

## CAT 2014 VARC Question Paper with Solutions

**Time Allowed :3 Hours**

**Maximum Marks :390**

**Total questions :130**

### Quick Tip

#### **INSTRUCTIONS:**

- 1. Read the instructions given at the beginning/end of each section or at the beginning of a group of questions very carefully.**
- 2. This test has two sections with 60 questions - 30 questions in each section. The TOTAL TIME available for the paper is 140 minutes. The time available for each section is 70 minutes and you cannot return to the first section once you have started the second section.**
- 3. SYou are expected to show your competence in both the sections.**
- 4. All questions carry three marks each. Each wrong answer will attract a penalty of one mark.**

**Q1. Each of Mr. Raj, his mother, his wife, and his son is a different professional among lawyer, doctor, engineer, and accountant. - Accountant is not the son of the lawyer (lawyer is blood relative of the doctor). - Engineer is son of the accountant, who is not blood relative of the doctor. Who can never be the doctor?**

- (A) Mr. Raj
- (B) Mr. Raj's wife
- (C) Mr. Raj's son
- (D) Both A and C

**Correct Answer:** (D) Both A and C

**Solution:**

**Step 1: Relation constraints** Engineer = son of accountant. Accountant is not blood relative of doctor → Accountant must be wife or son (since mother and Raj are blood relatives).

**Step 2: Lawyer–doctor relationship** Lawyer is blood relative of doctor. Therefore, if doctor is Raj, lawyer must be mother or son. But if doctor = Raj, accountant would have to be wife, engineer = son → possible conflict with given constraints.

**Step 3: Check each person as doctor** - If doctor = Mr. Raj's son → doctor is blood relative, accountant would be mother or wife. But engineer = son of accountant contradicts son = doctor. - If doctor = Mr. Raj → contradictions arise with lawyer and accountant positions. Thus Mr. Raj and his son can never be doctor.

Both A and C

#### Quick Tip

In logic puzzles with professions, map relational constraints first, then test each possibility for contradictions.

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**Q2.** Five boys — Vivek, Abhishek, Roy, Das, and Ranjan — are compared for height and weight.

- Vivek is taller and lighter than Abhishek.
- Ranjan is shorter and heavier than Das.
- Both Abhishek and Roy are taller and heavier than Das.
- If Abhishek is taller than Roy, then Vivek is heavier than Ranjan.
- Roy is heavier than Abhishek.

**If Roy is heavier than Das, then Abhishek is taller than Roy. Who is the lightest?**

- (A) Roy
- (B) Das
- (C) Ranjan
- (D) Abhishek

**Correct Answer:** (B) Das

**Solution:**

**Step 1: From statements** Roy heavier than Abhishek; both taller and heavier than Das → Das is shorter and lighter than both Roy and Abhishek.

**Step 2: Height/weight ordering** Vivek lighter than Abhishek. Ranjan heavier than Das but shorter than Das.

Given Roy heavier than Das → triggers Abhishek taller than Roy; Vivek heavier than Ranjan.

**Step 3: Lightest** Das is lighter than Roy and Abhishek, and Ranjan is heavier than Das.

Vivek lighter than Abhishek but no lighter than Das (since Das is lightest overall).

Das

#### Quick Tip

In comparative reasoning, first fix absolute extremes (lightest, tallest) from direct statements, then deduce middle order.

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**Q3. Five men A, B, C, D, and E sit in order at a round table and vote for Chairman. In the first ballot, none votes for self or neighbour. First ballot results in tie. In the second**

ballot, C votes for E, others stick to original choices, resulting in B's victory. Who voted for B in the first ballot?

- (A) D
- (B) E
- (C) C
- (D) Cannot be determined

**Correct Answer:** (C) C

**Solution:**

**Step 1: Seating and restrictions** Positions around table: A–B–C–D–E–A. No one votes for self or neighbour.

**Step 2: First ballot tie** Since in second ballot C changes vote to E causing B to win, C must have originally voted for B (giving B some votes in first round).

**Step 3: Conclusion** Given the tie in first round, the only scenario fitting the restrictions is C voting for B initially.

C

#### Quick Tip

For voting puzzles, track who gains or loses votes across rounds; changes reveal original choices.

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**Q4. Choose the sentence in which the usage of the word APART is *incorrect* or *inappropriate*.**

- (A) As soon as Abhishek took the toy train in his hands, the whole thing came apart and he started bawling.
- (B) I mistake Latha for Sheela because I can't differentiate between them apart.
- (C) Jerry completed the paper, apart from the last question.

(D) Thanks to technology, we don't feel that we live 3000 kms apart.

**Correct Answer:** (B)

**Solution:**

**Step 1: Meaning of "apart"** The word "apart" can mean:

- separated in space or time (e.g., "3000 kms apart")
- into pieces (e.g., "came apart")
- except for something (e.g., "apart from the last question")

**Step 2: Check each sentence** (A) "came apart" — correct (into pieces).

(B) "differentiate between them apart" — incorrect. The correct usage would be "differentiate between them" without "apart" in this context.

(C) "apart from" — correct (except for).

(D) "3000 kms apart" — correct (separated by distance).

**Step 3: Conclusion** Only (B) is an incorrect usage.

B

**Quick Tip**

Check idiomatic usage — some words like "apart" have specific fixed phrases in which they work correctly.

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**Q5. Choose the sentence in which the usage of the word GROUND is *incorrect or inappropriate*.**

- (A) Good workers are thin on ground these days.
- (B) The Kargil soldiers held their ground against the enemy.
- (C) The guest lecturer covered new ground in every session.
- (D) My grandfather designed the house from the ground up.

**Correct Answer:** (A)

**Solution:**

**Step 1: Meaning of “ground” in idioms** - “thin on the ground” (British) means rare, scarce — correct form is “thin on the ground” not “thin on ground”.

- “hold one’s ground” — stand firm, correct.
- “cover new ground” — deal with new topics, correct.
- “from the ground up” — from the beginning, correct.

**Step 2: Check each sentence** (A) “thin on ground” — incorrect, missing “the”. Should be “thin on the ground”.

(B) correct idiom.

(C) correct idiom.

(D) correct idiom.

**Step 3: Conclusion** Only (A) is incorrect usage.

A

**Quick Tip**

Idioms often require fixed articles or prepositions — omitting them makes the usage incorrect.

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**Q6.**

(A) Many of the Impressionists eschewed black, for example, conscious that shadow was actually composed of other colours, mostly purples and blues.

(B) In his delightfully readable book, Philip Hook, Sotheby’s senior director of Impressionist and Modern Art, analyses how the movement took different forms in different countries.

(C) Whether in their landscapes, figure paintings or still lifes, the Impressionists celebrated and transformed the commonplace, finding beauty in a misty harbour at sunrise and radiance in a bowl of fruit.

(D) But what it had in common everywhere was the younger generation’s desire to cleanse artistic vision by painting only what they saw about them, with broad brush strokes and brighter, simpler colours.

**Solution:**

**Step 1: Identify the theme** Statements (A), (C), and (D) all describe Impressionist painting styles and philosophy, focusing on colour use, subject choice, and technique.

**Step 2: Identify the odd one out** Statement (B) introduces a specific author and his book — it shifts focus from describing the movement itself to discussing a secondary source. This interrupts the flow of the descriptive narrative.

**Step 3: Logical sequence of remaining statements** (A) → (C) → (D) forms a coherent descriptive paragraph about Impressionist art.

**Quick Tip**

When finding the odd sentence in a paragraph completion task, remove the one that changes focus or introduces unrelated context.

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**Q7.**

(A) A less barbaric fix is cloning patients' hair cells.

(B) Surgical solutions for restoring lush locks have always involved a painful trade-off — transplanting hair from the rear of your head to the top could leave you thin in the back.

(C) The procedure is a matter of vanity, it could provide insight into how to clone other tissues for therapeutic uses.

(D) Dr. Farjo makes use of this technique and injects the clones into sparse scalp regions, where each can sprout a fresh hair.

**Solution:**

**Step 1: Identify the theme** Statements (A), (B), and (D) all describe hair restoration methods, moving from traditional surgery to modern cloning techniques.

**Step 2: Identify the odd one out** Statement (C) talks about cloning for other tissues and therapeutic uses — this shifts the topic from hair restoration specifically to general medical cloning, breaking the coherence.

**Step 3: Logical sequence of remaining statements** (B) → (A) → (D) forms a clear narrative: the problem with old methods, the new method, and its application.

### Quick Tip

The odd sentence is often the one that changes the scope from specific to general or introduces unrelated information.

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### Passage:

I reported on the Iraq invasion as a “unilateral” journalist, which meant I rented an SUV from Hertz in Kuwait and sneaked across the border with the first US tanks. I wound up in Baghdad on April 9, 2003, and watched the Marines tear down the iconic statue of Saddam Hussein at Firdos Square. I returned to Iraq on several occasions to work on lengthy stories about the dismal turn of events as the occupation turned into a war of Americans against Iraqis, and Iraqis against Iraqis. The carnage, though heartbreaking, was almost the least shocking experience of my journeys between war in the Mideast and my home in New York City.

While Americans killed and got killed in Iraq, Americans back home shopped at Walmart and watched reality television. I had covered a lot of wars and thought I had grown accustomed to peaceful countries being unconcerned by other people’s quarrels. My unsentimental education had begun in the 1990s in Bosnia where I often had a Matrix-like experience. In the morning, I would wake up in Sarajevo or another cursed town that was blasted by bombs, frozen by winter and deprived of food. I would then begin my effort to get the hell out of hell. I would hope for a seat on what was known as Maybe Airlines. These were the UN relief flights that brought food into besieged Sarajevo. Maybe the shelling would be light enough for flights to land and take off, maybe not. If the flights were grounded, I could try to escape by driving along Sniper Alley and through a creepy no man’s land that constituted the only border that mattered in a nation cut and quartered by war.

Distances are small in Europe. By the afternoon, I could be in Vienna or Budapest or London, enjoying the comfortable life that Europe offered many of its citizens: hot showers, good food, clean sheets, the certainty that I would not be killed by a mortar as I slept. I had a hard time believing these altered states existed in such close proximity. The contented Europeans eating apple strudel or shopping at Harrods on those 1990s afternoons – didn’t

they realize war was being fought in their backyard? The answer was that they knew and didn't care. Proximity isn't destiny. Bosnia though close, wasn't their home. Other people were killing and dying, not their people.

I had understood only half of it and learned the other half a decade later, on my return to America after sojourns in Iraq. Outside the tight-knit community of military families who cared deeply about the wars, nearly everyone in America went about his or her life as though Iraq and Afghanistan didn't matter much. Nor had Americans been asked to change their way of life. It had become possible, I realized, for a nation to be at war without suffering the inconveniences associated with war – including the inconvenience of thinking about it.

World War II was a classic war in the sense of rationing, of drives for war bonds, of a draft the elite could not avoid with college deferments and of a ceaseless drumbeat in almost every sector of society that a great conflict was being fought that required great sacrifices of everyone. Even for families spared the loss of a loved one overseas, World War II was a visible – intentionally visible – aspect of life in the homeland; the nation's leaders made it so. Life as it was before the war had to be suspended.

**Q8. Which of the following best states the author's main point?**

- (A) War is an existential issue.
- (B) War is not an exception to normal peacetime, but an enduring condition.
- (C) Wars do not bother people any more, even when waged on their behalf.
- (D) Wartime is the unpleasant and unwelcome partner of peacetime.

**Correct Answer:** (C)

**Solution:**

**Step 1: Identify the core message** The passage contrasts the author's direct war experiences abroad with the indifference of people in the US and Europe, even when their nations were at war.

- Step 2: Eliminate distractors** (A) "War is an existential issue" — too vague.  
(B) "War as enduring condition" — partially true but not the main thrust.  
(D) "Wartime as partner of peacetime" — metaphorical, not central.

**Step 3: Match best fit** The focus is on the disconnect between citizens and wars fought on their behalf → matches (C).

C

#### Quick Tip

In main idea questions, prefer the choice that captures the author’s overall stance, not just a supporting detail.

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**Q9. The phrase ‘unsentimental education’ is used to:**

- (A) imply that there is no escape from the clutches of war.
- (B) disclose the shockingly indifferent attitude of people towards war.
- (C) point out that wars are no longer situated in historical context.
- (D) argue that the end of war is imminent.

**Correct Answer:** (B)

#### Solution:

**Step 1: Context of phrase** The author uses “unsentimental education” to describe learning from observing people unaffected by wars despite physical proximity.

**Step 2: Match meaning** It’s about discovering the indifference and detachment of those not directly touched by conflict → aligns with (B).

**Step 3: Why others are wrong** (A) focuses on inevitability of war — not implied.

(C) about historical context — irrelevant.

(D) about war’s end — not discussed.

B

### Quick Tip

Look at the sentence and nearby context to determine what an unusual phrase refers to in author's tone and perspective.

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**Q10. The author states “Proximity isn’t destiny” to suggest that:**

- (A) pushing the boundaries during military conflict is not a new experience for Europeans.
- (B) political discourse can be more important to public opinion than war itself.
- (C) Europeans would not give up their comforts because the neighbours are at war.
- (D) geographical boundaries are not predestined but wars are.

**Correct Answer:** (C)

### Solution:

**Step 1: Meaning in context** The author uses the phrase when noting that Bosnians were at war while nearby Europeans continued unaffected, enjoying comforts.

**Step 2: Matching choice** This shows that geographical closeness doesn't force people to be affected — they may ignore the conflict → aligns with (C).

**Step 3: Eliminate others** (A) irrelevant, (B) unrelated to proximity, (D) misinterprets the metaphor.

C

### Quick Tip

When an author uses a metaphorical phrase, match it to the surrounding example for the intended implication.

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**Q11. Our Constitution is so simple and \_\_\_\_\_ that it is always possible to meet extraordinary needs by changes in emphasis and arrangement without loss of essential \_\_\_\_\_.**

- (A) rational notion
- (B) comprehensible norm
- (C) practical form
- (D) realistic ideology

**Correct Answer:** (C) practical form

**Solution:**

**Step 1: First blank analysis** The first blank describes the Constitution in a way that makes it adaptable to extraordinary needs. Words like “practical” or “flexible” fit best.

- “Rational” refers to logic, but may not directly imply adaptability.
- “Comprehensible” means understandable, but not necessarily adaptable.
- “Realistic” refers to being in touch with reality but is less precise here.
- “Practical” implies functionality and adaptability — best fit.

**Step 2: Second blank analysis** The second blank refers to what remains intact despite changes in emphasis and arrangement. “Form” fits best because it means structure, which can remain intact while details are adjusted.

- “Notion” is too vague,
- “Norm” refers to standards, but not structural essence,
- “Ideology” refers to beliefs, but the sentence is about structural integrity.

Practical Form

**Quick Tip**

When two blanks are interlinked, choose words that reinforce each other’s meaning in the context rather than working in isolation.

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**Q12.** In any society that values liberty and regards it as a right, punishment will be viewed very seriously, to be \_\_\_\_\_ only if a very good justification for it is \_\_\_\_\_.

- (A) awarded based

- (B) imposed    posited
- (C) meted    tendered
- (D) provided    forwarded

**Correct Answer:** (C) meted    tendered

**Solution:**

**Step 1: First blank analysis** The context is punishment — the correct collocation is “meted out” (meaning given or inflicted).

- “Awarded” is inappropriate for punishment,
- “Imposed” could work but is weaker than the precise legal term “meted”,
- “Provided” is entirely incorrect for punishment.

**Step 2: Second blank analysis** A justification can be “tendered” (formally offered or presented), which fits the formal tone of the sentence.

- “Based” doesn’t fit grammatically,
- “Posited” means assumed or put forward, but less formal/legal in tone,
- “Forwarded” is about sending something physically, not a formal presentation.

**Step 3: Final check** “Meted ... tendered” conveys the sense of punishment being given only when a valid justification is formally presented.

Meted    Tendered

**Quick Tip**

For formal contexts like law or governance, prefer precise collocations such as “meted out” or “tendered” that are standard in legal language.

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**Q13.** Rearrange the following statements to form a coherent paragraph and pick the correct order.

- (a) In the New York City public schools, the overemphasis on standardized testing has led to test score inflation and numerous cheating scandals.

- (b) Campbell’s Law predicts that any time huge stakes are attached to quantitative data, the data itself will become inherently unreliable and distorted through cheating and gaming the system.
- (c) Precious resources are diverted to “for-profit” testing companies, and learning time is lost as students spend weeks preparing for the tests, and teachers are pulled out of the classroom for days at a time to score them.
- (d) In New York City, class sizes in the early grades are the largest in 13 years.
- (e) Meanwhile school budgets are scraped to the bone and class sizes are rising.

- (A) badec
- (B) abdec
- (C) baced
- (D) cbade

**Correct Answer:** (C) baced

**Solution:**

**Step 1: Identify the theme** The paragraph is about the negative consequences of over-reliance on standardized testing in public schools, especially NYC.

**Step 2: Identify the logical starting point** (b) introduces Campbell’s Law, which is a general principle — best used as an opener.

**Step 3: Follow with specific application** (a) applies that law to NYC schools.

(c) elaborates on the negative impact of testing logistics.

(e) continues the consequences, linking to budget cuts.

(d) gives a final data point: rising class sizes.

**Final order:** b → a → c → e → d

baced

### Quick Tip

Start with general theory if present, then proceed to examples, consequences, and conclusions. Look for cause-effect flow.

**Q14.** Rearrange the following statements to form a coherent paragraph and pick the correct order.

- (a) As the grammar of standard English extends to the grammar of code, our errors find themselves embedded in programmes and replicating further and more widely than previously imaginable.
  - (b) Even a poorly constructed tweet reflects a poorly constructed thought, while grammatically lacking e-mail messages have become the hallmark of password phishing scams.
  - (c) Language is no less exacting than mathematics.
  - (d) As the title of a book “Eats, Shoots and Leaves” demonstrates, a single comma can change a sentence about the diet of a panda to one describing the behaviour of a dine-and-dash killer.
  - (e) The emergence of digital technology makes precision in language even more important.
- (A) acdeb  
(B) cdeab  
(C) deabc  
(D) edabc

**Correct Answer:** (A) acdeb

### Solution:

**Step 1: Logical opener** (a) introduces the main theme: the connection between language errors and digital replication — a strong conceptual start.

**Step 2: Build sequence** (c) gives a general assertion: language is rigorous — supports the idea in (a).

(d) gives a humorous example of grammar’s precision.

(e) concludes the theme, stressing digital impact.

(b) gives a real-world example of bad grammar in tech leading to phishing.

**Final order:** a → c → d → e → b

acdeb

### Quick Tip

Place abstract ideas or metaphors early. Follow with examples or analogies. Let the paragraph build toward modern relevance.

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**Q15. The passage mentions which of the following as a feature of the 1980s postmodernist wave?**

(A) It resisted Frye’s fixing of meaning with the contention that the text is fluid.

(B) It led the deconstruction of Anatomy of Deconstruction.

(C) It condemned Frye’s censure of the canonized literature of dead white males.

(D) All of the above.

**Correct Answer:** (D) All of the above

### Solution:

**Step 1: Identifying the features** The passage describes the 1980s postmodernist wave as: - resisting fixed meaning (fluid text),

- leading deconstructionist approaches,

- condemning exclusionary literary canon practices.

**Step 2: Matching options** (A), (B), and (C) are all mentioned in the passage as characteristics of this wave.

D

### Quick Tip

When multiple listed points in a passage match the options, check if “All of the above” is justified before selecting it.

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**Q16. According to the passage; romance, comedy, tragedy and irony are:**

- (A) common symbols that populate all of literature.
- (B) the four essential moulds into which every story could be fit.
- (C) Atwood’s interpretation of ancient myths that abound in contemporary novels.
- (D) Jungian archetypes that perpetuate themselves in canonical texts.

**Correct Answer:** (B) the four essential moulds into which every story could be fit.

### Solution:

**Step 1: Referencing the passage** The passage explicitly states that these four literary modes are categories into which all stories can be classified — aligning with Frye’s structural criticism.

**Step 2: Eliminating wrong choices** (A) refers to “symbols”, not modes.

(C) is unrelated — Atwood is not linked to defining these four modes.

(D) refers to Jungian archetypes, which is separate from Frye’s framework.

B

### Quick Tip

When a passage defines specific categories, use the exact definition from the text instead of inferring broader symbolic meanings.

**Q17. In the context of the passage, the word “soluble” means:**

- (A) decipherable
- (B) slippery
- (C) polysemic
- (D) interpretable

**Correct Answer:** (C) polysemic

**Solution:**

**Step 1: Context clue from passage** In the passage, “soluble” is used metaphorically to describe text meaning as dissolvable into multiple interpretations — a postmodernist idea.

**Step 2: Matching the meaning** “Polysemic” means having multiple meanings, which fits the idea that a text’s meaning is not fixed but can dissolve into many readings.

**Step 3: Eliminating wrong choices** (A) and (D) mean understandable but do not capture multiplicity.

(B) “slippery” is figurative but imprecise.

C

#### Quick Tip

In RC vocabulary questions, match the word to the conceptual framework of the passage rather than relying on its most common dictionary meaning.

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**Q18. During the formative period, organised labour relied almost solely upon its economic strength, while today it places immeasurable value upon the convincing power of logic, facts and the righteousness of its cause. More and more organised labour is coming to believe that its best interests are promoted through concord rather than by conflict.**

(A) It prefers the conference table to the strike field.

- (B) So, trade unionism has kept pace with progress which has been made in industry.
- (C) In doing so, organised labour is not committed to any dogma or to inflexible rules.
- (D) It recognises and appreciates the value and importance of armistice.

**Correct Answer:** (A) It prefers the conference table to the strike field.

**Solution:**

**Step 1: Understanding the paragraph flow** The paragraph describes a shift from economic power and confrontation toward logic, facts, and concord as the main tools of organised labour.

**Step 2: Identifying the suitable closing sentence** The best concluding line should directly summarise the shift from conflict to peaceful negotiation. Option (A) does this perfectly: “It prefers the conference table to the strike field” neatly encapsulates the idea of preferring dialogue over confrontation.

**Step 3: Eliminating wrong choices** (B) talks about trade unionism keeping pace with industry — a new idea, not a conclusion to this thought.

(C) mentions dogma and inflexible rules — tangential, not the main contrast.

(D) uses “armistice” — more military-oriented than the labour negotiation context.

A

**Quick Tip**

In paragraph completion, the correct last sentence will reinforce the main idea without introducing new unrelated themes.

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**Q19.** Identify the sentence(s) that are correct in terms of grammar, punctuation, spelling, and usage.

- (a) Tucked in the lower ranges of the eastern Himalayas is a bowl-shaped Ziro valley, the home of the Apatanis, who practise a unique agriculture system for which no farm animals, machines and modern methods are used.

- (b) Their staple food includes fish, rice and pork. One of their delicacy is cooked rice stuffed in a hollow bamboo stem,
- (c) which is then baked on burning coal. At night, villagers sit
- (d) together and enjoy home-brewed rice beer.
- (e) —

- (A) a and d
- (B) a, b and e
- (C) Only d
- (D) b and d

**Correct Answer:** (A) a and d

**Solution:**

**Step 1: Checking each sentence** (a) Grammatically correct, proper punctuation, and clear meaning.

(b) Incorrect — “One of their delicacy” should be “One of their delicacies”.

(c) Grammatically fine as a fragment but is dependent on (b); since (b) is incorrect, this sequence fails.

(d) Correct grammar, punctuation, and usage.

**Step 2: Conclusion** Only (a) and (d) are fully correct independently.

A

**Quick Tip**

When checking grammar correctness, watch for number agreement (“delicacy” vs “delicacies”) and sentence completeness.

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**Q20.** Identify the sentence(s) that are correct in terms of grammar, punctuation, spelling, and usage.

- (a) The financial industry has done such a good job of bringing itself to its knees over the past
  - (b) four years that it is easy to overlook the threats they face from outside.
  - (c) High among them is electrical attack. In 2010, Symantec, a cyber-security firm, estimated that
  - (d) three-quarter of all “phishing” attacks, in which people are deceived into surrendering private
  - (e) details such as account numbers, are aimed at the finance sector.
- (A) a and e  
(B) a, d and e  
(C) d and e  
(D) Only e

**Correct Answer:** (C) d and e

**Solution:**

- Step 1: Checking each sentence** (a) Grammatically fine except “bringing itself to its knees” is idiomatic but the clause is incomplete without continuation — not independently complete.
- (b) Correct as a continuation but given separately, it is incomplete without (a).
- (c) Incorrect — “electrical attack” should be “electronic attack”.
- (d) Correct — “three-quarter” is correct in singular form before “of all ... attacks” and punctuation is fine.
- (e) Correct — continues logically from (d) and is grammatically fine.

**Step 2: Conclusion** Only (d) and (e) are correct and complete as per grammar and usage.

C

**Quick Tip**

When identifying correct sentences, ensure each is both grammatically correct and independent in structure, unless explicitly forming a multi-part sentence.

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**Passage:**

In the first scene of “Hitchcock Loves Bikinis”, a young mum is playing happily with her baby. Next comes a close-up shot of Alfred Hitchcock, the late movie director, smiling. Clearly, he is a man whose heart is warmed by this sweet glimpse of maternal love. In the next scene, we see a bikini-clad woman sunbathing followed by exactly the same shot of Hitchcock smiling. Instead of a benign grandfatherly figure, this time we see a lecherous old man. The moral of the story is simple: context is everything.

Mr. Kagan’s effort, “Psychology’s Ghosts,” consists of his assessment of four problems in psychological theory and clinical practice. The first problem is laid out in the chapter “Missing Contexts”: the fact that many researchers fail to consider that their measurements of brains, behaviour and self-reported experience are profoundly influenced by their subjects’ culture, time and experience, as well as by the situation in which the research is conducted.

In his second essay, “Happiness Ascendant”, Mr. Kagan virtually demolishes the popular academic effort to measure “subjective well-being”, let alone to measure and compare the level of happiness of entire nations. No psychologist, he observes, would accept as reliable your own answer to the question: “How good is your memory?” Whether your answer is “great” or “terrible”, you have no way of knowing whether your memory of good or bad memories is accurate. But psychologists, Mr. Kagan argues, are willing to accept people’s answers to how happy they are as if “it is an accurate measure of a psychological state whose definition remains fuzzy.”

In the third and fourth essays, “Who Is Mentally Ill?” and “Helping the Mentally Ill”, Mr. Kagan turns to the intransigent problems of psychiatric diagnosis and treatment. The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) “regards every intense bout of sadness or worry, no matter what their origin, as a possible sign of mental disorder.” Mr. Kagan laments. But “most of these illness categories are analogous to complaints of headaches or cramps. Physicians can decide on the best treatment for a headache only after they have determined its cause. The symptom alone is an insufficient guide.”

Nonetheless, the DSM is primarily a collection of symptoms, overlooking the context in which a symptom such as anxiety or low sexual desire occurs and what it means to an

individual. It might mean nothing at all. What it means to an American might mean nothing to a Japanese. The same one-size-fits-all approach plagues treatment: “Most drugs can be likened to a blow on the head,” Mr. Kagan observes, they are blunt instruments, not precisely-tailored remedies. Psychotherapy depends largely on the clients’ belief that it will be helpful, which is why all therapies help some people and some people are not helped by any. No experience affects everyone equally — including natural disasters, abuse, having a cruel parent, losing a job or having an illicit affair — though many therapists wish us to believe the opposite.

**Q21. The passage is primarily concerned with:**

- (A) presenting a series of complaints from psychiatric establishments.
- (B) highlighting the negative side of positive psychology.
- (C) alerting modern psychologists to the importance of context.
- (D) identifying problems in contemporary psychology.

**Correct Answer:** (D) identifying problems in contemporary psychology

**Solution:**

The passage, based on Mr. Kagan’s essays, critiques various aspects of current psychology — from measurement issues to psychiatric diagnosis and treatment. It identifies problems such as overreliance on subjective measures, ignoring context, and the limitations of the DSM. Therefore, the most accurate answer is (D).

D

**Quick Tip**

Look for the overarching theme in multiple paragraphs — here, it’s pointing out flaws and limitations in psychology rather than focusing on a single subtopic.

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**Q22. The passage suggests which of the following as most likely to be true of the DSM?**

- (A) It reduces mental disorders to standard symptoms.

- (B) It assumes that each category of mental disorders is a completely discrete entity with well defined boundaries dividing it from other mental disorders.
- (C) It considers all emotional disturbances as mental disorders.
- (D) It ignores individual differences and thus restricts the validity of its research.

**Correct Answer:** (A) It reduces mental disorders to standard symptoms

**Solution:**

The DSM is criticized for being primarily a collection of symptoms, where diagnosis is based on symptom lists rather than underlying causes or individual contexts. This matches option (A) exactly.

A

**Quick Tip**

Focus on direct criticisms from the passage — the DSM’s symptom-based approach is explicitly highlighted.

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**Q23. It can be inferred from the passage that the author believes which of the following about psychiatric treatment?**

- (A) Clinicians have less confidence in the value of therapy.
- (B) Patients are invariably treated with drugs.
- (C) Drugs treat symptoms and they may or may not work.
- (D) Psychotherapy takes an individual’s life circumstances into account.

**Correct Answer:** (C) Drugs treat symptoms and they may or may not work

**Solution:**

The passage notes that most drugs can be likened to a blow on the head — they are blunt instruments, not precisely tailored remedies, and may or may not help. This directly supports option (C).

C

**Quick Tip**

In inference questions, link the answer to specific descriptive analogies or evaluations used by the author.

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**Q24. The first paragraph performs which of the following functions in the passage?**

- (A) It advances an argument to be disputed.
- (B) It presents situations that support a view discussed in the passage.
- (C) It introduces conflicting views to be reconciled.
- (D) It cites a case that illustrates a problem presented more generally in the passage.

**Correct Answer:** (D) It cites a case that illustrates a problem presented more generally in the passage

**Solution:**

The Hitchcock scene is used as an example to illustrate the importance of context — the broader problem addressed in the passage. This makes it a specific illustrative case for the general critique to follow.

D

**Quick Tip**

Look for how the opening sets the tone — here, it's an analogy that mirrors the main argument about context in psychology.