WEST BENGAL CIVIL SERVICE (EXECUTIVE) MAIN EXAMINATION

English (Compulsory)

Practice Papers with Model Answers

12 full-length papers · letter · report · composition · précis · translation

Modelled on the 2014 – 2023 papers

How to use these papers

- Each paper follows the real pattern: **five questions of 40 marks each, 200 marks, 3 hours**. Q1 letter, Q2 report, Q3 composition or essay, Q4 précis, Q5 translation of a Hindi passage into English.
- First sit the **Question Paper** of one paper with a timer and write your answers by hand within the word limits. Then compare them with the **Solutions** that follow.
- All passages are original and written for practice. They match the style and level of the real papers.
- The green **Exam tip** after each answer says what the examiner rewards, so you can mark your own copy.

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Practice Paper 1

Time: 3 hours · **Full marks:** 200 · All questions are compulsory.

Question Paper

QUESTION Q1 · 40 marks

Write a letter within 150 words on any one (use A, B, C or X, Y, Z instead of names and addresses).

(a) Write a letter to the Divisional Railway Manager, Sealdah Division, drawing his attention to the danger at your suburban station, where passengers regularly cross the tracks for want of a foot-overbridge. Request a foot-overbridge, proper fencing and regular announcements.

Or

(b) Write a letter to the editor of a newspaper about the danger that heatwaves pose to outdoor workers, and suggest measures for their safety such as shade, drinking water and changed working hours.

QUESTION Q2 · 40 marks

Draft a report within 200 words on the partial collapse of an old building in north Kolkata after a night of heavy rain.

QUESTION Q3 · 40 marks

Write a composition on any one of the following topics.

(a) Silence

(b) The dignity of manual labour

(c) A rainy evening in a Kolkata para

QUESTION Q4 · 40 marks

Write a précis of the following passage and add a suitable title (35+5).

Of all human aims, happiness is the one most certain to elude those who pursue it directly. The man who examines his feelings every evening to learn whether he has been happy is like a gardener who pulls up his seedlings daily to inspect the roots: the very act of watching destroys the thing watched. Happiness is not a destination but a by-product, and it comes unbidden to those whose attention is fixed elsewhere.

Our most contented hours are seldom those we set apart for pleasure. They are the hours when some task so absorbed us that we forgot ourselves. In such work the self, with its hungers and anxieties, is laid aside, and its absence is the condition of our peace. Only when the work is done do we discover that we have been happy.

The wise man, therefore, does not hunt for happiness; he chooses work worthy of his whole attention and gives himself to it. The work need not be grand, provided it engages him fully and seems to him worth doing. Pleasures sought for their own sake soon pall, because they ask nothing

of us; absorbing work demands effort and repays it with a satisfaction that outlasts the hour. A society that sells happiness as a commodity is building on sand. It would do better to give its people work in which they can lose themselves, and let happiness follow in its train.

QUESTION Q5 · 40 marks

Translate any one of the following Hindi passages into English (for candidates who opted Hindi in lieu of Bengali for Paper I).

(a) जेठ की तपती दोपहरियों के बाद जब आसमान में पहली बार काले बादल घिर आते हैं, तो पूरे गाँव में एक अजीब-सी हलचल मच जाती है। किसान खेतों की मेड़ पर खड़े होकर आसमान की ओर ताकने लगते हैं, औरतें आँगन में सूखते कपड़े समेटने दौड़ पड़ती हैं और बच्चे ख़ुशी से चिल्लाते हुए गलियों में निकल आते हैं। फिर ठंडी हवा का एक झोंका आता है और देखते-ही-देखते मोटी-मोटी बूँदें धूल भरी धरती पर गिरने लगती हैं। मिट्टी से उठने वाली सोंधी ख़ुशबू हर किसी का मन तरोताज़ा कर देती है। सूखे तालाब के फिर से भर जाने की आस जागती है और पेड़ों की पत्तियाँ धुलकर चमक उठती हैं। किसान के लिए यह वर्षा केवल मौसम का बदलाव नहीं, बल्कि साल भर की रोज़ी-रोटी का भरोसा है। इसीलिए गाँव में पहली बारिश का स्वागत किसी त्योहार की तरह किया जाता है।

Or

(b) आजकल मोबाइल फ़ोन पर कुछ बटन दबाते ही घर बैठे सामान मँगवाना आम बात हो गई है। ऑनलाइन ख़रीदारी ने हमारी ज़िंदगी को निस्संदेह आसान बना दिया है। दामों की तुलना करना सरल है, ढेरों विकल्प मिलते हैं और भीड़-भाड़ वाले बाज़ार में धक्के खाने की ज़रूरत नहीं पड़ती। लेकिन इस सुविधा की एक क़ीमत भी है, जिसकी ओर हमारा ध्यान कम ही जाता है। मोहल्ले के नुक्कड़ की वह छोटी-सी दुकान, जहाँ से बरसों तक हमारे घर का राशन आता रहा, धीरे-धीरे सूनी होती जा रही है। उस दुकानदार से हमारा केवल लेन-देन का रिश्ता नहीं था। वह हमारे बच्चों के नाम जानता था, मुसीबत के समय उधार दे देता था और कभी-कभी बिना कहे ही समझ जाता था कि हमें क्या चाहिए। स्क्रीन पर चमकती छूट उस भरोसे की जगह नहीं ले सकती। इसका अर्थ यह नहीं कि हम तकनीक से मुँह मोड़ लें। ज़रूरत संतुलन की है। यदि हम रोज़मर्रा की कुछ चीज़ें पास की दुकान से ही ख़रीदें, तो न केवल एक परिवार की रोज़ी बचेगी, बल्कि मोहल्ले का वह आपसी अपनापन भी बना रहेगा, जो किसी ऐप में नहीं मिलता।

Solutions

Q1 · Letter writing

(a)

XYZ
Y Road, Station Para
Z, North 24 Parganas
16 June 2026

The Divisional Railway Manager
Eastern Railway, Sealdah Division
Kolkata 700014

Subject: Request for a foot-overbridge, fencing and announcements at Z station

Sir,

I write on behalf of the daily passengers of Z station on the Sealdah main line to draw your attention to a danger that grows worse every day.

The station has no foot-overbridge. To reach the opposite platform or the market beyond, hundreds of people, including schoolchildren and elderly commuters, walk across the tracks. Several have been injured in recent months, and a fatal accident seems only a matter of time. Gaps in the boundary wall make matters worse, since vendors and stray cattle also wander onto the line through them.

I therefore request you to sanction a foot-overbridge at the earliest, to fence both sides of the track near the platforms, and to arrange regular announcements in Bengali, Hindi and English warning passengers of approaching trains.

Prompt action will save lives and restore passengers' confidence in the railway.

Yours faithfully,
XYZ

(b)

XYZ
Y Lane, Behala
Kolkata 700034
2 May 2026

The Editor
The Daily Z
Kolkata 700001

Subject: Heatwaves and the safety of outdoor workers

Sir,

May I use your columns to speak for those who keep our city running in the worst of the summer heat?

Every afternoon construction labourers, traffic constables, rickshaw-pullers and delivery riders work under a blazing sun with little shade and less water. Heat exhaustion is no longer rare among them, and few can afford to lose a day's wages by staying at home.

Simple measures can protect them. Employers should provide shaded rest areas and cool drinking water with rehydration salts at every work site. Heavy outdoor work should be shifted to the early morning and evening, with a break during the hottest hours. Civic bodies could set up water kiosks at busy crossings, and health centres should be ready to treat heatstroke.

These workers build our homes and bring us our food. Their safety in a heatwave is a duty we all share.

Yours faithfully,
XYZ

EXAM TIP

The examiner looks for the full formal layout, the purpose in the first sentence, and every demand the question names (overbridge, fencing, announcements; shade, water, hours) set out as a clear request. Keep the body near 140 words and use only X, Y, Z for names and places.

Q2 · Report

Old building partly collapses in north Kolkata after night of heavy rain

KOLKATA, 22 July: A portion of an old three-storey residential building in the Shyambazar area of north Kolkata collapsed early on Wednesday after a night of incessant rain, injuring two residents.

According to officials, the rear wall and part of the second floor gave way at about 4 a.m., when most of the families inside were asleep. Neighbours raised the alarm and helped people out before fire brigade and disaster management teams arrived. The two injured, trapped under the debris, were pulled out after a rescue lasting nearly two hours and taken to a nearby hospital, where they were said to be stable.

Residents said the building, believed to be over a century old, had developed deep cracks and that rainwater had been seeping through its walls throughout the monsoon. Civic officials said the house had earlier been declared dangerous and its occupants served notice.

The municipal corporation has cordoned off the lane, moved the remaining families to a nearby school and ordered a survey of other dilapidated buildings in the locality. Tenants, however, urged the authorities to help them find safe housing rather than merely issue notices.

EXAM TIP

Marks go to a headline, a dateline, the 5Ws in the opening sentence, the cause (rain on an unsafe structure), the rescue and the official response, all in the past tense and third person. Attribute facts to "officials" or "residents"; never invent names or exact casualty figures.

Q3 · Composition

(a) Silence

Silence is usually defined by what it lacks: the absence of sound, of speech, of movement. Yet anyone who has sat alone on a riverbank at dawn, or waited outside an examination hall in the last minutes before the doors open, knows that silence has a texture of its own. It can soothe or threaten, heal or wound. To think about silence is to think about how we listen, to the world and to ourselves.

The first gift of silence is attention. Noise scatters the mind; quiet gathers it. A student working late in a hushed library finds that a problem which seemed impossible in a crowded room slowly yields. Scientists, poets and mathematicians have often described the long solitary hours in which their best ideas took shape. Silence does not supply the thought, but it clears the ground on which thought can grow.

Silence is also a form of speech. A teacher who pauses after asking a question teaches more than one who answers it at once, because the pause invites the class to think. Between old friends, a shared silence can express a trust that words would only spoil. At a memorial meeting, a minute's silence says what no speech could: that some losses lie beyond language. Even in music, the rests between the notes give the melody its shape.

Not every silence, however, is golden. There is the silence of the bystander who sees a wrong and looks away, the silence of a frightened witness, the silence forced upon those who have no voice in their families or communities. Such silence is not peace but fear or complicity. A healthy society needs people who know when to keep quiet and when to speak, and who have the courage to tell the difference.

Our age makes real quiet hard to find. Traffic, loudspeakers and television fill every gap, and many people now feel uneasy in an empty room and reach for a screen to fill it. Something is lost in this habit, for a mind that is never quiet seldom hears itself.

The remedy need not be dramatic. A few minutes each day without speech or screen, a walk taken alone, the patience to let another person finish speaking: these small disciplines restore what noise takes away. Silence, rightly used, is not emptiness. It is the space in which we listen, think and, in the end, find something worth saying.

(b) The dignity of manual labour

Every morning, before most of Kolkata wakes, sweepers clear the streets, milkmen pedal their loads through the lanes and porters at Howrah station shoulder the first luggage of the day. Without their labour the city would not function for a single morning. Yet those who do such work are often treated as if they were worth less than those who sit at desks. The idea of the dignity of manual labour challenges this prejudice: it holds that all honest work deserves respect, whether it is done with the hands or with the head.

In India the prejudice has deep roots. For centuries the caste order tied certain kinds of work to birth and attached a stigma to labour with the hands, especially work involving dirt or waste. The colonial demand for clerks, and the later craze for white-collar jobs, strengthened the belief that education is a ticket out of physical work. Even today many families would rather see a son idle than working as an electrician or a carpenter.

This attitude is both unjust and unwise. It is unjust because the farmer who grows our rice, the mason who raises our homes and the nurse who turns a patient in the night contribute as much to society as any officer. It is unwise because it wastes talent and creates a shortage of skilled hands while educated

young people search in vain for desk jobs. A country that wants roads, factories and homes cannot afford to look down on those who build them.

Some of our greatest thinkers saw this clearly. Gandhi insisted that everyone in his ashram, himself included, take a turn at cleaning and spinning, and Tagore made crafts and gardening part of the education he offered at Santiniketan. Their point was not that intellectual work should be abandoned, but that hand and mind belong together and that no task is beneath a self-respecting person.

Respect for labour must also be practical. It means fair wages, safe working conditions, social security and freedom from humiliation. Schools can help by teaching vocational skills as seriously as academic subjects, and families can help by sharing household chores instead of leaving them to domestic workers or to the women of the house.

Dignity does not come from the kind of work a person does but from the honesty and care with which it is done. When we greet the sweeper with the courtesy we show the manager, we take a small step towards a society that values every contribution.

(c) A rainy evening in a Kolkata para

By four in the afternoon the sky over our para had turned the colour of slate, and the old men playing cards on the rowak of the corner house began to gather their things. A sudden wind swept the lane, sending dry leaves and a stray newspaper spinning. Then the first heavy drops struck the tin roof of the tea stall, and within minutes the rain came down in earnest.

There is no sound quite like rain in a Kolkata lane. It drums on corrugated sheets, gurgles in old drainpipes and splashes off the balconies of houses that have stood for a century. The narrow street soon became a brown stream, carrying paper boats launched by the children of the house opposite, who shrieked with delight whenever one survived the current round the bend.

The tea stall became the heart of the para. Under its dripping awning a dozen people crowded together: a schoolboy holding his bag over his head, two office-goers who had given up hope of a bus, a delivery rider waiting out the storm. The owner, never happier than on such evenings, poured tea into clay cups and fried telebhaja in a blackened wok. Talk turned, as it always does, to football, the price of fish and whether the lane would flood again this year.

From the windows above came other sounds. Someone was practising a monsoon song of Tagore's on the harmonium, the tune rising and falling with the wind. In another house a pressure cooker whistled, and the smell of khichuri and fried brinjal drifted down the lane, the meal so many Bengali homes seem to cook when it rains.

As dusk fell, the streetlights came on, their yellow glow trembling in the puddles. A power cut plunged half the para into darkness for a while, and candles and emergency lamps glowed in the windows. Conch shells sounded from a few homes for the evening prayer, muffled by the steady rain.

By eight o'clock the downpour had softened to a drizzle. The water in the lane was ankle-deep, and a rickshaw-puller waded through it with a passenger holding an umbrella high. Frogs had begun their chorus in a vacant plot nearby.

Walking home through the wet lane, I thought how the rain had drawn the para together. For a few hours strangers had shared shelter, tea and talk, and the old neighbourhood had felt, once again, like one large family.

EXAM TIP

For an abstract topic, the examiner rewards a clear definition and a balanced view (silence as gift and as complicity); for a social topic, causes, consequences and remedies; for a descriptive one, concrete sights, sounds and smells in a clear time sequence rather than general praise of the rain.

Q4 · Précis

Title: Happiness: A By-product of Absorbing Work

Happiness eludes those who pursue it directly, for constant self-scrutiny destroys it; it comes only as a by-product of attention fixed elsewhere. People are happiest not in hours reserved for pleasure but when absorbing work makes them forget themselves, realising their happiness only afterwards. The wise, therefore, seek not happiness but work, however modest, that engages them fully and seems worthwhile. Pleasure pursued for itself soon palls, whereas demanding work gives lasting satisfaction. Society should offer absorbing work rather than happiness for sale, and let happiness follow.

(Passage: 237 words; Précis: 87 words)

EXAM TIP

The examiner rewards the central idea (happiness as a by-product) stated in the first sentence, the argument kept in its original order, the gardener simile dropped, and a title that names the idea. Stay close to one-third of the passage.

Q5 · Translation

(a) When, after the scorching afternoons of high summer, dark clouds gather in the sky for the first time, a strange excitement stirs through the whole village. Farmers stand on the ridges of their fields and gaze at the sky, women rush to gather the clothes drying in their courtyards, and children run shouting with joy into the lanes. Then comes a gust of cool wind, and in no time big, heavy drops begin to fall on the dusty earth. The sweet, earthy smell rising from the soil refreshes everyone's spirits. Hope revives that the dried-up pond will fill again, and the leaves on the trees, washed clean, begin to glisten. For the farmer this rain is not merely a change of season but the promise of a whole year's livelihood. That is why the village welcomes its first rain like a festival.

(b) These days, ordering things from home with a few taps on a mobile phone has become commonplace. Online shopping has undoubtedly made our lives easier. Comparing prices is simple, the choice is vast, and there is no need to jostle through crowded markets. But this convenience has a cost, one we seldom notice. The little shop at the corner of our neighbourhood, which supplied our household's groceries for years, is slowly losing its customers. Our bond with that shopkeeper was never merely one of buying and selling. He knew our children's names, gave us credit in hard times, and sometimes understood what we needed before we said a word. The discounts flashing on a screen cannot take the place of that trust. This does not mean that we should turn our backs on technology. What we need is balance. If we buy at least some of our daily needs from the shop nearby, we shall not only save a family's livelihood but also keep alive the neighbourly warmth that no app can offer.

EXAM TIP

"जेठ की तपती दोपहरियाँ" becomes "the scorching afternoons of high summer", since an English reader may not know the month Jeth. "मिट्टी की सोंधी ख़ुशबू" is "the sweet, earthy smell" of the soil, and "देखते-ही-देखते" is "in no time", not "while watching". In (b), "सूनी होती जा रही है" means the shop is "losing its customers", and "तकनीक से मुँह मोड़ना" becomes the English idiom "turn our backs on technology". The examiner rewards such idiomatic choices, the right tense, and no sentence left out.

Practice Paper 2

Time: 3 hours · **Full marks:** 200 · All questions are compulsory.

Question Paper

QUESTION Q1 · 40 marks

Write a letter within 150 words on any one (use A, B, C or X, Y, Z instead of names and addresses).

(a) Write a letter to the Commissioner, Kolkata Municipal Corporation, drawing his attention to the chronic waterlogging at the underpass in your ward, which is caused by blocked drains, and requesting pumps and the desilting of the drains before the monsoon.

Or

(b) Your younger brother has just joined a college in another city. Write a letter to him warning him against instant-loan apps and advising him on how to plan a monthly budget.

QUESTION Q2 · 40 marks

Draft a report within 250 words on a district science fair organised by your school. Mention the exhibits, the judges and the prize-winners.

QUESTION Q3 · 40 marks

Write a composition on any one of the following topics.

(a) The uses of failure

(b) Groundwater: the crisis beneath our feet

(c) A journey in a crowded local train

QUESTION Q4 · 40 marks

Write a précis of the following passage and add a suitable title (35+5).

It has long been a puzzle why men should willingly sit through the spectacle of suffering. We shrink from pain in our own lives, yet we pay to watch a king go mad on a heath or a mother lose her children, and we leave the theatre not crushed but strangely enlarged. The pleasure of tragedy cannot be the pleasure of cruelty, for the reader who enjoyed the hero's ruin for its own sake would be no reader at all, merely a spectator at a public whipping.

The answer lies partly in the distance that art places between us and the event. Because the sorrow is imagined, we may look at it steadily and what we cannot bear in life we can contemplate in a poem. But distance alone would give us only curiosity. What turns curiosity into something deeper is sympathy. The tragic hero is neither a villain whose fall we applaud nor a saint whose fall we cannot understand; he is a man like ourselves, only larger, and his error is one we recognise as possible in us. In fearing for him we fear for ourselves, and in pitying him we discover how much we are capable of feeling.

There is, moreover, a pleasure in order. Tragedy does not present suffering as a heap of accidents. It shows us cause following cause until the end seems both terrible and inevitable, and the mind, which hates confusion more than it hates pain, is satisfied by the sight of a pattern. Thus the spectator, having shared the hero's anguish and grasped its meaning, goes home calmer and wiser than he came. The pleasure of tragedy is, in the end, the pleasure of understanding.

QUESTION Q5 · 40 marks

Translate any one of the following Hindi passages into English (for candidates who opted Hindi in lieu of Bengali for Paper I).

(a) शेरशाह सूरी का शासन केवल पाँच वर्ष चला, पर इतने कम समय में उसने जो काम किए, वे सदियों तक याद किए गए। हुमायूँ को हराकर दिल्ली की गद्दी पर बैठने के बाद उसने समझ लिया था कि किसी बड़े राज्य को एक सूत्र में बाँधने के लिए अच्छी सड़कें सबसे ज़रूरी हैं। इसीलिए उसने बंगाल के सोनारगाँव से उत्तर-पश्चिम की सीमा तक जाने वाली पुरानी सड़क को फिर से बनवाया और आगे बढ़ाया। सड़क के दोनों ओर छायादार पेड़ लगाए गए, थोड़ी-थोड़ी दूरी पर कुएँ खुदवाए गए और यात्रियों के ठहरने के लिए सराय बनवाई गईं। हर सराय में डाक के घोड़े तैयार रहते थे, जिससे सरकारी समाचार कुछ ही दिनों में दूर-दराज़ के इलाक़ों तक पहुँच जाते थे। व्यापारियों का आना-जाना बढ़ा और चोर-डाकुओं का डर कम हुआ। बाद में अंग्रेज़ों ने इसी सड़क को ग्रैंड ट्रंक रोड का नाम दिया। आज भी जब हम इस राजमार्ग पर यात्रा करते हैं, तो अनजाने में एक दूरदर्शी शासक की योजना पर चल रहे होते हैं।

Or

(b) किसी को वचन देना जितना आसान है, उसे निभाना उतना ही कठिन। हम अक्सर बातचीत में, किसी को ख़ुश करने के लिए या संकोच के कारण, ऐसे वादे कर बैठते हैं जिन्हें पूरा करने का हमारा कोई इरादा नहीं होता। पर जिसने हम पर भरोसा किया, उसके लिए वह छोटा-सा वादा भी बड़ा होता है। वह अपनी योजनाएँ उसी के सहारे बनाता है। जब वादा टूटता है, तो केवल एक काम अधूरा नहीं रहता, बल्कि आपसी विश्वास में दरार पड़ जाती है, जिसे भरने में बरसों लग जाते हैं। इसीलिए हमारे बुज़ुर्ग कहते थे, "प्राण जाए पर वचन न जाए।" समझदारी इसी में है कि हम सोच-समझकर ही वादा करें, और यदि किसी कारण उसे पूरा न कर सकें, तो समय रहते साफ़-साफ़ बता दें।

Solutions

Q1 · Letter writing

(a)

X
Y Road, Ward No. Z
Kolkata – 700 0XX
10 May 20XX

The Commissioner
Kolkata Municipal Corporation
5, S. N. Banerjee Road
Kolkata – 700 013

Subject: Chronic waterlogging at the Y Road underpass – request for pumps and desilting of drains

Sir,

The underpass on Y Road in Ward No. Z goes under knee-deep water after every heavy shower and stays flooded for a day or more. On behalf of the residents, I seek your urgent help.

The cause is plain to see. The side drains and the gully pits at both ends are choked with silt, plastic and construction waste, so the water has nowhere to go. Buses turn back, two-wheelers stall midway, and schoolchildren and office-goers are forced to wade through filthy water. Last year a cyclist slipped and was badly hurt.

With the monsoon only weeks away, I request you to have the drains and gully pits desilted at once, to station portable pumps at the underpass for the rainy season, and to put up warning boards when the water rises.

Early action will spare thousands of people daily hardship.

Yours faithfully,
X

(b)

12 B Lane, C Town
West Bengal
10 May 20XX

Dear Y,

I was glad to hear that you have settled into your hostel and that the classes have begun well. Now that you are managing your own money for the first time, I must share two pieces of advice.

First, keep away from the instant-loan apps that flood your phone with offers of "money in five minutes". They charge crushing interest and hidden fees, and once installed, many of them

demand access to your contacts and photographs. Some of them harass borrowers and shame them before their friends. If you are ever short, call me or Baba; never borrow from a stranger on the screen.

Second, plan a monthly budget. Write down your fixed costs, such as mess, rent and travel, set aside a small sum for books and emergencies, and only then spend on outings. Note every expense in a diary, and write to me soon.

Your loving brother,
X

EXAM TIP

In (a) the examiner looks for the precise location, the cause (blocked drains), the effect on people and the two specific requests (pumps, desilting) before the monsoon. In (b), a personal letter, there is no subject line and no "Yours faithfully"; the warm tone must still carry two clear, practical pieces of advice.

Q2 · Report

Young Scientists Shine at District Science Fair

KOLKATA, 12 March: Students from schools across the district showed their working models at the District Science Fair held on Thursday at the host school in Behala. The day-long fair, on the theme "Science for a Sustainable Tomorrow", was organised with the support of the district education office.

The exhibits filled three halls and the school courtyard. A team from a Class IX section displayed a low-cost water filter made of sand, charcoal and clay pots, while another group showed a sensor that sounds an alarm when a pond's water level falls. Models of a solar dryer for fish, a smart dustbin that sorts dry and wet waste, and a mobile app that warns farmers of pest attacks drew large crowds.

The entries were judged by a panel of three: a professor of physics from a city college, a scientist from a state research institute and a retired headmistress. The judges said they had looked for originality, a clear grasp of the science, and usefulness to ordinary people.

The water-level alarm won the first prize in the senior section, and the waste-sorting dustbin came second. In the junior section, a working model of a windmill pump was adjudged the best.

Prizes and certificates were given away by the district inspector of schools, who urged students to "ask questions without fear". Officials said the best five projects would go forward to the state-level fair.

EXAM TIP

A report needs a headline, a dateline and the third person throughout. This one covers every element the question names (exhibits, judges, prize-winners) in that order, and it attributes the closing information to "officials" rather than to invented names or figures.

Q3 · Composition

(a) The Uses of Failure

We are taught to fear failure long before we learn to read. A poor mark is hidden from parents, a lost match is not mentioned at dinner, and a rejected job application is spoken of in whispers. Yet almost

every lasting achievement, whether of a person or of a nation, has been built on a foundation of earlier defeats. Failure is less the opposite of success than one of its raw materials.

Its first use is as a teacher. Success tells us little beyond the fact that something worked; failure tells us exactly where we went wrong. A student who scores badly in mathematics and then examines every mistake in the paper learns more from that one script than from ten easy tests. In 2019 the lander of India's Chandrayaan-2 mission crashed on the Moon. The scientists studied what had gone wrong, strengthened the craft and changed its landing plan, and in 2023 Chandrayaan-3 landed safely near the lunar south pole. The second success was made possible by the first failure.

Failure also tests and builds character. It is easy to be cheerful when everything goes well; the true measure of a person is how he rises after a fall. Each setback that is faced honestly leaves behind a little more patience and a little more resolve. Those who have never failed are often brittle, and the first serious blow can break them.

A third use is humility and sympathy. A person who has known defeat is slower to sneer at others who stumble. A teacher who once struggled with a subject explains it more kindly; a manager who has lost a contract understands a junior's mistake. Failure widens the heart as well as the mind.

None of this means that failure should be welcomed for its own sake. Repeated failure through carelessness teaches nothing, and a society that offers no second chance turns a single defeat into lifelong despair. Our examination system, which too often treats one bad result as a final verdict, needs to remember this. Students should be allowed to fail, to learn and to try again without shame.

In the end, failure is useful only to those who refuse to be defined by it. The question is never whether we will fail, for everyone does, but what we will do the morning after. Treated as a lesson rather than a sentence, failure becomes the most honest teacher we will ever have.

(b) Groundwater: The Crisis Beneath Our Feet

When we think of a water crisis, we picture dry rivers and cracked fields. The more dangerous crisis, however, is one we cannot see. Deep under our villages and cities lie the aquifers that supply most of the water we drink and much of the water our crops need. India draws more groundwater than any other country in the world, and in many regions it is drawing it far faster than the rain can replace it.

The causes are not hard to find. Since the Green Revolution, the tube-well has been the farmer's lifeline. Cheap or free electricity for pumps has encouraged farmers to grow water-hungry crops such as paddy and sugarcane even in dry regions; in parts of Punjab and Haryana the water table has fallen year after year. In cities, the story is similar. Piped supply is irregular, so housing complexes and factories sink deep borewells, while concrete and tar cover the ground through which rain once soaked in. Ponds and wetlands, which used to recharge the aquifers, are filled up for building plots.

The crisis is not only one of quantity but also of quality. In several districts of West Bengal, including Nadia, Murshidabad and North 24 Parganas, groundwater carries arsenic, which causes skin lesions and cancer after years of drinking. In the dry western districts such as Purulia and Bankura, excess fluoride damages teeth and bones. Over-pumping near the coast lets salt water creep into wells. Thus a family may have a hand pump in the courtyard and still have no safe water.

The remedies lie partly in policy and partly in everyday habit. Farmers need to be helped, through better prices and assured purchase, to shift to crops that need less water, and to use drip and sprinkler irrigation. Electricity for pumps should be metered sensibly so that waste is discouraged. Programmes such as the Atal Bhujal Yojana, which involve village communities in measuring and managing their own

groundwater, deserve to be widened. In towns, rooftop rainwater harvesting should be compulsory for large buildings, and old ponds must be revived rather than filled.

Groundwater is a shared bank account from which everyone withdraws but into which few deposit. Unless we start replenishing it, the taps will one day run dry without warning. The crisis beneath our feet must be met before it rises to the surface.

(c) A Journey in a Crowded Local Train

Anyone who has lived in Kolkata knows that the suburban local train is less a means of transport than a way of life. I learnt this properly one Monday morning last winter, when I had to reach Sealdah from Barasat for an interview at ten o'clock.

I reached the platform at a quarter past eight. It was already a sea of heads: office-goers with tiffin boxes, students with heavy bags, vendors balancing baskets of guavas, and a few nervous first-timers like me. When the train glided in, it was already full. Before I could decide which door to try, the crowd simply lifted me and carried me inside.

For the next few minutes I could neither move my arms nor see my own feet. My nose was pressed against someone's shoulder, and an umbrella handle dug into my ribs. Yet nobody shouted. A man near the door called out, "Push a little inside, dada, there is room!" and somehow there was. A college girl held my file above the heads so that it would not be crushed, and returned it to me at the next station with a smile.

Gradually the compartment revealed its own small world. Four elderly men had made a table of their knees and were playing cards as calmly as if they were in a drawing room. A vendor squeezed through, selling ballpoint pens, then peanuts, then lemon tea from a flask, and I never understood how he managed to move at all. Two clerks argued about a football match with great passion, while a woman beside the window read a Bengali novel, quite untroubled.

At Dum Dum the crowd thickened further, and a blind singer came in, playing a small harmonium and singing an old Rabindrasangeet. For a few minutes the noise fell away. Coins were passed hand over hand to him from people who could not even see him.

When the train finally pulled into Sealdah, the doors released us like a river bursting a dam. My shirt was crumpled and one button was missing, but I had arrived in time. I also carried away something else: the knowledge that in that tightly packed compartment, strangers had made room for one another, helped without being asked and shared a song. The crowded local train is a hardship, but it is also a lesson in patience and fellow-feeling.

> **EXAM TIP**
>
> In (a), an abstract topic, the examiner rewards distinct "uses" (one per paragraph) backed by a concrete example such as the two Chandrayaan missions, plus a balancing paragraph. In (b), name the causes, the quality problem specific to West Bengal (arsenic, fluoride) and practical remedies. In (c), a narrative, vivid detail in time order and a reflective ending score more than general remarks about crowds.

Q4 · Précis

Title: Why Tragedy Gives Pleasure

People who shun pain in life willingly watch tragic suffering and leave enriched, so their pleasure cannot be cruelty. Partly, the distance of art lets the mind calmly examine what it could not bear in life. Distance

alone breeds curiosity; sympathy deepens it, because the hero resembles us and his error could be ours: fearing for him, we fear for ourselves, and pitying him, we discover our capacity for feeling. Tragedy also satisfies the mind's love of order by presenting suffering as an inevitable chain of causes. The spectator thus leaves calmer and wiser: tragic pleasure is the pleasure of understanding.

(Passage: 283 words; Précis: 101 words)

EXAM TIP

The examiner rewards the three reasons (distance, sympathy, order) kept in the passage's order, with the illustrations (the mad king, the public whipping) dropped. The title names the central question, and the précis is close to one-third of the passage.

Q5 · Translation

(a) Sher Shah Suri ruled for only five years, but what he achieved in that short time was remembered for centuries. Having defeated Humayun and taken the throne of Delhi, he realised that nothing was more essential than good roads for holding a large kingdom together. He therefore had the old road from Sonargaon in Bengal to the north-western frontier rebuilt and extended. Shady trees were planted along both sides, wells were dug at short intervals, and sarais, or inns, were built where travellers could rest. Post-horses were kept ready at every sarai, so that official news reached remote regions within a few days. Trade flowed more freely, and the fear of thieves and dacoits declined. Later the British named this very road the Grand Trunk Road. Even today, when we travel along this highway, we are, without knowing it, following the plan of a far-sighted ruler.

(b) It is as easy to give one's word as it is hard to keep it. In conversation, to please someone or out of hesitation, we often make promises we have no intention of keeping. Yet to the person who trusted us, even a small promise matters a great deal, for he builds his plans upon it. When the promise is broken, it is not merely a task left undone; a crack opens in mutual trust that may take years to mend. That is why our elders used to say, "Let life go, but never one's word." Wisdom lies in promising only after careful thought and, if for some reason we cannot keep a promise, in saying so plainly while there is still time.

EXAM TIP

- "जितना आसान है, उतना ही कठिन" is a balanced comparison; "as easy … as it is hard" keeps the balance instead of two separate sentences.
- "अनजाने में … योजना पर चल रहे होते हैं" plays on travelling and following; "without knowing it, following the plan" keeps both senses, which "walking on his plan" would lose.
- "प्राण जाए पर वचन न जाए" is a saying, so it is given as a crisp English maxim in quotation marks, not a literal "life may go but promise may not go". Keep "सराय" as "sarai" with a gloss, as the term is part of the history.

Practice Paper 3

Time: 3 hours · **Full marks:** 200 · All questions are compulsory.

Question Paper

QUESTION Q1 · 40 marks

Write a letter within 150 words on any one (use A, B, C or X, Y, Z instead of names and addresses).

(a) Write a letter to the District Magistrate, Malda, describing how riverbank erosion is swallowing homes and farmland in your village, and requesting urgent embankment work and the rehabilitation of displaced families.

Or

(b) Write a letter to the Editor of a newspaper about the rising number of dog bites in your town, urging a sterilisation programme for stray dogs and a regular supply of anti-rabies vaccine in every health centre.

QUESTION Q2 · 40 marks

Draft a report within 200 words on a mock cyclone-evacuation drill held in a coastal block of South 24 Parganas before the storm season.

QUESTION Q3 · 40 marks

Write a composition on any one of the following topics.

(a) A dialogue between a farmer and an agricultural extension officer on switching to natural (chemical-free) farming.

(b) Patriotism in everyday life.

(c) The changing face of the Indian village.

QUESTION Q4 · 40 marks

Write a précis of the following passage and add a suitable title (35+5). (The passage contains 207 words.)

A street does not become a neighbourhood merely because people live side by side upon it. Houses may stand wall to wall while their occupants remain strangers, nodding at the gate and complaining behind closed doors. What turns a cluster of dwellings into a community is something less visible than brick and more durable than acquaintance: a shared feeling that the ground outside one's door belongs to everyone, and is therefore the charge of everyone.

This is what we call civic sense. It is not a matter of grand public virtue but of small and repeated restraints. The man who will not throw refuse into the lane, or who lowers his music after dark, performs no heroic deed; he simply refuses to treat common ground as a private convenience. Yet a neighbourhood stands or falls by such refusals, for every careless act invites another.

Laws can punish the worst offences, but they cannot supply the habit of consideration on which ordinary life depends. That habit grows only where people feel seen and known by those around them. Anonymity breeds indifference; generous familiarity breeds responsibility. A true neighbourhood is less a place than a practice, renewed each day by people who remember that they do not live alone.

QUESTION Q5 · 40 marks

Translate any one of the following Hindi passages into English (for candidates who opted Hindi in lieu of Bengali for Paper I).

(a)

टीका शरीर को बीमारी से लड़ना कैसे सिखाता है? जब कोई रोगाणु हमारे शरीर में प्रवेश करता है, तो प्रतिरक्षा तंत्र उसे पराया पहचानकर उस पर हमला करता है। इस लड़ाई में शरीर विशेष प्रकार के प्रोटीन बनाता है, जिन्हें एंटीबॉडी कहते हैं। मुश्किल यह है कि किसी नए रोगाणु को पहचानने और उसके विरुद्ध हथियार तैयार करने में शरीर को कुछ दिन लग जाते हैं, और तब तक रोग अपनी जड़ें जमा चुका होता है।

टीका इसी देरी को दूर करता है। उसमें रोगाणु का कमज़ोर या निष्क्रिय रूप, अथवा उसका कोई हानिरहित अंश होता है। यह शरीर को बीमार नहीं करता, पर प्रतिरक्षा तंत्र को असली शत्रु का चेहरा दिखा देता है। शरीर उसके विरुद्ध एंटीबॉडी बनाता है और, सबसे बड़ी बात, उसे याद रखता है। बाद में जब असली रोगाणु आता है, तो शरीर उसे तुरंत पहचान लेता है और उसके पैर जमाने से पहले ही उसे परास्त कर देता है। जब समाज के अधिकांश लोग टीका लगवा लेते हैं, तो वे उन थोड़े-से लोगों की भी रक्षा करते हैं जो किसी कारणवश टीका नहीं लगवा सकते।

(b)

बंगाल के गाँवों में दोपहर का समय कुछ अलग होता है। घर का काम निपटाकर स्त्रियाँ आँगन में या बरामदे की छाँव में बैठ जाती हैं, और उनके हाथों में सुई-धागा चल पड़ता है। यही कांथा की दुनिया है। पुराने ज़माने में घर की फटी-पुरानी साड़ियों और धोतियों की परतें जोड़कर उन पर बारीक टाँके डाले जाते थे, और उनसे बच्चों के बिछौने या ओढ़ने की चादरें बनती थीं। इस तरह जो चीज़ फेंक दी जाती, वह फिर से काम की बन जाती थी।

पर कांथा केवल किफ़ायत की कला नहीं है। इन टाँकों में स्त्रियाँ अपने मन की बातें भी सिल देती थीं — कमल, मछली, हाथी, पालकी, गाँव के मेले और रामायण के प्रसंग। हर कांथा अपनी बनाने वाली की कहानी कहता है। आज यह कला शहरों के बाज़ारों से होती हुई विदेशों तक पहुँच चुकी है। फिर भी इसे जीवित रखने वाली वही गाँव की स्त्रियाँ हैं, जिन्हें अक्सर उनके धैर्य और हुनर का उचित दाम नहीं मिलता।

Solutions

Q1 · Letter writing

(a)

XYZ
Village X, P.O. Y
Block Z, Malda
10 July 2026

The District Magistrate
Malda Collectorate
Malda

Subject: Riverbank erosion at Village X — request for embankment work and rehabilitation

Sir,

Since the last monsoon the Ganga has been eating into its bank at Village X, Block Z, at an alarming pace, and the villagers seek your help.

Within a few months, a row of homes, part of our mango orchards and the only path to the primary school have slipped into the river. Families who lost their houses now shelter in the school building or under plastic sheets beside the road. Those who remain spend sleepless nights whenever the water rises.

Three measures are urgently needed: emergency protection of the worst stretch with sandbags and boulders before the next flood, a permanent embankment taken up with the Irrigation and Waterways Department, and a survey of the displaced families so that they receive land, shelter and relief.

The villagers will gladly assist any inspection team. An early visit would restore their hope.

Yours faithfully,
XYZ

(b)

XYZ
12, A Road
B Town, District C
18 August 2026

The Editor
The Daily D
Kolkata

Subject: Stray dogs, dog bites and the shortage of anti-rabies vaccine

Sir,

Dog bites have risen sharply in our town this year, and help too often fails to arrive.

Packs of stray dogs now gather near the bus stand, the market and school gates. Children and elderly walkers are the usual victims. Worse, victims are often sent from one health centre to another because the vaccine is out of stock.

Cruelty is no answer, for the animals are not to blame. The municipality should run a regular sterilisation and vaccination programme for stray dogs and fix proper feeding points away from schools. Every health centre must keep a steady supply of anti-rabies vaccine, and people should be taught to wash a bite at once and seek treatment the same day.

Rabies is almost always fatal once symptoms appear, yet it is wholly preventable. No one in our town should die of it for want of a vaccine.

Yours faithfully,
XYZ

EXAM TIP

(a) earns marks for a request the DM can act on: three clear steps (emergency protection, a permanent embankment, rehabilitation) in one paragraph. (b) is rewarded for balance: it names the problem, rejects cruelty, and puts the duty on both the municipality and the health centres. Body counts: (a) 141 words, (b) 145 words.

Q2 · Report

Mock Drill Moves Coastal Villagers to Cyclone Shelters

NAMKHANA (South 24 Parganas), 22 April: Sirens wailed across three riverside villages of this coastal block on Wednesday morning as the block administration held a mock evacuation drill ahead of the cyclone season.

The exercise, organised with the disaster management department, the police and civil defence volunteers, began with a simulated warning of a severe cyclone. Volunteers went from hut to hut with loudhailers, while fishermen were told by radio to return to shore. Elderly residents, pregnant women and children were soon moved by tractor and van to the nearest multipurpose cyclone shelter, where cooked food, drinking water and a medical desk were waiting.

Officials said the drill exposed some gaps. A damaged approach road slowed vehicles, and several families were unwilling to leave their cattle behind. "People hesitate to leave home until the water is at the door. A drill teaches them that early is safe," a block official said.

Residents welcomed the effort; a schoolteacher who sheltered with her pupils said the children now knew the route by heart.

The administration has promised to repair the road, add cattle sheds near the shelters and repeat the drill before the monsoon.

(192 words)

EXAM TIP

The examiner looks for 5W+1H in the opening sentence, a past-tense, third-person account, and an answer to the drill's real purpose: what worked, what went wrong, and what the authorities promised next. One unnamed official and one resident are enough; no figures are invented.

Q3 · Composition

(a) A dialogue between a farmer and an agricultural extension officer on natural farming

(Haren Mondal, a paddy and vegetable farmer, meets Ruma Das, the block's agricultural extension officer, at the edge of his field.)

Ruma: Good morning, Harenbabu. You asked to see me about natural farming?

Haren: Yes, madam. My neighbour says I should stop using fertiliser and pesticide altogether. I have two daughters in school. If my harvest fails, who will feed them?

Ruma: That is the right question to ask first. Nobody should gamble the whole farm. Why not begin with one plot, say a quarter of your land, and keep the rest as it is?

Haren: And what do I put in the soil instead of urea?

Ruma: Preparations you can make at home: cow dung, cow urine, jaggery, pulse flour and a handful of soil from under a tree, left to ferment for a few days. It does not feed the plant directly. It wakes up the life in the soil, the earthworms and microbes that make nutrients available.

Haren: My soil has gone hard. After every season I need more fertiliser for the same crop.

Ruma: That is exactly what chemicals do over the years. Cover the ground with straw instead of burning it. The mulch keeps moisture in, and you will need less water from the pump. Grow a pulse between the rows as well; it fixes nitrogen and gives you a second crop.

Haren: And the insects? Without spray, the brinjal will be finished.

Ruma: Not if you use neem and garlic sprays, and plant marigold along the border to draw pests away. I will not pretend the first two seasons are easy. Yields may dip a little before the soil recovers.

Haren: Then how do I gain?

Ruma: Your costs fall sharply, because you are no longer buying chemicals on credit. And buyers in the towns now pay more for vegetables grown without poison. If a few farmers here form a group, we can help you get certified and reach those markets.

Haren: My father farmed like this, you know, before the bags of fertiliser came.

Ruma: Then you are not starting something new; you are returning with better knowledge. Come to the training at the block office next Thursday. I will visit your plot every fortnight.

Haren: One plot, then. If it works, the whole field next year.

Ruma: That is how every good change on the land begins.

(b) Patriotism in everyday life

Patriotism is usually pictured in grand colours: a soldier at a snowbound post, a freedom fighter facing the gallows, a stadium rising to the national anthem. Such moments deserve our reverence. Yet a nation is not kept alive by its rare heroes alone. It survives, or decays, through the millions of ordinary choices its citizens make every day, and it is there that most of us are tested.

The first test is honesty in small things. A trader who gives the correct weight, a contractor who mixes the right amount of cement, a citizen who pays the tax he owes: none of them will be garlanded, but each strengthens the country more than a hundred speeches. Corruption, after all, is rarely one great betrayal. It is a slow accumulation of minor dishonesties that each person excuses as harmless.

The second test is respect for what we hold in common. The same man who cheers the Tricolour may spit on a station platform, jump a red light or leave rubbish on a beach. Public property belongs to the nation, and to damage it is to injure the country one claims to love. Queueing patiently, saving water and electricity, and keeping a park clean are humble acts of loyalty.

Doing one's own work well is a third form. A teacher who prepares her lessons, a nurse who treats a poor patient with the same care as a rich one, and a clerk who clears a file without expecting a favour are all serving India. Excellence in one's duty is the most practical patriotism there is, because a country is finally the sum of the work its people do.

Finally, everyday patriotism means respecting fellow citizens who differ from us in language, faith or custom. Loving a land while despising half its people is a contradiction. Courtesy towards a migrant worker, a vote cast thoughtfully, and a refusal to forward rumours that set one community against another protect the nation's unity better than any slogan.

Patriotism, then, is not a feeling reserved for Independence Day. It is a habit of conduct that shows itself in the shop, the street, the office and the polling booth. When enough citizens practise it quietly, the country needs fewer heroes, because its ordinary days are already well kept.

(c) The changing face of the Indian village

For generations, the Indian village was described in the same few strokes: mud houses, a pond, a banyan tree with its elders, bullock carts on a dusty track, and a life governed by the seasons. That picture has not vanished, but it no longer tells the whole story. Over the last few decades the village has changed in its roads, its work, its homes and its outlook, and the change continues at a quickening pace.

The most visible change is physical. Paved roads now reach places that were once cut off in the monsoon. Electricity, piped water, toilets and concrete houses built under housing schemes have altered the skyline of countless villages. A bus, a motorcycle or a toto now carries villagers to the town in an hour, and the old isolation is fading.

Work has changed too. Farming remains the backbone, but fewer families depend on it alone. Young men migrate to cities and other states for construction or factory work and send money home. Women run self-help groups, small shops and tailoring units. Tractors and power tillers have largely replaced the plough and the bullock, and farmers check prices and weather on their mobile phones.

Education and communication have widened horizons. Almost every village now has a primary school, and girls cycling to high school are a common sight in rural Bengal. The mobile phone and the television have brought the world into the courtyard. Bank accounts and digital payments, unknown a generation ago, now reach the remotest hamlet.

Yet the change is not all gain. Migration has left many villages with ageing parents and empty homes. Joint families are breaking into smaller units, and the old bonds of the village meeting place and the shared festival are loosening. Heavy use of chemicals and groundwater threatens the soil on which village life depends. Many traditional crafts, from pottery to weaving, are struggling against factory goods.

The task, therefore, is to guide the change rather than resist it. Villages need good schools, health centres and local employment so that the young can prosper without having to leave. Panchayats should be strengthened, and traditional skills linked to modern markets. If that is done, the Indian village can keep what was best in its old life, its closeness and its rootedness in the land, while gaining the comforts and opportunities of the new.

> **EXAM TIP**
>
> In (a) the examiner rewards two distinct voices: the farmer's real fear (a failed harvest) is met with practical answers, not a lecture, and the ending is a reasoned decision. In (b) the marks go to a clear contrast between symbolic and everyday patriotism, developed through concrete conduct. In (c) a balanced essay that covers gains and losses and ends with suggestions scores higher than a nostalgic description.

Q4 · Précis

Title: Civic Sense Makes a Neighbourhood

Living side by side does not make people neighbours. A community forms only when residents feel that the space around their homes is shared and is everyone's responsibility. Such civic sense rests on small, constant restraint rather than great virtue, and its neglect spreads fast. Law can punish grave offences but cannot create everyday consideration, which grows only where people know one another. A true neighbourhood is therefore a daily practice, not a place.

(Passage: 207 words; Précis: 74 words)

> **EXAM TIP**
>
> The précis keeps the argument's order (proximity is not community, civic sense as restraint, the limits of law, neighbourhood as practice) and drops the illustrations of refuse and loud music. A title that names the central idea, not just "Neighbourhood", earns the 5 marks.

Q5 · Translation

(a)

How does a vaccine teach the body to fight disease? When a germ enters the body, the immune system recognises it as an intruder and attacks it. In this battle the body produces special proteins called antibodies. The difficulty is that the body needs a few days to recognise a new germ and arm itself against it, and by then the disease has already taken root.

A vaccine removes precisely this delay. It contains a weakened or inactivated form of the germ, or some harmless part of it. It does not make the body ill, but it shows the immune system the face of the real enemy. The body produces antibodies against it and, most important of all, remembers it. Later, when the real germ arrives, the body recognises it at once and defeats it before it can gain a foothold. And when most people in a society are vaccinated, they also protect the few who, for one reason or another, cannot be.

(b)

Afternoons have a character of their own in the villages of Bengal. Their household chores done, the women settle in the courtyard or in the shade of the veranda, and needle and thread begin to move in

their hands. This is the world of the kantha. In the old days, layers of worn-out saris and dhotis were joined together and covered with fine stitches to make bedding or wraps for the children. In this way, what would have been thrown away was put to use once more.

But kantha is not merely an art of thrift. Into these stitches the women also sewed what lay in their hearts: lotuses, fish, elephants, palanquins, village fairs and episodes from the Ramayana. Every kantha tells the story of the woman who made it. Today the craft has travelled through city markets to countries abroad. Yet those who keep it alive are the same village women, who are often denied a fair price for their patience and skill.

EXAM TIP

"जड़ें जमा चुका होता है" and "पैर जमाने से पहले" are idioms: "has already taken root" and "before it can gain a foothold" keep the image without a word-for-word rendering. "घर का काम निपटाकर" becomes the English absolute phrase "Their household chores done". "अपने मन की बातें भी सिल देती थीं" is rendered "sewed what lay in their hearts", not "stitched the talks of their mind". The examiner rewards complete, idiomatic sentences with no line skipped.

Practice Paper 4

Time: 3 hours · **Full marks:** 200 · All questions are compulsory.

Question Paper

QUESTION Q1 · 40 marks

Write a letter within 150 words on any one (use A, B, C or X, Y, Z instead of names and addresses).

(a) Your father recently received a video call from a man in police uniform who claimed that he was under "digital arrest" and demanded an immediate money transfer to "clear his name". Write a letter to the Superintendent of Police (Cyber Crime) of your district reporting the incident, requesting action against the callers and asking for an awareness camp in your locality.

Or

(b) Write a letter to a friend describing how you cast your vote for the first time: the queue, the polling booth and what the experience meant to you.

QUESTION Q2 · 40 marks

Draft a report within 250 words on the Kolkata Book Fair held this year. Mention the crowds, the theme country, the book launches and the stalls of little magazines.

QUESTION Q3 · 40 marks

Write a composition on any one of the following topics.

(a) Courtesy costs nothing

(b) India's journey to the Moon and beyond

(c) A village mela I remember

QUESTION Q4 · 35 + 5 = 40 marks

Write a précis of the following passage and add a suitable title (35+5).

Many imagine that the scientist begins with certainty and proceeds to prove what he already believes. The truth is nearly the reverse. He begins with a question, frames a guess that might answer it, and then devises a trial that could show the guess to be wrong. If the trial fails to overthrow it, the guess survives, not as a final truth but as the best account available for the present. If the trial succeeds, the guess is abandoned, however elegant, and the search begins again.

It follows that doubt is not the enemy of knowledge but its most faithful servant. A mind that refuses to question its own conclusions can only repeat them; it cannot improve them. The scientist must therefore cultivate a peculiar humility, holding his theories firmly enough to test them and loosely enough to let them go. This is not easy, for every man grows fond of his own ideas, and pride resists the evidence that would humble it. That is why science is not the work of one mind but of many, each examining the claims of the others and accepting nothing on authority alone.

Such a habit of thought has value far beyond the laboratory. A citizen who asks for evidence before he believes, who changes his opinion when the facts change, and who admits the limits of what he knows, is less easily deceived by rumour or by the confident voice of the demagogue. To doubt wisely is not to believe nothing; it is to believe in proportion to the proof.

QUESTION Q5 · 40 marks

Translate any one of the following Hindi passages into English (for candidates who opted Hindi in lieu of Bengali for Paper I).

(a) गाँव के सरकारी स्कूल से सेवानिवृत्त हुए मास्टर जी को लोग आज भी उतना ही आदर देते हैं, जितना नौकरी के दिनों में देते थे। फ़र्क़ बस इतना है कि अब उनकी कक्षा स्कूल की इमारत में नहीं, उनके अपने आँगन में लगती है। हर शाम सूरज ढलते ही बच्चे टाट-पट्टियाँ लेकर उनके घर पहुँच जाते हैं। इनमें अधिकतर ऐसे ग़रीब परिवारों के बच्चे हैं जिनके माता-पिता दिन भर खेतों में मज़दूरी करते हैं और ट्यूशन का ख़र्च नहीं उठा सकते। मास्टर जी इनसे एक पैसा नहीं लेते। लालटेन की रोशनी में वे गणित के सवाल समझाते हैं, अंग्रेज़ी के शब्द रटवाने के बजाय उनका अर्थ बताते हैं और बीच-बीच में कोई कहानी भी सुना देते हैं, ताकि दिन भर के काम से थके हुए बच्चों का मन पढ़ाई में लगा रहे। कभी-कभी गाँव के लोग चंदा करके लालटेन का तेल और कॉपियाँ पहुँचा देते हैं। उनका कहना है कि पढ़ाई का असली मक़सद नौकरी पाना नहीं, बल्कि सोचने की आदत डालना है। पिछले कुछ वर्षों में उनके यहाँ पढ़े कई बच्चे आगे की पढ़ाई के लिए शहर गए हैं और कुछ लौटकर गाँव के ही बच्चों को पढ़ाने लगे हैं। मास्टर जी मुस्कुराकर कहते हैं, "दीये से दीया जलता है, यही मेरी पेंशन है।"

Or

(b) सर्दियाँ आते ही गाँव के बाहर की बड़ी झील का रूप बदल जाता है। दूर-दराज़ के ठंडे देशों से हज़ारों मील की उड़ान भरकर प्रवासी पक्षी यहाँ डेरा डालने लगते हैं। सुबह की धुंध में जब पानी पर उनके झुंड तैरते दिखाई देते हैं, तो लगता है मानो झील ने रंग-बिरंगी चादर ओढ़ ली हो। शाम को उनका कलरव दूर खेतों तक सुनाई देता है और गाँव के बच्चे घंटों किनारे बैठे उन्हें निहारते रहते हैं। बड़े-बूढ़े बताते हैं कि पहले इनकी संख्या कहीं अधिक होती थी। अब झील के किनारे बढ़ता अतिक्रमण और चोरी-छिपे होने वाला शिकार इन मेहमानों के लिए ख़तरा बन गए हैं। यदि हम इन्हें बचाना चाहते हैं, तो झील को भी बचाना होगा।

Solutions

Q1 · Letter writing

(a)

XYZ
12, Station Road
Barasat, North 24 Parganas
14 March 20XX

The Superintendent of Police (Cyber Crime)
District Police Office
Barasat, North 24 Parganas

Subject: Attempted "digital arrest" fraud on my father and request for an awareness camp

Sir,

I wish to report an attempted fraud on my father, a retired schoolteacher, on 12 March.

He received a video call from a man in police uniform who claimed that a parcel of drugs had been booked in his name. The caller declared him under "digital arrest", forbade him to tell anyone, and demanded a large transfer to an account to "clear his name". My father was shaken, but my sister took the phone in time and no money was paid.

The caller's number, the account details and screenshots of the call are enclosed. I request you to trace those responsible and have the number and account blocked.

As many elderly people in our locality live alone, I also request an awareness camp at our community hall to explain that no police officer arrests anyone over a video call.

Yours faithfully,
XYZ

Enclosures: screenshots, caller's number, account details

(b)

XYZ
Kalyani, Nadia
22 May 20XX

Dear A,

You will laugh, but I keep showing everyone my inked finger. Last Monday I voted for the first time, and I want to tell you all about it.

I reached the booth at our old primary school by seven, yet the queue already wound past the banyan tree. Farmers, nurses coming off night duty and a grandmother on her grandson's arm waited patiently together. When my turn came, the polling officer checked my name in the roll, a

second officer marked my finger, and I stepped behind the cardboard screen. The beep of the machine sounded oddly solemn.

Walking home, I felt that I had become a real part of the country, not merely someone who complains about it. My single vote counted exactly as much as anyone else's.

Your turn comes next year. Promise me you will not miss it.

With love,
XYZ

EXAM TIP

In (a) the examiner rewards a precise account (when, how, what was demanded, that no money was lost), enclosed evidence and two clear requests: action and the camp. In (b) a personal letter needs no subject line and no "Yours faithfully"; concrete sights (the queue, the ink, the screen) earn more than general talk of democracy.

Q2 · Report

Book Fair Closes to Huge Crowds as Little Magazines Hold Their Own

KOLKATA, 9 February: The Kolkata Book Fair closed at the Central Park fairground in Salt Lake on Sunday evening, nearly two weeks after it opened, after drawing what organisers described as some of the largest crowds in its history.

From the opening day, long queues formed at the gates well before noon. Families, college students and elderly readers jostled through the lanes, and the weekends were so crowded that extra volunteers had to be posted at the main crossings. Police officials said the fair passed off without any major incident.

The pavilion of this year's theme country was among the busiest. It displayed translated classics, children's picture books and works on the country's history. Its cultural evenings of music and readings drew full audiences.

Several publishers launched new titles on the fair's open-air stage, among them a fresh translation of a nineteenth-century Bengali novel, a collection of poems by young writers from the districts and a series of science books for schoolchildren.

The little-magazine pavilion was, as always, the heart of the fair for many visitors. Editors of small journals from across the state sat behind modest tables, selling poetry, criticism and essays at low prices. "We sell little, but we meet our readers face to face," one editor said.

Organisers said sales had risen over the previous year, helped by digital payment counters, and that planning for next year's fair would begin shortly.

EXAM TIP

Take the four points named in the question (crowds, theme country, launches, little magazines) in that order, one paragraph each. Attribute every claim ("organisers said", "one editor said") and give no sales figures: an examiner cannot check them and may treat them as invented.

Q3 · Composition

(a) Courtesy costs nothing

Courtesy is the small change of social life: a greeting, a word of thanks, a moment of patience with a stranger. It asks for no money and little effort, yet its absence is felt at once. The proverb that courtesy costs nothing is true of the giver; for the receiver, it is often worth a great deal.

At its root, courtesy is a way of recognising that another person matters. When a bus conductor answers an old man's question patiently, or a clerk looks up from his file to say "please wait, I will be with you shortly", the message is that the other person is not a nuisance but a fellow human being. Rudeness says the opposite, and that is why it wounds more than its words alone would suggest.

Courtesy also makes common life run smoothly. A crowded railway platform, a busy hospital corridor or a government office can become a place of quarrels or of quiet co-operation, depending on how people speak to one another. A polite request is obeyed more readily than an order, and an apology offered in time can end a dispute that pride would have prolonged for weeks. In business, too, a courteous shopkeeper keeps his customers long after a cheaper rival has opened down the road.

It must be admitted that courtesy can be counterfeit. Flattery and fawning wear its clothes, and a smooth manner may hide indifference. True courtesy, however, is not servility. It is shown equally to the powerful and the powerless, to the officer and to the sweeper, and it does not change with the other person's usefulness. Its test is how one treats those who can do nothing in return.

Like any habit, courtesy is learnt early. Children copy what they see at home far more than what they are told. Parents who thank the domestic help, and teachers who listen to a shy student without mocking him, teach manners more surely than any lesson on good conduct. Public servants, who meet citizens at their most anxious, carry a special duty here.

In an age of hurried messages and impatient crowds, courtesy may look old-fashioned. It is, in fact, more necessary than ever. It costs the giver a few seconds and a little self-control; it can restore to the receiver a sense of dignity. Few investments yield so much for so little.

(b) India's journey to the Moon and beyond

When the lander of Chandrayaan-3 touched down near the lunar south pole on 23 August 2023, India became the first nation to land a craft in that region and only the fourth to achieve a soft landing on the Moon. The cheers in the control room at Bengaluru were the climax of a journey that had begun six decades earlier with sounding rockets carried on bicycles at Thumba.

The Moon programme itself began with Chandrayaan-1 in 2008. A modest orbiter, it carried instruments from several countries and helped detect signs of water molecules on the lunar surface, a finding that changed scientific thinking about our nearest neighbour. Chandrayaan-2 followed in 2019. Its orbiter worked well, but the lander Vikram crashed in the final moments of descent. The failure was public and painful, yet the scientists studied it closely, strengthened the lander's design and returned four years later to succeed.

India's ambitions have never stopped at the Moon. The Mars Orbiter Mission, Mangalyaan, reached Mars in 2014 on its first attempt and at a cost that drew admiration across the world. In 2023, Aditya-L1 was launched to study the Sun from a vantage point far beyond the Moon. The Gaganyaan programme now aims to send Indian astronauts into orbit on an Indian rocket, and plans for a space station of India's own have been announced.

These missions are not mere displays of national pride. Satellites built by the same organisation forecast cyclones along the Bengal coast, guide fishing boats to their catch, map crops and carry television and

internet signals to remote villages. The skills gained in building a lunar lander flow back into weather science, communication and navigation. Private companies have also begun to build rockets and satellites, opening a new field of skilled employment.

Critics sometimes ask whether a country with so much poverty should spend on space. The answer lies partly in the modest budgets of these missions and partly in their returns. Space science has repaid the nation many times over in lives saved during storms alone. It also gives young Indians, especially those from small towns, a visible proof that world-class work can be done at home.

The journey to the Moon has taught India that patience, frugal engineering and the courage to learn from failure can carry a nation very far. The next destinations are already on the drawing board.

(c) A village mela I remember

Every winter, in the week after the paddy harvest, a mela was held on the open field beside the river in my grandmother's village. I went there for the last time when I was twelve, and I still remember it more vividly than many things that happened last year.

The fair announced itself long before we reached it. From the dyke we could hear the drone of loudspeakers, the clang of a merry-go-round and the cries of hawkers, and a thin haze of smoke from a hundred stoves hung over the field. As we came closer, the field seemed to have turned into a small town of canvas and bamboo.

The stalls were arranged in rough lanes. One lane belonged to the potters, with clay horses, painted dolls and earthen lamps laid out on straw. Another sold bangles that caught the sun, cheap mirrors, steel buckets and ploughshares. In the food lane, men fried jilipi in wide pans, and the smell of hot sugar and mustard oil followed us everywhere. My grandmother bought me a paper bag of muri and batasha and a whistle shaped like a bird.

In the evening the crowd thickened. A jatra troupe performed on a raised wooden stage lit by petromax lamps, and the villagers sat on the ground till late at night, weeping and laughing with the heroes of an old legend. Near the river a wandering fakir singing to his dotara drew a smaller, quieter circle. I remember understanding none of his words and being moved all the same.

What I recall most clearly, though, are the people. Farmers who had worked bent over the fields all year walked about in clean clothes with their families, bargaining loudly and laughing easily. Children ran between the stalls with balloons tied to their wrists, and relatives from distant villages met there by chance and embraced. For those few days, the whole countryside seemed to have stopped working in order to celebrate the fact that it had worked.

The mela still takes place, I am told, but it has changed. Plastic toys have replaced the clay ones, and mobile phones now record the jatra. Perhaps that is natural. Yet whenever I hear a toy whistle, I am once again twelve years old, holding my grandmother's hand on a crowded field by the river.

> **EXAM TIP**
>
> For (a) the examiner rewards an argument (why courtesy matters, its counterfeit, how it is learnt), not a string of proverbs. In (b) accurate milestones (2008, 2014, 2023) and the link to everyday benefits score; uncertain figures should be left out. In (c) sensory detail and a reflective ending lift a description above a list of stalls.

Q4 · Précis

Title: Doubt: The Engine of Knowledge

Science starts not with certainty, as is commonly supposed, but with a question and a tentative answer, tested in ways that could disprove it. A surviving answer is accepted only provisionally; a failed one is discarded, however attractive. Doubt therefore serves knowledge, since an unquestioning mind cannot improve its conclusions. The scientist must humbly test his theories and abandon them, and because pride resists evidence, science relies on many minds checking one another, not on authority. The habit also guards citizens against rumour and demagogues, for wise doubt proportions belief to proof.

(Passage: 258 words; Précis: 92 words)

> **EXAM TIP**
>
> The examiner rewards the three-step line of thought (method, doubt as a virtue, its civic value) kept in the passage's order, in fresh wording. Lifting phrases such as "faithful servant" or "confident voice of the demagogue" loses marks; the title must name the central idea, doubt, not just "Science".

Q5 · Translation

(a) The old master has retired from the village government school, yet people still show him the same respect they did while he was in service. The only difference is that his class now meets not in the school building but in his own courtyard. Every evening, as soon as the sun goes down, children arrive at his house carrying their jute mats. Most of them come from poor families whose parents labour in the fields all day and cannot afford private tuition. The master takes not a single paisa from them. By the light of a lantern he works through arithmetic problems with them, teaches the meaning of English words instead of making the children learn them by rote, and now and then tells them a story, so that children tired from a long day's work keep their minds on their lessons. Sometimes the villagers pool money to send him kerosene for the lantern and exercise books. In his view, the real purpose of education is not to get a job but to form the habit of thinking. In the last few years, several of his pupils have gone to the city for higher studies, and a few have come back to teach the village children themselves. "One lamp lights another," the master says with a smile. "That is my pension."

(b) As soon as winter sets in, the large lake on the edge of the village changes its face. Migratory birds, having flown thousands of miles from distant cold lands, begin to settle here for the season. When their flocks are seen floating on the water through the morning mist, the lake seems to have wrapped itself in a many-coloured shawl. In the evening their calls carry to the far-off fields, and the village children sit on the bank for hours, watching them. The old people say that the birds once came in far greater numbers. Today, creeping encroachment along the shore and poaching carried on in secret have become a threat to these guests. If we wish to save them, we must save the lake as well.

> **EXAM TIP**
>
> "मास्टर जी" is the respectful village name for a teacher, rendered "the old master" rather than "Master ji". The proverb "दीये से दीया जलता है" becomes the English image "One lamp lights another", not "a lamp burns from a lamp". In (b) "डेरा डालने लगते हैं" means "settle here for the season", and "चादर ओढ़ ली हो" reads better as "wrapped itself in a shawl" than the literal "wore a sheet".

Practice Paper 5

Time: 3 hours · **Full marks:** 200 · All questions are compulsory.

Question Paper

QUESTION Q1 · 40 marks

Write a letter within 150 words on any one (use A, B, C or X, Y, Z instead of names and addresses).

(a) Write a letter to the Vice-Chancellor of your university requesting the setting up of a student counselling and well-being centre with trained counsellors.

Or

(b) Write a letter to the Editor of a daily newspaper on the common practice of buying antibiotics without a doctor's prescription and the danger of drug resistance.

QUESTION Q2 · 40 marks

Draft a report within 200 words on a handloom and handicrafts fair held in your city, and on what the weavers of Shantipur and Phulia told visitors about their livelihoods.

QUESTION Q3 · 40 marks

Write a composition on any one of the following topics.

(a) Is competition always healthy?

(b) Child labour in a growing economy

(c) Memoirs of an old banyan tree

QUESTION Q4 · 35 + 5 = 40 marks

Write a précis of the following passage and add a suitable title (35+5).

For the greater part of human history the written word belonged to a few. A manuscript was copied slowly by hand, and its cost placed it beyond the reach of all but the priest, the scholar and the wealthy patron. For centuries even the printing press multiplied books without making them cheap. The common man met literature, if at all, through the ear: from the storyteller in the market or the singer at the fair. He was a listener, never a reader.

The nineteenth century altered this condition more deeply than many a war. Presses driven by steam, paper made from wood instead of rags, and railways that carried print to distant towns brought down the price of reading until a labourer could buy a newspaper for the price of a meal. Almanacs, ballads, tracts and primers poured out in unheard-of numbers; in Calcutta the humble presses of Battala fed the bazaar with books priced for the clerk and the shopkeeper rather than the gentleman.

The consequences reached far beyond the bookshop. A man who could read was no longer obliged to take his opinions from those above him; he could compare, question and judge for himself. Reading alone bred the habit of private reflection, while reading in company, around a single

newspaper passed from hand to hand, bred a public that argued about its own affairs. The movements for reform and self-government that marked the age drew much of their strength from people who had learnt their politics from print.

Cheapness, it is true, brought a flood of trivial matter, and fastidious critics lamented it. Yet the trivial book was often the first step towards the serious one, for the habit of reading, once formed, seldom rests content with what first awakened it. A people that has learnt to read cannot easily be persuaded to stop thinking.

QUESTION Q5 · 40 marks

Translate any one of the following Hindi passages into English (for candidates who opted Hindi in lieu of Bengali for Paper I).

(a)

कुछ दशक पहले तक घर में पिता की छवि एक ऐसे व्यक्ति की थी जो सुबह काम पर निकल जाता था और रात को थका-हारा लौटता था। बच्चों की पढ़ाई, उनकी बीमारी और रोज़मर्रा की ज़रूरतें माँ के ज़िम्मे थीं। बच्चे पिता से डरते अधिक थे, खुलकर बात कम करते थे। घर में उनकी भूमिका कमाने वाले और अनुशासन रखने वाले मुखिया तक सीमित थी।

आज यह तस्वीर तेज़ी से बदल रही है। जिन घरों में माता और पिता दोनों नौकरी करते हैं, वहाँ घर का काम भी दोनों में बँटने लगा है। अब बहुत-से पिता बच्चों को स्कूल छोड़ने जाते हैं, अभिभावक-शिक्षक बैठक में शामिल होते हैं, रसोई में हाथ बँटाते हैं और रात को बच्चों को कहानी सुनाते हैं। इससे पिता और बच्चों के बीच की दूरी घटी है और रिश्ते में दोस्ती का भाव आया है।

फिर भी यह बदलाव अधूरा है। कई परिवारों में पिता का घर के काम में हाथ बँटाना आज भी 'मदद' कहलाता है, ज़िम्मेदारी नहीं। सच्ची बराबरी तभी आएगी जब घर चलाना माता-पिता दोनों का साझा कर्तव्य माना जाएगा।

Or

(b)

कोलकाता की सड़कों पर घंटी बजाती, धीरे-धीरे सरकती ट्राम बरसों से इस शहर की पहचान रही है। सन् 1873 में यहाँ घोड़ों से खींची जाने वाली ट्राम चली थी, और 1902 में बिजली से चलने वाली ट्राम ने उसकी जगह ले ली। उस ज़माने में ट्राम आधुनिकता का प्रतीक थी। दफ़्तर जाने वाले बाबू, कॉलेज के छात्र और बाज़ार जाने वाली गृहिणियाँ, सभी इसी में सफ़र करते थे, और किराया इतना कम था कि ग़रीब आदमी भी इसका लाभ उठा सकता था।

समय के साथ शहर बदला। सड़कों पर बसों, टैक्सियों और निजी गाड़ियों की भीड़ बढ़ी, मेट्रो रेल आई, और ट्राम को धीमी और पुरानी सवारी कहा जाने लगा। एक-एक कर कई मार्ग बंद हो गए और डिपो सूने पड़ने लगे।

फिर भी कोलकाता के बहुत-से लोग ट्राम को केवल आने-जाने का साधन नहीं मानते। उनके लिए यह शहर की स्मृतियों का हिस्सा है। पर्यावरण-प्रेमियों का तर्क है कि बिजली से चलने वाली ट्राम धुआँ नहीं छोड़ती, इसलिए इसे बंद करने के बजाय आधुनिक बनाना चाहिए। अब प्रश्न यह है कि क्या तेज़ रफ़्तार से भागता यह शहर अपनी पुरानी, धीमी सहेली के लिए थोड़ी-सी जगह बचा पाएगा।

Solutions

Q1 · Letter writing

(a)

Room 14, Hostel No. 2
ABC University
Kolkata 700 0XX
16 March 2026

The Vice-Chancellor
ABC University
Kolkata 700 0XX

Subject: Request for a student counselling and well-being centre

Sir,

On behalf of the students of this university, I write to propose a counselling and well-being centre on the campus, staffed by trained counsellors.

Many of us are living away from home for the first time and face heavy syllabi, examination anxiety, money worries and loneliness. At present there is nobody on the campus whom a distressed student can approach in confidence. Our teachers are kind, but they are neither trained nor free to listen at length. Troubles left unspoken sometimes grow into depression, or worse.

A centre with qualified counsellors, fixed hours, strict confidentiality and an emergency helpline would meet this need. Regular workshops on stress, sleep and study habits, and some training for wardens and mentors, would help spot problems early.

May I request that this proposal be placed before the Executive Council at its next meeting?

Yours faithfully,
XYZ
Third-year student, Department of Economics

(b)

XYZ
12, ABC Road
Howrah 711 0XX
16 March 2026

The Editor
The Daily XYZ
Kolkata 700 0XX

Subject: Antibiotics sold without prescription and the danger of drug resistance

Sir,

A habit most of us think harmless deserves attention. At the first sign of a cough or fever, people walk into a pharmacy and buy antibiotics without a prescription, often on the chemist's advice or by asking for the strip that worked last time.

This practice is dangerous. Antibiotics are useless against viral illnesses such as the common cold, and needless or half-finished courses let the hardiest bacteria survive and grow resistant. As resistance spreads, ordinary infections become difficult and costly to treat, and medicines that once saved lives begin to fail.

Drug inspectors must ensure that these medicines are sold only on prescription, and shops that flout it should lose their licences. Doctors should prescribe them sparingly, and health departments should run awareness drives.

Patients, for their part, must stop treating antibiotics as a quick cure for every ailment.

Yours faithfully,
XYZ

EXAM TIP

Examiners look for the purpose in the first sentence, one idea per paragraph and a concrete closing request. In (a), naming the features of the centre (confidentiality, helpline, fixed hours) earns more than a general plea; in (b), explaining *how* resistance develops shows that the writer understands the issue.

Q2 · Report

Weavers Speak of Shrinking Looms at City Handloom Fair

KOLKATA, 18 December: A five-day handloom and handicrafts fair opened at a south Kolkata ground on Monday, drawing crowds of shoppers and bringing the weavers of Shantipur and Phulia face to face with their buyers.

Organised by a state handloom cooperative, the fair has over a hundred stalls offering tant and jamdani saris, dhotis, terracotta, dokra metalwork, mats and bamboo crafts. Live demonstrations on wooden looms drew students and foreign tourists.

The Nadia weavers, however, spoke of hard times. Several told visitors that the rising price of yarn and dyes had eaten into their earnings, while cheap powerloom copies sold as handloom were driving genuine products out of local markets. Many said the young were leaving the looms for work in other states. "A sari takes days to weave, but buyers compare its price with a machine-made one," a master weaver said.

The weavers called for cheaper yarn, easier credit, stricter checks on fake handloom labels and regular sales outlets in cities and online.

Officials of the cooperative said direct sales at such fairs gave weavers a fair price, and promised more fairs across the state.

EXAM TIP

The question has two parts, the fair *and* the weavers' account, and the weavers deserve the larger share of the words. Quoting "a master weaver" rather than a named person, and closing with the officials' response, keeps the report objective.

Q3 · Composition

(a) Is competition always healthy?

We are told from childhood that competition brings out the best in us. The class topper is held up as a model, rival companies are said to serve the customer better, and the nation itself is urged to compete with the world. There is truth in this, but the word "always" in the question invites a closer look, because the same force that sharpens effort can also wound and corrupt.

The case for competition is strong. When several mobile companies fought for customers in India, call and data charges fell sharply and a labourer in a village could afford a smartphone. On the playing field, an athlete runs faster because a rival is at her shoulder. In a classroom, a good debate or quiz makes students read more widely than any syllabus demands. Competition rewards effort, exposes complacency and keeps monopolies, whether of firms or of ideas, from growing lazy.

Yet competition turns harmful when the prize matters more than the person. Many children today are measured only by ranks and percentiles. Parents compare them with the neighbour's son, coaching centres sell success as a product, and a single entrance examination is made to decide a young life. The result is anxiety, sleepless nights and, in the saddest cases, despair. In the workplace, targets that reward only the winner tempt people to cut corners; in sport, the same pressure leads to doping and match-fixing.

Competition is also unhealthy when the contestants do not start from the same line. A child from a village school, studying by lantern light, is not in a fair race with one who has private tutors and a quiet room. To call such a contest healthy is to mistake privilege for merit. And in some fields cooperation, not rivalry, is what the work demands: scientists fighting an epidemic, or farmers sharing the water of one canal, achieve more by pooling their knowledge than by hiding it.

What, then, makes competition healthy? Clear and fair rules, an honest referee, reasonably equal opportunity, and a culture that respects the loser who tried hard. Best of all is the contest with oneself: the student who tries to improve on last month's marks, or the runner who chases her own record, gains all the benefits of striving without the bitterness of envy.

Competition, then, makes a useful spur but a cruel judge. It is healthy when it spurs effort within fair limits, and harmful when it becomes the only measure of human worth.

(b) Child labour in a growing economy

India is often described as one of the fastest-growing large economies in the world. New highways, malls and a rising middle class are the visible signs of that growth. Yet at a roadside tea stall, a brick kiln or a city flat, one can still find a child washing glasses, carrying bricks or minding someone else's baby. Child labour in a growing economy is a paradox that shames our progress.

The roots of the problem lie in poverty and insecurity. When a family is in debt, or when the main earner falls ill, a child's small wage can seem the difference between eating and going hungry. Seasonal migration pulls children away from school to brick kilns and construction sites. Some employers prefer children because they are cheap, obedient and unlikely to complain. The long closure of schools during the pandemic pushed many children out of classrooms, and not all of them returned.

The cost of child labour is heavy. Working children lose their childhood, their health and their education. A boy who stitches zari in a dim room or a girl who works as a domestic help from dawn to night is exposed to injury, abuse and exhaustion. Most of all, such a child grows into an unskilled adult who

earns little, so that poverty passes on to the next generation. For the nation, every child at work instead of at school is a loss of the skilled workforce on which future growth depends.

The law is clear enough. Since its amendment in 2016, the child labour law forbids employing children below fourteen, except in family enterprises after school hours, and bars adolescents from hazardous work. The Right to Education Act promises free and compulsory schooling from six to fourteen, and the mid-day meal draws poor children in. The weakness lies in enforcement and in the economic pressures that push families to break the law.

The remedy therefore has to be both firm and humane. Inspections must be regular and rescued children must be rehabilitated, not merely released. Schools must be good enough to keep children interested, and parents must earn enough to manage without their children's wages. Citizens too have a part to play: a household that employs a child helper, or a customer who ignores the boy at the dhaba, shares in the wrong.

A growing economy is measured not only by its output but by the lives of its children. India's growth will be complete only when every child holds a book rather than a tool.

(c) Memoirs of an old banyan tree

I am the banyan at the crossroads of Ramnagar, and I have stood here longer than anyone in the village can remember. I began as a seed dropped by a passing bird into a crack in an old wall. The wall crumbled long ago; I did not.

For many years I was only a sapling that goats nibbled and boys swung on. Then my branches spread, and my roots began to hang from them like the grey beards of old men. Slowly the roots reached the ground and became pillars, and I grew into a small forest on my own.

My shade became the village's meeting place. In the mornings a schoolmaster gathered children under my branches and taught them to write letters in the dust. In the afternoons the elders settled quarrels here, and on market days traders spread their cloth, pots and vegetables around my trunk. I have heard bargains struck, marriages arranged and secrets whispered. Women tied red threads round my roots and prayed for the health of their children, and I kept their prayers as faithfully as I could.

I have seen hard times too. One year the rains failed, the fields cracked, and families left with bundles on their heads, looking back at me as they walked away. Another year a great storm tore off one of my largest limbs. The villagers wept as though a member of the family had been hurt, and the next spring they were glad to see new leaves on the wound.

Generations have passed beneath me. The boy who once fell from my branch and broke his arm came back as a grey-haired grandfather, leaning on a stick, to sit in my shade with his grandson. Bicycles replaced bullock carts, then motorcycles came, and now buses stop where the haat used to be.

Lately men with measuring tapes have walked around me. They speak of widening the road, and I fear that the axe may come. But last week a girl from the high school brought her classmates here. They counted the birds in my branches, measured my spread, and wrote a letter to the block office asking that the road bend a little to spare me.

I do not know how my story will end. I know only that I have given this village shade, shelter and a place to meet. If the children save me, I shall keep doing so for their grandchildren.

EXAM TIP

Answer the exact wording: in (a) the word "always" calls for a qualified verdict, not a list of advantages. In (b), tie the issue to the "growing economy" and offer remedies; in (c), keep the first-person voice of the tree throughout and let the village's history unfold through what it has seen.

Q4 · Précis

Title: Cheap Print and the Common Reader

For most of history reading was the privilege of a wealthy, learned few, because manuscripts and even early printed books were costly, and ordinary people knew literature only by hearing it. In the nineteenth century mechanised printing, cheaper paper and rail transport made printed matter affordable to workers and small traders. The effects were profound. Literate people could form independent opinions; solitary reading encouraged reflection, and shared reading created a public that debated its own affairs, strengthening the reform and self-rule movements of the time. Although cheap print spread much triviality, it formed a reading habit that tended to grow towards serious thought and proved irreversible.

(Passage: 308 words; Précis: 106 words)

EXAM TIP

Marks go to the chain of argument kept intact: few readers, then cheap print, then independent opinion and a debating public, then the lasting reading habit. Leave out the Battala presses and the price of a newspaper; they illustrate, they do not argue. A title linking cheap print to the new reader earns the 5 marks.

Q5 · Translation

(a)

A few decades ago, the father in a household was seen as a man who left for work in the morning and came home worn out at night. The children's studies, their illnesses and the daily needs of the household were the mother's concern. Children were more afraid of their father than open with him. His role at home was limited to that of the head of the family: the breadwinner and the keeper of discipline.

Today the picture is changing fast. In homes where both parents go out to work, the housework has begun to be shared between them as well. Many fathers now drop the children at school, attend parent-teacher meetings, lend a hand in the kitchen and tell the children a story at bedtime. This has narrowed the distance between fathers and their children and brought a spirit of friendship into the relationship.

Yet the change is far from complete. In many families a father's share in the housework is still called "help", not responsibility. True equality will come only when running a home is regarded as a duty shared by both parents.

(b)

With its clanging bell and its unhurried glide through the streets, the tram has for years been a symbol of Kolkata. Horse-drawn trams first ran here in 1873, and in 1902 electric trams took their place. In those days the tram stood for modernity. Office babus, college students and housewives on their way to market all travelled by it, and the fares were so low that even the poor could afford a ride.

The city changed with time. Buses, taxis and private cars crowded the roads, the Metro arrived, and the tram came to be dismissed as slow and old-fashioned. One by one, many routes were closed and the depots fell silent.

Yet many people in Kolkata do not see the tram merely as a way of getting about. For them it is part of the city's memory. Environmentalists argue that an electric tram gives off no smoke and should therefore be modernised rather than scrapped. The question now is whether a city racing ahead at such speed can spare a little room for its slow old companion.

EXAM TIP

- *थका-हारा* is rendered "worn out", and *हाथ बँटाना* "lend a hand"; '*मदद कहलाता है, ज़िम्मेदारी नहीं* keeps its contrast as "called help, not responsibility".
- *बाबू* stays "babus" (with "office" for clarity), and *अपनी पुरानी, धीमी सहेली* becomes "its slow old companion", since a literal "female friend" would sound odd in English.
- *घंटी बजाती, धीरे-धीरे सरकती ट्राम* is recast as a phrase, "with its clanging bell and its unhurried glide", rather than two clumsy participles.

Practice Paper 6

Time: 3 hours · **Full marks:** 200 · All questions are compulsory.

Question Paper

QUESTION Q1 · 40 marks

Write a letter within 150 words on any one (use A, B, C or X, Y, Z instead of names and addresses):

(a) Write a letter to the Officer-in-Charge of the Traffic Guard of your area about the danger faced by small children outside a primary school that stands on a busy highway. Request speed-breakers, a zebra crossing and a traffic warden at school hours.

Or

(b) Write a letter to a friend describing a boat trip you recently made through the Sundarbans: the mangroves, the creeks and the wildlife you glimpsed.

QUESTION Q2 · 40 marks

Draft a report within 250 words on a free health camp organised for tea-garden workers in north Bengal.

QUESTION Q3 · 40 marks

Write a composition on any one of the following topics:

(a) Write a speech welcoming the delegates to a seminar on saving Bengal's folk arts: Baul, Chhau and patachitra.

(b) The value of time

(c) Migrant workers: builders without homes

QUESTION Q4 · 40 marks (35+5)

Write a précis of the following passage and add a suitable title:

Few questions have troubled the moral reasoning of men so persistently as the relation between what we seek and the way we seek it. When the goal is noble, the road towards it seems a small matter; a little deceit, a little cruelty, a little bending of the rule appear a fair price for a great good.

Yet the argument rests on a confusion. An end is not a place at which we arrive and then stand untouched by the journey. It is made, piece by piece, of the very acts that are supposed merely to serve it. Whoever builds trust with lies has built something, but it is not trust; whoever secures peace by terror has secured obedience, which is a different thing. The means do not vanish at the moment of success; they remain inside the result and give it its true character.

There is a further danger, and it lies in the doer rather than in the deed. A man who permits himself one dishonest step for a good cause finds the second step easier, and he soon loses the power to tell a cause from a convenience. The habit outlives the purpose that excused it.

This is not to say that the world allows clean hands at every turn, or that every compromise is a crime. It is only to say that the end can never be wholly better than the means that produce it. The surest way to a good end is to make every step towards it good in itself.

QUESTION Q5 · 40 marks

Translate any one of the following Hindi passages into English (for candidates who opted Hindi in lieu of Bengali for Paper I):

(a) घर से काम करने का चलन अब कोई नई बात नहीं रहा। बहुत-से लोगों को अब न सुबह की भागदौड़ झेलनी पड़ती है, न भीड़-भरी बसों में घंटों का सफ़र करना पड़ता है। चाय का प्याला हाथ में लिए, अपने ही कमरे में बैठकर दफ़्तर का काम निपटा लेना किसे अच्छा नहीं लगेगा? बच्चों के साथ थोड़ा समय मिल जाता है और बूढ़े माता-पिता की देखभाल भी हो जाती है। लेकिन इस सुविधा की भी एक क़ीमत है। धीरे-धीरे दफ़्तर और घर के बीच की दीवार ढह जाती है और काम कभी ख़त्म ही नहीं होता। सहकर्मियों से हँसी-मज़ाक़, दोपहर के खाने पर गपशप, ये छोटी-छोटी ख़ुशियाँ छिन जाती हैं। कंप्यूटर की स्क्रीन पर दिखते चेहरे पास होकर भी दूर लगते हैं, और आदमी भरे घर में भी अकेला पड़ जाता है।

Or

(b) हमारे देश के अनेक शहरों में गर्मी आते ही पानी का संकट गहरा जाता है। नल सूख जाते हैं, टैंकरों के आगे लंबी क़तारें लग जाती हैं और ज़मीन के नीचे का पानी हर साल और गहराई में उतरता जाता है। विडंबना यह है कि इन्हीं शहरों में बरसात के दिनों में इतना पानी बरसता है कि सड़कें नदियाँ बन जाती हैं। यह सारा पानी नालियों से बहकर व्यर्थ चला जाता है। अगर हम इसे सहेज लें तो बहुत-सी मुश्किलें अपने आप दूर हो सकती हैं। इसका सबसे सरल उपाय है छत पर वर्षा-जल संचयन। छत पर गिरने वाला पानी पाइपों के ज़रिए एक टंकी में पहुँचाया जाता है। रास्ते में एक छोटा-सा फ़िल्टर पत्तियों, धूल और कचरे को रोक लेता है। इस पानी से बगीचे सींचे जा सकते हैं और कपड़े धोए जा सकते हैं। चाहें तो इसे एक गड्ढे के रास्ते ज़मीन में भी उतारा जा सकता है, जिससे आसपास के कुओं और हैंडपंपों में पानी लौट आता है। ज़रूरत है तो बस थोड़ी समझदारी और पहल की। अगर हर मोहल्ला यह ठान ले, तो आने वाली पीढ़ियों को प्यासा नहीं रहना पड़ेगा।

Solutions

Q1 · Letter writing

(a)

XYZ
Village and Post Office ABC
District Purba Bardhaman
14 July 2026

The Officer-in-Charge
Traffic Guard, ABC
District Purba Bardhaman

Subject: Request for speed-breakers, a zebra crossing and a traffic warden outside ABC Primary School on the highway

Sir,

I am writing, as a parent and a resident of this village, to seek your urgent help in protecting the children of ABC Primary School, which opens directly onto the state highway.

Trucks and buses race past the gate at high speed. Every morning and afternoon, children as young as five have to cross the road without any marking or signal. Last week a pupil was grazed by a motorcycle and escaped serious injury only by chance.

I therefore ask that two speed-breakers with warning signs be built on either side of the school, a clearly visible zebra crossing be painted at the gate, and a traffic warden be posted during school hours.

These modest measures would cost little and could save a child's life. The parents of the area will gladly cooperate in any way you suggest.

Yours faithfully,
XYZ

(b)

ABC Road, Kolkata
20 December 2026

Dear Y,

Your last letter asked what I did over the holidays. The answer is that I spent three unforgettable days on a boat in the Sundarbans, and I have wanted to tell you about it ever since.

We set off from Godkhali at dawn. Within an hour the wide river had narrowed into creeks so quiet that we could hear the water lapping against the mangrove roots. The trees rose from mud bristling with their strange breathing roots, and kingfishers flashed blue across the channels.

The wildlife made the trip. We saw spotted deer at the water's edge, a crocodile sunning itself on a mudbank and, on the last evening, fresh pugmarks on the bank. No tiger showed itself, but the boatman's hushed voice was thrilling enough.

You must come with me next winter. Write soon, and give my regards to your parents.

Yours affectionately,
XYZ

EXAM TIP

In (a) the strongest answers state the danger at once, back it with a single incident (the grazed pupil) and set out the three requests in one sentence, so that the officer can act on them. In (b), a personal letter, there is no subject line and the close is "Yours affectionately"; marks go to vivid, ordered description (journey, scenery, wildlife) rather than a list of adjectives.

Q2 · Report

Free Health Camp Brings Doctors to Tea-Garden Workers in the Dooars

JALPAIGURI, 9 November: Hundreds of tea-garden workers and their families queued from early morning on Sunday at a free health camp held on the grounds of a tea estate near Malbazar in the Dooars. It was organised by the district health department with a Siliguri-based voluntary organisation.

A team of doctors, nurses and pharmacists set up separate counters for general medicine, women's health, children's health, eye care and dental care. Organisers said the aim was to reach workers who rarely visit a hospital because the nearest one is far away and a day's journey means a day's lost wages.

Health workers tested visitors for anaemia, high blood pressure and diabetes, and children were weighed and checked for malnutrition. Free medicines, iron tablets and spectacles were distributed, and patients needing further treatment were referred to the district hospital.

Doctors at the camp said anaemia among women and untreated high blood pressure among older workers were the commonest problems they found. A woman plucker said she had been living with constant headaches for years and had never had her blood pressure checked before.

Volunteers also held short sessions on safe drinking water, nutrition and the dangers of using pesticides without protective gear.

A district health official said follow-up visits would be held every month and that a mobile medical unit would be proposed for the gardens of the block. The garden management promised to provide space for a permanent clinic.

EXAM TIP

The opening paragraph must answer what, where, when and who organised; the rest moves from services to findings to a worker's own voice and ends on the follow-up. Notice the restraint: "hundreds" of workers, "commonest problems", no invented percentages or counts.

Q3 · Composition

(a) Speech: welcoming the delegates to a seminar on saving Bengal's folk arts

Respected Chairperson, distinguished guests, artists who have travelled from the villages of Bengal, and dear friends,

It is my privilege to welcome you, on behalf of the organising committee, to this seminar on saving Bengal's folk arts. Some of you have come from universities and cultural institutions; others have come straight from Purulia, Birbhum and Medinipur, carrying your instruments, your masks and your painted scrolls. Your presence together in one hall is itself the message of this seminar: scholarship and practice must work side by side if these arts are to live.

Let us remind ourselves of what we are here to protect. The Baul, with his ektara and his saffron robe, sings of a divine that lives within the human heart, and his songs have crossed every boundary of caste and creed. The Chhau dancers of Purulia, in their towering masks shaped by the craftsmen of Charida, turn episodes from the epics into thundering, acrobatic drama. The patuas of Pingla paint long scrolls and sing the story as they unroll them, so that each performance is both a painting and a ballad.

These arts are not museum pieces. They are living ways of seeing the world. Yet they are in danger. Many young people in artist families no longer wish to follow a calling that pays so little. Performances shrink into short items for tourists, and the meaning drains out of them. Middlemen often take the profit, while the artist is left with applause and an empty purse.

What can a seminar do? It can listen, first of all, to the artists themselves. It can propose ways to bring folk arts into school syllabuses so that children grow up proud of them. It can explore fair markets, both in fairs and online, where a patua sells her scroll at a just price. It can urge that the songs and dances be recorded with care, and that the old masters be supported while they train apprentices.

Over the next two days we shall hear papers, watch demonstrations and, I hope, argue a great deal. Let every session end with something practical.

Friends, a people that forgets its songs forgets a part of itself. Let us leave this hall determined that the ektara will still be heard, and the masks still dance, a hundred years from now. Once again, a warm welcome to you all. Thank you.

(b) The value of time

Of all the resources a person possesses, time is the only one that is shared equally. The rich and the poor, the clever and the slow, each receive twenty-four hours a day. What separates one life from another is not the quantity of time but the use made of it.

Time differs from every other possession in one cruel respect: it cannot be stored or recovered. Money that is lost may be earned again, and health that fails may often be restored, but an hour once wasted is gone for ever. This is why the wise have always treated time as the stuff of life itself. To kill time, as the idle like to say, is quietly to kill a part of oneself.

A student understands this most sharply in the weeks before an examination. Chapters postponed in the easy months now crowd into a few anxious nights, and work that could have been learnt with understanding is crammed in panic. The same pattern follows us into adult life. The farmer who misses the season of sowing cannot make it up by working harder later; the patient who delays treatment may find that the delay has done more harm than the disease.

Valuing time does not mean filling every minute with work. Rest, play, friendship and reflection are not waste; they renew the mind and give work its meaning. The real waste is the hour that serves no purpose at all: drifting from one distraction to another, worrying instead of acting, or lying in bed telling oneself that tomorrow will be different.

A few habits help. A simple plan for the day, with the hardest task placed first, keeps priorities clear. Small fragments of time, such as a bus journey or the wait at a clinic, can be used to read or revise. Punctuality, too, is a form of respect, for the person who keeps others waiting is spending their time as well as his own.

Time also has a social face. A nation whose offices start late, whose trains and files move slowly, and whose citizens treat appointments casually pays for it in lost work and lost trust.

In the end, a life is simply the sum of its days. Those who learn early to value each one find that time, far from running out, seems to expand to hold everything that matters.

(c) Migrant workers: builders without homes

Look at any rising tower in Kolkata, Mumbai or Bengaluru and you will find, somewhere behind the scaffolding, a row of tin sheds. In them live the men and women who are building the city: migrant workers from the villages of Bihar, Odisha, Jharkhand and our own districts of Bengal. They build homes for others and have no secure home of their own.

Migration itself is neither new nor wrong. When farming fails to support a family, when land is small and rain uncertain, a young man boards a train to a distant city in search of wages. The money he sends home pays for his children's schooling, his parents' medicines and the repair of the family house. In this sense migrant labour quietly sustains both the city and the village.

The trouble lies in the conditions under which this labour is done. Most migrants work through contractors, without written contracts, fixed wages or social security. They live in crowded camps without clean water or proper toilets. Their children either stay behind without parents or follow them from site to site with no regular schooling. Language and distance make them easy to cheat and hard to hear.

The world saw their plight most clearly in the spring of 2020. When the sudden lockdown closed work sites, thousands of workers, left without wages or shelter, set out to walk hundreds of kilometres home. That long procession on the highways was a painful reminder that the people on whom our cities depend had never been counted as their citizens.

Some steps have since been taken. The One Nation One Ration Card scheme lets a worker draw rations wherever he lives, and the e-Shram portal has begun to register unorganised workers so that welfare can reach them. These are useful beginnings, but much remains. Construction welfare funds collected from builders must actually reach the workers. Employers should provide decent housing on or near the site, and cities should plan affordable rental housing for those who come to work. Schools must find ways to enrol migrant children for a season without losing them the next.

Above all, the attitude of the city must change. A migrant is not an outsider who takes; he is a builder who gives. A society that lives in the houses he builds owes him, at the very least, a roof of his own and the dignity of being seen.

> **EXAM TIP**
>
> In (a) the examiner rewards the speech form: the salutation to the audience, the purpose stated early, concrete knowledge of each art, and a closing appeal. In (b) the marks go to argument over proverbs, with examples that show the cost of lost time and a balanced view of rest. In (c) the essay should cover causes, conditions, a well-known episode and policy remedies, and end with a humane conclusion.

Q4 · Précis

Title: Good Ends Need Good Means

The relation between ends and means has long troubled moral thought, since a noble aim tempts people to excuse dishonest methods. This is a mistake. An end is built out of the steps that lead to it, and the means survive in the result and decide its nature. Wrong means also corrupt the doer, for each dishonest act makes the next easier until principle yields to convenience. Though compromise is sometimes unavoidable, no end can be better than its means, and only good steps lead to a good end.

(Passage: 256 words; Précis: 89 words)

> **EXAM TIP**
>
> The examiner looks for the four stages of the argument in their original order: the temptation, the end being made of its means, the corruption of the doer, and the qualified conclusion. The illustrations (trust built on lies, peace secured by terror) are folded into the general point, not copied. The 5 title marks go to a title that states the thesis as a principle.

Q5 · Translation

(a) Working from home is no longer a novelty. Many people no longer have to face the morning rush or spend hours travelling in crowded buses. Who would not enjoy getting through the day's office work in one's own room, a cup of tea in hand? One gets a little time with the children and can look after one's ageing parents as well. But this comfort, too, has its price. Little by little the wall between office and home crumbles, and the work never seems to end. The banter with colleagues and the gossip over lunch, those small joys, are taken away. The faces on the computer screen seem far away even though they are right there, and a person can feel lonely even in a house full of people.

(b) In many cities of our country, the water crisis deepens as soon as summer arrives. Taps run dry, long queues form in front of water tankers, and the groundwater sinks deeper every year. The irony is that in the rainy season these very cities receive so much rain that their roads turn into rivers. All this water runs off through the drains and is wasted. If we could save it, many of our difficulties would disappear on their own. Rooftop rainwater harvesting is the simplest way of doing so. The water that falls on the roof is carried through pipes into a tank. On the way, a small filter holds back leaves, dust and rubbish. This water can be used for gardens and for washing clothes. If one wishes, it can also be led into the ground through a pit, which brings water back into the wells and hand pumps of the neighbourhood. All it takes is a little good sense and initiative. If every neighbourhood made up its mind to do this, the generations to come would not have to go thirsty.

> **EXAM TIP**
>
> "भरे घर में भी अकेला पड़ जाता है" is rendered "feel lonely even in a house full of people", keeping the paradox rather than translating word by word. "दीवार ढह जाती है" keeps its image as "the wall … crumbles", which is natural in English too. In (b), "सड़कें नदियाँ बन जाती हैं" becomes "roads turn into rivers", and "ठान ले" is "made up its mind", not "decided firmly". The examiner rewards complete sense, the right tense and idiomatic English.

Practice Paper 7

Time: 3 hours · **Full marks:** 200 · All questions are compulsory.

Question Paper

QUESTION Q1 · 40 marks

Write a letter within 150 words on any one (use A, B, C or X, Y, Z instead of names and addresses):

(a) Write a letter to the Chief Medical Officer of Health of your district reporting a rise in dengue cases in your ward and requesting fogging, larvicide spraying and a door-to-door survey.

Or

(b) Write a letter to the Editor of a daily newspaper on the adulteration of food in markets and eateries, stressing the need for testing laboratories and regular inspections.

QUESTION Q2 · 40 marks

Draft a report within 200 words on the first day of a newly opened Metro corridor in your city, covering the commuters' reactions and the problems noticed.

QUESTION Q3 · 40 marks

Write a composition on any one of the following topics:

(a) Habits make the man

(b) Darjeeling at a crossroads: tourism and the hills

(c) The day the electricity failed

QUESTION Q4 · 35+5 = 40 marks

Write a précis of the following passage and add a suitable title (35+5). (The passage contains 184 words.)

Money is perhaps the most ingenious of human inventions, and for that very reason the most deceptive. It began as a convenience, a token that spared men the trouble of barter, and it remains, at its best, a means of turning toil into leisure, need into comfort and scattered effort into common enterprise. Yet the instrument has a curious habit of changing places with its owner. What was first sought in order to buy security is soon sought for its own sake; the man who wished only to be free of want becomes the servant of his savings, measuring friendships by their usefulness and his days by their returns. Wealth promises independence, but the more of it a man stores, the more he fears to lose, and fear is the least independent of conditions. Nor does it purchase the things men most desire: health may be tended with it but never secured, and the respect it buys is seldom respect at all. Money, in short, serves well only those who know what they want it for; to all others it quietly becomes the master.

QUESTION Q5 · 40 marks

Translate any one of the following Hindi passages into English (for candidates who opted Hindi in lieu of Bengali for Paper I):

(a) बंगाल में नववर्ष का पहला दिन, पोइला बैशाख, केवल कैलेंडर का पन्ना पलटने का दिन नहीं है। इस दिन कोलकाता की गलियों से लेकर गाँव के हाट तक दुकानें फूलों और आम के पत्तों की बंदनवार से सज जाती हैं। सुबह-सुबह दुकानदार गणेश और लक्ष्मी की पूजा करवाते हैं और लाल कपड़े में बँधी नई बही खोलते हैं, जिसे 'हालखाता' कहा जाता है। पुराने ग्राहक आकर साल भर का बकाया चुकाते हैं और बदले में उन्हें मिठाई का डिब्बा और नए साल का पंचांग मिलता है। यह लेन-देन हिसाब से अधिक भरोसे का उत्सव है, क्योंकि उधार की पूरी व्यवस्था आपसी विश्वास पर ही टिकी रहती है। आज डिजिटल भुगतान और कंप्यूटर पर रखे जाने वाले खातों के दौर में भी बहुत-से व्यापारी इस परंपरा को नहीं छोड़ते। उनके लिए हालखाता पुराने रिश्तों को नया करने का बहाना है, और ग्राहक के लिए यह याद करने का अवसर कि बाज़ार केवल मुनाफ़े से नहीं, संबंधों से भी चलता है।

Or

(b) अपनी थाली में रखी रोटी, दाल और सब्ज़ी को हम इतनी सहजता से स्वीकार कर लेते हैं कि शायद ही कभी सोचते हैं कि वह हम तक कैसे पहुँची। उसके पीछे किसी किसान की महीनों की मेहनत छिपी होती है, जिसने जेठ की धूप में खेत जोता, सावन की झड़ी में रोपाई की और पूस की ठिठुरती रातों में फसल की रखवाली की। वह न मौसम पर भरोसा कर सकता है, न बाज़ार पर; एक बेमौसम ओलावृष्टि या भाव में एक गिरावट उसकी साल भर की कमाई पर पानी फेर देती है। फिर भी वह हर वर्ष नई उम्मीद के साथ बीज बोता है। विडंबना यह है कि जो सारे देश का पेट भरता है, उसी के घर में अक्सर तंगी रहती है और उसके बच्चे रोज़ी-रोटी की तलाश में शहरों की ओर जाने को विवश होते हैं। किसान के प्रति हमारा ऋण केवल भाषणों और नारों से नहीं चुकता। अन्न का एक दाना भी बर्बाद न करना, उसकी उपज का उचित दाम देना और उसके श्रम का सम्मान करना ही हमारी कृतज्ञता के सच्चे रूप हैं। जिस दिन हम भोजन से पहले क्षण भर उस अनदेखे हाथ को याद करना सीख लेंगे, उस दिन हमारी थाली केवल पेट नहीं, मन भी भरेगी।

Solutions

Q1 · Letter writing

(a)

X, Y Road
Ward No. Z, Kolkata
14 August 20XX

The Chief Medical Officer of Health
District Health Office
ABC District

Subject: Rise in dengue cases in Ward No. Z and request for urgent preventive measures

Sir,

I write on behalf of the residents of Ward No. Z to report a sharp rise in dengue cases over the past three weeks. Several families in our locality have had members admitted to hospital, and many more are down with high fever.

The cause is not hard to find. Rainwater stands in blocked drains, on vacant plots and in discarded tyres near the market, and the larvae breed unchecked. No fogging has been done in the area this season.

We therefore request you to arrange regular fogging in the evenings, spraying of larvicide in drains and stagnant pools, and a door-to-door survey by health workers to trace fever cases and destroy breeding sites inside homes. A short awareness drive would also help residents keep containers dry.

The residents of the ward will gladly assist your team in every way.

Yours faithfully,
XYZ

(b)

X, Y Lane
Kolkata 7000ZZ
14 August 20XX

The Editor
The Daily ABC
Kolkata

Subject: Adulteration of food and the need for testing and inspection

Sir,

May I draw public attention, through your paper, to the adulteration of food in our markets and eateries, which now threatens the health of every household?

Turmeric coloured with chemical dyes, milk thinned with water and starch, sweets made with cheap oils and vegetables brightened with colour are sold openly. Roadside stalls and even well-known restaurants reuse cooking oil for days. The poor suffer most, because they cannot pay for branded goods, yet branded goods are not always safe either.

Laws exist, but they are rarely enforced. Every district needs a food-testing laboratory open to the public at a nominal fee, and mobile vans that can test samples on the spot. Food inspectors must carry out surprise checks and publish their findings, and repeat offenders must lose their licences.

Consumers, too, should demand bills and report suspicious products.

Yours faithfully,
XYZ

EXAM TIP

Examiners reward a first sentence that states the purpose, concrete requests the official can act on (fogging, larvicide, survey; labs, inspections, licences) and the correct formal close. Count only the body: keep it near 140 words.

Q2 · Report

New Metro corridor opens to crowds, cheers and a few teething troubles

KOLKATA, 12 March: Thousands of commuters rode the city's newest Metro corridor, between Purbachal and Dakshin Bazar, on its first day of public service on Monday, and most liked what they saw.

The first train left Purbachal at seven in the morning, and by nine the platforms were packed with office-goers, students and curious families out for a ride. Many passengers said that a journey which used to take more than an hour by bus and auto-rickshaw now took barely twenty minutes. "I can reach college without changing three vehicles," said a first-year student. Elderly travellers praised the lifts and the clean, air-conditioned coaches.

The day was not free of problems. Long queues formed at the ticket counters because several smart-card vending machines did not work. Escalators at two stations were switched off for hours, and passengers complained that signboards were too few and the feeder buses from residential areas had not yet started.

Metro officials said the faulty machines would be repaired within a week, more staff would guide passengers at busy stations, and feeder services were being planned with the state transport department.

EXAM TIP

The examiner looks for a headline, a dateline, the first-day facts in the opening paragraph, both halves of the question (reactions and problems) and an official response at the end. Quote "a student" or "officials", never a named person, and avoid exact ridership figures.

Q3 · Composition

(a) Habits make the man

We like to believe that our lives are shaped by great decisions: the choice of a career, a partner, a city. In truth they are shaped far more by small acts repeated daily without thought. A habit is a decision made

once and then handed over to the body, and because it no longer asks our permission, it quietly decides who we become.

The power of habit lies in accumulation. One page read before sleep seems trivial, yet a year of such evenings adds up to a shelf of books. Ten minutes of walking changes nothing in a day and a great deal in a decade. The same arithmetic works in reverse. A student who postpones revision "just this once" finds, by the time of the examination, that postponement has become his method. Character is less a gift of birth than the sum of these quiet repetitions.

Habits also save the mind for better work. A person who rises at a fixed hour, keeps his desk in order and answers letters promptly does not waste energy deciding these matters each day. His attention is free for problems that deserve it. This is why disciplined people often seem calm: their routine carries the load that others bear by willpower alone.

Bad habits are harder to break than to form, because they usually begin as comforts. Late nights, careless spending and the reflex of reaching for a phone at every idle moment each offer a small pleasure now and charge a large price later. They are seldom defeated by resolutions made on the first day of the year. They yield instead to substitution: a walk in place of the evening cigarette, a fixed hour for study in place of an open-ended evening. A habit is changed most easily by putting another in its seat.

Societies, too, are made by habit. Queuing patiently, keeping streets clean, arriving on time and paying taxes honestly are not laws so much as shared customs, and a nation that practises them needs fewer policemen. Children learn these customs less from lectures than from watching the adults around them.

The proverb therefore holds a hopeful truth. If habits make the man, then a man can remake himself, not by one heroic effort but by choosing, patiently and every day, the small acts he wishes to become.

(b) Darjeeling at a crossroads: tourism and the hills

For more than a century Darjeeling has been the summer refuge of Bengal. Its tea gardens, its view of Kanchenjunga at dawn and its toy train winding up from the plains have drawn generations of visitors. Tourism has given the hills a living, but it now threatens the very charm that made them famous, and the town must choose its path.

The benefits are real. Hotels, homestays, taxis, guides, porters and handicraft shops support thousands of families, and many young people find work at home instead of leaving for distant cities. Homestays in nearby villages have brought income to places that once depended only on farming or on the uncertain wages of the tea estates.

The costs, however, are mounting. Concrete hotels have climbed the slopes with little regard for building rules, loading fragile hillsides that are already prone to landslides during the monsoon. In the peak season the roads from Siliguri are choked with vehicles, and the narrow streets of the town fill with exhaust and noise. Water is scarce; many households buy it from tankers while hotels draw heavily on the same springs. Plastic bottles and wrappers collect along trekking trails and in the jhoras, the hill streams. The quiet hill station of old is turning into a crowded resort.

The tea industry, the other pillar of the hills, is in difficulty too, with ageing bushes, falling prices and workers who seek better wages elsewhere. If tourism grows while tea declines, the economy of the region will rest on a single, unsteady foundation.

The way forward lies in balance rather than restriction. Building rules must be enforced strictly, with no construction on unstable slopes. A cap on vehicles entering the town in the peak season, better shared transport and the revival of the toy train as everyday transport, not merely a joyride, would ease the

roads. Rainwater harvesting in hotels, a ban on single-use plastic and fees that go directly to waste management would protect the environment. Spreading visitors across the year and across lesser-known villages, with tea-garden stays and nature walks, would ease the pressure on the town itself.

Darjeeling cannot shut its doors to tourists, nor should it. It must decide whether it wants more visitors or better ones, people who come for the hills and leave them as they found them.

(c) The day the electricity failed

It happened on a Saturday in May, the hottest week of the year. At about eleven in the morning the ceiling fan above my head slowed, sighed and stopped. The refrigerator fell silent, the television went dark in the middle of a cricket match and, from every flat in our building, came the same groan of protest.

At first we treated it as a minor nuisance. My mother opened the windows, my younger sister fanned herself with a newspaper and I assumed the power would return within the hour. It did not. By noon a neighbour had learnt that a transformer on the main road had burnt out, and that repairs would take most of the day.

The afternoon was hard. The water pump could not run, so the overhead tank emptied and we had to carry buckets from the tube-well in the next lane. My phone battery ran down, and with it went my plans for the evening. Food in the refrigerator had to be cooked at once or given away. For the first time I realised how many of our daily comforts depend on a single wire. We ate lunch on the floor of the coolest room, too hot even to talk, while the clock on the wall ticked louder than I had ever heard it.

Yet the day had its gifts. With no television and no internet, the families of our building drifted down to the courtyard, where it was a little cooler. Elderly Mr X, whom I had only ever greeted on the stairs, told stories of his childhood in a village without any electricity at all. Children who usually stayed indoors with their screens played hide-and-seek between the parked cycles. Someone brought out a harmonium, and by dusk half the building was singing old songs by candlelight.

When the lights finally flickered back at about nine, a cheer went up, and everyone hurried indoors to switch on fans and charge phones. Within minutes the courtyard was empty again.

I still think of that day whenever the power cuts out. It taught me how fragile modern life is, and how much we waste the electricity we take for granted. It also showed me that our neighbours were people we had never troubled to know. The darkness lasted only ten hours, but it lit up something we had forgotten.

> **EXAM TIP**
>
> For (a), examiners reward a clear thesis and an argument that moves (how habits form, why they matter, how to change them), not a string of proverbs. For (b), they want both sides with region-specific detail and practical remedies. For (c), a narrative needs a sequence of events, sensory detail and a reflective close.

Q4 · Précis

Title: Money: Servant or Master

Money, a clever but deceptive invention, was devised to ease exchange and can still turn labour into comfort. Yet it tends to master its owner: sought first for security, it is soon pursued for itself, and life is

judged by profit. Riches breed fear of loss, not freedom, and cannot assure health or true esteem. Money serves only those with a clear purpose; others it enslaves.

(Passage: 184 words; Précis: 66 words)

> **EXAM TIP**
>
> The marks go to the turn in the argument (money as a useful tool, then money as a master), kept in the passage's order and in fresh words. A title that names that contrast earns the 5 title marks; "Money" alone is too vague.

Q5 · Translation

(a) In Bengal, Poila Baisakh, the first day of the new year, is much more than the day the calendar turns a page. From the lanes of Kolkata to the village markets, shops are decorated with flowers and garlands of mango leaves. Early in the morning shopkeepers have prayers offered to Ganesh and Lakshmi and open a new account book bound in red cloth, known as the *haal-khata*. Old customers come in to settle the year's dues and receive a box of sweets and a new almanac in return. The exchange is less a matter of accounts than a celebration of trust, for the whole system of credit rests on mutual faith. Even today, in an age of digital payments and computerised ledgers, many traders keep up the custom. For them the *haal-khata* is an occasion to renew old ties; for the customer, it is a reminder that a market runs not on profit alone but on relationships as well.

(b) We take the rotis, dal and vegetables on our plate so much for granted that we seldom stop to ask how they reached us. Behind them lie months of a farmer's toil: he ploughed his field in the scorching summer sun, transplanted the seedlings in the steady monsoon rain and guarded the crop through bitter winter nights. He can depend neither on the weather nor on the market; a single unseasonal hailstorm or one fall in prices can wipe out a whole year's earnings. Even so, he sows his seed every year with fresh hope. The irony is that the man who feeds the whole nation often lives in want himself, while his children are forced to drift to the cities in search of a livelihood. Our debt to the farmer cannot be repaid with speeches and slogans. Wasting not a single grain of food, paying a fair price for his produce and respecting his labour are the true forms of our gratitude. The day we learn to remember, for a moment before every meal, that unseen hand, our plate will fill not only the stomach but the heart.

> **EXAM TIP**
>
> *पानी फेर देती है* is an idiom, so it becomes "wipe out", not "pours water over". *जेठ*, *सावन* and *पूस* are Hindu months; name the seasons they stand for ("summer", "monsoon", "winter") so an English reader follows. In (a), *पूजा करवाते हैं* is causative: shopkeepers "have prayers offered" by a priest. Keep the Bengali term *haal-khata* in italics and explain it once.

Practice Paper 8

Time: 3 hours · **Full marks:** 200 · All questions are compulsory.

Question Paper

QUESTION Q1 · 40 marks

Write a letter within 150 words on any one (use A, B, C or X, Y, Z instead of names and addresses):

(a) Write a letter to the Branch Manager of a nationalised bank (with a copy to the Lead District Manager) requesting that a banking-correspondent point be opened in your village and that a camp be held to teach villagers how to make digital payments safely.

Or

(b) Write a letter to the Editor of a daily newspaper about the spread of fake news through messaging apps during emergencies, and suggest what users and the platforms must do to check it.

QUESTION Q2 · 40 marks

Draft a report within 250 words on a seminar held in your district on "Women's Self-Help Groups and the Rural Economy".

QUESTION Q3 · 40 marks

Write a composition on any one of the following topics:

(a) Science without conscience

(b) The rising cost of healthcare and the common man

(c) My first day in a new city

QUESTION Q4 · 40 marks

Write a précis of the following passage and add a suitable title. (35+5)

Of all the emotions that govern human conduct, fear is perhaps the oldest and the least respected. We are taught to be ashamed of it, as though a brave man were one who had never trembled. Yet fear is not an enemy planted in us by mistake. It is the watchman of the mind, the faculty that warned our remote ancestors of danger and so kept them alive. A creature without fear would not be heroic; it would simply be short-lived.

The error lies not in feeling fear but in obeying it without question. A watchman who raises the alarm at every shadow soon makes the household a prisoner of its own walls. When fear is allowed to decide for us, it shrinks our lives quietly: we avoid the difficult conversation, decline the unfamiliar task, and call our timidity prudence. The damage is seldom dramatic, and so it often goes unnoticed.

Courage, then, is not the absence of fear but a judgement made in its presence. The courageous person hears the warning, weighs it honestly, and acts if the cause is worth the risk. Such courage is rarely born in a single heroic moment. It grows, like any strength, through small and repeated

exercise, each modest victory over hesitation making the next a little easier. In the end, it is not fearlessness but the mastery of fear that deserves our admiration.

QUESTION Q5 · 40 marks

Translate any one of the following Hindi passages into English (for candidates who opted Hindi in lieu of Bengali for Paper I):

(a) सिक्किम की ऊँची बर्फ़ीली चोटियों से निकलकर तीस्ता जब पहाड़ों के बीच से नीचे उतरती है, तो उसका रूप देखते ही बनता है। हरे-नीले पानी वाली यह नदी चट्टानों से टकराती, झाग उड़ाती और गरजती हुई आगे बढ़ती है, मानो उसे कहीं पहुँचने की बड़ी जल्दी हो। दोनों ओर खड़े साल और बाँस के घने जंगल उसकी इस दौड़ के मौन साक्षी हैं। बरसात में यही नदी विकराल रूप धारण कर लेती है; पहाड़ खिसकते हैं, सड़कें बह जाती हैं और किनारे बसे गाँवों की नींद उड़ जाती है। पर जाड़ों में वह फिर शांत और निर्मल हो जाती है, जैसे कुछ हुआ ही न हो। पहाड़ के लोग तीस्ता से डरते भी हैं और उसे पूजते भी हैं, क्योंकि उनका जीवन इसी नदी के किनारे पलता है।

Or

(b) कुछ वर्ष पहले तक गाँव की बहुत-सी लड़कियाँ आठवीं कक्षा के बाद पढ़ाई छोड़ देती थीं। हाई स्कूल गाँव से कई किलोमीटर दूर था, रास्ता सुनसान था और रोज़ इतना पैदल चलना आसान नहीं था। माता-पिता भी बेटियों को अकेले भेजने से हिचकते थे। फिर सरकारी योजना के तहत छात्राओं को साइकिलें मिलीं और देखते-ही-देखते तस्वीर बदलने लगी। अब सुबह-सुबह गाँव की पगडंडियों पर स्कूल की वर्दी पहने लड़कियों की टोलियाँ साइकिल चलाती दिखाई देती हैं। जो दूरी कभी पहाड़ जैसी लगती थी, वह अब आधे घंटे का खेल बन गई है। साइकिल ने उन्हें केवल स्कूल तक नहीं पहुँचाया, उनके मन में आत्मविश्वास भी भर दिया। अब वे बाज़ार से दवा ले आती हैं, छोटे भाई-बहनों को ट्यूशन छोड़ आती हैं और घर के कई काम सँभाल लेती हैं। कई गाँवों के शिक्षकों का कहना है कि छात्राओं की उपस्थिति बढ़ी है और कम उम्र में होने वाली शादियाँ भी घटी हैं। सच तो यह है कि दो पहियों की इस साधारण-सी सवारी ने लड़कियों को अपने भविष्य की ओर बढ़ने का रास्ता दिखा दिया है।

Solutions

Q1 · Letter writing

(a)

Village and P.O. X
Block Y, District Z
West Bengal
10 March 2026

The Branch Manager
ABC Bank, Y Branch
District Z

Copy to: The Lead District Manager, District Z

Subject: Request for a banking-correspondent point and a digital-payments literacy camp in village X

Sir,

Village X has no banking outlet within easy reach, and its residents request you to open a banking-correspondent point here and to hold a camp on safe digital payments.

Your branch is nearly twelve kilometres away. Elderly pensioners, farmers and women from self-help groups lose a day's work, and often a day's wages, merely to withdraw small sums or update their passbooks. Those without a vehicle depend on two irregular buses.

Many villagers have recently begun using mobile payments but understand them poorly. Some have shared one-time passwords with strangers who telephoned them, and a few have already lost money.

A correspondent point at the panchayat office would bring basic services to our doorstep, while a camp could teach people how to pay safely, guard their PINs and report fraud. The panchayat has agreed to provide a room.

Yours faithfully,
XYZ

(b)

A/12, B Road
Kolkata 700 0XX
10 March 2026

The Editor
The Daily C
Kolkata

Subject: Fake news on messaging apps during emergencies

Sir,

Every emergency now brings a second danger to our phones: false messages that travel faster than any official warning.

During the last cyclone warning, a forwarded voice note claimed that a dam upstream had burst. Families in low-lying areas fled at midnight, while others ignored the genuine evacuation order because they no longer knew whom to believe. Rumours of this kind also spread panic during epidemics and communal tension.

Users must pause before forwarding anything, check it against official channels or a trusted newspaper, and never share unverified audio clips. Platforms, for their part, should limit mass forwarding during emergencies, label forwarded messages clearly and promptly carry corrections issued by the district administration.

A rumour costs nothing to send, but it can cost lives. A little restraint from every user would be our best defence.

Yours faithfully,
XYZ

EXAM TIP

In (a), the examiner looks for the copy to the LDM, a concrete practical difficulty (distance, lost wages, OTP fraud) and a specific request with an offer of help. In (b), one vivid incident and a two-part remedy (users, platforms), as the question asked, earn more than general complaints about technology.

Q2 · Report

Self-help groups are the backbone of the village economy, seminar told

BARUIPUR, 12 March: Women's self-help groups have changed rural households from borrowers into small entrepreneurs, but they now need wider markets and better training to grow further. This was the main message of a day-long seminar on "Women's Self-Help Groups and the Rural Economy" held on Saturday at the auditorium of a district college in South 24 Parganas.

The seminar was organised by the college's economics department together with the district rural livelihood office. Bank officials, block development staff, researchers and more than a hundred group members from nearby villages attended.

Opening the session, a senior official of the livelihood mission said that regular saving and peer lending had freed many women from moneylenders. Group leaders then described their ventures, from pickles and dried fish to tailoring units and poultry farms. One member from a coastal village said that her group's loan had helped her buy a sewing machine, and that her daughter now stayed in school.

Speakers, however, pointed to persistent hurdles. Products often fail to reach town buyers, packaging is poor and few members are confident with digital payments or online selling. A bank manager urged groups to keep their records up to date so that larger loans could be sanctioned without delay.

The seminar ended with recommendations for block-level sales outlets, training in bookkeeping and packaging, and links with online marketplaces. Organisers said a follow-up workshop would be held in the coming months.

EXAM TIP

A seminar report is marked on 5W+1H in the first paragraph, a balanced body (achievements, then problems) and a clear outcome. Attribute views to unnamed officials or members and avoid inventing statistics; a single human detail, such as the sewing machine, lifts the report.

Q3 · Composition

(a) Science without conscience

Science tells us what can be done; it cannot, by itself, tell us what ought to be done. That second question belongs to conscience, the moral sense that weighs an action by its effect on human beings. Science without conscience is therefore like a powerful engine without a driver: the more powerful it becomes, the more dangerous it is.

History offers sobering lessons. The physics that explained the energy locked inside the atom also produced the bombs that destroyed Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945. Chemistry gave the world fertilisers that eased famines, and the chemists of the same age gave armies poison gas in the trenches of the First World War. In each case the discovery was neutral; the choice of how to use it was not. When scientists and governments ignored the human cost, knowledge became a weapon.

The danger has not passed with the twentieth century. Today genetic engineering can alter the very material of life, and surveillance technology can track a citizen's every movement. Pharmaceutical research saves millions, yet the temptation to hide unfavourable trial results or to price life-saving drugs beyond the reach of the poor is real. In laboratories and boardrooms alike, the question "Is it profitable?" too often drowns the question "Is it right?"

Conscience, however, is not the enemy of science. Some of the greatest scientists were also its most thoughtful critics. Many physicists who had worked on nuclear weapons later campaigned for disarmament. Medical research today is governed by ethics committees, informed consent and the principle that a patient's dignity matters more than a researcher's curiosity. These safeguards were built precisely because conscience was allowed a voice.

What, then, is required? First, ethics should be taught alongside science, so that a young engineer or doctor learns to ask whom a discovery will help and whom it may harm. Secondly, research must remain open to public scrutiny, because secrecy is the natural home of abuse. Thirdly, citizens themselves need enough scientific literacy to judge the claims made in their name.

Indian tradition has long held that knowledge without virtue is incomplete. The scientist who measures the stars must also remember the people beneath them. Science gives us power; conscience teaches us to use it with restraint and compassion. Only when the two walk together can progress truly be called human progress.

EXAM TIP

The examiner rewards a clear definition at the start, accurate historical examples (only those you are sure of), a balanced paragraph showing that conscience and science can work together, and concrete remedies rather than a sermon.

(b) The rising cost of healthcare and the common man

For an ordinary Indian family, a serious illness is a double blow. There is the suffering of the patient, and then the bill. Hospital stays, diagnostic tests and medicines have grown steadily more expensive, and for millions of households a single operation can wipe out years of savings. The rising cost of healthcare has become one of the quietest causes of poverty in the country.

Several forces push costs upward. Government hospitals are often overcrowded and short of specialists, so patients turn to private clinics, where charges are high and seldom transparent. Advanced equipment and imported implants add to the expense. Medicines for long-term conditions such as diabetes, heart disease and cancer must be bought month after month. In many cases the family pays from its own pocket because it has no insurance at all.

The consequences fall hardest on the poor and the lower middle class. A daily-wage earner who falls ill loses both his income and his savings at the same time. Families sell land or jewellery, borrow from moneylenders at crushing rates of interest or simply postpone treatment until the disease becomes incurable. It is common to see relatives from distant districts of West Bengal camping outside Kolkata's large hospitals for weeks, spending on food and lodging while they wait.

Governments have tried to respond. Public health insurance schemes at the national and state levels now cover hospital treatment for many poor families, and generic medicine shops sell essential drugs at lower prices. These measures have brought real relief, yet gaps remain: many people do not know their entitlements, some hospitals are reluctant to admit insured patients, and outpatient costs such as tests and medicines are often left uncovered.

The remedy must begin at the base. Primary health centres in villages and towns should be properly staffed and equipped, so that common illnesses are treated early and cheaply. Hospital charges in the private sector should be displayed openly and regulated. Prevention through clean water, vaccination and regular screening is far cheaper than cure. Citizens, too, should be encouraged to take insurance and to keep a modest health fund.

Health is not a luxury but the foundation of every other right. A nation that wishes to prosper cannot allow its people to choose between treatment and their next meal. Affordable healthcare is not charity; it is sound economics and simple justice.

> **EXAM TIP**
>
> High marks go to an essay that explains causes, shows the human effect with one specific picture (relatives waiting outside city hospitals), acknowledges existing schemes without inventing figures and ends with practical remedies.

(c) My first day in a new city

The train pulled into Pune station a little after six in the morning. I had travelled for more than a day from Kolkata to join my first job, carrying one suitcase, a bag of my mother's home-made snacks and a printed map I would never use. As I stepped onto the platform, I realised that for the first time in my life nobody around me knew my name.

The first challenge was language. The auto-rickshaw driver answered my halting Hindi in rapid Marathi, and my Bengali accent drew a polite but puzzled smile. At last we agreed on the address by pointing at my phone. The city slid past the window: wide roads lined with trees, students on scooters, and the smell of fresh bread from a corner bakery. It looked cleaner and calmer than I had expected, yet everything felt slightly strange, as if I were watching a film rather than living in it.

My paying-guest room was small but bright. The landlady, an elderly woman with sharp eyes and a kind voice, handed me the keys and a list of house rules. Then, unexpectedly, she placed a steaming cup of tea and a plate of poha in front of me. "You must eat before you go to the office," she said. It was such a motherly gesture that my nervousness began to melt.

The office was another world. Introductions followed one after another, and I forgot names as quickly as I heard them. A colleague from Odisha, who had joined a year earlier, noticed my confusion and took me under his wing. At lunch he explained the bus routes, the cheapest eating places and the best spot to watch the evening sky from the hill near our office.

By evening I was exhausted, but curious enough to walk around the neighbourhood. Shops were lit up, temple bells rang somewhere, and a group of children played cricket in a narrow lane, shouting in a language I did not understand but a spirit I recognised at once. Standing there, I felt a sharp pang of homesickness for the narrow lanes of my own para.

That night I telephoned my parents and told them everything. I had arrived a stranger, but in a single day I had met kindness from a landlady, help from a colleague and joy from children at play. A new city, I realised, becomes home not through its buildings but through its people.

> **EXAM TIP**
>
> A narrative composition scores when it moves in time order, uses sensory detail (sights, smells, sounds) and shows feelings changing through the day. End with a reflection that gives the story a point instead of stopping abruptly.

Q4 · Précis

Title: Courage Is the Mastery of Fear

Fear, the oldest and least honoured human emotion, is no shameful flaw but a natural guardian that has protected mankind from danger. The real fault lies in obeying it blindly, for it then quietly narrows life and lets cowardice pass for caution. Courage is not freedom from fear but a reasoned decision to act despite it when the cause justifies the risk, and it grows through repeated small victories over hesitation. Thus the mastery of fear, not its absence, deserves admiration.

(Passage: 231 words; Précis: 81 words)

> **EXAM TIP**
>
> The title must name the central idea (courage as mastering fear), not merely "Fear". Keep the three-step argument in order (fear is useful; blind obedience to it is harmful; courage is acting in spite of it) and drop the watchman image and the examples of avoided tasks.

Q5 · Translation

(a) Rising among the high, snow-clad peaks of Sikkim, the Teesta is a sight to behold as it makes its way down through the mountains. Its blue-green waters dash against the rocks, throwing up foam and roaring as they rush on, as though the river were in a great hurry to get somewhere. The dense forests of sal and bamboo that stand on either bank are silent witnesses to its race. In the monsoon the same river turns ferocious: hillsides slide, roads are washed away, and the villages along its banks lie awake with

worry. Yet in winter it becomes calm and clear once more, as if nothing had happened. The people of the hills both fear the Teesta and revere it, for it is on its banks that their lives are nurtured.

(b) Until a few years ago, many girls in the village gave up their studies after Class VIII. The high school lay several kilometres away, the road was lonely, and walking that far every day was no easy matter. Parents, too, were reluctant to send their daughters alone. Then, under a government scheme, schoolgirls were given bicycles, and almost overnight the picture began to change. Now, early every morning, groups of girls in school uniform can be seen cycling along the village paths. A distance that once seemed as daunting as a mountain has become a mere half-hour ride. The bicycle has not only carried them to school; it has also filled them with self-confidence. They now fetch medicines from the market, drop their younger brothers and sisters at tuition and manage many household errands. Teachers in several villages say that the girls' attendance has risen and that early marriages have declined. The truth is that this humble two-wheeled ride has shown the girls the road to their future.

EXAM TIP

"उसका रूप देखते ही बनता है" is an idiom of admiration, so "is a sight to behold" is better than "its form is worth seeing". "गाँवों की नींद उड़ जाती है" means the villages lie awake with anxiety, rendered as "lie awake with worry", not "the sleep of villages flies away". In (b), "आधे घंटे का खेल" becomes "a mere half-hour ride", and "देखते-ही-देखते" becomes "almost overnight". The examiner rewards such natural English idiom, unchanged tense (past for the earlier situation, present for the change) and no omitted sentence.

Practice Paper 9

Time: 3 hours · **Full marks:** 200 · All questions are compulsory.

Question Paper

QUESTION Q1 · 40 marks

Write a letter within 150 words on any one (use A, B, C or X, Y, Z instead of names and addresses).

(a) Write a letter to the Director of Sports, Government of West Bengal, drawing attention to the neglected football ground of your village and requesting its restoration, along with a coaching camp for the girls of the area.

Or

(b) Write a letter to a friend living abroad describing the Durga Puja in Kolkata: the pandals, the crowds and the immersion.

QUESTION Q2 · 40 marks

Draft a report within 200 words on a visit by the students of your college to a solar-powered village.

QUESTION Q3 · 40 marks

Write a composition on any one of the following topics.

(a) A dialogue between a father and his son on choosing a career after Class XII.

(b) Food as culture: the cuisine of Bengal.

(c) Hope.

QUESTION Q4 · 40 marks (35+5)

Write a précis of the following passage and add a suitable title.

A democracy rests on the conviction that no man, and no body of men, possesses the whole of truth. If that conviction is sincere, every citizen must be free to say what he thinks, for the opinion the majority dismisses today may be the wisdom it embraces tomorrow. A government that silences its critics does not become wiser; it merely loses the warning that might have saved it. Freedom of speech is thus not a favour granted by the state, but the means by which a free people corrects its own mistakes.

Yet it would be a strange reading of liberty to suppose that it knows no bounds. The right to speak is exercised among others who have rights of their own. A citizen may attack the powerful as sharply as he pleases, and he ought to be protected in doing so; but he may not spread a falsehood that ruins an innocent neighbour, nor stir a crowd to violence against those whose faith differs from his own. Speech that aims not to persuade but to destroy has abandoned the purpose for which freedom was claimed.

The difficulty lies in drawing the line, and in deciding who shall draw it. If the power to restrain is left wholly to those in office, they will find every inconvenient truth dangerous and every critic a

disturber of the peace. Limits, therefore, must be few and precise, laid down by law rather than by the passing anger of rulers, and judged by independent courts. Where restraint is the exception and freedom the rule, a nation can bear a great deal of foolish and even offensive talk.

In the end, no statute can do the work of character. A people that prizes free expression must also learn restraint in using it, and answer a bad argument with a better one rather than with force. Liberty of speech survives only where citizens are tolerant enough to hear what displeases them.

QUESTION **Q5 · 40 marks**

Translate any one of the following Hindi passages into English (for candidates who opted Hindi in lieu of Bengali for Paper I).

(a) आज हम मोबाइल फ़ोन पर नक्शा खोलते हैं और पल भर में जान लेते हैं कि हम कहाँ खड़े हैं। यह किसी जादू से कम नहीं लगता, पर इसके पीछे विज्ञान का एक सीधा-सा सिद्धांत काम करता है। पृथ्वी से लगभग बीस हज़ार किलोमीटर की ऊँचाई पर दर्जनों उपग्रह लगातार चक्कर लगा रहे हैं। हर उपग्रह में एक अत्यंत सटीक घड़ी लगी होती है, और वह हर क्षण अपना स्थान और समय रेडियो संकेतों के रूप में भेजता रहता है। आपका फ़ोन इन संकेतों को पकड़ता है और हिसाब लगाता है कि किसी संकेत को उस तक पहुँचने में कितना समय लगा। इसी समय से उस उपग्रह की दूरी निकल आती है। जब कम-से-कम चार उपग्रहों की दूरी मालूम हो जाती है, तो फ़ोन इन दूरियों को मिलाकर आपका ठीक-ठीक स्थान तय कर लेता है। घड़ी में एक सेकंड के दस लाखवें हिस्से की चूक भी स्थान को सैकड़ों मीटर इधर-उधर कर सकती है, इसलिए घड़ियों की शुद्धता ही इस पूरी व्यवस्था की जान है।

Or

(b) हमारी शिक्षा-व्यवस्था में परीक्षा साधन न रहकर साध्य बन गई है। बच्चा स्कूल में क़दम रखते ही अंकों की दौड़ में शामिल हो जाता है। माता-पिता पूछते हैं कि कितने नंबर आए; यह कोई नहीं पूछता कि क्या सीखा। नतीजा यह है कि विद्यार्थी पाठ को समझने के बजाय रटने में लगा रहता है। परीक्षा से पहले की रात कुंजियाँ और नोट्स घोंटकर पी लिए जाते हैं, अगले दिन उत्तर-पुस्तिका पर उगल दिए जाते हैं और परिणाम आते-आते सब कुछ दिमाग़ से उड़ जाता है। ऐसा ज्ञान उस पानी की तरह है जो रेत पर डाला जाए और जड़ों तक कभी न पहुँचे। सच्ची शिक्षा जिज्ञासा जगाती है। वह बच्चे को प्रश्न पूछना, प्रयोग करना और अपनी भूल से सीखना सिखाती है। जो विद्यार्थी किसी पौधे को रोज़ बढ़ते हुए देखता है, वह वनस्पति-विज्ञान की परिभाषा भले न रट पाए, पर जीवन का नियम समझ लेता है। इसका अर्थ यह नहीं कि परीक्षाएँ समाप्त कर दी जाएँ। मूल्यांकन ज़रूरी है, किंतु उसका उद्देश्य विद्यार्थियों को छाँटना नहीं, बल्कि उनकी प्रगति को परखना और उनकी कमज़ोरियों को दूर करना होना चाहिए। जब तक हम अंकों को योग्यता का एकमात्र पैमाना मानते रहेंगे, तब तक हमारी कक्षाओं से डिग्रियाँ तो निकलेंगी, पर सोचने वाले मनुष्य नहीं।

Solutions

Q1 · Letter writing

(a)

Village XYZ
P.O. ABC, District XYZ
West Bengal
10 January 2027

To
The Director of Sports,
Department of Youth Services and Sports,
Government of West Bengal,
Kolkata

Subject: Restoration of the village football ground and a coaching camp for girls

Sir,

On behalf of the young people of village XYZ in ABC block, I seek your help in reviving our only football ground, which has lain neglected for several years.

The field, once the venue of a popular inter-village tournament, is now uneven and turns into a pond after every shower. The goalposts have rusted, the fencing has collapsed and cattle graze there freely. Boys who once trained every evening now have nowhere to play.

Meanwhile, several girls of the area have shown real promise in school matches, but they have no coach, no kit and no safe place to practise.

I therefore request you to have the ground levelled, drained and fenced, and to organise a coaching camp for girls under a qualified woman coach during the coming vacation. The gram panchayat has agreed to maintain the ground once it is restored.

Yours faithfully,
XYZ
Secretary, XYZ Youth Club

(b)

ABC Road
Kolkata 700 0XY
20 October 2026

My dear A,

Your letter reached me just as the dhak began to sound in our para, and I decided at once that you must have a share of this year's Durga Puja, if only on paper.

The city has been transformed. Our neighbourhood pandal recreated a terracotta temple of Bishnupur, while one in north Kolkata was built entirely of clay cups and bamboo. Each pandal is a work of art, and at night whole streets glow.

The crowds were beyond belief. On Ashtami we queued for nearly two hours, inching forward with thousands of families, yet laughed all the way, kept going by phuchka and egg rolls.

Dashami brought the bittersweet part. Married women smeared one another with vermilion, and the goddess was carried to the river amid drumbeats, dancing and moist eyes.

Do plan to come home next autumn. Mother sends her love.

Yours affectionately,
X

EXAM TIP

In (a), the examiner looks for the problem, its effect and a precise two-part request (repair the ground, start the girls' camp) set out in separate paragraphs. In (b), a personal letter takes no subject line and closes "Yours affectionately"; vivid, specific details (pandal themes, Ashtami queue, sindur khela) earn more than adjectives such as "wonderful".

Q2 · Report

Solar Village Lights Up Students' Lesson

KOLKATA, 12 March: Students of the geography and physics departments of Riverside College returned on Saturday from a day-long study visit to Suryapur, a village in South 24 Parganas that now draws almost all its electricity from the sun.

The visit, organised by the college's environment club, aimed to show students how renewable energy works outside the laboratory. Villagers led them past rows of solar panels on a former fallow plot, which feed a small local grid. Teachers said the plant powers homes, street lights, a health sub-centre and pumps for the fields.

Residents described the change. Children now study after dark, women no longer breathe kerosene smoke, and farmers irrigate without costly diesel. A member of the village committee explained that each household pays a modest monthly charge, used to clean and repair the panels.

The students also learnt about the plant's limits, including weaker output during the monsoon and the need for trained local technicians.

On their return, the club announced that the students would prepare a project report and hold an exhibition on campus. Its convener said the trip had turned a textbook chapter into a living lesson.

EXAM TIP

A report is news, not an essay: headline, dateline, the 5Ws in the first paragraph, then what was seen, what residents said and what follows. Attributing claims ("teachers said", "a member explained") and avoiding invented figures keep it credible.

Q3 · Composition

(a) A dialogue between a father and his son on choosing a career after Class XII

The evening after the Class XII results. Rohan has done well, and his father wants to talk about what comes next.

Father: Rohan, your results deserve a celebration, but the engineering entrance forms close next week. Have you filled yours in?

Rohan: Not yet, Baba. I wanted to talk to you first. I am not sure engineering is for me.

Father: Not sure? You scored well in mathematics. Half the boys in our lane would give anything for those marks.

Rohan: Marks show what I can do, not what I want to do. I enjoyed mathematics as a puzzle, but whenever I opened the newspaper I went straight to the business pages. I would like to study economics, and perhaps move into policy research later.

Father: Economics is a fine subject, but where does it lead? An engineer at least has a job after four years. I have seen too many graduates waiting for something to turn up.

Rohan: Banks, research organisations, consulting firms and even the civil services look for people who understand data and the economy. And many engineers end up doing an MBA and working in finance anyway, after four years spent on a subject they never liked.

Father: You have done your homework, I see. But tell me honestly: is this a passion, or simply fear of the entrance examination?

Rohan: That is fair. I am not running from hard work; economics with mathematics is no easy option. I spoke to my teacher and to two seniors at the university. They warned me that the course is demanding and that a master's degree is almost essential.

Father: Which means more years of fees and no salary.

Rohan: I have thought about that. I can apply for scholarships, and I could tutor younger students in the evenings to help with the costs.

Father: You remind me of myself. I wanted to study literature, and my father sent me to a commerce college. I have done well enough, but I have never stopped wondering what might have been. I do not want you wondering at forty-five.

Rohan: Then you will let me choose?

Father: On one condition. Sit with me this weekend and draw up a plan: the colleges, the entrance tests and a fallback if things go wrong. A choice made with open eyes is one I can support.

Rohan: Agreed, Baba. And thank you for listening.

Father: Listening was the easy part. The hard work is now yours.

(b) Food as culture: the cuisine of Bengal

Food is more than nourishment. What a people eats, and how and with whom it eats, records its geography, its history and its values. Few Indian cuisines show this as clearly as that of Bengal, where a meal is discussed with the seriousness other regions reserve for politics.

Geography laid the foundation. Bengal is a land of rivers, ponds and paddy fields, and so rice and fish, *machh-bhaat*, form the heart of the everyday meal. Mustard, grown in the winter fields, gives the region its cooking oil and the sharp paste in which hilsa is steamed. The arrival of hilsa with the monsoon is

awaited almost like a festival, and freshwater fish, prawns and seasonal greens follow the rhythm of the year.

The structure of a Bengali meal reveals a philosophy of balance. Lunch traditionally begins with *shukto*, a mildly bitter vegetable dish meant to awaken the palate, and moves through dal, fritters, vegetables and fish to a tangy chutney, ending with sweets. Each course prepares the tongue for the next, and the meal travels from bitter to sweet as a well-told story moves towards its resolution.

History has added many layers. Portuguese settlers are often credited with encouraging the use of *chhana*, the fresh cheese from which sandesh and rosogolla are made. When the deposed Nawab of Awadh settled in Kolkata in the nineteenth century, his cooks are said to have brought the biryani that, in this city, acquired its famous potato. The Chinese community of Tangra gave Kolkata its own spicy noodles, and refugees from East Bengal after Partition brought dishes that still fuel the friendly rivalry between *ghoti* and *bangal* households, a rivalry that extends from hilsa versus prawn to the football ground.

Food also marks the stages of life and the bonds of community. A child's first taste of rice is a ceremony, *annaprashan*. On Jamai Shashthi, sons-in-law are fed with lavish affection. During Durga Puja, strangers sit side by side to share *bhog khichuri*, and the vegetarian cooking without onion or garlic prepared on holy days shows how faith has shaped the kitchen.

In a city now crowded with pizza outlets and delivery apps, Bengali cuisine survives because it carries memory. To sit before a Bengali meal is to read, course by course, the story of a land and its people.

(c) Hope

An old Greek story tells of Pandora, who opened a forbidden jar and let loose every evil upon the world. Only one thing remained inside: hope. People have argued ever since whether it was left as a final gift or a final torment. Yet the story captures something true: when everything else has gone, human beings still look forward. Hope is the belief that the future can be better than the present, joined to the will to work for it.

In ordinary life, hope is so common that we hardly notice it. A farmer in Bengal sows paddy before the rains have arrived, trusting that the clouds will come. A student who has failed an examination sits down to prepare again. Parents set aside small savings for a child's education that lies years ahead. None of them can be certain of the result, but none of them would act at all without hope.

History offers grander examples. Generations of Indians worked for an independence that many of them did not live to see. The psychiatrist Viktor Frankl, who survived the Nazi concentration camps, observed that prisoners who held on to a purpose, a task to finish or a person to return to, were better able to endure suffering than those who had lost all sense of a future.

Hope must, however, be distinguished from wishful thinking. The man who buys a lottery ticket every week and waits for fortune to change his life is not hopeful but passive. Real hope is active: it plans, prepares and persists. The Czech writer and statesman Václav Havel drew a similar line when he described hope not as the conviction that things will turn out well, but as the certainty that something makes sense, however it turns out.

Hope is also social. A teacher who believes in a struggling pupil, or a leader who gives a community a reason to try, spreads it as surely as despair spreads through neglect. A society that offers fair examinations, honest courts and real opportunities gives its citizens grounds for hope; one that denies them breeds cynicism.

Emily Dickinson pictured hope as a small bird that sings in the soul and never asks for anything in return. That is perhaps its greatest virtue. It costs nothing, yet without it no field would be sown, no lesson learnt and no injustice resisted.

> **EXAM TIP**
>
> In the dialogue, the examiner rewards two distinct, reasoned viewpoints and a sensible resolution, not a quarrel. In (b) and (c), specific examples (*shukto*, the Awadh biryani, Frankl, the farmer sowing before the rains) and a clear line of argument score higher than general praise or definitions.

Q4 · Précis

Title: Free Speech and Its Proper Limits

Democracy assumes that nobody possesses the whole truth, so every citizen must be free to speak: rejected opinions may later prove wise, and critics warn governments of their errors. Free speech is not a favour from the state but the means by which a free people corrects itself. It is not unlimited, however, since others have rights too; criticism of the powerful deserves protection, but slander and incitement, which seek to destroy rather than persuade, do not. As rulers would brand all criticism dangerous, limits must be few, precise, fixed by law and judged by independent courts. Ultimately, free speech survives only through citizens' restraint and tolerance.

(Passage: 325 words; Précis: 107 words)

> **EXAM TIP**
>
> The passage moves in four steps: why free speech matters, where it must stop, who should draw the line, and the citizen's own restraint. The précis keeps all four in order, drops the passing illustrations (the ruined neighbour, the crowd stirred against another faith) and turns the closing maxim into one plain clause. The title states both halves of the argument, freedom and its limits.

Q5 · Translation

(a) Today we open a map on our mobile phones and learn in an instant exactly where we are standing. It seems nothing short of magic, yet behind it lies a simple scientific principle. Some twenty thousand kilometres above the earth, dozens of satellites are constantly circling the planet. Each carries an extremely accurate clock and, at every moment, sends out its position and the time in the form of radio signals. Your phone picks up these signals and works out how long each one took to reach it. From that time, the distance to the satellite can be calculated. Once the distances to at least four satellites are known, the phone combines them to fix your exact position. An error of even a millionth of a second in the clocks can shift that position by hundreds of metres, which is why the precision of the clocks is the lifeblood of the whole system.

(b) In our education system, the examination has ceased to be a means and has become an end in itself. The moment a child sets foot in school, he is drawn into the race for marks. Parents ask how many marks he scored; nobody asks what he learnt. As a result, instead of understanding his lessons, the student busies himself with learning them by rote. On the night before the examination, guidebooks and notes are gulped down whole; the next day they are poured out onto the answer script, and by the time the results arrive, every word has vanished from memory. Such knowledge is like water poured on sand: it

never reaches the roots. True education awakens curiosity. It teaches a child to ask questions, to experiment and to learn from his mistakes. A student who watches a plant grow day by day may not be able to recite the definition of botany, but he grasps a law of life. This does not mean that examinations should be abolished. Assessment is necessary, but its purpose should be not to weed students out but to measure their progress and help them overcome their weaknesses. As long as we treat marks as the sole yardstick of merit, our classrooms will turn out degrees, but not thinking human beings.

EXAM TIP

- *किसी जादू से कम नहीं* is rendered "nothing short of magic", and *इस पूरी व्यवस्था की जान है* as "the lifeblood of the whole system", not the literal "life of this system".
- *परीक्षा साधन न रहकर साध्य बन गई है* uses the English pair "a means … an end in itself"; *घोंटकर पी लिए जाते हैं… उगल दिए जाते हैं* becomes "gulped down … poured out", keeping the image of cramming, and *दिमाग़ से उड़ जाता है* becomes "vanished from memory", not the literal "flies out of the brain".
- *छाँटना* here means eliminating weaker candidates, so "weed out" fits better than "sort" or "select".

Practice Paper 10

Time: 3 hours · **Full marks:** 200 · All questions are compulsory.

Question Paper

QUESTION Q1 · 40 marks

Write a letter within 150 words on any one (use A, B, C or X, Y, Z instead of names and addresses).

(a) Write a letter to the Labour Commissioner, Government of West Bengal, drawing attention to the working conditions of app-based food and parcel delivery workers in Kolkata, and requesting accident insurance, rest-points with drinking water and toilets, and a grievance cell for them.

Or

(b) Write a letter to the Editor of a daily newspaper on the growing coaching-centre culture among school students, its cost to families, the pressure it puts on children and the neglect of regular schooling that follows.

QUESTION Q2 · 40 marks

Draft a report within 250 words on a herd of wild elephants entering villages in Jhargram district, the damage caused to crops and houses, and the response of the forest department.

QUESTION Q3 · 40 marks

Write a composition on any one of the following topics.

(a) Tolerance

(b) Online gaming and betting apps: a hidden trap

(c) A night journey on a river ferry

QUESTION Q4 · 35 + 5 marks

Write a précis of the following passage and add a suitable title (35+5).

The classroom is only one of the places where a mind is formed, and perhaps not the chief one. Long before a child can read, he has been gathering knowledge with his eyes and hands: he has learnt that water finds its level, that a dog may be trusted when its tail is loose, that the weather changes before the wind does. Such learning is slow and unrewarded, for no examiner asks for it, yet it is the most durable we possess, because it was won by attention and not received on authority. The habit of observing is, in truth, the beginning of all independent thought. A man who looks closely at the world will soon begin to question what he is told about it. Schools do their best work, therefore, not when they fill the memory but when they sharpen the eye, and send the pupil out able to teach himself for the rest of his life.

QUESTION Q5 · 40 marks

Translate any one of the following Hindi passages into English (for candidates who opted Hindi in lieu of Bengali for Paper I).

(a) जनवरी 1941 की एक सर्द रात कलकत्ता के एल्गिन रोड वाले मकान के चारों ओर ब्रिटिश पुलिस का कड़ा पहरा था। घर में नज़रबंद सुभाषचंद्र बोस कई दिनों से किसी से मिल नहीं रहे थे, और बाहर यह बात फैला दी गई थी कि वे एकांत साधना में लीन हैं। पर असल में वे देश छोड़ने की तैयारी कर रहे थे। दूसरा विश्वयुद्ध छिड़ चुका था, और उनका विश्वास था कि अंग्रेज़ी राज से लड़ने के लिए विदेशों से सहायता जुटानी होगी। इन दिनों में उन्होंने दाढ़ी भी बढ़ा ली थी। आधी रात के बाद उन्होंने एक पठान का भेस धरा और चुपचाप घर से निकल पड़े। उनके भतीजे शिशिर कुमार बोस गाड़ी लिए तैयार खड़े थे। पहरेदारों को भनक तक न लगी, और भोर होने से पहले शहर बहुत पीछे छूट चुका था। गोमो स्टेशन से नेताजी ने उत्तर भारत जाने वाली रेलगाड़ी पकड़ी। फिर पेशावर और काबुल के रास्ते, अनेक कठिनाइयाँ झेलते हुए, वे अंततः यूरोप जा पहुँचे। कई दिनों तक अंग्रेज़ सरकार को पता ही नहीं चला कि उसका सबसे बड़ा बंदी पिंजरे से उड़ चुका है। यह साहसिक पलायन आज भी स्वाधीनता संग्राम की सबसे रोमांचक घटनाओं में गिना जाता है।

Or

(b) गर्मियों में बिजली का बिल देखकर अक्सर घर के लोग चौंक उठते हैं। पर थोड़ी-सी सावधानी से यह बोझ काफ़ी हल्का किया जा सकता है। कमरे से निकलते समय पंखा और बत्ती बंद कर देना एक छोटी आदत है, लेकिन इसका असर बड़ा होता है। पुराने बल्बों की जगह एलईडी बल्ब लगाने से कम बिजली में ज़्यादा रोशनी मिलती है। एसी का तापमान बहुत नीचे रखने की ज़रूरत नहीं होती; चौबीस-पच्चीस डिग्री पर भी कमरा आराम से ठंडा रहता है। टीवी को केवल रिमोट से बंद करके छोड़ दिया जाए, तो वह भी चुपचाप बिजली खाता रहता है, इसलिए उसे स्विच से बंद करना चाहिए। बिजली बचाना केवल पैसे बचाना नहीं है, यह देश के संसाधनों की रक्षा भी है।

Solutions

Q1 · Letter writing

(a)

X Y Z
12, Bose Para Lane
Kolkata – 700 0XX
14 March 20XX

The Labour Commissioner
Government of West Bengal
New Secretariat Buildings
Kolkata – 700 001

Subject: Accident insurance, rest-points and a grievance cell for app-based delivery workers

Sir,

I write on behalf of a group of residents who depend daily on the young men and women who deliver food and parcels across Kolkata through mobile applications. These workers ride long hours in heat and rain, often against tight delivery deadlines, yet they are treated as "partners" rather than employees and enjoy almost no protection.

An accident on the road can leave such a rider without income or treatment. Most have nowhere to rest, drink water or use a toilet during a twelve-hour shift, and no office listens when payments are cut or accounts are blocked without explanation.

I therefore request your department to require the companies to provide accident insurance for every active worker, to set up rest-points with water and toilets at busy junctions, and to open a grievance cell where these workers can lodge complaints.

Yours faithfully,
X Y Z

(b)

A B C
7, Station Road
Barasat, North 24 Parganas
14 March 20XX

The Editor
The Daily Herald
Kolkata – 700 0XX

Subject: Coaching centres are crowding out the school

Sir,

May I use your paper to raise a worry shared by many parents? Coaching has become a second school for our children, and in many homes it has quietly become the first.

The cost is heavy. Families of modest means pay fees for three or four subjects, often by cutting other needs. The pressure on the child is heavier still: a fourteen-year-old leaves home at dawn for a batch, sits through school, and returns to another batch at night, with no time left for play, rest or reading for pleasure.

Worst of all, the school itself is neglected. Pupils skip classes or sleep through them, and teachers find their lessons treated as a formality.

Schools must win back trust by teaching well and giving extra help where needed, and parents must stop believing that more hours mean more learning.

Yours faithfully,
A B C

EXAM TIP

Examiners reward a first sentence that states the purpose, one idea per paragraph, and a closing request that covers **every** item in the question: here insurance, rest-points and a grievance cell in (a); cost, pressure and neglect of school in (b). Count the body only and stay under 150.

Q2 · Report

Wild elephant herd raids villages in Jhargram; crops and houses damaged

JHARGRAM, 12 March: A large herd of wild elephants, including several calves, entered a cluster of villages on the forest fringe of Jhargram district on Monday night, damaging standing crops and several mud houses. No loss of human life was reported.

Villagers said the herd came out of the forest after dark and moved slowly through paddy and vegetable fields for several hours, stopping wherever the crop was ripe. Fields of potato and early paddy were trampled, and the walls of a few houses on the forest edge collapsed when the animals searched for stored grain. Many families spent the night on rooftops or in the village school.

"We beat drums and lit torches, but the elephants would not turn back," said a farmer whose field was flattened. Residents complained that forest staff arrived late and that no warning had reached the village in advance.

Officials of the forest department said that the herd had been moving between Jhargram and neighbouring districts in search of food and water. Teams of forest guards and trained local volunteers were deployed on Tuesday to guide the animals back into the forest without harming them. Villagers were warned not to approach the herd or to use firecrackers.

The divisional forest office said that damage would be assessed and compensation paid to affected families under existing rules. Officials added that solar-powered fencing, early-warning messages and more water bodies inside the forest were being considered to reduce such conflict.

EXAM TIP

A headline, a dateline and a first paragraph that answers what, where and when earn the opening marks. The question has three parts (the herd's entry, the damage, the forest department's response); give each its own paragraph. Keep figures vague ("a large herd", "several hours") and quote only unnamed villagers and officials.

Q3 · Composition

(a) Tolerance

Tolerance is often mistaken for indifference, as if it meant shrugging at whatever others believe or do. It is something harder. To tolerate is to disagree with a person, sometimes deeply, and still grant him the right to think, speak and live as he chooses, so long as he does no harm. It asks for restraint, not approval.

The need for it is plainest in a country like ours. India holds many faiths, hundreds of languages and countless customs of food, dress and worship. A single lane in Kolkata may hear the azaan, the conch shell and a church bell within the same hour. Such variety survives only because, for most of our history, neighbours have learnt to live with what they did not share. The Constitution turned this habit into law by guaranteeing freedom of religion and expression to every citizen.

Tolerance is just as necessary in smaller circles. A family in which the young and the old cannot bear each other's opinions soon falls silent at the dinner table. A classroom where a student is mocked for a wrong answer stops asking questions. In offices, teams that cannot accept a colleague's different method waste their energy on quarrels instead of work. In each case intolerance does not win the argument; it simply ends the conversation.

Yet tolerance has limits, and it would be foolish to deny them. A society need not tolerate cruelty, violence or the denial of other people's rights. To put up with injustice in the name of open-mindedness is not tolerance but cowardice. The test is simple: we may refuse to accept harmful acts while still respecting people's freedom to hold views we dislike.

Today the virtue is under strain. Social media rewards outrage, and a careless remark can provoke a crowd within minutes. Arguments are reduced to slogans, and opponents are treated as enemies. Against this, tolerance must be practised deliberately: by listening before replying, by reading what the other side actually says, and by remembering that one's own certainty may be mistaken.

Tolerance, then, is not weakness but a form of strength. It allows people who differ to share a street, a school and a nation without being forced into sameness. A democracy can live with a great many disagreements; what it cannot live without is the patience to work through them.

(b) Online gaming and betting apps: a hidden trap

A few years ago a phone game was a harmless way to pass a bus journey. Today many of the most heavily advertised apps invite users not merely to play but to stake money, promising quick winnings to anyone with skill or luck. Behind the bright colours and celebrity endorsements lies a trap that is easy to enter and hard to leave.

The attraction is not difficult to understand. These apps are available at any hour, need only a smartphone and a few rupees to begin, and often reward a new user with a bonus or an early win. That first success creates the belief that the next round will bring more. Many such apps are designed with the

same tricks as casino machines: flashing rewards, near-misses, leaderboards and endless notifications that pull the player back.

The damage follows quietly. Students lose sleep and concentration, and their studies suffer. Young earners spend wages meant for the family, then borrow from friends or from instant-loan apps to recover their losses. Because the money moves through digital wallets, parents and spouses often learn of the debt only when it has become unmanageable. Newspapers have carried distressing reports of young people driven to despair by such losses, and counsellors describe a growing number of cases of gaming addiction.

The law has struggled to keep pace. Gambling has traditionally been regulated by the states, while these apps operate across the country and sometimes from abroad. The distinction between a "game of skill" and a "game of chance" has been argued in court many times, and operators have used it to avoid regulation. The Central Government has in recent years moved to restrict real-money gaming and to block illegal betting sites, but enforcement remains a challenge as new apps appear under new names.

Law alone, however, cannot solve the problem. Families must talk openly about money and the risks of easy gain. Schools and colleges can include digital and financial literacy in their programmes. Banks and payment platforms can flag unusual patterns of spending. Most of all, the advertising that presents betting as a route to wealth needs firm control.

The hidden trap of these apps lies in their promise that fortune is only one more click away. Recognising that promise for what it is remains the best protection, for once a user believes it, the losses have already begun.

(c) A night journey on a river ferry

It was past nine when the ferry's horn sounded at the small ghat, and the last passengers hurried down the slippery steps. I had missed the evening bus after a relative's wedding in a village across the river, and the night ferry was the only way home. I found a place on the wooden bench near the rail and watched the boat pull slowly away from the bank.

At first the river seemed entirely dark. Then my eyes grew used to it, and I began to see its shapes: the black line of trees on the far shore, a few lamps glowing in the huts along the bank, the silver path that the half-moon laid across the water. The engine thudded steadily beneath my feet, and the smell of diesel mixed with the cooler, earthy smell of the river.

The passengers were a world of their own. A vegetable seller sat beside her empty baskets, counting coins in the faint light. Two college students argued in low voices about a cricket match. An old man wrapped in a shawl dozed against a sack of rice, and a child slept across his mother's lap, one hand still clutching a paper toy. A tea seller moved among us with a kettle and clay cups, and the hot, sweet tea tasted better than any I had drunk in a city café.

Midway across, the boatman switched off the deck lights to see the water better, and for a few minutes we drifted through near-darkness. The noise of the engine seemed to fade, and I could hear the water slapping against the hull. Far away a fishing boat showed a single lantern, rising and falling with the current. In that silence the river felt immense and ancient, and our crowded ferry very small.

Then a light appeared on the other bank, and the boatman shouted for the rope. Passengers stood, gathered their bundles and pushed towards the gangway, the spell broken in an instant. The ferry bumped gently against the jetty, and we climbed out onto firm ground.

I have crossed many rivers since, mostly by daylight and over bridges. None of those journeys has stayed with me as that one has. The night ferry carried me only a short distance, but for half an hour it let me see how quietly and patiently a river goes on with its work, long after the day has ended.

> **EXAM TIP**
>
> For an abstract topic the examiner wants a definition, then development with Indian examples and a limit or counter-view. For a current topic, cover causes, harm, law and remedies. For a descriptive piece, use the senses (sight, sound, smell, taste) and close with a reflection rather than a summary.

Q4 · Précis

Title: Observation: The True Teacher

Much of a person's education happens outside the classroom. Learning gained through one's own observation, though ignored by examinations, lasts longest because it rests on attention, not authority. Close observation leads to questioning and thus to independent thought. Schools succeed best, therefore, when they train perception rather than memory, so that pupils can educate themselves lifelong.

(Passage: 158 words; Précis: 56 words)

> **EXAM TIP**
>
> The examples (water finding its level, the dog, the weather) are dropped, and the chain of argument is kept in order: learning outside school, why it lasts, how it breeds independent thought, what schools should therefore do. The title is a thesis in four words, which is what the 5 title marks reward.

Q5 · Translation

(a) On a cold night in January 1941, the house on Elgin Road in Calcutta was closely guarded by the British police. Subhas Chandra Bose, under house arrest inside, had not met anyone for several days, and word had been put about that he was absorbed in a spiritual retreat. In truth, he was preparing to leave the country. The Second World War had broken out, and he believed that help would have to be found abroad for the fight against British rule. During these days he had also let his beard grow. After midnight he disguised himself as a Pathan and quietly slipped out of the house. His nephew, Sisir Kumar Bose, stood ready with a car. The guards suspected nothing, and before dawn the city lay far behind. At Gomoh station Netaji boarded a train for northern India. Then, by way of Peshawar and Kabul and through many hardships, he at last reached Europe. For days the British government did not even realise that its most important prisoner had flown the cage. This daring escape is still counted among the most thrilling episodes of the freedom struggle.

(b) In summer, people at home are often startled when they see the electricity bill. Yet a little care can lighten this burden considerably. Switching off the fan and the light when leaving a room is a small habit, but its effect is large. Replacing old bulbs with LED bulbs gives more light for less power. There is no need to set the air conditioner very low; even at twenty-four or twenty-five degrees a room stays comfortably cool. A television switched off only with the remote goes on quietly consuming power, so it should be turned off at the switch. Saving electricity is not merely saving money; it is also protecting the nation's resources.

EXAM TIP

"एकांत साधना में लीन हैं" is rendered "absorbed in a spiritual retreat", not the literal "engaged in solitary practice"; "पहरेदारों को भनक तक न लगी" becomes "the guards suspected nothing". "पिंजरे से उड़ चुका है" keeps its idiom as "had flown the cage", which English readers know. "चुपचाप बिजली खाता रहता है" becomes "goes on quietly consuming power": "eating electricity" would be a word-for-word slip. Keep the past tense steady in (a) and the general present in (b).

Practice Paper 11

Time: 3 hours · **Full marks:** 200 · All questions are compulsory.

Question Paper

QUESTION Q1 · 40 marks

Write a letter within 150 words on any one (use A, B, C or X, Y, Z instead of names and addresses):

(a) Write a letter to the Chairman, West Bengal Board of Secondary Education, drawing attention to the late supply of textbooks in the Ol Chiki script to Santali-medium schools in your district, and requesting that they reach the schools before the session begins.

Or

(b) Write a letter to your father explaining your plan to return to your village after your studies and start a small agri-business.

QUESTION Q2 · 40 marks

Draft a report within 200 words on an inter-college debate competition held at your college. Mention the motion, the speakers and the result.

QUESTION Q3 · 40 marks

Write a composition on any one of the following topics:

(a) Write an article for a newspaper on "Why every citizen should learn first aid".

(b) Curiosity

(c) Monsoon in Bengal

QUESTION Q4 · 35 + 5 = 40 marks

Write a précis of the following passage and add a suitable title (35+5). The passage contains 275 words.

We are apt to think of beauty as something rare, a thing to be travelled to and paid for, kept behind glass in galleries or set apart on distant mountains. The habit is natural, for what is rare compels attention, and what compels attention we readily call beautiful. Yet the habit impoverishes us. It teaches the eye to sleep through the greater part of life and to wake only on holidays.

Beauty, rightly understood, is less a property of rare objects than a quality of attention. The same light that falls upon a palace falls upon a kitchen wall; the difference lies chiefly in whether anyone is looking. Those whom we call artists are not, for the most part, people who have discovered extraordinary things. They are people who have refused to let ordinary things become invisible. They have looked long and patiently at what others pass by, and in looking they have found order, rhythm and meaning where the hurried see only clutter.

It follows that the sense of beauty can be cultivated by anyone, and that its cultivation is a moral as well as an aesthetic discipline. To attend closely to a common thing is to grant it a kind of respect; it

is to admit that the world was not made merely for our use. A people that has learned to see beauty in its daily tools, its humble dwellings and its plain labour will be slower to despise them, and slower still to despise those who make them. The education of the eye is therefore no luxury reserved for the leisured. It is part of the education of a humane character.

QUESTION Q5 · 40 marks

Translate any one of the following Hindi passages into English (for candidates who opted Hindi in lieu of Bengali for Paper I):

(a)

बरसात की एक शाम दस साल का रतन स्कूल से घर लौट रहा था। बस-अड्डे के पास कीचड़ में उसे एक भूरा बटुआ पड़ा मिला। खोलकर देखा तो उसमें कुछ नोट और दवा की एक पर्ची थी। पल भर के लिए उसके मन में लालच जागा। घर में तंगी थी और माँ कई दिनों से नई चप्पल की बात टाल रही थीं। पर अगले ही क्षण उसका ध्यान उस पर्ची पर गया। किसी की दवा इन्हीं पैसों से आनी होगी। पर्ची पर एक पता लिखा था। रतन भीगता हुआ उस गली तक पहुँचा। दरवाज़ा काँपते हाथों वाले एक बुज़ुर्ग ने खोला, जो सुबह से बटुआ खोज-खोजकर हार चुके थे। बटुआ देखते ही उनकी आँखें भर आईं। उन्होंने इनाम देना चाहा, पर रतन ने विनम्रता से मना कर दिया। घर लौटकर जब उसने माँ को सब बताया, तो माँ ने उसे गले लगा लिया। उस रात रतन को लगा कि वह कुछ खोकर नहीं, बहुत कुछ पाकर लौटा है।

(b)

बंगाल में इलिश केवल एक मछली नहीं, एक भावना है। बरसात आते ही बाज़ारों में उसकी चाँदी-सी चमकती देह दिखाई देने लगती है और घर-घर में सरसों वाली इलिश की ख़ुशबू फैल जाती है। पर इस स्वाद के पीछे एक अद्भुत यात्रा छिपी है। इलिश अपना अधिकांश जीवन समुद्र के खारे पानी में बिताती है, किंतु अंडे देने के लिए वह धारा के विरुद्ध तैरकर गंगा, पद्मा और रूपनारायण जैसी नदियों के मीठे पानी में लौट आती है। इसीलिए उसका भविष्य हमारी नदियों की सेहत से जुड़ा है।

पिछले कुछ दशकों में यह यात्रा कठिन होती गई है। बाँधों और बैराजों ने उसका रास्ता रोका है, नदियों में गाद जमती जा रही है और प्रदूषण बढ़ा है। पर सबसे बड़ा ख़तरा अंधाधुंध मछली पकड़ने से है। बारीक जालों में छोटी-छोटी 'खोका इलिश' भी फँस जाती हैं, जो फिर कभी बड़ी होकर अंडे नहीं दे पातीं। इसी कारण प्रजनन के दिनों में इलिश पकड़ने पर रोक लगाई जाती है और जालों के आकार पर नियम बनाए गए हैं। किंतु नियम तभी सफल होंगे जब मछुआरे और ख़रीदार दोनों संयम बरतें। यदि हम छोटी मछली ख़रीदना बंद कर दें, तो नदियाँ फिर से इलिश से भर सकती हैं।

Solutions

Q1 · Letter writing

(a) Letter to the Chairman, WBBSE

XYZ
ABC Village, P.O. ABC
District XYZ, West Bengal

5 February 2027

The Chairman
West Bengal Board of Secondary Education
Salt Lake, Kolkata

Subject: Late supply of Ol Chiki-script textbooks to Santali-medium schools

Sir,

As the guardian of two pupils in a Santali-medium secondary school of our district, I wish to bring to your notice the repeated delay in the supply of textbooks printed in the Ol Chiki script.

For the past few years these books have reached our schools months after the session began. Teachers are forced to dictate lessons or depend on worn photocopies, and children fall behind, especially in mathematics. Some have stopped attending altogether. Such delay defeats the very purpose of teaching young learners in their mother tongue.

I therefore request you to have the printing and dispatch of Ol Chiki textbooks completed before the next session opens, to keep a reserve stock at the district office, and to open a helpline through which headmasters can report shortages at once.

Your timely intervention would spare many children a lost year.

Yours faithfully,
XYZ

(b) Letter to father

ABC Hostel, XYZ College
Kolkata

20 March 2027

Dear Baba,

I hope you and Ma are keeping well. My final examinations end next month, and I want to share a plan I have long been considering.

Instead of looking for a job in the city, I wish to come home and start a small agri-business. Our land grows fine vegetables, yet we sell them cheaply to middlemen. I plan to begin with mushroom cultivation in our unused shed and to form a group with a few young farmers to sell our produce together in town.

I have worked out the costs carefully. I will take a short training course at the Krishi Vigyan Kendra and apply for a bank loan under a government scheme.

I know you hoped I would find a secure job, but I believe I can earn well and help our village too. Please give me your blessing.

Your loving son,
XYZ

(Letter bodies: (a) 140 words; (b) 141 words.)

EXAM TIP

In (a) the purpose comes in the first sentence and the requests are concrete (deadline, reserve stock, helpline), which is what fetches marks in a formal letter. In (b) a personal letter has no subject line and no "Yours faithfully"; it must still be organised: the plan, how it will be funded, then an honest answer to the father's likely worry.

Q2 · Report

Saraswati Mahavidyalaya Wins Inter-College Debate on Examinations

KOLKATA, 12 March: Lake View College hosted its annual inter-college debate competition in its main auditorium on Saturday, with teams from eight colleges taking part before a packed hall of students and teachers.

The motion was "This House believes that examinations measure memory, not merit." Each team sent one speaker for and one against, and every speaker had five minutes, followed by questions from the floor.

Speaking for the motion, a second-year student of Eastern College of Commerce argued that students are rewarded for reproducing notes rather than for thinking. The strongest reply came from a final-year science student of Saraswati Mahavidyalaya, who said that a fair examination tests understanding and that the fault lies in poorly set papers, not in examinations themselves.

A panel of three judges, drawn from the faculties of neighbouring colleges, marked the speakers on argument, evidence, delivery and rebuttal. Saraswati Mahavidyalaya won the team trophy, while the best-speaker award went to a first-year student of the host college for a sharp rebuttal.

The principal of Lake View College, presenting the prizes, said that debate teaches young people to disagree without bitterness. Organisers said that the competition would become an inter-district event next year.

(Report: 198 words, excluding the headline.)

EXAM TIP

The question names three things (motion, speakers, result), and each gets its own paragraph here. Speakers are identified by year and college rather than by invented names, the tense stays in the past, and both sides of the motion are summarised fairly before the result.

Q3 · Composition

(a) Article: Why every citizen should learn first aid

Why Every Citizen Should Learn First Aid

By XYZ

A man collapses at a crowded bus stop. A crowd gathers within seconds, phones are raised, someone calls for water, and everyone waits for an ambulance stuck in traffic. Nobody kneels beside him and does the one thing that might keep him alive. The trouble is not cruelty but ignorance: most of us have never been taught first aid.

First aid is simply the help given to an injured or suddenly ill person before trained medical care arrives. After a serious injury or a sudden cardiac arrest, the first few minutes are decisive, and the actions of a bystander can count for more than anything a hospital later does. Chest compressions for a person whose heart has stopped, firm pressure on a bleeding wound, turning an unconscious person on to the side so that the airway stays clear: none of these needs expensive equipment. They need only a calm mind and a few hours of training.

The case is stronger still in a state like ours. In rural Bengal, snakebite remains a serious danger during the rains, and much harm is done by tight tourniquets, cuts and the delay caused by visits to a faith healer. A trained villager knows that the victim should be kept still and taken at once to a health centre where anti-venom is available. Children drown in village ponds every year; a neighbour who knows how to clear the airway and give rescue breaths can turn a funeral into a recovery. In the hot months, recognising heatstroke and cooling the patient quickly saves lives on construction sites and in fields.

Fear often holds people back. Many worry that they will be dragged into police cases if they help an accident victim. The law now protects Good Samaritans who help in good faith, and this assurance needs to be far better known. Others fear doing harm, yet the greater harm almost always lies in doing nothing.

What is needed is a habit, not a campaign. First aid could be taught in every school from the middle classes, made part of NSS and NCC activities, and offered in short courses at panchayat offices, housing societies and workplaces. Drivers, conductors, teachers and security guards, who are so often first on the scene, deserve special training.

A society is judged partly by how its members behave in an emergency. When every citizen knows what to do in those first few minutes, the anxious crowd at the bus stop becomes a ring of helping hands.

> **EXAM TIP**
>
> An article needs a headline and a byline, an opening that catches the reader (here a scene), and a closing call to action. Local, specific examples (snakebite, village ponds, heatstroke) and a practical plan earn far more than general praise of first aid.

(b) Curiosity

Every small child is a philosopher. Before the age of five, a child asks why the sky is blue, where the night goes and what lies inside a clock, and asks with a seriousness that adults rarely match. Curiosity, the restless wish to know and to understand, is perhaps the most natural of human appetites. The real question is not how to create it, but how to keep it alive.

Almost every advance in knowledge began with a question that others had stopped asking. On a sea voyage to Europe in 1921, C. V. Raman looked at the deep blue of the Mediterranean and refused to accept the usual explanation that the sea merely reflects the sky. His experiments on the scattering of

light, begun in that mood of wonder, led to the discovery that brought India its first Nobel Prize in science. The colour of the sea had been seen by millions; it took a curious mind to find a problem in it.

Curiosity also enriches ordinary life. A farmer who wonders why one corner of his field yields more than another, a nurse who notices a pattern in her patients' complaints, a reader who looks up an unfamiliar word instead of skipping it: each becomes wiser through a small act of inquiry. The curious traveller learns more in a day than the incurious one in a month.

Yet curiosity is not always a virtue. The proverb warns that curiosity killed the cat, and there is a prying kind that feeds on other people's private lives and spreads gossip. There is also a reckless kind that experiments with drugs or dangerous dares merely to know how they feel. True curiosity is disciplined. It seeks understanding rather than sensation, and it respects the limits set by kindness and by common sense.

Sadly, our schools often blunt the very faculty they ought to sharpen. When marks depend on reproducing a guidebook, the question "why?" becomes a waste of time, and the child who asks too many is told to be quiet. Teachers who welcome questions, laboratories where students may test their own guesses, and libraries open beyond examination hours would do more for education than many new syllabuses.

Curiosity is the beginning of learning, but it is also a lifelong companion. Those who keep it into old age stay young in spirit, for they still look at the world as children do, as something worth understanding.

> **EXAM TIP**
>
> An abstract topic needs a definition, a well-chosen example that is certainly true (Raman and the blue sea), and a balancing paragraph that separates healthy curiosity from prying or reckless curiosity. That balance is what lifts an abstract essay above a list of praises.

(c) Monsoon in Bengal

For weeks the summer presses down on Bengal like a heavy lid. The fields crack, the ponds shrink to muddy pools, and in Kolkata the afternoons hang still and white with heat. Then, one day in June, the sky darkens from the south, a cool wind smells suddenly of wet earth, and the first heavy drops strike the dust. The monsoon has arrived, and the whole land seems to breathe again.

In the countryside the rain is a promise of bread. Farmers who have waited anxiously for it hurry to their fields. Soon the land is a patchwork of flooded plots where men and women, bent double in the mud, transplant the young aman paddy seedlings in neat rows. Ponds brim over, frogs fill the nights with their chorus, and the kadam trees burst into round, golden blossoms whose fragrance drifts across the village paths. The rivers swell and turn brown, and fishing boats set out in search of the silver hilsa that the season brings.

The city meets the monsoon with mixed feelings. A downpour of an hour can turn the lanes of north Kolkata into streams, stall the trams and leave office-goers wading home with their trousers rolled up. Yet the same rain washes the dust from the trees, cools the air and fills the evenings with a pleasant idleness. On a rainy holiday, Bengali homes have their own ritual: steaming khichuri, begun bhaja (fried aubergine) and perhaps a piece of fried hilsa, eaten while the rain drums on the windows. Children float paper boats in the gutters, and the old hum Tagore's songs of the rains, for few poets have loved this season more.

The monsoon has its harsher face too. Rivers break their banks in the north and the south, villages are cut off, mud houses collapse, and diseases spread through stagnant water. In the hills, landslides block roads for days. For the poor, whose roofs leak and whose work stops in heavy rain, the season can be one of hardship rather than poetry.

Still, it is impossible to imagine Bengal without its monsoon. The rains decide the harvest, shape the festivals and colour the moods of its literature and music. Long after the clouds have gone, the green of the paddy fields remains, a reminder that this land lives by the generosity of the sky.

> **EXAM TIP**
>
> A descriptive composition is marked on sensory detail and order: here before the rains, the village, the city, the hardships, and a closing thought. Concrete Bengali details (aman paddy, kadam flowers, khichuri, waterlogged lanes) and an honest look at the harsher side keep it from becoming a string of adjectives.

Q4 · Précis

Title: Beauty Lies in Attention

People think of beauty as rare and remote, an understandable habit that blinds them to most of life. Beauty, however, lies less in unusual objects than in attention. Artists do not discover extraordinary things but refuse to overlook ordinary ones, finding order and meaning where others see disorder. Anyone can cultivate this vision, a moral discipline too, since close attention respects things and denies that the world exists merely for human use. Those who see beauty in everyday things respect them and their makers. Training the eye thus shapes a humane character.

(Passage: 275 words; Précis: 92 words)

> **EXAM TIP**
>
> The passage moves in three steps (the false idea that beauty is rare, beauty as attention, the moral value of training the eye), and the précis keeps them in that order. The imagery of galleries, mountains, palaces and kitchen walls is dropped, and the title names the central idea rather than the topic.

Q5 · Translation

(a)

One rainy evening ten-year-old Ratan was walking home from school. Near the bus stand he found a brown wallet lying in the mud. On opening it, he saw a few banknotes and a doctor's prescription. For a moment he was tempted. Money was tight at home, and for days his mother had been putting off buying him a new pair of sandals. But the very next moment his eyes fell on the prescription. This money, he realised, must have been meant for someone's medicine. An address was written on the slip. Getting soaked in the rain, Ratan made his way to that lane. The door was opened by an old man with trembling hands, who had been searching for the wallet since morning and had given up hope. At the sight of it his eyes filled with tears. He wanted to reward the boy, but Ratan politely declined. When he reached home and told his mother everything, she hugged him close. That night Ratan felt that he had come home having lost nothing and gained a great deal.

(b)

In Bengal the hilsa is not merely a fish; it is a passion. As soon as the rains arrive, its gleaming, silvery body appears in the markets, and the aroma of hilsa cooked in mustard drifts from one home to the next. Behind this taste, however, lies a remarkable journey. The hilsa spends most of its life in the salt water of the sea, but to spawn it swims upstream into the fresh water of rivers such as the Ganga, the Padma and the Rupnarayan. That is why its future is bound up with the health of our rivers.

Over the past few decades this journey has grown harder. Dams and barrages have blocked its path, silt keeps building up in the rivers, and pollution has increased. The greatest threat, though, is indiscriminate fishing. Fine-meshed nets trap even the tiny young fish known as *khoka ilish*, which never live to grow up and spawn. This is why catching hilsa is banned during the breeding season and rules have been laid down on the mesh size of nets. Yet the rules will work only if fishermen and buyers alike exercise restraint. If we stop buying small fish, our rivers may once again teem with hilsa.

EXAM TIP

"पल भर के लिए उसके मन में लालच जागा" becomes "For a moment he was tempted", not "greed awoke in his mind". "कुछ खोकर नहीं, बहुत कुछ पाकर लौटा है" keeps its balance as "having lost nothing and gained a great deal". In (b), "एक भावना है" is rendered "a passion", "धारा के विरुद्ध तैरकर" simply as "swims upstream", and "संयम बरतें" as "exercise restraint"; the local name *khoka ilish* is kept and explained.

Practice Paper 12

Time: 3 hours · **Full marks:** 200 · All questions are compulsory.

Question Paper

QUESTION Q1 · 40 marks

Write a letter within 150 words on any one (use A, B, C or X, Y, Z instead of names and addresses).

(a) Write a letter to the Managing Director of the State Transport Corporation requesting that a late-evening bus route, recently cancelled, be restored, since night-shift workers depend on it to reach their workplaces and return home.

Or

(b) Write a letter to the editor of a daily newspaper on the need for wider public awareness about organ donation and pledging.

QUESTION Q2 · 40 marks

Draft a report within 250 words on an anti-drug awareness programme held at a college in your district.

QUESTION Q3 · 40 marks

Write a composition on any one of the following topics.

(a) Ambition

(b) Consumerism and the culture of waste

(c) A stranger who helped me

QUESTION Q4 · 40 marks

Write a précis of the following passage and add a suitable title (35+5).

Conversation is commonly thought of as the easiest of the social arts, since anyone with a tongue and a little leisure may practise it. Yet it is precisely because everybody talks that so few people converse. Talk is the mere exchange of sounds and opinions; conversation is a partnership in which two or more minds agree, for an hour, to think aloud together. The first is a habit of the voice, the second an achievement of the character.

The chief enemy of conversation is not ignorance but vanity. The vain talker regards the pauses in another man's speech as openings for his own, and while his companion is still speaking he is busily preparing the clever thing he will say next. He hears words but not meaning. Such a person may be brilliant, well read and amusing, and yet he leaves his listeners oddly tired, as one is tired by a performance at which one has been compelled to sit silent.

The good conversationalist, by contrast, knows that listening is not the interval between his turns but half of the art itself. To listen well is to give another person the rare compliment of full attention, to follow the shape of his thought and not merely the words in which he dresses it, and to answer

what he meant rather than what he happened to say. Out of such attention grows the true pleasure of talk: the discovery, half-way through an evening, that one holds an opinion one did not bring into the room.

It follows that conversation is a moral as well as an intellectual exercise. It asks for patience with the slow, generosity towards the mistaken and the humility to be corrected. A society that loses the habit of conversation does not fall silent; it grows louder, for people who no longer listen can only raise their voices. To relearn the art, therefore, is not a small matter of manners. It is to recover the conditions in which disagreement remains friendly and truth has a chance to be heard.

QUESTION **Q5 · 40 marks**

Translate any one of the following Hindi passages into English (for candidates who opted Hindi in lieu of Bengali for Paper I).

(a) शहर के पुराने बाज़ार के पीछे एक छोटी-सी गली है, जहाँ हर दोपहर एक लंबी कतार लगती है। यह कतार किसी दुकान के आगे नहीं, बल्कि एक सामुदायिक रसोई के दरवाज़े पर लगती है। यहाँ कोई किसी से उसका नाम, जाति या धर्म नहीं पूछता। रिक्शा चलाने वाले, दिहाड़ी मज़दूर, अस्पताल आए मरीज़ों के परिजन और कभी-कभी कॉलेज के विद्यार्थी भी एक ही पंक्ति में ज़मीन पर बैठकर दाल-भात खाते हैं। रसोई चलाने वाले बताते हैं कि यह काम कुछ पड़ोसियों ने महामारी के दिनों में शुरू किया था, जब बहुत-से लोगों के पास न काम बचा था, न पैसा। तब किसी ने चावल दिया, किसी ने बर्तन, और किसी ने अपना समय। आज भी रसोई चंदे और स्वयंसेवकों के भरोसे चलती है। सुबह सब्ज़ी काटने वालों में मंदिर के पुजारी भी होते हैं और मस्जिद के पास रहने वाली गृहिणियाँ भी। एक बुज़ुर्ग स्वयंसेवक कहते हैं, "भूख का कोई मज़हब नहीं होता, तो रोटी का क्यों हो?" शायद इसी सीधी-सी बात में हमारे समाज की सबसे बड़ी ताक़त छिपी है।

Or

(b) अधिकतर लोग जगदीशचंद्र बसु को एक भौतिकशास्त्री के रूप में जानते हैं, पर पौधों के जीवन को समझने में भी वे अग्रणी थे। उन्नीसवीं सदी के अंत में उन्होंने रेडियो तरंगों पर जो प्रयोग किए, उनके लिए आज भी उन्हें आदर से याद किया जाता है। किंतु उनकी जिज्ञासा यहीं नहीं रुकी। उनके मन में यह प्रश्न उठा कि क्या पेड़-पौधे भी जीव-जंतुओं की तरह बाहरी प्रभावों का अनुभव करते हैं। इस प्रश्न का उत्तर पाने के लिए उन्होंने ऐसे सूक्ष्म यंत्र बनाए, जो पौधों में होने वाली अत्यंत धीमी हलचल को भी कई गुना बड़ा करके दिखा सकते थे। इन यंत्रों की सहायता से उन्होंने दिखाया कि गर्मी, ठंड, चोट या विष का असर पौधों पर भी पड़ता है और वे अपने ढंग से उसका उत्तर देते हैं। उस समय कई पश्चिमी वैज्ञानिकों ने उनकी बातों पर संदेह किया, पर बसु ने धैर्य नहीं छोड़ा और अपने प्रयोग बार-बार दोहराए। उनका विश्वास था कि सजीव और निर्जीव जगत के बीच की रेखा उतनी कठोर नहीं है, जितनी समझी जाती है। कलकत्ता में उन्होंने जिस विज्ञान-संस्थान की स्थापना की, वह आज भी शोध का एक प्रमुख केंद्र है। बसु का जीवन हमें सिखाता है कि सच्चा वैज्ञानिक वही है, जो प्रश्न पूछने का साहस रखे और उत्तर पाने के लिए धीरज भी।

Solutions

Q1 · Letter writing

(a)

A/4, Y Para, Uluberia
District Howrah
14 March 20XX

To
The Managing Director
State Transport Corporation
Kolkata

Subject: Request to restore the cancelled late-evening bus on the Uluberia–Esplanade route

Sir,

The 9.30 p.m. bus from Esplanade to Uluberia, withdrawn last month, was the only public transport on this route after nine o'clock. I request, for the residents of Uluberia and the villages along the highway, that it be put back into service.

Hospital attendants, security guards, factory hands and call-centre staff relied on it to reach their night shifts and to return home. They must now pay for shared cars at several times the fare, or wait for hours at unlit stops. Women workers, in particular, feel unsafe travelling so late.

If the route was cancelled for low earnings, a smaller bus, a revised timing or a monthly pass for shift workers could make it viable.

I therefore request you to restore the service at the earliest and to consult commuters before any future change.

Yours faithfully,
XYZ

(b)

B/7, C Road
Kolkata 7000XX
20 March 20XX

To
The Editor
The Daily D
Kolkata

Subject: Need for wider awareness about organ donation

Sir,

Few acts save as many lives as organ donation, yet few receive so little public discussion.

Every year many patients waiting for a kidney, liver or cornea die because a donor is not found in time. Yet a single brain-dead donor can give life or sight to several people. The shortage is caused less by medicine than by myths, religious misgivings and the simple fact that families are never asked at the right moment.

Hospitals should have trained counsellors to speak gently to grieving families. Schools, colleges and offices could hold pledge drives, and the pledge could be recorded on the driving licence. Above all, people must discuss their wishes with their families, because consent finally rests with them.

A pledge costs nothing, but it may become someone's second chance at life.

Yours faithfully,
XYZ

EXAM TIP

In (a), offering alternatives (a smaller bus, a revised timing, passes) answers the Corporation's likely objection about earnings before it is raised. In (b), naming who should act (hospitals, colleges, families) turns a general appeal into a workable plan.

Q2 · Report

Students pledge to stay drug-free at college awareness programme

BARASAT, 26 June: Several hundred students took a pledge against drug abuse on Thursday at an awareness programme held at Riverside College, Barasat, to mark the International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking.

The programme was organised by the college's National Service Scheme unit together with the district police and a local de-addiction centre. It opened with a street play by students that showed how a young man drifted from "harmless" experiments with friends into addiction, debt and the loss of his family's trust.

Addressing the gathering, a senior police officer said that peddlers increasingly target students near campuses and through social media. He urged students to report suspicious activity on the police helpline, assuring them that their identities would be kept secret.

A psychiatrist from the de-addiction centre explained that addiction is an illness, not a moral failure, and that early treatment brings good results. She listed the warning signs parents and friends should notice: sudden changes in mood, falling marks, withdrawal from friends and unexplained demands for money.

Two young men now in recovery shared their experiences and were warmly applauded.

The principal announced that a counselling cell would be opened on the campus and that teachers would be trained to identify students at risk. Posters and a signature campaign continued in the corridors till evening.

Students said the frank discussion had helped them see addiction as a danger close to home.

EXAM TIP

Give each voice its own paragraph (police, doctor, students in recovery, principal) so the examiner sees the programme unfold, and end on its outcome, the counselling cell. Speakers stay unnamed ("a senior police officer said") and no figures are invented.

Q3 · Composition

(a) Ambition

Ambition is the desire to rise above one's present condition: to achieve, to excel, to leave some mark on the world. Few qualities have been praised and condemned so equally. Moralists have warned against it for centuries, while every biography of a scientist, reformer or athlete shows that nothing great was done without it. The truth is that ambition is a force, and like any force its value depends on the direction in which it is turned.

At its best, ambition is the engine of effort. A student from a village school who resolves to become a doctor will rise before dawn, borrow books and endure years of hard study that a merely contented student would never attempt. Nations, too, are moved by collective ambition. India's space programme began with rocket parts carried on bicycles, and the resolve to reach the Moon sustained its scientists through repeated setbacks. Without such longing, talent remains a seed that is never planted.

Ambition also gives shape to a life. It turns vague wishes into goals, and goals into daily habits. A person who knows what he is aiming at can say no to distractions and can measure his progress honestly.

Yet the same force can destroy. When ambition is directed only at power, wealth or fame, it begins to treat other people as ladders. The ruthless official who crushes rivals, the businessman who adulterates medicines for profit, the politician who divides communities to win votes: all are ambitious, and all leave ruin behind them. Unchecked ambition also consumes its owner. The student pushed to secure the highest rank at any cost may reach it and find himself anxious, friendless and unsure why he wanted it.

The difference lies in two things: the end and the means. Ambition aimed at excellence in one's work, or at the good of others, enlarges a person. Ambition aimed merely at being above others narrows him, because there is always someone higher still. Similarly, ambition pursued through honest labour builds character, whereas ambition pursued through shortcuts corrupts it. Gandhi was intensely ambitious, but for the freedom of a people, not for himself.

Ambition, then, should neither be suppressed nor worshipped. It must be educated. Parents and teachers do young people a service when they encourage them to aim high, and an even greater one when they teach them what is worth aiming at. A well-directed ambition is not the enemy of contentment but its foundation, for the deepest satisfaction comes from having striven worthily.

(b) Consumerism and the culture of waste

Walk past any housing estate on the morning after a festival sale and the bins tell the story: boxes, bubble wrap and last year's gadgets. Behind them lies consumerism, the belief that happiness and status lie in acquiring more and more goods. In India it has spread rapidly in the last three decades, from metropolitan malls to small-town showrooms and, through online shopping, to the remotest village. Its constant companion is waste.

Why do we buy so much? Rising incomes have given many families, for the first time, the means to buy what they could once only admire. Easy credit and "buy now, pay later" schemes remove the pause

between desire and purchase. Advertising works tirelessly to persuade us that last year's phone, clothes or furniture are out of date. Festivals and weddings, once occasions for simple celebration, have become displays of spending.

Waste follows at every step. Goods are designed to be replaced rather than repaired; a broken appliance often costs more to mend than to throw away. Fast fashion encourages clothes to be worn a few times and discarded. Online orders arrive wrapped in layers of plastic and cardboard. Food is bought in excess and thrown away while many go hungry. The result can be seen in the mountains of rubbish at the edges of our cities, where waste-pickers sift through what the better-off have rejected.

The damage is not only to the environment. Consumerism quietly reshapes values. When worth is measured by possessions, people work longer hours to buy things they have little time to enjoy, and children learn to judge one another by brands. Household debt rises, and with it anxiety.

India, however, has a strong tradition to draw on. Our grandparents mended, reused and handed down. An old sari became a quilt; a glass jar became a store for pickles; the kabadiwala recycled what remained. Such habits were born of necessity, but they reflect a sound principle: that things have value beyond their newness.

Reviving that principle need not mean rejecting comfort. Citizens can buy less and buy better, choose durable goods, repair before replacing and refuse needless packaging. Manufacturers can be required to take back and recycle their products. Schools can teach that a good life is measured by relationships, health and learning rather than by possessions.

Consumption is necessary; consumerism is a choice. A society that learns to distinguish between the two will be both richer and cleaner.

(c) A stranger who helped me

Fog was the one thing I had not planned for. In the last week of December I was travelling alone for the first time, from Kolkata to Siliguri for a university interview.

My train reached Malda six hours late, long after midnight, and then stopped altogether. The announcement said it would not move till morning. Most passengers settled down to sleep, but my interview was at ten o'clock, and I was close to tears. My phone battery was dying, I had little cash, and I knew no one in the town.

An elderly man in a worn shawl had been sitting opposite me since Kolkata. He had spoken little, except to offer me a share of his oranges, which I had politely refused. Now he leaned forward and asked what the matter was. When I explained, he simply said, "Come with me."

I hesitated. Every warning I had heard about trusting strangers came back to me. But something steady in his manner made me follow. He led me out to the bus stand near the station and learnt that the first bus to Siliguri would leave at three. He then found a tea stall that was still open, bought me tea and a plate of hot puris, and asked the owner to let me charge my phone from his plug.

We talked while we waited. He was a retired schoolteacher going to visit his daughter. He told me about the interviews he had faced as a young man, and how nervous he had been at each. "They are not looking for someone who knows everything," he said. "They want someone who thinks honestly." I have remembered that sentence ever since.

At three he walked me to the bus, spoke to the conductor, and pressed a hundred-rupee note into my hand when he saw me count my coins. I protested, but he only smiled and said, "Pass it on someday."

I reached Siliguri with an hour to spare and did well at the interview. In my excitement I realised only later that I had never asked his name.

I have never seen him again. Yet that night taught me more than any lesson about caution. Kindness from a stranger asks for nothing and expects nothing, and the only way to repay it is to offer the same to someone else. Whenever I see a lost or anxious traveller now, I think of the man in the worn shawl and try to keep his request.

> **EXAM TIP**
>
> In (a) and (b) the marks lie in the turn of the argument: each side argued fairly, Indian examples, and a closing line that settles the tension (ambition must be educated; consumption is not consumerism). In (c) they reward a clear sequence, concrete detail and a closing reflection that shows what the experience taught.

Q4 · Précis

Title: Conversation: The Art of Listening

Although everyone talks, genuine conversation is rare, for it is not a mere exchange of opinions but a shared effort of minds thinking together, and it depends on character rather than on fluency. Its chief obstacle is vanity: the self-absorbed speaker treats another's pauses as chances to display himself, hears words without grasping their sense, and leaves his hearers weary however gifted he may be. A good conversationalist regards listening as an essential part of the art, attends fully to what the other person means, and so finds his own views changing. Conversation therefore demands patience, generosity and humility. A society that stops listening grows only louder, and recovering this art keeps disagreement civil and lets truth be heard.

(Passage: 341 words; Précis: 119 words)

> **EXAM TIP**
>
> The title names the central idea (listening), worth the full 5 marks. The précis keeps the passage's four steps in order (talk versus conversation, vanity, listening, moral value) and drops the image of the tiring performance.

Q5 · Translation

(a) Behind the city's old market runs a narrow lane where a long queue forms every afternoon. It does not form outside a shop, but at the door of a community kitchen. Here nobody asks anyone his name, caste or religion. Rickshaw-pullers, daily-wage labourers, relatives of patients in hospital, and now and then even college students sit side by side on the floor and eat dal and rice. The people who run the kitchen say that a few neighbours started it during the pandemic, when many people had neither work nor money left. One gave rice, another gave utensils, and someone else gave time. Even today the kitchen runs on donations and volunteers. Those who chop the vegetables each morning include the temple priest and housewives who live near the mosque. As one elderly volunteer puts it, "Hunger has no religion, so why should bread have one?" Perhaps the greatest strength of our society lies hidden in this simple truth.

(b) Most people know Jagadish Chandra Bose as a physicist, but he was also a pioneer in the study of plant life. He is still remembered with respect for the experiments on radio waves that he carried out at the end of the nineteenth century. His curiosity, however, did not stop there. He began to wonder whether plants, like animals, also feel the effects of the world around them. To answer this question he built delicate instruments that could magnify many times over even the slightest movement taking place within a plant. With their help he showed that heat, cold, injury and poison affect plants too, and that plants respond to them in their own way. At the time, many Western scientists doubted his claims, but Bose did not lose patience and repeated his experiments again and again. He believed that the line between the living and the non-living world was not as rigid as it was thought to be. The scientific institute he founded in Calcutta remains a leading centre of research even today. Bose's life teaches us that the true scientist is one who has the courage to ask questions and the patience to find the answers.

EXAM TIP

In (a), "भूख का कोई मज़हब नहीं होता, तो रोटी का क्यों हो?" keeps the rhetorical question ("so why should bread have one?") rather than flattening it into a statement; "दिहाड़ी मज़दूर" is "daily-wage labourers", not "day workers". In (b), "पेड़-पौधे" becomes simply "plants", and "अपने ढंग से उसका उत्तर देते हैं" is "respond to them in their own way", not "give its answer". Keep "Calcutta", as the passage uses the period name.