

**UPSC NDA 2026: Unit 14 - Reading Comprehension Practice Test**

**Instructions:** For each question below, choose the most appropriate answer from the options given.

**Passage 1 (For Q1-Q5)**

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has long been a proponent of cost-effective space exploration. Its Mars Orbiter Mission (Mangalyaan), launched in 2013, was a landmark achievement not only for its successful entry into Mars orbit in the first attempt but also for its astonishingly low budget of approximately \$74 million—less than the production cost of many Hollywood films. This efficiency is attributed to a culture of frugal engineering, jugaad (innovative fix), minimal bureaucracy, and a highly motivated, in-house talent pool that works with an interdisciplinary approach. The mission's primary objective was technological, demonstrating India's capability to design, plan, and manage an interplanetary mission.

1. **What was the primary objective of ISRO's Mars Orbiter Mission (Mangalyaan)?**
  - a) To discover water on Mars
  - b) To demonstrate India's capability for interplanetary missions
  - c) To send a rover to the Martian surface
  - d) To collaborate with NASA on a joint mission
2. **The phrase "frugal engineering" in the passage most nearly means:**
  - a) Engineering that uses expensive, imported materials.
  - b) Engineering focused on maximizing output while minimizing cost.
  - c) Engineering that compromises on quality for lower cost.
  - d) Engineering based solely on theoretical models.
3. **According to the passage, which of the following is NOT cited as a reason for ISRO's cost-effectiveness?**
  - a) A culture of innovative fixes (jugaad)
  - b) Heavy reliance on foreign technology partners
  - c) An interdisciplinary, in-house talent pool
  - d) Minimal bureaucratic processes
4. **The tone of the author when mentioning the mission's budget being "less than the production cost of many Hollywood films" is primarily one of:**
  - a) Sarcasm and criticism
  - b) Awe and admiration
  - c) Indifference and neutrality
  - d) Doubt and skepticism

5. **The central idea of the passage is:**
  - a) Hollywood films are excessively expensive.
  - b) Mars is the next frontier for all space agencies.
  - c) ISRO achieved a significant, cost-effective milestone with its Mars Orbiter Mission.
  - d) Bureaucracy is the main hindrance to space exploration.

**Passage 2 (For Q6-Q10)**

The "Green Revolution" in India, initiated in the 1960s, transformed the country from a food-deficient nation into a self-sufficient one. It involved the introduction of high-yielding variety (HYV) seeds, chemical fertilizers, and expanded irrigation. While it averted large-scale famines and boosted agricultural output, particularly in states like Punjab and Haryana, it also led to long-term ecological and social consequences. These include depletion of groundwater, soil degradation, reduced biodiversity, and increased indebtedness among small farmers due to high input costs. The revolution, thus, presents a complex legacy of triumph and caution.

6. **What was the primary immediate benefit of the Green Revolution in India?**
  - a) It improved soil biodiversity.
  - b) It made India a food-exporting giant.
  - c) It averted famines and achieved food self-sufficiency.
  - d) It reduced the cost of farming for all farmers.
7. **The term "complex legacy" in the last sentence implies that the Green Revolution:**
  - a) Had only negative outcomes.
  - b) Was a complete and unambiguous success.
  - c) Had both positive and negative long-term effects.
  - d) Is now irrelevant to modern agriculture.
8. **Which of the following is mentioned as a negative consequence of the Green Revolution?**
  - a) Decrease in crop variety
  - b) Expansion of forest cover
  - c) Reduction in irrigation facilities
  - d) Increase in average farm size
9. **What inference can be drawn about the states of Punjab and Haryana from the passage?**
  - a) They were unaffected by the Green Revolution.
  - b) They were the primary beneficiaries in terms of increased output.
  - c) They primarily grew traditional crops.
  - d) They faced no ecological issues.

10. **The author's attitude towards the Green Revolution is best described as:**

- a) Uncritically celebratory
- b) Harshly condemnatory
- c) Balanced and analytical
- d) Nostalgic and emotional

**Passage 3 (For Q11-Q15)**

A cynic, as defined by Oscar Wilde, is "a man who knows the price of everything and the value of nothing." This aphorism critiques a worldview that reduces all worth to mere monetary or material terms, ignoring intangible qualities like beauty, ethics, or love. In modern consumer culture, this cynical attitude can manifest in valuing art by its auction price, education by future salary, and relationships by social advantage. Wilde suggests that such an outlook leads to a profoundly impoverished understanding of the world.

11. **According to Oscar Wilde's definition, a cynic fails to appreciate:**
  - a) The market price of commodities
  - b) The intrinsic value of things
  - c) The cost of production
  - d) Financial investments
12. **The word "aphorism" in the passage most closely means:**
  - a) A lengthy and detailed analysis
  - b) A humorous story or anecdote
  - c) A short, witty statement expressing a general truth
  - d) A contradictory statement
13. **Which of the following modern attitudes would the author consider "cynical" as per the passage?**
  - a) Donating to charity anonymously.
  - b) Choosing a university major solely based on earning potential.
  - c) Preserving a historical monument for cultural heritage.
  - d) Creating art for personal expression.
14. **The main argument of the passage is that:**
  - a) Money is the most important measure of success.
  - b) A cynical outlook, focused only on price, leads to a shallow worldview.
  - c) Oscar Wilde was a cynical person.
  - d) Modern consumer culture has no downsides.
15. **The tone of the passage can be described as:**
  - a) Persuasive and critical
  - b) Humorous and satirical

- c) Scientific and detached
- d) Melancholic and sorrowful

#### Passage 4 (For Q16-Q20)

Biodiversity hotspots are regions with exceptionally high levels of species richness that are also under severe threat from human activity. To qualify as a hotspot, a region must contain at least 1,500 species of vascular plants as endemics (found nowhere else on Earth) and have lost at least 70% of its original habitat. The Western Ghats in India is one such hotspot, home to thousands of endemic species of flora and fauna, including the lion-tailed macaque and the Malabar giant squirrel. Conservation in these areas is critical not just for the species themselves but for ecosystem services like water purification and climate regulation that benefit humanity.

16. **What are the two primary criteria for a region to be declared a biodiversity hotspot?**
  - a) High tourism value and large geographical area
  - b) High endemic plant species and significant habitat loss
  - c) Presence of large mammals and high annual rainfall
  - d) Political stability and international funding
17. **The word "endemics" in the passage refers to species that:**
  - a) Are dangerous to humans
  - b) Are found only in that specific region
  - c) Migrate across continents
  - d) Are commonly found in zoos
18. **Why is conservation in biodiversity hotspots like the Western Ghats important for humans directly?**
  - a) They are prime locations for real estate development.
  - b) They provide ecosystem services like water purification.
  - c) They contain vast reserves of mineral resources.
  - d) They are sparsely populated, making conservation easy.
19. **What can be inferred about the lion-tailed macaque from the passage?**
  - a) It is found all over India.
  - b) It is likely an endemic species of the Western Ghats.
  - c) It is not a threatened species.
  - d) It is the main reason the Western Ghats is a hotspot.

20. **The central theme of the passage is:**
  - a) The economic potential of the Western Ghats.
  - b) The definition, criteria, and importance of conserving biodiversity hotspots.
  - c) A comparison of different biodiversity hotspots worldwide.
  - d) The history of habitat loss in India.

#### Passage 5 (For Q21-Q25)

The art of diplomacy lies not in saying the right thing at the right time, but in avoiding the wrong thing at the tempting moment. A seasoned diplomat understands that silence can be more powerful than speech, and that listening often yields more strategic advantage than lecturing. It is a subtle dance of nuance, where body language, timing, and unspoken understanding carry as much weight as the words in a formal treaty. In an era of instant communication, this age-old virtue of measured restraint is more crucial than ever.

21. **According to the passage, what is the core of diplomatic art?**
  - a) Delivering powerful speeches
  - b) Preparing flawless treaties
  - c) Avoiding misspeaking at critical times
  - d) Using technology effectively
22. **The phrase "measured restraint" in the last sentence implies:**
  - a) Hasty and reactive communication
  - b) Careful and controlled communication
  - c) Complete avoidance of communication
  - d) Aggressive and forceful negotiation
23. **What does the author suggest about the role of listening in diplomacy?**
  - a) It is a sign of weakness.
  - b) It is less important than speaking eloquently.
  - c) It can provide a strategic advantage.
  - d) It is only useful in informal settings.
24. **The author's view on instant communication in the context of diplomacy is that it:**
  - a) Makes traditional diplomacy obsolete.
  - b) Makes the need for careful restraint even greater.
  - c) Simplifies the diplomatic process.
  - d) Ensures greater transparency automatically.
25. **The overall tone of the passage is:**
  - a) Cynical and dismissive
  - b) Instructive and appreciative
  - c) Satirical and humorous
  - d) Panicky and warning

#### Vocabulary in Context (For Q26-Q35)

Choose the option that is closest in meaning to the underlined word/phrase as used in the given sentence.

26. The evidence presented against the accused was **circumstantial** and not direct.
  - a) Conclusive
  - b) Indirect and based on inference
  - c) Fabricated
  - d) Overwhelming
27. Her **propensity** for kindness made her beloved in the community.
  - a) Aversion
  - b) Natural tendency
  - c) Occasional act
  - d) Hidden talent
28. The minister's **equivocal** statement confused the journalists.
  - a) Clear and direct
  - b) Ambiguous and misleading
  - c) Lengthy and detailed
  - d) Encouraging and supportive
29. The old fort was in a **dilapidated** state after decades of neglect.
  - a) Pristine and new
  - b) Renovated
  - c) Broken down and ruined
  - d) Fortified and strong
30. He was known for his **prolific** output, having written over fifty novels.
  - a) Unproductive
  - b) Highly productive
  - c) Critically acclaimed
  - d) Mediocre in quality
31. The agreement was **null and void** after the breach of contract.
  - a) Legally binding
  - b) Under review
  - c) Without legal force
  - d) Complicated
32. Her argument was **specious**, appearing logical but actually flawed.
  - a) Genuinely sound
  - b) Deceptively plausible
  - c) Extremely simple
  - d) Widely accepted

33. The king was a **benevolent** ruler, loved by his subjects.  
a) Tyrannical  
b) Weak and indecisive  
c) Kind and charitable  
d) Unknown
34. The scientist remained **skeptical** of the extraordinary claims without verifiable data.  
a) Fully convinced  
b) Doubtful and questioning  
c) Enthusiastically supportive  
d) Indifferent and uninterested
35. The two theories are **diametrically opposed** on this fundamental point.  
a) Slightly different  
b) Completely opposite  
c) Mutually supportive  
d) Vaguely similar

#### Inference and Critical Reasoning (For Q36-Q45)

36. **Passage:** "All participants in the race must wear a numbered bib. Ravi is wearing a numbered bib." What can be logically inferred?  
a) Ravi is winning the race.  
b) Ravi is a participant in the race.  
c) Ravi is organizing the race.  
d) Nothing can be inferred about Ravi's participation.
37. **Passage:** "Whenever it rains heavily, the streets in the old town get flooded. The streets in the old town are flooded today." What is the most reasonable conclusion?  
a) It must be raining heavily today.  
b) It may have rained heavily, or there could be another cause.  
c) The drainage system in the new town is also faulty.  
d) It will continue to rain tomorrow.
38. **Passage:** "Studies show that regular reading for pleasure from a young age strongly correlates with higher vocabulary and better academic performance in later years." What is the implied suggestion?  
a) Reading for pleasure guarantees academic success.  
b) There is a positive association between early recreational reading and later language skills.  
c) Academic performance is solely dependent on vocabulary.

- d) Children who don't read for pleasure will fail academically.
39. **Passage:** "The company announced record profits this quarter. Simultaneously, it announced a freeze on all new hiring and a cut in the annual bonus." What can be inferred about the company's priorities?  
a) It is focused on sharing profits with employees.  
b) It is expanding its workforce rapidly.  
c) It is prioritizing financial reserves or shareholder returns over employee benefits.  
d) It is facing immediate bankruptcy.
40. **Passage:** "The principal stated, 'Any student found using a cell phone during class hours will have the device confiscated.'" What is the principal's tone?  
a) Persuasive  
b) Authoritative and warning  
c) Apologetic  
d) Jubilant
41. **Statement 1:** All engineers are logical thinkers.  
**Statement 2:** Some artists are engineers.  
**Conclusion:** Therefore, some artists are logical thinkers.  
Is the conclusion logically valid?  
a) Yes, it follows from the statements.  
b) No, it does not follow.  
c) It is contradictory.  
d) It is possible but not definite.
42. **Passage:** "The author argues that true innovation rarely comes from committees, but from the inspired work of individuals willing to challenge the status quo." The author is likely to be **critical** of which of the following?  
a) Individual geniuses  
b) Traditional educational systems  
c) Highly bureaucratic and consensus-driven R&D departments  
d) Risk-taking entrepreneurs
43. **Passage:** "The review called the film 'a visually stunning but narratively incoherent spectacle.'" What was the reviewer's opinion?  
a) The film was perfect in all aspects.  
b) The film had great visuals but a weak, confusing story.  
c) The film had a great story but poor visuals.  
d) The film was boring and unimpressive.

44. **Passage:** "While the new policy aims to streamline the process, its implementation has been plagued by delays and confusion, causing frustration among stakeholders." The author's view of the policy's implementation is one of:  
a) Unqualified success  
b) Constructive criticism  
c) Cynical dismissal  
d) Objective reporting with a note on its problematic execution
45. **Passage:** "He was a philanthropist in the truest sense, for his charitable work was done quietly, without any desire for public recognition." The key quality of the philanthropist highlighted here is:  
a) Wealth  
b) Fame  
c) Humility  
d) Ambition

#### Central Idea & Summary (For Q46-Q50)

46. **Which of the following is the most important task when identifying the central idea of a passage?**  
a) Counting the number of adjectives used.  
b) Identifying the longest sentence.  
c) Determining the key point the author is trying to convey.  
d) Focusing only on the first and last sentences.
47. **A good summary of a passage should:**  
a) Include every detail from the original text.  
b) Be longer than the original passage.  
c) Capture the main points in a concise form.  
d) Primarily focus on the reader's personal opinion.
48. **Passage Summary Practice:** "The Industrial Revolution, beginning in late 18th-century Britain, marked a shift from agrarian economies to mechanized manufacturing. It brought unprecedented economic growth and technological innovation but also led to urban overcrowding, poor working conditions, and environmental pollution. Its legacy is thus a dual one of progress and social cost." Which title best captures the central idea?  
a) The Inventions of the Industrial Revolution  
b) Britain: The Sole Leader of Industry  
c) The Dual Legacy of the Industrial Revolution  
d) The Problems of Urbanization
49. **If a passage details the life cycle of a butterfly in four stages—egg, larva, pupa, adult—its central**

idea is:

- a) Butterflies are beautiful insects.
- b) Butterflies face many predators.
- c) Butterflies undergo a process of metamorphosis.
- d) All insects have similar life cycles.

50. **An author writes a passage comparing and contrasting classical and operant conditioning, providing examples of each. The central idea is most likely:**

- a) To narrate a personal story about learning.
- b) To explain and differentiate two key psychological concepts.
- c) To argue that one form of conditioning is superior.
- d) To criticize the field of psychology.

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#### END OF TEST

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#### Answer Key:

1. b) To demonstrate India's capability for interplanetary missions
2. b) Engineering focused on maximizing output while minimizing cost.
3. b) Heavy reliance on foreign technology partners
4. b) Awe and admiration
5. c) ISRO achieved a significant, cost-effective milestone with its Mars Orbiter Mission.
6. c) It averted famines and achieved food self-sufficiency.
7. c) Had both positive and negative long-term effects.
8. a) Decrease in crop variety (reduced biodiversity)
9. b) They were the primary beneficiaries in terms of increased output.
10. c) Balanced and analytical
11. b) The intrinsic value of things
12. c) A short, witty statement expressing a general truth
13. b) Choosing a university major solely based on earning potential.
14. b) A cynical outlook, focused only on price, leads to a shallow worldview.
15. a) Persuasive and critical
16. b) High endemic plant species and significant habitat loss
17. b) Are found only in that specific region
18. b) They provide ecosystem services like water purification.
19. b) It is likely an endemic species of the Western Ghats.
20. b) The definition, criteria, and importance of conserving biodiversity hotspots.
21. c) Avoiding misspeaking at critical times
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23. c) It can provide a strategic advantage.
24. b) Makes the need for careful restraint even greater.
25. b) Instructive and appreciative
26. b) Indirect and based on inference
27. b) Natural tendency
28. b) Ambiguous and misleading
29. c) Broken down and ruined
30. b) Highly productive
31. c) Without legal force
32. b) Deceptively plausible
33. c) Kind and charitable
34. b) Doubtful and questioning
35. b) Completely opposite
36. b) Ravi is a participant in the race.
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39. c) It is prioritizing financial reserves or shareholder returns over employee benefits.
40. b) Authoritative and warning
41. a) Yes, it follows from the statements.
42. c) Highly bureaucratic and consensus-driven R&D departments
43. b) The film had great visuals but a weak, confusing story.
44. d) Objective reporting with a note on its problematic execution
45. c) Humility
46. c) Determining the key point the author is trying to convey.
47. c) Capture the main points in a concise form.
48. c) The Dual Legacy of the Industrial Revolution
49. c) Butterflies undergo a process of metamorphosis.
50. b) To explain and differentiate two key psychological concepts.