, indistinguishable from the nontradwife's. The tradwife's trollish genius is to beat us at our own dress-up game. By insisting that the idyllic cottage daydream should be real, right down to the primitive gender roles, she leaves others feeling hollow, cheated. The hullabaloo and headaches she causes may be the price we pay for taking too many things at face value: our just deserts, served Instagram-perfect by a manicured hand on a gorgeous ceramic dish, with fat, mouthwatering maraschino cherries on top.

- (1) By promoting an idealized past, the tradwife exposes the artifice of contemporary values and mocks societal norms.
- (2) The tradwife, with her vintage dress and traditional roles, highlights the superficiality of modern life and challenges current societal norms.
- (3) The tradwife's commitment to outdated gender roles and retro fashion critiques the superficiality of today's societal ideals.
- (4) The tradwife's vintage dress and adherence to traditional roles reveal the artificial nature of modern life and its superficial values.

Answer: (2)

Solution:

The passage critiques the tradwife's adoption of outdated ideals and the superficiality of modern life. Option (2) captures the essence of the passage by emphasizing how the tradwife's actions challenge contemporary norms while highlighting the contradictions in modern society.

Quick Tip

When selecting the best summary, focus on the central theme of the passage and identify the option that reflects the main argument without getting lost in minor details.

Q.3 The passage given below is followed by four alternate summaries. Choose the option that best captures the essence of the passage.

Humans have managed to tweak the underlying biology of various plants and animals to produce high-tech crops and microbes. But regulating these entities is complicated, as the framework of policies and procedures are outdated and not flexible enough to adapt to emerging technology. The question is whether regulation will ever be able to keep up with human innovation, to regulate living things, which are apt to be unpredictable and unique; to capture all the potential risks when new biological entities are introduced, or when they pass on variations of their genes?

- (1) Current regulation of biotechnology is outdated, but it is debatable if we can create a framework, imaginative and flexible, to cover all contingencies in this fast-changing area.
- (2) The mercurial nature of biological entities calls for scientists to shape the regulations governing emerging technology, with regular calibration to handle variations in the field.
- (3) The problem with formulating regulation for innovation in the scientific arena is that it is impossible to imagine the outcomes or risks related to the outcomes of all the research.

(4) A new framework of rules and procedures for regulating the most recent research emerging from biotechnology is urgently needed, to keep up with this rapidly changing discipline.

Answer: (1)

Solution:

The passage discusses the challenges in regulating biotechnology due to outdated frameworks and the unpredictability of biological entities. Option (1) captures the idea that regulation needs to be flexible and imaginative to handle emerging technology.

Quick Tip

Look for summaries that reflect the central issue discussed in the passage—here, the struggle between innovation in biotechnology and the limitations of existing regulations.

Q.4 Five jumbled up sentences (labelled 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5), related to a topic, are given below. Four of them can be put together to form a coherent paragraph. Identify the odd sentence and key in the number of that sentence as your answer.

1. Part of the appeal of forecasting is not just that it seems to work, but that you don't seem to need specialized expertise to succeed at it.
2. The tight connection between forecasting and building a model of the world helps explain why so much of the early interest in the idea came from the intelligence community.
3. This was true even though the latter had access to classified intelligence.
4. One frequently cited study found that accurate forecasters' predictions of geopolitical events, when aggregated using standard scientific methods, were more accurate than the forecasts of members of the US intelligence community who answered the same questions in a confidential prediction market.
5. The aggregated opinions of non-experts doing forecasting have proven to be a better guide to the future than the aggregated opinions of experts.

Answer: (2)

Solution:

The jumbled sentences describe the growing interest in forecasting and how non-experts often outperform experts in predicting future events. The odd sentence, Sentence 2, stands out because it introduces the intelligence community’s interest in forecasting, which is not directly related to the core theme of comparing the forecasting accuracy of experts and non-experts. All the other sentences are focused on the comparison of forecasts, making Sentence 2 the odd one.

Quick Tip

When working with jumbled sentences, the key is to identify the underlying theme. Look for sentences that disrupt the flow or context established by the other sentences. The odd sentence typically introduces a concept unrelated to the main argument or theme.

Q.5 There is a sentence that is missing in the paragraph below. Look at the paragraph and decide where (option 1, 2, 3, or 4) the following sentence would best fit.

Sentence: Taken outside the village of Trang Bang on June 8, 1972, the picture captured the trauma and indiscriminate violence of a conflict that claimed, by some estimates, a million or more civilian lives.

Paragraph: The horrifying photograph of children fleeing a deadly napalm attack has become a defining image not only of the Vietnam War but the 20th century. _(1)_. Dark smoke billowing behind them, the young subjects’ faces are painted with a mixture of terror, pain, and confusion. _(2)_. Soldiers from the South Vietnamese army’s 25th Division follow helplessly behind. _(3)_. The picture was officially titled “The Terror of War,” but the photo is better known by the nickname given to naked 9-year-old at its centre “Napalm Girl”. _(4)_.

1. Option 1
2. Option 2
3. Option 3
4. Option 4

Answer: (3) Option 3

Solution:

The missing sentence provides critical context to the iconic image of children fleeing the napalm attack by describing the specific moment captured in the photograph. The sentence fits best in Option 3, as it ties directly to the photo's historical and emotional significance. This sentence bridges the description of the children's fear and the role of the South Vietnamese soldiers, thus setting up the importance of the image in capturing the trauma of the war.

Quick Tip

When inserting a missing sentence, pay attention to how the surrounding sentences build on each other. The missing sentence should provide necessary background or context for the idea introduced and create a natural flow in the narrative.

Q.6 The passage given below is followed by four alternate summaries. Choose the option that best captures the essence of the passage.

Lyric poetry is a genre of private meditation rather than public commitment. The impulse in Marxism toward changing a society deemed unacceptable in its basic design would seem to place demands on lyric poetry that such poetry, with its tendency toward the personal, the small scale, and the idiosyncratic, could never answer. There is within Marxism, however, also a strand of thought that would locate in lyric poetry alternative modes of perception and description that call forth a vision of worlds at odds with a repressive reality or that draw attention to the workings of ideology within the hegemonic culture. The poetic imagination may indeed deflect larger social concerns, but it may also be implicitly critical and utopian.

1. Marxism has internal contradictions due to which one strand of Marxism sees no merit in lyric poetry while another appreciates the alternative modes of perception in poetry.

2. The focus of lyric poetry as personal may not seem compatible with Marxism.

However, it is possible to envisage lyric poetry as a symbol of resistance against an oppressive culture.

3. Marxism makes unreasonable demands on lyric poetry. However, lyric poetry has its own merits that are largely ignored by Marxism due to its personal nature.

4. The focus of lyric poetry is largely personal while that of Marxism is bringing change in society. Unless the difference is resolved, poetry will remain largely utopian.

Answer: (2) The focus of lyric poetry as personal may not seem compatible with Marxism.

However, it is possible to envisage lyric poetry as a symbol of resistance against an oppressive culture.

Solution:

The passage explores the potential role of lyric poetry within Marxism, highlighting how lyric poetry's personal and introspective nature might seem at odds with Marxist ideals that focus on societal change. However, the author suggests that lyric poetry can still act as a form of resistance to oppressive systems by offering alternative perspectives and raising awareness of ideological forces. Option (2) captures this idea by balancing the tension between the personal and the political dimensions of lyric poetry.

Quick Tip

When analyzing summaries, look for the option that most accurately reflects the central theme of the passage. The best summary will highlight the key conflict or argument presented and encompass the main ideas.

Comprehension:

The passage below is accompanied by four questions. Based on the passage, choose the best answer for each question.

Fears of artificial intelligence (AI) have haunted humanity since the very beginning of the computer age. Hitherto these fears focused on machines using physical means to kill, enslave or replace people. But over the past couple of years new AI tools have emerged that threaten the survival of human civilisation from an unexpected direction. AI has gained some remarkable abilities to manipulate and generate language, whether with words, sounds or images. AI has thereby hacked the operating system of our civilisation.

Language is the stuff almost all human culture is made of. Human rights, for example, aren't inscribed in our DNA. Rather, they are cultural artefacts we created by telling stories and writing laws. Gods aren't physical realities. Rather, they are cultural artefacts we created by inventing myths and writing scriptures....What would happen once a non-human intelligence becomes better than the average human at telling stories, composing melodies, drawing images, and writing laws and scriptures? When people think about Chatgpt and other new AI tools, they are often drawn to examples like school children using AI to write their essays. What will happen to the school system when kids do that? But this kind of question misses the big picture. Forget about school essays. Think of the next American presidential race in 2024, and try to imagine the impact of AI tools that can be made to mass-produce political content, fake-news stories and scriptures for new cults...

Through its mastery of language, AI could even form intimate relationships with people, and use the power of intimacy to change our opinions and worldviews. Although there is no indication that AI has any consciousness or feelings of its own, to foster fake intimacy with humans it is enough if the AI can make them feel emotionally attached to it....

What will happen to the course of history when AI takes over culture, and begins producing stories, melodies, laws and religions? Previous tools like the printing press and radio helped spread the cultural ideas of humans, but they never created new cultural ideas of their own. AI is fundamentally different. AI can create completely new ideas, completely new culture....

Of course, the new power of AI could be used for good purposes as well. I won't dwell on this, because the people who develop AI talk about it enough....

We can still regulate the new AI tools, but we must act quickly. Whereas nukes cannot invent more powerful nukes, AI can make exponentially more powerful AI... Unregulated AI deployments would create social chaos, which would benefit autocrats and ruin democracies. Democracy is a conversation, and conversations rely on language. When AI hacks language, it could destroy our ability to have meaningful conversations, thereby destroying democracy....And the first regulation I would suggest is to make it mandatory for AI to disclose that it is an AI. If I am having a conversation with someone, and I cannot tell whether it is a human or an AI—that's the end of democracy. This text has been generated by a human. Or has it?

Q.7 We can infer that the author is most likely to agree with which of the following statements?

- (1) One of the biggest casualties from the spread of unregulated AI is likely to be the democratic process.
- (2) Apart from its drawbacks, AI tools have been beneficial in boosting technological and industrial advance worldwide.
- (3) The commonly expressed fear that future AI developments will fatally harm humans is unfounded.
- (4) People's fears of the dangers of students using ChatGPT and other new AI tools are unfounded.

Answer: (1) One of the biggest casualties from the spread of unregulated AI is likely to be the democratic process.

Solution:

The author's main concern in the passage is that the unchecked rise of AI, especially its abil-

ity to manipulate language, poses a serious threat to the democratic process. The passage discusses how AI could undermine meaningful conversations, leading to the erosion of democratic discourse and potentially benefiting authoritarian regimes. Therefore, option (1) aligns directly with the author's argument about the dangers of unregulated AI and its potential to harm democracy.

Quick Tip

When inferring an author's viewpoint, focus on the primary concerns they raise in the passage. In this case, the author's worry is that AI's unchecked power may threaten democracy, so any option reflecting this concern is more likely to be correct.

Q.8 The tone of the passage could best be described as

- (1) Alarmist, because the passage discusses scenarios of the influence of new AI tools on language and human emotions.
- (2) Cautionary, because the author lays out some adverse effects of the proliferation of unregulated AI tools.
- (3) Prescient, as the author analyses the future impact of the use of new AI tools on crucial areas of our society and culture.
- (4) Quizzical, as the passage poses several questions, concluding with the question of whether or not the passage content has been generated by AI.

Answer: (2) Cautionary, because the author lays out some adverse effects of the proliferation of unregulated AI tools.

Solution:

The tone of the passage is cautionary, as the author warns about the potential harmful consequences of the unchecked spread of AI, particularly its impact on language, democracy, and society. The author does not take an alarmist or quizzical tone but instead urges careful con-

sideration and regulation of AI technologies. Therefore, option (2) best describes the author's tone.

Quick Tip

Identifying the tone of a passage involves understanding the author's attitude. In this case, the author's concern about the risks posed by AI tools indicates a cautionary tone, as the author is emphasizing the need for regulation.

Q.9 The author terms language “the operating system of our civilization” for all the following reasons EXCEPT that it

- (1) Has laid the foundation for the creation of cultural artefacts through writing and telling of stories.
- (2) Is the basis of AI tools like ChatGPT which can be used to generate academic content and opinion.
- (3) Can influence political views and opinions as it engenders close emotional ties among people.
- (4) Is fundamental to the articulation and spread of human values and culture in our society.

Answer: (2) Is the basis of AI tools like ChatGPT which can be used to generate academic content and opinion.

Solution:

In the passage, the author refers to language as the “operating system of our civilization” to emphasize its foundational role in shaping human culture, values, and communication. The author highlights how language influences society, culture, and even politics, but does not link language directly to AI tools like ChatGPT. While AI tools use language, this is not the focus of the author's argument. Therefore, option (2) is the exception.

Quick Tip

For "EXCEPT" questions, focus on identifying the option that does not align with the main ideas presented in the passage. Here, the author talks about language's role in culture, not its connection to AI.

Q.10 The author identifies all of the following as dire outcomes of the capture of language by AI EXCEPT that it could

- (1) Eventually subvert democratic processes through the mass creation and spread of fake political content and news.
- (2) Apply its mastery of language to create strong emotional ties which could exacerbate the polarization of political views.
- (3) Spawn a completely new culture through its ability to create new ideas and opinions.
- (4) Out-strip human creativity and endeavours in the spheres such as art and music and, in the formulation of laws.

Answer: (2) Apply its mastery of language to create strong emotional ties which could exacerbate the polarization of political views.

Solution:

In the passage, the author discusses various concerns regarding the growing power of AI over language. These include its potential to undermine democratic processes by creating and spreading fake political content (option 1), its ability to generate entirely new cultures (option 3), and its capacity to surpass human creativity in fields such as art, music, and law-making (option 4). However, the author does not specifically highlight AI's ability to create emotional ties that could worsen political polarization as one of the main dangers. While the author does mention the power of AI to manipulate emotions and opinions, the specific scenario described in option (2) is not a focus of the argument. Therefore, option (2) does not align with the other concerns expressed by the author and is the correct answer.

Quick Tip

When answering "EXCEPT" questions, carefully identify the core concerns presented in the passage. Focus on the specific issues the author emphasizes and eliminate options that introduce ideas not discussed or explored in the text.

Comprehension:

The passage below is accompanied by four questions. Based on the passage, choose the best answer for each question.

There is a group in the space community who view the solar system not as an opportunity to expand human potential but as a nature preserve, forever the provenance of an elite group of scientists and their sanitary robotic probes. These planetary protection advocates [call] for avoiding "harmful contamination" of celestial bodies. Under this regime, NASA incurs great expense sterilizing robotic probes in order to prevent the contamination of entirely theoretical biospheres. . . .

Transporting bacteria would matter if Mars were the vital world once imagined by astronomers who mistook optical illusions for canals. Nobody wants to expose Martians to measles, but sadly, robotic exploration reveals a bleak, rusted landscape, lacking oxygen and flooded with radiation ready to sterilize any Earthly microbes. Simple life might exist underground, or down at the bottom of a deep canyon, but it has been very hard to find with robots. . . . The upsides from human exploration and development of Mars clearly outweigh the welfare of purely speculative Martian fungi. . . .

The other likely targets of human exploration, development, and settlement, our moon and the asteroids, exist in a desiccated, radiation-soaked realm of hard vacuum and extreme temperature variations that would kill nearly anything. It's also important to note that many international competitors will ignore the demands of these protection extremists in any case. For example, China recently sent a terrarium to the moon and germinated a plant seed—with, unsurprisingly, no protest from its own scientific community. In contrast, when it was re-

cently revealed that a researcher had surreptitiously smuggled super-resilient microscopic tardigrades aboard the ill-fated Israeli Beresheet lunar probe, a firestorm was unleashed within the space community. . . .

NASA's previous human exploration efforts made no serious attempt at sterility, with little notice. As the Mars expert Robert Zubrin noted in the *National Review*, U.S. lunar landings did not leave the campsites cleaner than they found it. Apollo's bacteria-infested litter included bags of feces. Forcing NASA's proposed Mars exploration to do better, scrubbing everything and hauling out all the trash, would destroy NASA's human exploration budget and encroach on the agency's other directorates, too. Getting future astronauts off Mars is enough of a challenge, without trying to tote weeks of waste along as well.

A reasonable compromise is to continue on the course laid out by the U.S. government and the National Research Council, which proposed a system of zones on Mars, some for science only, some for habitation, and some for resource exploitation. This approach minimizes contamination, maximizes scientific exploration . . . Mars presents a stark choice of diverging human futures. We can turn inward, pursuing ever more limited futures while we await whichever natural or manmade disaster will eradicate our species and life on Earth. Alternatively, we can choose to propel our biosphere further into the solar system, simultaneously protecting our home planet and providing a backup plan for the only life we know exists in the universe. Are the lives on Earth worth less than some hypothetical microbe lurking under Martian rocks?

Q.11 The contrasting reactions to the Chinese and Israeli “contaminations” of lunar space

- (1) Are evidence of China's reasonable approach towards space contamination.
- (2) Are valid as the contamination of the lunar environment from animal sources is far greater than from plants.
- (3) Indicate that national scientists may have different sensitivities to issues of biosphere protection.

(4) Reveal global biases prevalent in attitudes towards different countries.

Answer: (3) Indicate that national scientists may have different sensitivities to issues of biosphere protection.

Solution:

The contrasting reactions to the Chinese and Israeli “contaminations” of lunar space illustrate differing national perspectives on biosphere protection. While China’s actions went largely unchallenged, the Israeli incident sparked controversy, reflecting how scientists from different nations may have varying sensitivities or priorities regarding space contamination. The passage highlights this discrepancy, and option (3) best captures the essence of the author’s argument about these differing sensitivities.

Quick Tip

Look for answers that highlight underlying differences in perspectives when comparing reactions. The author uses the contrast between countries to point out varying sensitivities to environmental issues.

Q.12 The author’s overall tone in the first paragraph can be described as

- (1) Equivocal about the reasons extended by the group of scientists seeking to limit space exploration.
- (2) Indifferent to the elitism of a few scientists aiming to corner space exploration.
- (3) Approving of the amount of money NASA spends to restrict the spread of contamination in space.
- (4) Sceptical about the excessive efforts to sanitise planets where life has not yet been proven to exist.

Answer: (4) Sceptical about the excessive efforts to sanitise planets where life has not yet

been proven to exist.

Solution:

In the first paragraph, the author critiques the overzealous efforts to sterilize space exploration missions, especially considering that no life has yet been discovered on planets like Mars. The tone is sceptical, as the author questions whether these efforts are excessive or unwarranted. Therefore, option (4) is the best choice because it reflects the author's doubt about the necessity of these sterilization efforts.

Quick Tip

To determine the tone of a passage, focus on the words that reflect the author's attitude. Words like "sceptical" or "critical" indicate doubt or questioning, which matches the author's tone in this case.

Q.13 The author mentions all of the following reasons to dismiss concerns about contaminating Mars EXCEPT:

- (1) Efforts to contain contamination on Mars are likely to be derailed as competitor countries may not follow similar restrictions.
- (2) The use of similar probes on astronomical bodies like the moon have had little effect on the environment.
- (3) The lack of evidence of living organisms on Mars makes possible contamination from earthly microbes a moot point.
- (4) Earlier explorations have already contaminated pristine space environments.

Answer: (2) The use of similar probes on astronomical bodies like the moon have had little effect on the environment.

Solution:

The author dismisses concerns about contaminating Mars based on several factors, including the lack of life on Mars (making contamination less of a concern), the already contaminated space environments from previous missions, and the potential for competitor countries to ignore contamination restrictions. However, the author does not specifically mention the effect of probes on the moon's environment as a reason to dismiss concerns about Mars contamination, making option (2) the exception.

Quick Tip

For "EXCEPT" questions, focus on what the author has explicitly dismissed. Identify the one statement that is not directly addressed or refuted in the passage.

Q.14 The author is unlikely to disagree with any of the following EXCEPT:

- (1) The exorbitant costs of continuing to keep the space environment pristine may be unsustainable.
- (2) That while NASA's earlier missions were not ideal in their approach to space contamination, they likely did no grave damage.
- (3) The proposal for a zonal segregation of the Martian landscape into regions for different purposes.
- (4) Space contamination should be minimized until the possibility of life on the astronomical body being explored is ruled out.

Answer: (4) Space contamination should be minimized until the possibility of life on the astronomical body being explored is ruled out.

Solution:

The author expresses skepticism about the excessive efforts to sterilize space exploration missions, particularly when life has not yet been proven to exist on Mars or other celestial bodies. The author argues that the focus should be on practical exploration rather than purely min-

imizing contamination. The argument presented in option (4) that contamination should be minimized until life is ruled out—does not align with the author’s viewpoint. The author is unlikely to agree with the idea of waiting for proof of no life before allowing human exploration, as they believe the likelihood of life on Mars is low and that human exploration should continue regardless. Therefore, option (4) is the exception and the correct answer.

Quick Tip

For "EXCEPT" questions, carefully examine the author’s tone and perspective. Look for the option that contradicts the main argument or theme discussed in the passage.

Q.15 There is a sentence that is missing in the paragraph below. Look at the paragraph and decide where (option 1, 2, 3, or 4) the following sentence would best fit.

Sentence: This reality is putting stress on employees who have to pay for transport, desk lunches, more childcare, clothing and that after-work socialisation – costs they haven’t incurred for nearly two years.

Paragraph:

...(1)... Prices are rising at their fastest rate in 40 years, consequently, return-to-office-related costs have shot up – think petrol and food, for instance. ...(2)... Yet wages haven’t kept up with inflation – even despite the salary growth many workers have enjoyed during a favourable pandemic labour market. ...(3)... This is especially jarring for workers who were able to save during remote work, when these expenditures weren’t a factor. ...(4)... In April 2022, Umus, a London university lecturer, told BBC Worklife that they were spending nearly a quarter of what they made every day on return-to-work costs.

Answer: (3) Option 3

Solution:

The missing sentence, which discusses the stress employees face from rising costs due to the return to office, fits best after Sentence 2. Sentence 2 mentions that wages have not kept up with inflation, and the missing sentence provides a logical continuation by elaborating on the additional financial pressures employees are facing, such as transport, childcare, and other work-related expenses. It builds on the point made in Sentence 2 and highlights the difficulties of managing finances in the face of rising costs, making Option 3 the most suitable fit.

Quick Tip

When inserting a missing sentence, focus on maintaining the flow of ideas. The missing sentence should logically extend the argument or description in the surrounding sentences, adding necessary detail or context.

Comprehension:

The passage below is accompanied by four questions. Based on the passage, choose the best answer for each question.

Moutai has been the global booze sensation of the decade. A bottle of its Flying Fairy which sold in the 1980s for the equivalent of a dollar now retails for \$400. Moutai’s listed shares have soared by almost 600% in the past five years, outpacing the likes of Amazon. . . . It does this while disregarding every Western marketing mantra. It is not global, has meagre digital sales and does not appeal to millennials. It scores pitifully on environmental, social and governance measures. In the Boy Scout world of Western business it would leave a bad taste, in more ways than one.

Moutai owes its intoxicating success to three factors—not all of them easy to emulate. First, it profits from Chinese nationalism. Moutai is known as the “national liquor”. It was used to raise spirits and disinfect wounds in Mao’s Long March. It was Premier Zhou Enlai’s favourite tittle, shared with Richard Nixon in 1972. Its centuries-old craftsmanship—it is distilled eight times and stored for years in earthenware jars—is a source of national pride. It also claims to be hangover-proof, which would make it an invention to rival gunpowder....

Second, it chose to serve China's super-rich rather than its middle class. Markets are littered with the corpses of firms that could not compete in the cut-throat battle for Chinese middle-class wallets. And the country's premium market is massive—at 73m-strong, bigger than the population of France, notes Euan McLeish of Bernstein, an investment firm, and still less crowded with prestige brands than advanced economies. Moutai is to these well-heeled drinkers what vintage champagne is to the rest of the world.....

Third, Moutai looks beyond affluent millennials and digital natives. The elderly and the middle-aged, it found, can be just as lucrative. Its biggest market now is (male) drinkers in their mid-30s. Many have no siblings, thanks to four decades of China's one-child policy—which also means their elderly parents can splash out on weddings and banquets. Moutai is often a guest of honour.

Moutai has succeeded thanks to nationalism, elitism and ageism, in other words—not in spite of this unholy trinity. But it faces risks. The government is its largest shareholder—and a meddling one. It appears to want prices to remain stable. Exorbitantly priced booze is at odds with its professed socialist ideals. Yet minority investors—including many foreign funds—lament that Moutai's wholesale price is a third of what it sells for in shops. Raising it could boost the company's profits further. Instead, in what some see as a travesty of corporate governance, its majority owner has plans to set up its own sales channel.....

In the long run, its biggest risk may be millennials. As they grow older, health concerns, work-life balance and the desire for more wholesome pursuits than binge-drinking may curb the “Ganbei!” toasting culture [heavy drinking] on which so much of the demand for Moutai rests. For the time being, though, the party goes on.

Q.16 The phrase “would make it an invention to rival gunpowder” has been used in the passage in a sense that is

- (1) Synonymical.
- (2) Metaphorical.
- (3) Substantive.
- (4) Literal.

Answer: (2) Metaphorical.

Solution:

The phrase “an invention to rival gunpowder” is not meant to be interpreted literally. Instead, it is used metaphorically to emphasize the extraordinary nature of the claim that Moutai’s hangover-proof properties could be as revolutionary as gunpowder, a discovery that dramatically changed human history. The comparison is not to be taken at face value but rather as a metaphor that underscores the potential significance of Moutai’s innovation. This metaphorical usage draws attention to the monumental impact that the invention could have, in terms of its societal and cultural influence, similar to how gunpowder revolutionized warfare.

Quick Tip

When a phrase is used figuratively to highlight the impact or significance of something, it is a metaphor. Look for comparisons that emphasize a major effect, but not in a literal sense.

Q.17 Which one of the following is both a reason for Moutai’s success as well as a possible threat to that success?

- (1) Its appeal to the rich.
- (2) Chinese love of liquor-filled celebration.
- (3) Government involvement in its business.

(4) Its appeal to the older age group.

Answer: (4) Its appeal to the older age group.

Solution:

Moutai's appeal to the older age group has been a key driver of its success, as this demographic has the purchasing power and cultural affinity for the brand. However, this very factor also presents a potential threat in the long term. As younger generations (like millennials) show growing health concerns and shifting preferences, the company could lose its customer base as the older demographic ages. This creates a duality: while the older age group has driven Moutai's success, their decreasing consumption could limit future growth. Therefore, the answer to this question is option (4) because the same factor that fuels Moutai's success is also a potential risk to its future viability.

Quick Tip

When an option presents both an advantage and a risk, it typically indicates a factor that is subject to market or demographic changes. In this case, the older age group's consumption patterns present both a driving force and a vulnerability.

Q.18 In the context of the passage, we can infer that to succeed in the liquor industry in China, a marketing firm must consider all of the following factors affecting the Chinese liquor market EXCEPT that

- (1) There are few competitors to meet the demands of high-end liquor consumers.
- (2) There is money to be made from marketing to the middle class.
- (3) The government may control the pricing of products.
- (4) The competition for winning over the middle class is very stiff.

Answer: (2) There is money to be made from marketing to the middle class.

Solution:

Moutai has specifically targeted the wealthier segments of the population, rather than focusing on the highly competitive middle class. The passage emphasizes that the market for high-end liquor in China is still underdeveloped compared to more mature markets in the West, and there are fewer prestige brands vying for the wealthy consumers. Option (2) is the exception because it suggests that marketing to the middle class is a key strategy, but this is not a priority for Moutai, whose primary focus is the wealthy and older consumers. This aligns with the passage's explanation of Moutai's target market.

Quick Tip

Focus on the company's market strategy as described in the passage. If the company targets a particular demographic (like the wealthy), other consumer segments (like the middle class) are less likely to be the focus of their marketing efforts.

Q.19 In the context of the passage, it is most likely that the author refers to Moutai's marketing strategy as "the unholy trinity" because

- (1) It exposes the firm to long-term risks.
- (2) There is nothing holy about marketing techniques for liquor.
- (3) It contradicts the Western strategy of marketing.
- (4) It profits from Chinese nationalist feelings.

Answer: (3) It contradicts the Western strategy of marketing.

Solution:

The term "unholy trinity" refers to Moutai's use of three factors—nationalism, elitism, and ageism—that drive its marketing strategy. These factors contrast with Western marketing strategies, which typically emphasize inclusivity, sustainability, and broad appeal. Moutai's

approach, with its focus on an older, wealthier demographic and its connection to Chinese nationalism, goes against the grain of Western marketing principles. Therefore, the correct answer is option (3), which highlights the contradiction between Moutai’s approach and typical Western strategies.

Quick Tip

Look for figurative language that provides insight into the author’s critique of the company. In this case, “unholy trinity” is a metaphorical reference to how Moutai’s marketing strategy diverges from conventional Western practices.

Q.20 There is a sentence that is missing in the paragraph below. Look at the paragraph and decide where (option 1, 2, 3, or 4) the following sentence would best fit.

Sentence: Many have had to leave their homes behind, with more than 1.3 million people being displaced due to the drought.

Passage:

Somalia has been dealing with an enormous humanitarian catastrophe, driven by the longest and most severe drought the country has experienced in at least 40 years. ___(1)___ Five consecutive rainy seasons have failed, causing more than 8 million people - almost half of the country’s population – to experience acute food insecurity. ___(2)___ More than 43,000 people are believed to have lost their lives, with half of the lives lost likely being children under five. The damage the drought has caused is far-reaching. ___(3)___ Farmers have lost all their agricultural income, while pastoralists have lost more than 3 million livestock, impoverishing entire communities, and leaving them on the brink of famine. ___(4)___ Some, like the pastoralists, may never be able to go back as their livelihoods have been irreversibly wiped out.

Answer: (1) Option 4

Solution:

The missing sentence, “Many have had to leave their homes behind, with more than 1.3 million people being displaced due to the drought,” logically fits after the sentence describing the devastating impact of the drought. This helps provide more context about the displacement of people, which is a direct result of the widespread destruction caused by the drought. It naturally flows into the discussion of the loss of livelihoods and the broader humanitarian crisis.

Quick Tip

For missing sentences, ensure they logically connect the ideas in the paragraph. Consider the flow of information and choose a sentence that provides important context to what is being discussed.

Comprehension Passage:

Languages become endangered and die out for many reasons. Sadly, the physical annihilation of communities of native speakers of a language is all too often the cause of language extinction. In North America, European colonists brought death and destruction to many Native American communities. This was followed by US federal policies restricting the use of indigenous languages, including the removal of native children from their communities to federal boarding schools where native languages and cultural practices were prohibited. As many as 75 percent of the languages spoken in the territories that became the United States have gone extinct, with slightly better language survival rates in Central and South America .

..

Even without physical annihilation and prohibitions against language use, the language of the “dominant” cultures may drive other languages into extinction; young people see education, jobs, culture and technology associated with the dominant language and focus their attention on that language. The largest language “killers” are English, Spanish, Portuguese, French, Russian, Hindi, and Chinese, all of which have privileged status as dominant languages threatening minority languages.

When we lose a language, we lose the worldview, culture and knowledge of the people who spoke it, constituting a loss to all humanity. People around the world live in direct contact with their native environment, their habitat. When the language they speak goes extinct, the rest of humanity loses their knowledge of that environment, their wisdom about the relationship between local plants and illness, their philosophical and religious beliefs as well as their native cultural expression (in music, visual art and poetry) that has enriched both the speakers of that language and others who would have encountered that culture. . . .

As educators deeply immersed in the liberal arts, we believe that educating students broadly in all facets of language and culture . . . yields immense rewards. Some individuals educated in the liberal arts tradition will pursue advanced study in linguistics and become actively engaged in language preservation, setting out for the Amazon, for example, with video recording equipment to interview the last surviving elders in a community to record and document a language spoken by no children.

Certainly, though, the vast majority of students will not pursue this kind of activity. For these students, a liberal arts education is absolutely critical from the twin perspectives of language extinction and global citizenship. When students study languages other than their own, they are sensitized to the existence of different cultural perspectives and practices. With such an education, students are more likely to be able to articulate insights into their own cultural biases, be more empathetic to individuals of other cultures, communicate successfully across linguistic and cultural differences, consider and resolve questions in a way that reflects multiple cultural perspectives, and, ultimately extend support to people, programs, practices, and policies that support the preservation of endangered languages.

There is ample evidence that such preservation can work in languages spiraling toward extinction. For example, Navajo, Cree and Inuit communities have established schools in which these languages are the language of instruction and the number of speakers of each has increased.

Q.21 It can be inferred from the passage that it is likely South America had a slightly better language survival rate than North America for all of the following reasons EXCEPT:

- (1) The colonial government was unable to mainstream the locals.
- (2) Locals were provided job opportunities in the colonial administration.
- (3) European colonists allowed children of native speakers to stay at home with their families.
- (4) Not many native speakers were killed by European colonists.

Answer: (2) Locals were provided job opportunities in the colonial administration.

Solution:

The passage suggests that in South America, the better survival rate of native languages can be attributed to factors such as fewer physical annihilations of indigenous people and less severe colonial policies. However, the notion that locals were provided job opportunities in the colonial administration (option 2) is not mentioned as a reason for better language survival. This is not in line with the passage's explanation of why South America had better language survival rates, making option (2) the exception.

The key to this answer is understanding the specific factors that contributed to better language survival, such as less disruption of indigenous communities, rather than any administrative roles in colonial governance.

Quick Tip

For "EXCEPT" questions, carefully distinguish between factors that directly contribute to the outcome discussed and those that are mentioned as irrelevant or not supported by the passage.

Q.22 The author believes that a liberal arts education combined with participation in language

preservation empowers students in all of the following ways EXCEPT that they will

- (1) Overcome cultural barriers to communication.
- (2) Establish schools to preserve languages spiralling towards extinction.
- (3) Learn different languages.
- (4) Develop a better understanding of their own culture.

Answer: (2) Establish schools to preserve languages spiralling towards extinction.

Solution:

The author highlights that a liberal arts education, combined with language preservation activities, can help students understand and appreciate cultural diversity. While many students will engage with different languages and cultural practices, the author notes that only a small number will actively engage in linguistics or set up schools to preserve dying languages. Therefore, the establishment of schools for language preservation is not something the author expects the majority of students to pursue, making option (2) the exception.

This reinforces the idea that while the education system can create awareness, it's the few dedicated students who will take significant action in preserving endangered languages.

Quick Tip

"EXCEPT" questions often point out what does not fit within the argument. In this case, the establishment of schools is not emphasized as a widespread outcome of language preservation education.

Q.23 In the context of the passage, which one of the following hypothetical scenarios, if true, is NOT an example of the kind of loss that occurs when a language becomes extinct?

- (1) The Andamanese language has a word to describe someone who has lost a step-sister. When the language dies, we will lose the concept of the word and the emotions it evokes.

- (2) The Lamkangs of Manipur have only 3 remaining native speakers of the language. When they die, we will lose one more group from the government list of indigenous tribes.
- (3) The Inuits of Alaska have 35 different words to describe the texture of snow. When the language becomes extinct, we will lose that understanding of nature.
- (4) The Nicobarese language describes 20 different moods of the ocean. By the time the last speaker is educated in a Central Board school, they will have forgotten their language.

Answer: (2) The Lamkangs of Manipur have only 3 remaining native speakers of the language. When they die, we will lose one more group from the government list of indigenous tribes.

Solution:

The passage emphasizes the loss of cultural, environmental, and philosophical knowledge when a language becomes extinct. The examples provided describe how language extinction leads to the loss of unique concepts, such as words describing specific emotions or aspects of nature (options 1, 3, and 4). However, option (2) refers to the loss of a group from an administrative list, which is more about classification than the loss of cultural knowledge or understanding. Therefore, option (2) is the exception because it does not directly pertain to the cultural or philosophical knowledge lost with the extinction of a language.

This distinction is important because the passage focuses on the deep, meaningful losses knowledge of nature, emotional expressions, and worldviews—that come with the death of a language.

Quick Tip

For these types of questions, focus on the deeper, more impactful consequences of language loss, such as the loss of cultural knowledge, instead of more administrative or demographic aspects.

Q.24 Which one of the following hypothetical scenarios, if true, would most strongly under-

mine the central ideas of the passage?

- (1) Schools that teach endangered languages can preserve the language only for a generation.
- (2) Most liberal arts students will pursue jobs in publishing and human resource management rather than doctorates in linguistics.
- (3) Recording a dying language that has only a few remaining speakers freezes it in time: it stops evolving further.
- (4) A liberal arts education requires that, in addition to being fluent in English, students gain fluency in two of the top five most spoken languages globally.

Answer: (4) A liberal arts education requires that, in addition to being fluent in English, students gain fluency in two of the top five most spoken languages globally.

Solution:

The central argument of the passage revolves around the importance of language preservation, cultural diversity, and the role of education in raising awareness of endangered languages. Option (4) would directly undermine this argument because it emphasizes the acquisition of global, widely spoken languages rather than endangered or minority languages. If the education system focuses on the most spoken languages, it could divert attention away from the preservation of languages at risk of extinction, which is the primary concern of the passage. Therefore, option (4) would most strongly contradict the core argument.

Quick Tip

The answer that contradicts the passage’s main argument, or takes a position that conflicts with the passage’s perspective, is often the correct one. In this case, the focus on global languages undermines the concern for preserving endangered languages.