WEST BENGAL CIVIL SERVICE (EXECUTIVE) MAIN EXAMINATION

English (Compulsory)

Previous-Year Questions, Solved

Letters · Reports · Précis · Translation

44 questions with model answers · 2014 – 2023

How to use this book

- Questions are grouped by type: letter writing, report writing, précis and translation. Within each type, the newest year comes first.
- Every question is in a **blue box**. Where a paper offers a choice (a) or (b), both are answered, so you can practise either.
- Answers follow the word limit printed in the question. The **green Exam tip** gives the format and scoring points to remember.

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Letter Writing

2023 · Question 1

QUESTION 40 · within 150 words

1. (a) Write a letter to the Additional District Magistrate (ADM) of your district requesting him to issue an Economically Weaker Section (EWS) certificate in favour of you. You have furnished all the necessary documents those are to be needed to issue the same.

Or,

(b) You are an aspirant of civil service. Now, you would like to avail the coaching and the guidance provided at the Satyendranath Tagore Civil Services Study Centre (SNTCSSC), Salt Lake, Kolkata.

Write a letter to the Chairman, SNTCSSC, expressing your wish to join the centre and to avail the library, hostel and other facilities provided there.

(Write the letter within 150 words and use A, B, C or X, Y, Z instead of name and address)

NOTE

In the scan, the instruction line "(Write the letter within 150 words and use A, B, C or X, Y, Z …) 40" is printed just above the 2023 heading. It is taken here as the instruction for this 2023 question.

(a)

X
Y Village, Z Block
District A
4 April 2023

The Additional District Magistrate
District A

Subject: Request for an Economically Weaker Section (EWS) certificate

Sir,

I, X, a permanent resident of Y village under Z block of this district, request you to issue an Economically Weaker Section (EWS) certificate in my favour.

I belong to the general category, and my family's annual income from all sources is below the limit fixed by the government for the EWS category. We do not own property beyond the ceiling prescribed under the rules. I need the certificate to apply for government jobs and for admission to higher education under the EWS quota.

I have already furnished all the necessary documents with my application, including proof of income, property and residence, my identity card and a self-declaration.

As the last dates for some applications are approaching, I shall be grateful if you kindly issue the certificate at the earliest.

Yours faithfully,
X

(b)

X
Y Road, Z Town
District A
4 April 2023

The Chairman
Satyendranath Tagore Civil Services Study Centre
Salt Lake, Kolkata

Subject: Request to join the Centre and use its library and hostel

Sir,

I am a graduate who aspires to join the civil services, and I wish to enrol at the Satyendranath Tagore Civil Services Study Centre for coaching and guidance.

The Centre is well known for its systematic coaching, experienced faculty and the success of its students in the WBCS and other competitive examinations. Coming from a family of modest means in a district town, I cannot afford private coaching in Kolkata, and your guidance would be of great value to me.

I would also like to use the Centre's library, which I understand is rich in reference books and journals, and to stay in its hostel, as I have no accommodation in Kolkata. I shall abide by all the rules of the Centre.

I request you kindly to let me know the admission procedure, eligibility, fees and documents required.

Yours faithfully,
X

EXAM TIP

Use only X, Y, Z or A, B, C for names and addresses, as instructed; a real name can cost marks. Bodies: about 130 and 140 words.

2022 · Question 1

QUESTION

1. (a) To the Director General, NCC Regiment, Indian Army on the need to make NCC training a part of education in school.

Or,

(b) To the Editor of a reputed English newspaper highlighting the insecurity faced by elderly people in Indian Society today.

(a)

11, B. T. Road
Kolkata 700056
10 September 2022

The Director General
National Cadet Corps
New Delhi

Subject: Making NCC training a part of school education

Sir,

As a parent and a former cadet, I respectfully submit that NCC training should be made a regular part of school education.

The National Cadet Corps has long helped young people develop discipline, leadership and a spirit of service. However, only a limited number of schools offer it, and many students never get the chance to join. Making it part of the school curriculum would extend these benefits to all.

Regular drill and physical training would improve students' fitness, while camps and adventure activities would teach teamwork and self-reliance. Training in first aid, disaster relief and community service would prepare them to help in emergencies. It would also foster national integration and a sense of duty among future citizens.

I therefore request you to consider introducing NCC training in all schools, with suitable infrastructure and trained instructors.

Yours faithfully,
Subhajit Pal

(b)

6, Bidhan Pally
Kalyani 741235
10 September 2022

The Editor
The Statesman
Kolkata

Subject: Insecurity faced by the elderly

Sir,

Behind the closed doors of many homes, elderly people in India today live with a growing sense of insecurity.

As children move to other cities or abroad, many senior citizens now live alone. Loneliness, poor health and lack of care make their lives difficult. Some are neglected or even ill-treated by their own families, while others fall prey to burglars and online fraudsters who target those living by themselves. Rising medical costs add to the anxiety of those without a regular pension.

Society and the State must respond together. Police stations should keep lists of elderly residents and visit them regularly. Affordable healthcare, day-care centres and helplines for senior citizens should be expanded. Children must be reminded of their legal and moral duty to support their parents.

Those who built our society deserve to grow old in safety and dignity.

Yours faithfully,
Sharmila Basu

EXAM TIP

For (a), address the office by its proper title and keep the tone respectful; list benefits in a logical order (fitness, skills, citizenship). For (b), cover emotional, physical and financial insecurity. Bodies: about 140 and 140 words.

2021 · Question 1

QUESTION

1. (a) Write a letter to the Principal of your college requesting him for waiving the tuition fees during the pandemic period. Cite proper reasons for the prayer.

Or,

(b) Write a letter to the editor of an esteemed daily protesting against corporeal punishment in educational institutions,

(a)

23, G. T. Road
Howrah 711101
15 June 2021

The Principal
Howrah Narasingha Dutt College
Howrah

Subject: Prayer for waiver of tuition fees during the pandemic

Sir,

I am a student of B.A. Third Year (History) of your college. I humbly request you to waive my tuition fees for the period of the pandemic.

My father runs a small garment shop, which has remained closed for months because of the lockdown. With no income, and with our savings spent on treatment after my mother fell ill with COVID-19, my family is finding it hard to meet even daily needs. Besides, all classes have been held online, so I have not used the laboratory, library or other campus facilities for which part of the fees is charged.

I have always maintained a good academic record and do not wish my studies to be interrupted. I shall be grateful if you kindly waive my tuition fees for this period, or at least allow me to pay

them in instalments.

Yours faithfully,
Sumana Kar
Roll No. 47, B.A. Third Year (History)

(b)

5, Ballygunge Place
Kolkata 700019
15 June 2021

The Editor
The Telegraph
Kolkata

Subject: Corporal punishment in educational institutions

Sir,

Please allow me to protest strongly against the corporal punishment still inflicted on students in many schools and other educational institutions.

Although the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act prohibits physical punishment, reports of pupils being caned, slapped, made to kneel in the sun or humiliated before their classmates continue to appear. Such treatment does not discipline a child; it breeds fear, resentment and a dislike of learning. Some children suffer lasting injuries and emotional scars, and some even drop out of school.

Teachers must be trained in positive methods of discipline such as counselling, encouragement and dialogue with parents. Every institution should have a grievance cell where students can complain safely, and those who break the law must face strict action.

The education authorities must ensure that no child is beaten in the name of discipline.

Yours faithfully,
Kaustav Bose

EXAM TIP

(a) is a request: give two or three genuine reasons (loss of income, illness, online classes) and offer an alternative such as instalments. In (b), write "corporal" (bodily) punishment; "corporeal" in the printed question is a slip. Bodies: about 140 words each.

2020 · Question 1

QUESTION

1. (a) write a letter to the Manager of a theatre enquiring about showing a movie to the children of a school in the afternoon.

or

(b) Last Sunday you flew from Delhi to Kolkata. on arriving home you discovered that you had left your cabin bag on the plane. write a letter to the Airline describing about the bag.

(a)

Sunrise Public School
14, Diamond Harbour Road
Kolkata 700034
20 January 2020

The Manager
Rupkatha Cinema
Kolkata 700034

Subject: Enquiry about a special afternoon screening for schoolchildren

Sir,

I am writing on behalf of Sunrise Public School to enquire whether your theatre could arrange a special afternoon screening of a film for our students.

We plan to take about two hundred and fifty pupils of Classes VI to VIII to watch a suitable children's or family film on a weekday in the coming month. The show should begin around 2 p.m. and end by 4.30 p.m., so that the children can reach home before dark.

I would be grateful if you could let me know whether such a screening is possible, which films are available, the dates on which the hall is free, and the cost per ticket, including any concession for a school group. Please also inform us about seating, drinking water and parking for our school buses.

An early reply would help us complete our arrangements.

Yours faithfully,
Rita Mukherjee
Principal

(b)

16, Jodhpur Park
Kolkata 700068
24 February 2020

The Manager
Lost and Found Section
Skyline Airways
Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose International Airport
Kolkata 700052

Subject: Cabin bag left on flight SA 512 from Delhi to Kolkata

Sir,

Last Sunday I left my cabin bag on board one of your flights, and I seek your help in tracing it.

I travelled from Delhi to Kolkata on flight SA 512 on 23 February, in seat 14C; the flight landed at about 7.30 p.m. In my hurry to leave, I forgot the bag in the overhead locker above my seat and realised it only after reaching home.

It is a medium-sized black trolley bag with a red ribbon tied to the handle and a name tag bearing my name and phone number. It contains clothes, a pair of spectacles, some books and important office papers.

I request you to trace the bag and inform me, so that I may collect it from your office at Kolkata airport. Copies of my boarding pass and identity card are enclosed.

Yours faithfully,
Anirban Chakraborty
Phone: 98300 00000

EXAM TIP

Both are business letters. (a) should list every point the manager must answer (film, date, time, cost, facilities). (b) must give flight details and a precise description of the bag. Bodies: about 140 and 140 words.

2019 · Question 1

QUESTION

1. (a) Write a letter to the Editor of a newspaper expressing your views on the problems caused by the Mushrooming of unplanned buildings rapidly in the city. Also suggest some measures to arrest this problem.

or

(b) Write a letter to your friend living in another country, describing the initiatives taken by you to spread awareness regarding the benefits of planting trees.

(a)

33, Raja Rammohan Sarani
Kolkata 700009
16 July 2019

The Editor
The Statesman
Kolkata

Subject: Mushrooming of unplanned buildings in the city

Sir,

Unplanned buildings are springing up across our city at an alarming pace, and I request space in your newspaper to point out the harm they cause.

Multi-storeyed blocks are rising on narrow lanes, filled-up ponds and even wetlands, often without approved plans. Drainage built for a smaller population now overflows, causing

waterlogging after every shower. Roads are congested, groundwater is being exhausted, and open spaces have almost vanished. Many such structures also ignore fire-safety and structural norms, putting residents' lives at risk.

The civic authorities must act firmly. Building plans should be sanctioned only after checking drainage, road width and water supply, and illegal constructions must be stopped at the start rather than regularised later. Ponds and wetlands need strict protection. A master plan for the city's growth and regular inspections would arrest this trend.

Delay will only make the damage harder to undo.

Yours faithfully,
Arindam Ghosh

(b)

18, Netaji Nagar
Kolkata 700092
16 July 2019

Dear Arjun,

I was delighted to receive your letter and to learn that you have settled well in Toronto. You asked what keeps me busy, so let me tell you about a small campaign I have started.

After the scorching summer this year, a few friends and I formed a group called "Green Para". We visited schools in our neighbourhood and spoke to students about how trees cool the air, check pollution, hold the soil and give shelter to birds. With help from the local club, we planted nearly two hundred saplings along our streets and in school grounds, and each child adopted one sapling to tend. We also put up posters and spread the message on social media.

The response has been heartening, and the municipality has promised tree guards. Do write and tell me about green initiatives in Canada.

With love to uncle and aunt,

Yours affectionately,
Rahul

EXAM TIP

(a) is formal: problems first, then measures. (b) is a personal letter: no subject line, a warm opening and closing, and concrete actions rather than a lecture. Bodies: about 140 and 140 words.

2018 · Question 1

QUESTION

1. (a) Write a letter to a noted doctor whose practice is outside your city describing the nature of your ailment and seeking an appointment with him at his earliest convenience

or

(b) Write a letter to the editor of a newspaper expressing your anxiety and concern about the increasing exodus of bright students from your country seeking academic and career opportunities elsewhere adding a suggestion on how this tendency may be arrested.

(a)

7, Hill Cart Road
Siliguri 734001
3 August 2018

Dr S. K. Rao
Consultant Neurologist
22, Elgin Road
Kolkata 700020

Subject: Request for an appointment

Dear Dr Rao,

I am writing to seek an appointment with you, having heard much about your expertise in neurology from patients you have treated.

For about four months I have suffered from severe headaches, usually on one side of the head, accompanied by nausea and sensitivity to light. Lately they occur three or four times a week and sometimes last a whole day. Local doctors prescribed painkillers, and a brain scan showed nothing abnormal, but the relief has been only temporary. The attacks now affect my work and sleep.

Since I live in Siliguri, I would need to travel to Kolkata to consult you. I would be grateful if you could give me an appointment at your earliest convenience, preferably on a weekday, so that I can plan my journey. I shall bring all my reports and prescriptions with me.

Thanking you,

Yours sincerely,
Pradip Saha

(b)

41, Salt Lake, Sector II
Kolkata 700091
3 August 2018

The Editor
Hindustan Times
Kolkata

Subject: Exodus of bright students abroad

Sir,

It is with deep concern that I note the growing number of our brightest students who leave the country for higher studies and careers abroad, and seldom return.

Every year, thousands of young people trained at great public expense in our best institutions take their talent to foreign universities and companies. They are drawn by better research facilities, higher salaries, recognition of merit and a smoother working environment. The nation thus loses the innovation and leadership it badly needs.

This tendency can be arrested only by improving conditions at home. Universities need more research funding, modern laboratories and freedom from red tape. Industry should offer competitive pay and opportunities that reward merit. Fellowships for returning scholars, support for start-ups and collaboration with foreign institutions would encourage many to build their future here.

I hope policymakers will treat this as a national priority.

Yours faithfully,
Moumita Das

EXAM TIP

(a) is a semi-formal letter to a person: "Dear Dr Rao" and "Yours sincerely", with the symptoms stated clearly and briefly. (b) must end with the suggestion the question asks for. Bodies: about 140 words each.

2017 · Question 1

QUESTION within 150 words

1. Write a letter (within 150 words) to the editor of a newspaper on to what extent the use of animals in the scientific research acceptable.

14, Lake Road
Kolkata 700029
12 March 2017

The Editor
The Statesman
Kolkata

Subject: How far is the use of animals in scientific research acceptable?

Sir,

May I, through your columns, offer a view on a question that divides scientists and animal lovers alike: the use of animals in research?

There is no denying that animal studies have contributed to vaccines, surgical techniques and the safety testing of medicines that save millions of human lives. Banning them outright would slow medical progress. Yet countless animals suffer every year in experiments that are repetitive, poorly designed or meant only for cosmetics, and such cruelty cannot be justified.

The answer lies in balance. Animals should be used only for serious medical research and only where no alternative exists. Laboratories must adopt cell cultures and computer models wherever possible, reduce the number of animals, keep pain to a minimum and be inspected by independent ethics committees.

Science and compassion need not be enemies; with such safeguards, both can be served.

Yours faithfully,
Ananya Sen

EXAM TIP

A "to what extent" topic needs a balanced view: grant the benefits, condemn the abuse, then state a clear middle position. Body: about 140 words.

2016 · Question 1

QUESTION

1. Write a letter to the editor of a newspaper describing the rising instances of rough behavior of taxi and auto drivers. Suggest remedies for the situation.

27, Shyambazar Street
Kolkata 700004
8 February 2016

The Editor
The Telegraph
Kolkata

Subject: Rising rudeness of taxi and auto-rickshaw drivers

Sir,

Commuters in our city are meeting with rude and even aggressive behaviour from taxi and auto-rickshaw drivers more and more often, and I seek your space to raise the matter.

Refusals to go by the meter, demands for extra fare, overloading of autos and abusive language have become daily experiences for commuters. Women travelling late, elderly passengers and visitors unfamiliar with the city suffer most. Several incidents of drivers manhandling passengers have also been reported, and many people now hesitate to use these services.

Some simple steps could bring relief. Fares should be displayed clearly in every vehicle, and refusal should attract a heavy fine. A helpline number and the driver's licence details should be displayed inside each vehicle. Drivers ought to undergo regular training in courtesy, and repeat offenders must lose their permits.

I trust the transport department will act without delay.

Yours faithfully,
Sourav Mitra

EXAM TIP

The question has two parts, describing and suggesting remedies, so give each its own paragraph. No limit is printed; keep to the usual 150 words (body here: about 140).

2015 · Question 1

QUESTION within 200 words

1. Write a letter (within 200 words) to the editor of a newspaper on the ways and means of preventing the molestation of women and children in India.

9, Park Avenue
Durgapur 713204
20 April 2015

The Editor
The Times of India
Kolkata

Subject: Preventing the molestation of women and children

Sir,

Reports of the molestation of women and children appear in the press with disturbing regularity. I should like to suggest some ways in which this shameful trend can be checked.

The roots of the problem lie in social attitudes, weak enforcement and the silence of victims. Many cases go unreported because families fear stigma, while slow trials allow offenders to escape punishment. Children are especially vulnerable, since abusers are often people they know and trust.

Prevention must therefore begin at home and in school. Parents and teachers should teach children the difference between safe and unsafe touch and encourage them to speak up. Boys must be brought up to respect women as equals. Public places need better lighting, CCTV cameras and regular police patrols, and helpline numbers should be widely displayed.

Equally important is swift justice. Complaints must be registered without delay, women officers should be available at every police station, and cases under the POCSO Act and related laws should be tried in fast-track courts. Certain and speedy punishment is the strongest deterrent.

Only when families, schools, the police and the courts act together will women and children feel safe.

Yours faithfully,
Rina Chatterjee

EXAM TIP

"Ways and means" asks for solutions, so give most of the 200 words to prevention (home, school, public places, police, courts). Body: about 190 words.

2014 · Question 3

QUESTION within 150 words

3. Write a letter to the editor of a newspaper on the excessive expenses incurred at sports events held in India (within 150 words)

52, Station Road
Asansol 713301
5 May 2014

The Editor
Millennium Post
Kolkata

Subject: Lavish spending on sports events

Sir,

The lavish sums spent on sports events in India, often at the cost of sport itself, deserve public scrutiny.

Grand opening ceremonies, celebrity performances, decorative lighting and costly stadiums built for a single tournament consume enormous public funds. After the event, many of these venues lie unused and fall into disrepair. Meanwhile, young athletes in villages and small towns train without proper grounds, equipment, coaches or nutrition. Reports of irregularities in the organisation of some events have further shaken public trust.

Money meant for sport should build sport. The budget of every event ought to be audited and published, ceremonies kept modest, and stadiums designed for long-term community use. The savings could fund district academies, scholarships and modern training for promising talent.

Sports bodies would do well to heed this before the next big event is planned.

Yours faithfully,
Debashis Roy

EXAM TIP

Contrast the waste with the neglect of grassroots athletes; that contrast is the heart of the argument. Body: about 135 words.

Report Writing

2023 · Question 2

QUESTION 40 · within 200 words

2. Draft a report on 'Effect of Global Warming on Planet Earth', a Symposium organized by your college. (Within 200 words.)

Rabindra Mahavidyalaya Symposium Examines Global Warming's Toll on the Planet

KOLKATA, 18 March: A day-long symposium on "Effect of Global Warming on Planet Earth" was held at the auditorium of Rabindra Mahavidyalaya on Saturday. Organised by the college's Department of Environmental Science, it drew students, teachers, researchers and environmental activists from across the city.

Opening the session, the Principal said that global warming was no longer a distant threat but a reality visible in rising temperatures, erratic monsoons and melting glaciers. Speakers explained how the burning of fossil fuels and large-scale deforestation had raised the level of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. They described the danger to the Sundarbans, where rising seas and stronger cyclones threaten both the mangroves and the people who live there, and warned of falling crop yields, water shortages and the spread of disease.

Students presented papers and posters on renewable energy, waste reduction and sustainable farming. In a lively question-and-answer session, participants stressed that governments, industries and individuals must act together.

The symposium ended with a pledge by students to save energy, plant trees and avoid plastic. The organisers announced that the college would set up an eco-club and conduct an energy audit of the campus in the coming months.

EXAM TIP

A college-event report should name the organiser, venue, day and audience in the first paragraph, then the main points, then the outcome. Body: about 190 words.

2022 · Question 2

QUESTION 40 · within 200 words only

2. Draft a report on the usefulness of making a year's internship in industry a compulsory part of college education. (within 200 words only)

Educationists Back Year-Long Industry Internship for College Students

KOLKATA, 14 July: Making a year's internship in industry a compulsory part of college education would greatly improve the employability of graduates, educationists and industry leaders agreed at a panel discussion held at a city management institute on Thursday.

Opening the discussion, a senior academic observed that many graduates leave college with degrees but little idea of how a workplace functions. A full year in industry, he said, would let students apply classroom knowledge to real problems and develop teamwork, discipline, communication and problem-solving skills that textbooks cannot teach.

Industry representatives said that employers spend heavily on training fresh recruits. Interns who had worked with a firm for a year would need little training and could often be absorbed directly. Students would also discover their real interests early and choose careers more wisely, while a stipend would ease the burden on poorer families.

Some speakers cautioned that the scheme would succeed only if internships were properly structured and supervised, and did not become a source of cheap labour.

The panel recommended that universities and industry bodies frame clear guidelines, award academic credits for internships and set up placement cells linking colleges with firms.

EXAM TIP

An abstract topic becomes a news report when you hang it on an event (here a panel discussion). Show benefits, one caution and a recommendation. Body: about 190 words.

2021 · Question 2

QUESTION 40 · within 200 words

2. Draft a report on the way privatisation of government sectors can be done in a sensitive and perceptive manner (within 200 words).

Experts Call for a Humane Approach to Privatisation

KOLKATA, 22 August: Privatisation of government undertakings can benefit the economy only if it is carried out sensitively, with due regard for employees, consumers and the public interest, speakers said at a seminar organised by a city economics association on Sunday.

Economists acknowledged that many loss-making public enterprises burden the exchequer and that private management can bring efficiency, investment and modern technology. Yet they warned that a hasty or opaque sale of public assets could cause job losses, higher prices and the loss of essential services in remote areas.

To ensure a perceptive approach, speakers suggested that the government first identify strategic sectors that must remain in public hands. Sales should be made through open and transparent bidding, with asset valuations made public. Employees ought to be protected through job security for a fixed period, retraining and fair voluntary retirement schemes. Independent regulators must prevent private monopolies and protect consumers.

A trade union representative urged that workers be consulted at every stage, while others stressed that the proceeds should be spent on health, education and infrastructure.

The seminar ended with a resolution calling for a balanced policy that combines efficiency with social justice.

EXAM TIP

The key words are "sensitive and perceptive": the safeguards for workers, consumers and transparency should take up most of the report. Body: about 190 words.

2020 · Question 2

QUESTION 40

2. Draft a report on the poor conditions of roads and public parks in your locality.

Potholed Roads and Neglected Parks Trouble Behala Residents

KOLKATA, 5 September: Residents of several wards in Behala are facing serious hardship because of badly damaged roads and poorly maintained public parks in the area.

Most of the internal roads have not been repaired for years. Large potholes, many filled with rainwater during the monsoon, have made walking and driving hazardous. Several two-wheeler riders have been injured after skidding on the broken surface, and auto-rickshaws and school buses now avoid certain lanes. Ambulances, residents said, are often delayed on these stretches. Blocked drains add to the misery, leaving roads waterlogged for days after heavy rain.

The parks are in no better shape. Broken swings, overgrown grass, damaged benches and dead lights have turned them into unsafe places, especially after dark. Garbage lies heaped at the gates, and stray cattle roam inside. "Our children have nowhere to play, and the elderly cannot take their evening walk," a resident said.

Local people said they had complained repeatedly to the ward office without result. When contacted, municipal officials said that funds had been sanctioned and that repairs would begin after the monsoon.

Residents' welfare associations have threatened to stage a demonstration if work does not begin soon.

EXAM TIP

No limit is printed, so keep to the usual 200 words. A locality report is stronger when it shows the effects on people (injuries, children, the elderly) and ends with the authorities' response. Body: about 195 words.

2019 · Question 2

QUESTION 40

2. Draft a report on the scarcity of availability of blood in blood bank as well as risks involved in buying blood from blood banks, despite celebrating 'Blood Donation Day/Week' with all pomp and show in almost every nook and corner of the city.

Blood Banks Run Dry Despite Donation Day Fanfare

KOLKATA, 10 October: Barely a week after the city celebrated Blood Donation Day with rallies, banners and camps in almost every locality, patients and their families are running from one blood bank to another in search of blood.

Several government blood banks have reported acute shortages, particularly of rare groups. Patients awaiting surgery, mothers in childbirth and children with thalassaemia, who need regular transfusions, are the worst affected. Relatives are often told to bring their own donors, and many are forced to turn to touts outside hospitals who sell blood at high prices.

Doctors warned that such purchased blood carries serious risks. It is often drawn from professional donors who are poor, undernourished or ill, and may not be properly screened for infections such as HIV, hepatitis and malaria. Cases of patients receiving blood of the wrong group have also been reported.

Health experts said the celebrations achieve little if donation remains a once-a-year event. They called for voluntary camps throughout the year, especially in colleges and offices, better storage facilities and a computerised network showing the stock in every blood bank. Officials said action against illegal blood trading would be stepped up.

EXAM TIP

The question has three elements: the scarcity, the risks of buying blood, and the irony of the celebrations. Open with the irony and cover each element in turn. Body: about 190 words.

2017 · Question 2

QUESTION 40 · within 200 words

2. Draft a report (within 200 words) on GST roll-out celebration.

Nation Ushers in GST at Midnight Session of Parliament

NEW DELHI, 1 July: India's biggest tax reform since independence came into force at the stroke of midnight as the Goods and Services Tax (GST) was launched at a special function in the Central Hall of Parliament.

The President and the Prime Minister jointly pressed a button to mark the roll-out before an audience of ministers, members of Parliament, chief ministers, senior officials and industry leaders. The midnight ceremony recalled the historic session of August 1947. Some opposition parties, however, stayed away from the event.

Speaking at the function, the leaders described GST as a step towards "One Nation, One Tax" and an example of cooperative federalism, since the Centre and the States had shaped it together through the GST Council. The new system replaces a range of central and state levies, such as excise duty, service tax and VAT, with a single tax, removing barriers between States and creating a common national market.

Trade bodies and chambers of commerce in many cities held meetings to explain the new system, and officials said help desks had been set up to guide businesses.

Economists said that despite initial difficulties, the reform was expected to improve tax compliance and boost growth.

EXAM TIP

Use only facts you are sure of: the midnight launch of 30 June–1 July 2017 in the Central Hall, the GST Council, and the taxes it replaced. Body: about 195 words.

2016 · Question 2

QUESTION 40 · within 250 words

2. Draft a report (within 250 words) on environmental pollution.

"Be Careful about Environment"

"Be Careful about Environment": Rally Highlights Rising Pollution in Kolkata

KOLKATA, 5 June: Hundreds of students, teachers and environmental volunteers marched through central Kolkata on Sunday under the banner "Be Careful about Environment", drawing attention to the alarming rise in pollution in the city and its surroundings.

The rally, organised by a group of schools and voluntary organisations to mark World Environment Day, ended with a public meeting at which experts spoke on the many forms of pollution that threaten public health.

Speakers said that vehicle exhaust, construction dust and the burning of waste had made the city's air unhealthy, especially in winter, causing a rise in asthma and other respiratory illnesses. Untreated sewage and industrial effluents continue to flow into the Hooghly, while plastic bags choke drains and cause waterlogging during the monsoon. Noise from traffic, loudspeakers and firecrackers, they added, harms both people and birds.

An environmental scientist warned that pollution was no longer a matter of comfort but of survival. "Every citizen adds to the problem, and every citizen can help solve it," he told the gathering.

The speakers urged the authorities to enforce pollution norms strictly, expand public transport, phase out old vehicles, improve waste management and protect the city's wetlands and green cover. Citizens were asked to use public transport, avoid plastic, separate household waste and plant trees.

At the end of the meeting, participants took a pledge to protect the environment. The organisers said similar awareness programmes would be held in schools across the district throughout the year.

EXAM TIP

The printed line "Be Careful about Environment" reads as a theme or slogan, so build the report around an event carrying that banner. Cover air, water, plastic and noise in turn. Body: about 240 words.

2015 · Question 2

QUESTION 40 · within 250 words

2. Draft a report (within 250 words) on the problems of immigration and refugees in the world today.

Refugee Crisis Tests the World's Conscience, Seminar Told

KOLKATA, 20 June: The movement of millions of people fleeing war, persecution and poverty has become one of the gravest challenges facing the world today, speakers said at a seminar held in the city on World Refugee Day.

Opening the session, a professor of international relations said that conflicts in West Asia and Africa had forced unprecedented numbers of people from their homes. Many risk their lives crossing the sea in overcrowded boats or travelling long distances on foot, and thousands have died on the way. Those who survive often end up in crowded camps without adequate food, healthcare, schooling or legal status.

Speakers pointed out that the crisis affects host countries as well. Neighbouring nations, many of them poor, bear the heaviest burden, and the sudden arrival of large numbers strains housing, jobs and public services. This has fuelled resentment, anti-immigrant politics and stricter border controls in several countries. Irregular migration has also encouraged human trafficking and the exploitation of women and children.

Participants stressed, however, that refugees must not be seen merely as a burden, since many bring skills and labour that benefit their new homes. They called for fair burden-sharing among nations, greater support for United Nations agencies, and safe and legal routes for those seeking asylum. Above all, they said, the world must work to end the conflicts that drive people from their homes.

The seminar concluded with an appeal to treat every displaced person with dignity and compassion.

EXAM TIP

Look at both sides of the problem: the refugees' suffering and the strain on host countries. End with solutions. Avoid exact figures you cannot vouch for. Body: about 240 words.

2014 · Question 4

QUESTION 40 · within 200 words

4. Draft a report (within 200 words) on a disaster caused by fire.

Massive Fire Guts Wholesale Market in North Kolkata

KOLKATA, 12 February: A devastating fire broke out in a crowded wholesale market in north Kolkata early on Wednesday, destroying scores of shops and goods worth crores of rupees.

The fire started at about 2 a.m. in a garment shop on the ground floor of the four-storeyed building and spread rapidly through narrow corridors packed with cloth, plastic and other inflammable goods. Night guards raised the alarm, and local residents tried to douse the flames with buckets of water until the fire brigade arrived.

Several fire tenders battled the blaze for hours. Firefighters struggled to reach the building through narrow, encroached lanes, and water sources nearby were inadequate. Two guards trapped on the upper floor were rescued with hydraulic ladders and taken to hospital with burns. Residents of adjoining buildings were evacuated as a precaution.

Fire officials said a short circuit was the probable cause. The market, they added, had no working fire-fighting system, its exits were blocked with goods, and earlier notices had been ignored. "We lost everything in a few hours," said a shop-owner.

The State government has ordered an inquiry and announced a safety audit of all old markets in the city.

EXAM TIP

A disaster report follows the 5W+1H order: what happened, when and where, the rescue, the cause, then the official response. Body: about 195 words.

Précis Writing

2023 · Question 4

QUESTION 35+5

Write a precis on the following and add a suitable title for it.

[Passage: "Shakespeare is the greatest manipulator of the English tongue in poetry …" to "… the problem of translation still remains equally difficult." (about 226 words)]

Title: Shakespeare and the Limits of Translation

Shakespeare, the supreme master of English poetic language, is admired abroad, yet this does not disprove the view that poetry loses much in translation, for fewer foreigners grasp the associations of his language than enjoy his plays. He survives because his dramatic genius outlives the loss of his poetry and his verse expresses universal experience. Still, translation reduces his most suggestive lines to plain sense, and even if such a line bears a deeper meaning, translating it remains equally difficult.

(Passage: 226 words; Précis: 80 words)

EXAM TIP

Drop the Hamlet example entirely and keep only the point it proves: translation preserves sense but destroys poetry. The 5 title marks reward a title that names both Shakespeare and translation.

2022 · Question 4

QUESTION 35+5=40

Attempt a precis of the following passage (use special precis sheet provided for the purpose) and add a suitable title:

[Passage: "The medieval word for a Poet was a Maker, which …" to "… the pedantic prejudice that medieval civilization was not civilized." (about 386 words)]

Title: The Unrecognised Greatness of Chaucer

In the original sense of the poet as a maker, nobody was more creative than Chaucer. He created the national language and helped to shape the nation, standing as its father rather than merely one of its great sons, like Shakespeare and Milton. He also anticipated the novel, valued for its variety of real human characters rather than as a mere tale. Yet his greatness goes unrecognised. People repeat only the obvious: that he is nominally the father of English poetry, that English took shape in his age, with no credit to the man who shaped it, that he borrowed his framework of tales and enlivened it with personality, and that he possessed humour and courtesy. His name lacks the grandeur of Dante's or Shakespeare's, partly because early English is thought crude and partly because medieval civilisation is wrongly considered uncivilised.

(Passage: 386 words; Précis: 141 words)

EXAM TIP

The passage moves from Chaucer's achievements to the neglect of his greatness; keep that two-part order. Omit the comparisons with George Washington and Caedmon, which are illustrations, but retain the two reasons for the neglect given at the end.

2021 · Question 4

QUESTION (5+35) 40

Write a précis on the following passage and add a suitable title (use special sheet provided for the purpose):

[Passage: "There is an enemy beneath our feet-an enemy more deadly …" to "… precautionary measures can then be taken to save lives and some of the property." (about 330 words)]

Title: The Earth: Mankind's Impartial Enemy

The earth itself is mankind's deadliest enemy, for an earthquake threatens every nation alike and unleashes a power far beyond anything man can create. Scientists are working hard to combat it, and protection may soon be possible. Striking without warning, a quake ruins a modern city as completely as a primitive village, causing fires and explosions, wrecking transport, buildings, bridges and dams, and raising tidal waves at sea and avalanches in the mountains. Past quakes have killed thousands and even shifted whole regions of land. Since such forces cannot be resisted, scientists can only try to predict where a quake will strike, so that precautions may save lives and some property.

(Passage: 331 words; Précis: 111 words)

EXAM TIP

Leave out the Lisbon, Peru and Alaska figures; one general line on past destruction keeps the idea. The 5 marks are for the title, so make it capture the "impartial enemy" idea.

2020 · Question 4

QUESTION 35+5 = 40

write a precis of the following passage and add a suitable title:

[Passage: "If the West was considered the place of historical progress …" to "… changeless and static, cut off from the progress of western history." (about 127 words)]

Title: The Orient as a Timeless Land

Orientalism saw the West as the seat of historical and scientific progress and the Orient as changeless, frozen in antiquity far behind the enlightened West. Branded primitive and backward, it was a land where a Western traveller seemed to journey back in time: timeless, static and cut off from Western progress.

(Passage: 127 words; Précis: 51 words)

EXAM TIP

Drop the quoted phrase and the "twelfth to eighteenth century" example; keep the contrast West = progress, Orient = static. Slightly over one-third is acceptable for so short a passage.

2019 · Question 4

QUESTION 35 + 5 = 40

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

[Passage: "The chief record of Wordsworth's College life is to be found …" to "… she continued to be a kind of poetical conscience to him ." (about 180 words)]

Title: Dorothy, Wordsworth's Poetic Conscience

Wordsworth's college life is recorded chiefly in The Prelude. No distinguished scholar, he was shaped by inward experiences, and his reading of the great poets left no mark on his early verse. In the Lake Country he spent his vacations with his gifted sister Dorothy, who moulded his mind, softened his austere imagination and long remained his poetic conscience.

(Passage: 180 words; Précis: 59 words)

EXAM TIP

The passage builds towards Dorothy, so the title should name her influence, not just "Wordsworth at Cambridge". Omit the rock-and-ferns simile and the list of poets.

2018 · Question 4

QUESTION 40

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

[Passage: "The balance of nature is a very elaborate and very delicate …" to "… the biological aspects of the planet than has nature in five million." (about 145 words)]

Title: Man and the Balance of Nature

Nature's delicate balance has always shifted, slowly, as climates change and species evolve or spread. Civilised man has hastened this enormously, spreading species, covering land with crops and buildings, and destroying some creatures while multiplying others; in five thousand years he has altered life on earth more than nature did in five million.

(Passage: 145 words; Précis: 53 words)

EXAM TIP

The passage itself states 145 words, so aim near 48–50. Keep the closing five-thousand-versus-five-million contrast: it is the central idea, not a mere example.

2017 · Question 4

QUESTION 40

4. Make a precis of the following passage and add a suitable title:

[Passage: "Culture is a forbidding word. I have to use it, …" to "… a tradition which has lasted for about three thousand years." (about 260 words)]

Title: Culture, a Quiet Inheritance

The writer reluctantly uses the word culture for the fine things earlier generations created and handed down, which some wish to pass on although many scorn them as a waste of space and time. Cultured people no longer form an exclusive class, and culture is no longer a social privilege, neither a shield against the masses nor a ladder to high society. Still, they remain a small, unheard minority. Their real task is to transmit their modest knowledge and appreciation of books, pictures and music, a tradition some three thousand years old.

(Passage: about 260 words; Précis: 92 words)

EXAM TIP

The passage is personal ("we", "I"); turn it into third person ("the writer", "cultured people") and drop the images of drops in the ocean and grass-fires.

2016 · Question 4

QUESTION 40

4. Make a precis of the following passage and add a suitable title.

[Passage: "In reality, the soldier who is engaged in armed combat …" to "… the liveliest minds among us and which, literally, mutilate us." (about 270 words)]

Title: Liberation Struggle Restores a People

The soldier in a war of national liberation constantly feels the full degradation that colonial rule has inflicted. He must not only defeat the enemy but also lift his whole people out of the despair rooted in them. Though oppression is painful, the struggle, by restoring the downtrodden, reintegrates the nation and gives it unity and coherence, for colonialism crushes both the individual and the social structure. The liberation struggle also destroys the false notions of inferiority that colonial administration, military occupation and economic exploitation have planted, and only armed conflict can uproot them.

(Passage: about 270 words; Précis: 94 words)

EXAM TIP

Keep the two linked ideas in order: the struggle unites a broken people, and it destroys the colonial myth of inferiority. Leave out images such as "out of the pit and out of the shadows".

2015 · Question 4

QUESTION 40

4. Make a precis of the following passage and add a suitable title.

[Passage: "I quite understand that food and the utensils to eat …" to "… a giant who has got out of his depth and knows not how to swim." (317 words, as printed)]

Title: Simplicity in Life and Education

Education should be simple and inexpensive, since a costly apparatus that puts learning beyond reach defeats its own purpose, especially where resources are scarce. Eastern peoples, helped by their warm climate, have kept food, clothing and shelter simple, and education should respect this way of life. The writer does not praise poverty, but holds that simplicity is worth more than luxury and is a mark of perfection, not mere want; its absence makes essentials scarce and dear. Modern civilisation lets eating, entertainment, learning, government and law swell beyond their proper place, wasting strength without wisdom and floundering helplessly.

(Passage: 317 words; Précis: 98 words)

EXAM TIP

The printed count (317) gives a target of about 105 words. Drop the money-bags and drowning-giant images and keep only their point: needless costliness and misdirected effort.

2014 · Question 2

QUESTION 40

2. Make a precis of the following passage and add an appropriate title :

[Passage: "Not a few of our troubles are the result of acting …" to "… have saved themselves and their friends much necessary worry." (about 190 words)]

Title: Think Before You Act

Many of our troubles arise because we act first and think later, when it is too late. Thoughtless words and deeds, which cannot be undone, ruin countless friendships, yet people repeat the same folly endlessly. Thinking before speaking or acting is hard to learn but can be mastered and richly repays the effort; learnt early, it spares oneself and others a lifetime of regret.

(Passage: about 190 words; Précis: 64 words)

EXAM TIP

A short passage needs a short précis: about one-third is roughly 63 words. A crisp four-word title that states the moral earns the title marks.

Translation

2023 · Question 5

NOTE

The scan carries no year heading or question number for this paper. The year is confirmed by the paper code "MWC/II/2023" in the running head of page (3), where passage (b) continues.

QUESTION 40

Translate the Hindi passage into English (*any one*):

(Who opted Hindi in lieu of Bengali for Paper-I)

(a) [Passage: "अनुशासन की आवश्यकता हर स्थान पर औरहर क्षेत्र में …" to "… अध्ययन उसके नागरिकों को देखकर किया जा सकता है।" (about 175 words)]

(b) [Passage: "राष्ट्रीय विकास परिषद् ने देश के किसानों और कारखानों …" to "… सभी कार्यों को उक्त दृष्टि से देखा जाना चाहिए।" (about 170 words)]

(a)

Discipline is needed everywhere and in every sphere. It matters greatly in a person's private life, in social life and in the life of the nation. Someone whose private life lacks discipline will face difficult situations again and again, and will usually fail to achieve his goals. Such a person does not earn respect in society either. An undisciplined individual can contribute nothing to the advancement of his community; he may even obstruct its progress and become a burden on it. In national life, discipline matters most of all. A nation whose citizens are disciplined can face even the gravest crisis with dignity, whereas a nation of undisciplined citizens is like an unruly mob: no one can tell how it will behave next. The individual is the basic unit of society and of the nation, so a society and a nation will be only as good as the people who make them up. The character of a nation or a society can therefore be judged by looking at its citizens.

(b)

The National Development Council has appealed to the country's farmers and factory workers to give their fullest co-operation in making the Fourth Five-Year Plan a success. The various items of the Plan can be carried out successfully through the disciplined co-operation and devotion to duty of the people, and every section of society should contribute to this end. The Council has asked those who are well off to show restraint in their spending, to stop wasting their money and to try to cut down their expenses. All citizens should give the interests of the nation and of society more weight than their own narrow interests; in doing so they will be able to safeguard both their private interests and those of the nation. The present situation of the country has made arrangements for its security all the more important, and every task under the national Plan should be viewed from this standpoint.

EXAM TIP

"स्वाभिमान के साथ झेल लेते हैं" becomes "face … with dignity", and "अनियन्त्रित भीड़" "an unruly mob". In (b) capitalise "National Development Council" and "Fourth Five-Year Plan", and render "संकुचित हितों" as "narrow interests".

2022 · Question 5

NOTE

The scan carries no year heading, question number or paper code for this paper, so 2022 is a probable year based on the page order only (it sits between the 2021 and the MWC/II/2023 papers), not a confirmed one. The paper says "any one", but only passage (a) appears in the scan.

QUESTION 40

Translate the Hindi passage into English (*any one*):

(Who opted Hindi in lieu of Bengali for Paper-I)

(a) [Passage: "प्रातः काल भ्रमण करने से प्रकृति के सौन्दर्य पान …" to "… से शरीर के सब अंगों को प्राणवायु मिलती है।" (about 150 words)]

A morning walk lets us drink in the beauty of nature. The cool, gentle, fragrant breeze breathes new life into us. The twittering of birds, the smiling flowers and the red rays of the rising sun falling on the green earth spread a golden glow that fills the whole atmosphere with energy and refreshes both body and mind. While the polluted air around us all day makes us ill, the fresh, pure atmosphere and clean air of the early morning free us from many diseases. Even a sick person regains health by walking in clean air. Walking barefoot on dewy grass in the morning improves the eyesight. A brisk walk with the arms swinging exercises the whole body and eases mental stress. Breathing pure, fresh air supplies oxygen to every organ of the body.

EXAM TIP

"सौन्दर्य पान" is figurative ("drink in the beauty"), and "प्राणों को जीवन प्रदान करती है" reads naturally as "breathes new life into us". Render "प्राणवायु" as "oxygen", not "life-air".

2021 · Question 5

NOTE

The scan carries no year heading or question number for this paper. Its paper code at the top left (it looks like "ABC(C-II)-2/20…") is cut off by the scan and cannot be read with certainty, so 2021 is a probable year based on the page order only, not a confirmed one.

QUESTION 40

Hindi passage for Translation into English:

[Passage: "एक दिन सर आइजेक न्यूटन अपने कमरे की मेज …" to "… डायमंड तुम नहीं जानते कि तुमने क्या किया है।" (about 110 words)]

One day Sir Isaac Newton went out of his room, leaving on his table a pile of papers that contained his long research on the theory of light. His pet dog, Diamond, was lying in the same room. No sooner had he left than the dog jumped onto the table in such a way that a lighted candle standing on it fell over, and the papers caught fire at once. When Newton returned a few moments later, he found that twenty

years of hard work had been reduced to ashes. Yet the great scientist only patted the dog on the head and said in amazement, "Oh, Diamond, you do not know what you have done!"

EXAM TIP

"उनके जाते ही" is best rendered "No sooner had he left than…"; "राख में बदल गयी" becomes "had been reduced to ashes". Put Newton's closing words in direct speech with quotation marks and an exclamation mark.

2020 · Question 5

NOTE

The scan carries no year heading, question number or legible paper code for this paper, so 2020 is a probable year, not a confirmed one. It rests on the page order alone; passage (b) mentions UNESCO listing the Pink City (Jaipur, inscribed in 2019), which only shows the paper is from 2019 or later.

QUESTION 40

Translate the Hindi passages into English (*any one*):

(Who opted Hindi in liew of Bengali for Paper-I)

(a) [Passage: "जब से सभ्यता की शुरुआत हुई है तभी से …" to "… उसे प्राप्त करने के तरीके खोज ही लेते हैं।" (about 150 words)]

(b) [Passage: "कोई भी देश अपने ऐतिहासिक धरोहरों को सुरक्षित रखने …" to "… इसमें शामिल होनेवाला भारत का यह ग्यारहवां धरोहर बना।" (about 105 words)]

(a)

Ever since civilisation began, human beings have had to work in order to invent new and useful things. It is need alone that kindles in a person the passion to work for a living or to invent new things that benefit both himself and others. Need also spurs people into action. Whenever people want something, they must work hard to obtain it. To survive, for instance, people need money; to earn money they must work, and so in the end they look for a suitable job. Once a particular need becomes essential for survival, people always find a way to meet it.

(b)

To protect its historical heritage, a country declares such sites national monuments so that special care can be taken of them, for a nation is known above all by its ancient culture. With this in mind, UNESCO too adds the most vulnerable heritage sites of all countries to its list every year and gives financial help for their care and preservation. Recently UNESCO added India's Pink City to the World Heritage List, making it the eleventh Indian site to be included in it.

EXAM TIP

In (a) the Hindi "यह" points back to necessity, so name it ("It is need that…") instead of a vague "it". "सबसे जरूरतमंद धरोहरों" reads better as "the most vulnerable heritage sites"; keep the passage's own claim ("eleventh") without adding facts of your own.

2019 · Question 5

NOTE

The scan carries no year heading, paper code or page header for this paper, so 2019 is a probable year, not a confirmed one. It rests on two things: the page order (the translation papers run 2019 to 2023 on these pages) and passage (b), which reports the breaking of Vidyasagar's statue in Kolkata in May 2019, so the paper cannot be earlier than 2019.

QUESTION 40

5. Translate *any one* of the following passages into English:

(a) [Passage: "कोलकाता आकर दिल्ली के एक युवक अरमान अली ने …" to "… बल्कि वे चाहते हैं कि समाज की जागरुकता बढ़े।" (about 195 words)]

(b) [Passage: "कॉलेज स्क्वायर के श्यामाचरण दे स्ट्रीट में देव लाइब्रेरी …" to "… शुरु हुई है, उसे और बढ़ाने का प्रयोजन है।" (about 240 words)]

(a)

Armaan Ali, a young man from Delhi, came to Kolkata and planned to go to a restaurant for a plate of biryani. Before he went in, however, all sorts of questions began to cross his mind, such as whether the restaurant would have a wheelchair ramp. His fear proved well founded: several well-known restaurants in the city have no wheelchair access at all. Bibhas Das, another disabled young man like us, spoke of the obstacles he meets at every step. Both his legs have been affected by polio. Yet society's lack of awareness has not weakened the will of these young men; in the course of their struggle they have overcome hundreds of obstacles. At the American Center, the two of them shared the stories of their own struggles. Bibhas said that he travels all over the world on his crutches, and told the audience that he had won a silver medal in wheelchair fencing at the Paralympics. "My crutches are not my weakness but my strength," he remarked. Both of them said that they do not ask society for pity; what they want is for society to become more aware.

(b)

Dev Library, on Shyamacharan De Street near College Square, holds a vast number of books, and the works of different authors are arranged in different corners of the shop. The man in charge of the library said, "Suddenly every educated person has been drawn towards Vidyasagar. Within just a few days a great many people have come to my shop to buy *Barna Parichay*. I cannot say whether all this is happening because his statue was broken, but it is true that Vidyasagar has come into the spotlight afresh." This is the news now coming from the book market of College Street. Several publishers have at present begun to reprint *Barna Parichay*, although the copyright earlier belonged to a single publisher, Dev Library itself. A man of about seventy, dressed in dhoti and kurta and associated with the Dev Library group, said, "That day, before I went home, a procession had passed along College Street. At home I saw the news on television, and it hurt me to see that Vidyasagar's statue had been broken. Then it struck me that this very feeling has made people more conscious of Vidyasagar; otherwise he had simply been shut away in a glass case. A fresh discussion about Vidyasagar has begun, and it needs to be carried further."

EXAM TIP

"पग-पग पर" became "at every step" and "बैशाखी" "crutches"; "ह्विल चैयर जाने का रास्ता" is "wheelchair access" or "a wheelchair ramp", not "a road for the wheelchair". In (b), keep the primer's name as *Barna Parichay* and render "नये सिरे से सामने आने लगे हैं" as "has come into the spotlight afresh".

Essay & Composition

2023 · Question 3

QUESTION 40

Write a composition on any one of the following topics:

(a) National Education Policy (NEP) 2020: Highlights and Implementations

(b) Kanyashree Project, a Govt. Initiative: A model for woman empowerment and emancipation

(c) Ageing

(d) Literature and the representation of reality

(a) National Education Policy (NEP) 2020: Highlights and Implementation

Education policy shapes a nation more quietly, and more lastingly, than almost any other decision of government. India's third national policy on education, approved by the Union Cabinet in July 2020, replaced a framework that had stood since 1986. Its stated aim is to make Indian education holistic, flexible and rooted in the country's own needs while meeting global standards.

The most visible change is in school structure. The old 10+2 pattern gives way to a "5+3+3+4" design covering the foundational, preparatory, middle and secondary stages, so that early childhood care from the age of three is brought into the formal system for the first time. The policy gives special weight to foundational literacy and numeracy, recommends the mother tongue or regional language as the medium of instruction at least until Class 5, and introduces vocational exposure and coding from the middle stage. Board examinations are meant to test understanding rather than memory, and rigid walls between arts, commerce and science are to come down.

In higher education, the policy proposes four-year undergraduate programmes with multiple entry and exit points, an Academic Bank of Credits, a single overarching regulator, an invitation to leading foreign universities to open campuses in India, and a target of raising the gross enrolment ratio to fifty per cent by 2035. Recognising that no reform rises above the quality of its teachers, it makes a four-year integrated B.Ed. the minimum qualification for school teachers by 2030. It also repeats the long-standing goal of spending six per cent of GDP on education.

Implementation has begun but remains uneven. New curriculum frameworks, the credit bank, a foundational literacy mission and a common university entrance test are in place, and many universities have adopted the four-year degree. Yet education is a concurrent subject, and several states have objected to parts of the policy or preferred their own versions. Shortages of trained teachers, the cost of new infrastructure and the digital divide exposed during the pandemic are further obstacles. The promise of six per cent of GDP, first made decades ago, is still far from being met.

NEP 2020 is, therefore, a sound vision whose success will depend less on its wording than on funding, teacher training and genuine cooperation between the Centre and the states. If those conditions are met, it could produce learners who think, question and create rather than merely pass examinations.

(b) Kanyashree Prakalpa: A Model for the Empowerment and Emancipation of Women

In many parts of rural Bengal, a girl's schooling once ended the moment a suitable marriage proposal arrived. Kanyashree Prakalpa, launched by the Government of West Bengal in 2013, was designed to break that pattern by giving families a direct reason to keep their daughters in education and to delay their marriage.

The scheme is a conditional cash transfer. Girls in the adolescent age group who are unmarried and enrolled in school, or in an equivalent course, receive a modest annual scholarship. On turning eighteen, a girl who is still unmarried and continuing her education or training receives a one-time grant of twenty-five thousand rupees. A later component supports meritorious young women in postgraduate study. The money is paid straight into the girl's own bank account, which itself introduces many girls to financial independence. Because applications are made through schools and verified online, the benefit reaches the girl without passing through middlemen, and the scheme has grown to cover lakhs of girls every year across all the districts of the state.

The value of the project lies in this simple design. Each payment rewards two choices at once: staying in education and postponing marriage. It therefore attacks child marriage, early pregnancy, school dropout and the trafficking of vulnerable girls together. Kanyashree clubs in schools encourage girls to speak up, to report attempted child marriages and to support one another, and members have often persuaded parents to call off the wedding of an under-age classmate. The scheme received the United Nations Public Service Award in 2017, and the state observes 14 August as Kanyashree Divas.

Its achievements, however, should not hide its limits. A cash incentive cannot by itself change deep-rooted social attitudes, and child marriage has not disappeared from the state. Girls who complete school still need colleges within reach, safe transport and, above all, jobs; without them the grant risks becoming a dowry fund rather than a stepping-stone. Regular independent evaluation is needed to measure its long-term effect on employment and decision-making.

Even so, Kanyashree shows that well-targeted public money, placed directly in the hands of girls, can shift family choices. It offers a practical model for other states and countries: empowerment begins when a girl is allowed to stay in the classroom long enough to choose her own future.

(c) Ageing

Ageing is the one journey every living person shares, yet modern society seems strangely unprepared for it. Better medicine, nutrition and sanitation have lengthened human life, and India, long described as a young nation, now has a fast-growing population of people over sixty. How a society treats its elderly is fast becoming one of the clearest tests of its humanity.

Biologically, ageing brings a gradual decline in strength, sight, hearing and memory, and a greater risk of chronic illnesses such as diabetes, arthritis and heart disease. These changes need not mean helplessness. Regular exercise, a balanced diet, mental activity and timely medical care allow many people to remain active well into their seventies and eighties. The morning walkers in any city park, many of them past seventy, show that the body ages more gracefully when it is kept in use.

The deeper problems are social and economic. The joint family, which once gave old people both care and dignity, is giving way to small nuclear households, often scattered across cities and countries as children migrate for work. Many elderly parents live alone, and loneliness can harm health as much as disease. Most Indian workers have spent their lives in the informal sector without pensions, so old age often means dependence and poverty. Older women, who usually live longer and own less, suffer most. Cases of neglect and abuse, even by close relatives, are reported with painful regularity.

Remedies must come from several directions. The state has a duty to extend pensions, affordable health care and geriatric services, and to enforce laws that require children to maintain their parents. Communities can build day-care centres, recreation clubs and neighbourhood networks so that no old person is forgotten. Families, for their part, must remember that care is not charity but repayment of a lifelong debt.

Older people are also a resource, not merely a responsibility. Their experience, patience and skills can enrich schools, voluntary groups and workplaces that are willing to employ them. A retired engineer who coaches village students in mathematics, or a grandmother who keeps a family's recipes and stories alive, contributes something no institution can replace. Longer lives are a triumph only if they are also full and secure ones. The way we treat the old today will decide how we ourselves are treated tomorrow.

(d) Literature and the Representation of Reality

Every work of literature is, in some sense, a mirror held up to life, yet no mirror is perfectly flat. Writers select, arrange and colour what they see, and the question of how far literature represents reality has occupied critics from ancient times to our own.

Aristotle described poetry as imitation, but he did not mean mere copying. In his view the poet shows what may happen, according to probability, and so reveals general truths that history, bound to particular facts, cannot. This idea explains why a tragedy about an imaginary king may tell us more about ambition or grief than a chronicle of real events.

In the nineteenth century, realism and naturalism tried to bring literature as close to everyday life as possible. Novelists such as Balzac, George Eliot and Tolstoy described ordinary households, money, work and social class in careful detail. In India, Premchand wrote of peasants and debt, and Bengali fiction from Bankim Chandra to Manik Bandopadhyay portrayed village and city life with growing frankness. Such writing made readers see neglected people as fully human, and it sometimes stirred public opinion enough to influence reform.

Twentieth-century writers questioned whether reality could be captured from the outside at all. Modernists explored the inner stream of thought, while others used fantasy, myth and magical events to express truths that plain description could not reach. A fable or an exaggerated story may expose injustice more sharply than a faithful report. Orwell's Animal Farm, a tale of farm animals, says more about the betrayal of a revolution than many history books, and Kafka's nightmarish fables capture the helplessness of the individual before faceless authority.

Literature therefore represents reality not by reproducing it but by interpreting it. Its truth is emotional and moral rather than merely factual. A good novel or poem lets readers live briefly in another person's experience, enlarging their understanding and sympathy. At the same time, every representation reflects the writer's position, beliefs and blind spots, which is why readers must read critically and why the voices of women, Dalits, tribal communities and other once-silenced groups have changed our sense of what "reality" includes.

In the end literature neither escapes from life nor simply records it. It shapes our perception of the world, and in doing so it becomes part of that reality itself.

> **EXAM TIP**
>
> A 40-mark composition needs a clear introduction, three or four developed body paragraphs and a balanced conclusion (roughly 400 words). For policy topics such as NEP or Kanyashree, give only facts you are sure of and weigh achievements against shortcomings.

2022 · Question 3

QUESTION 40

Write an essay on any one of the following topics:

(a) Modern life in the Shadow of Artificial Intelligence.

(b) Representation of Women's Empowerment in Literature of the World.

(c) Search Engines on the Internet : Lord or Devil?

(a) Modern Life in the Shadow of Artificial Intelligence

Not long ago, artificial intelligence belonged to science fiction. Today it suggests the next word in our messages, recommends what we watch, sorts our email, translates languages and answers questions in fluent prose. Almost without noticing, we have begun to live alongside machines that learn.

The benefits are real. In medicine, AI systems help doctors read scans and detect diseases earlier. Farmers receive forecasts and crop advice on their phones. Banks use it to spot fraud, factories to predict machine failure, and governments to deliver services more quickly. For students and professionals, AI tools can explain difficult ideas, draft documents and save hours of routine work. For people with disabilities, speech and vision tools open doors that were once closed: a blind student can have a textbook read aloud, and a farmer who cannot read can ask a question in Bengali and hear the answer.

Yet the shadow is as long as the light. Many routine jobs, in offices as well as factories, may be automated, and workers who cannot learn new skills risk being left behind. AI systems learn from data that may carry human prejudice, and so can repeat unfair decisions about loans, jobs or policing. Realistic fake images, voices and videos make it harder to know what is true, which threatens both personal reputations and democratic debate. The constant collection of personal data raises serious questions of privacy and surveillance. There is also a quieter danger: if we let machines think for us, we may slowly lose the habit of thinking for ourselves.

The answer is neither blind enthusiasm nor fear. Governments must frame clear rules on data protection, transparency and accountability, so that a human being remains responsible for decisions that affect lives. Education must change to teach critical thinking, creativity and digital literacy, the abilities that machines cannot easily replace. Companies must test their systems for bias and be honest about their limits. Workers whose tasks are automated need retraining, and schemes for re-skilling should be planned now rather than after jobs have disappeared.

Artificial intelligence is powerful but has no conscience of its own; it reflects the purposes of those who build and use it. Whether it frees human beings from drudgery or quietly controls them depends on the choices made in this decade. Modern life need not stand in its shadow, provided people keep the final judgment in human hands.

(b) Representation of Women's Empowerment in the Literature of the World

Literature has often recorded the silence of women before it recorded their voices. For centuries most published writers were men, and women appeared in their pages as goddesses, temptresses or obedient wives. The gradual change in that portrayal is one of the most important stories in world literature.

Even in older texts, strong women break through. Sophocles' Antigone defies a king to bury her brother. In the Indian epics, Draupadi questions the assembly that gambled her away, and Sita's final refusal to

undergo another ordeal has been read as an act of dignity. Shakespeare's Portia and Rosalind are wiser and wittier than the men around them, although both must disguise themselves as men to act freely, a telling comment on the limits their world imposed.

The nineteenth century brought women's own voices into print. Jane Austen and Charlotte Brontë wrote of women who insist on marrying for love and self-respect; Jane Eyre's declaration of equality still moves readers. Henrik Ibsen's A Doll's House ended with Nora leaving her husband, a door-slam that shocked European audiences. In Bengal, Rabindranath Tagore gave women a strong inner life, and Rassundari Devi's autobiography showed a housewife teaching herself to read in secret.

In the twentieth century, Virginia Woolf argued in A Room of One's Own that a woman needs money and a room of her own to write. Simone de Beauvoir analysed how society makes a woman "the second sex". Toni Morrison, Maya Angelou and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie wrote of race and gender together, while Indian writers such as Mahasweta Devi, Ismat Chughtai and Kamala Das portrayed tribal, Muslim and middle-class women resisting both poverty and patriarchy.

This literature does more than describe empowerment; it helps to create it. By showing women as thinking, choosing and suffering individuals, it changes how readers, male and female, see the world. Nora's departure provoked debates in drawing rooms across Europe, and generations of young women have found in Jane Eyre or in Mahasweta Devi's fierce heroines the courage to question the roles assigned to them. Yet the task is unfinished, since many women's stories, especially those of the poor and marginalised, remain untold or are lost because they were never written down or translated. World literature will be complete only when every woman can tell her own story in her own voice.

(c) Search Engines on the Internet: Lord or Devil?

Whenever we need an answer today, from a train timing to the symptoms of an illness, our first instinct is to type a question into a search engine. Within a second it offers thousands of results. Such a powerful servant naturally invites the question whether it has quietly become our master.

There is no doubt about its benefits. Search engines have made the knowledge of the world available to anyone with a phone and an internet connection. A student in a remote village can read the same lectures and articles as a student in a great city. Professionals find solutions to technical problems in minutes, small businesses reach customers, and citizens can check government schemes and their rights. In emergencies, quick information about hospitals, routes and helplines can save lives. Farmers check market prices before selling their crops, and job-seekers find vacancies that once reached only those with the right connections. In this sense the search engine has spread knowledge more widely than any invention since the printing press.

The darker side is less visible. Search engines rank results through secret formulas, so a handful of companies decide what billions of people see first. Their business depends on advertising, which means they collect enormous amounts of personal data about our habits, locations and interests. Results can be shaped by commercial or political interests, and misleading or false pages sometimes appear at the top. Personalised results may trap users in a "filter bubble", showing them only what confirms their beliefs. Constant searching has also weakened patience and memory; many people no longer try to remember or think through a problem, because the answer seems always a click away.

The search engine, then, is neither lord nor devil. Its value depends on how it is governed and how it is used. Strong data-protection laws, competition among providers and transparency about ranking can limit its abuses. Users, for their part, must learn to compare sources, check facts and think critically. A

student who reads three sources on a topic, and asks who wrote each one and why, gains far more than one who copies the first answer that appears.

Used wisely, the search engine remains a remarkable servant of knowledge. Used blindly, it can mislead and manipulate. The choice between the two rests with us.

EXAM TIP

Open with a hook, give both sides, and end with a measured judgment. For a literature topic, accurate references to well-known works and writers earn marks; never invent titles or quotations.

2021 · Question 3

QUESTION 40

Write a composition on any one of the following topics:

(a) The menace of smartphones

(b) Social service is a necessary part of human existence

(c) Junk food and diseases

(a) The Menace of Smartphones

Walk into any railway compartment, restaurant or family drawing room today and you will find heads bent over glowing screens. The smartphone, a marvel of convenience, has become so central to daily life that many people feel anxious when it is out of reach. What began as a useful device now threatens to rule its owners.

Its usefulness cannot be denied. A smartphone is at once a telephone, camera, bank, map, library and classroom. It brought online lessons to students during the pandemic, allows small traders to receive digital payments and keeps migrant workers in touch with their families. Farmers check weather forecasts on it, patients book doctors' appointments, and elderly parents see their grandchildren's faces on video calls. To condemn the device itself would be foolish.

The menace lies in its misuse. Endless scrolling through short videos and social media feeds is designed to hold attention, and many users, especially teenagers, spend several hours a day on their phones. Sleep suffers, studies suffer and concentration weakens. Doctors report eye strain, neck pain and poor posture even among children. Constant comparison with the glamorous lives shown online can feed anxiety, loneliness and low self-esteem. Families sit together at the dinner table yet hardly talk, each member absorbed in a separate screen. On the roads, people use phones while driving or crossing streets, with fatal results. Cyber-bullying, online fraud and the rapid spread of rumours through messaging groups add a social dimension to the problem.

The remedy lies in balance rather than prohibition. Parents should set limits on children's screen time and, more importantly, set an example themselves. Schools can teach digital discipline and online safety as part of the curriculum. Individuals can switch off needless notifications, keep phones away at meals and at bedtime, and set aside phone-free hours for reading, exercise and conversation. Stricter enforcement of laws against using phones while driving is also essential. Technology companies, too, could help by offering simple tools that show users how much time they spend and by not designing apps to be addictive.

The smartphone itself is neither good nor evil; the menace lies in surrendering to it. If we learn to control it, it will enrich our lives; if we allow it to control us, it will steal the time, health and relationships that make life worth living.

(b) Social Service Is a Necessary Part of Human Existence

Human beings are social by nature. No one is born, grows up or survives entirely alone; each of us depends on parents, teachers, farmers, doctors and countless strangers. Social service, the willing effort to help others without seeking reward, is therefore not an optional act of charity but a natural repayment of that debt.

Every civilisation has recognised this truth. Indian tradition speaks of seva and of serving God through serving human beings. Swami Vivekananda urged his followers to see the divine in the poor and the sick. Mahatma Gandhi built his political movement on constructive work, sanitation, village industries and the uplift of the downtrodden. Mother Teresa devoted her life in Kolkata to the dying and the destitute. Their example shows that service can change both society and the person who serves.

Social service takes many forms. It may be teaching poor children, donating blood, caring for the elderly, planting trees, cleaning a neighbourhood or helping victims of floods and cyclones. Organisations such as the National Service Scheme and the National Cadet Corps give students a chance to work in villages and slums, while countless voluntary groups fill gaps that government services cannot reach. During the Covid-19 lockdown, ordinary citizens cooked meals for migrant workers, arranged oxygen cylinders and delivered medicines to elderly neighbours, proving that service does not require wealth or a formal organisation, only willingness.

The benefits flow both ways. Society gains practical help and a stronger sense of community. The volunteer gains discipline, empathy, confidence and a sense of purpose that no material success can give. Service breaks down barriers of class, caste and religion, because those who work together for a common cause learn to respect one another. A college student who spends a summer teaching in a slum school often returns with a clearer sense of her own privileges and duties.

Modern life, with its competition and self-interest, makes such service more necessary than ever. People today are better connected by technology yet often lonelier and more indifferent to their neighbours' suffering. Even a few hours a month given to others can restore the human bond.

A life spent only on oneself is narrow and, in the end, unsatisfying. Social service gives existence meaning and makes society humane. In serving others, we discover the best in ourselves.

(c) Junk Food and Diseases

Brightly packaged chips, sugary drinks, burgers, pizzas and instant noodles have become part of everyday eating in Indian cities and, increasingly, in small towns. They are tasty, cheap and quick, and clever advertising makes them fashionable among the young. Behind their appeal, however, lies a growing threat to public health.

Junk food is food high in calories, refined flour, sugar, salt and unhealthy fats, but poor in fibre, vitamins and minerals. It fills the stomach without nourishing the body. Because it is designed to taste irresistible, people tend to eat more of it than they need, and often in place of balanced meals of grains, pulses, vegetables and fruit.

The link between such food and disease is well established. Excess calories and sugar lead to obesity, which is rising sharply among Indian children. Obesity, in turn, raises the risk of type 2 diabetes, a disease once associated with middle age but now seen in young people. Too much salt contributes to

high blood pressure, and trans fats and saturated fats to heart disease and stroke. Poor diet is also linked to fatty liver, digestive problems, tooth decay and, in the long run, certain cancers. A diet that lacks nutrients can leave a person overweight and malnourished at the same time. Combined with long hours in front of screens and little physical exercise, junk food creates a dangerous lifestyle. Doctors now see children with high blood pressure and cholesterol levels once expected only in their grandparents, and habits formed in childhood are hard to change in adult life.

The problem demands action at several levels. Parents should keep such food as an occasional treat rather than a daily habit and make home-cooked meals attractive. Schools should ban junk food from canteens and teach nutrition in the classroom. Governments can require clear labelling of sugar, salt and fat, limit advertising aimed at children and encourage healthier choices through pricing. Above all, individuals must recognise that a moment's taste is not worth a lifetime of illness.

Traditional Indian cuisine offers a healthy and delicious alternative: a Bengali meal of rice, dal, a vegetable dish and fish, or a snack of muri and roasted chana, is cheaper and far more nourishing than a packet of chips. Returning to sensible eating habits is the surest way to protect the health of the coming generation.

EXAM TIP

Keep each body paragraph to one idea (benefits, harms, remedies) and close with a memorable but natural line. Health topics gain marks for accurate cause-and-effect, not for invented statistics.

2020 · Question 3

QUESTION 40

Write a composition on any one of the following topics:

(a) The Civil Rights Movements and the Effects

(b) How travelling the world affects life and personality

(c) Telling fairy tales to children : The cause and effect

(a) The Civil Rights Movements and Their Effects

Civil rights are the basic freedoms and equal protection that every citizen is entitled to receive from the state. History shows that such rights are rarely granted freely; they are usually won through long and painful struggle. The civil rights movements of the twentieth century, above all in the United States, are among the most inspiring examples of that struggle.

After the abolition of slavery, African Americans in the southern states still lived under segregation laws that separated them from white people in schools, buses, restaurants and even drinking fountains, and many were prevented from voting. In 1954 the Supreme Court declared racial segregation in public schools unconstitutional in Brown v. Board of Education. The next year Rosa Parks refused to give up her bus seat to a white passenger in Montgomery, Alabama, and the bus boycott that followed brought a young minister, Martin Luther King Jr., to national leadership.

Inspired partly by Mahatma Gandhi, King and his colleagues relied on non-violent protest: boycotts, sit-ins, freedom rides and marches. Their courage in the face of police dogs, beatings and arrests won the sympathy of the nation. The March on Washington in 1963, where King spoke of his dream of a society

judged by character rather than colour, became a turning point. Two years later, the march from Selma to Montgomery, where peaceful demonstrators were brutally attacked on a bridge, shocked the country into supporting voting rights.

The effects were far-reaching. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 outlawed discrimination in public places and employment, and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 removed many barriers to voting. Black Americans gradually entered universities, professions and public office in growing numbers. The movement also inspired others, including the women's movement, the struggle against apartheid in South Africa and campaigns for the rights of minorities and disabled people across the world. In India, the long fight against untouchability, led by Dr B. R. Ambedkar and enshrined in the Constitution, shares the same spirit.

Yet the work is unfinished. Racial and caste prejudice, economic inequality and unequal treatment by the police still exist in many societies, and gaps in wealth, housing and schooling between communities have proved far harder to close than unjust laws. The lasting lesson of the civil rights movements is that laws can be changed by peaceful, determined people, but attitudes must be changed generation after generation.

(b) How Travelling the World Affects Life and Personality

Saint Augustine is said to have compared the world to a book, of which those who never travel read only one page. The remark captures a truth that every traveller discovers: journeys change not only where we are but who we are.

Travel is first an education. Books and screens can describe the Himalayas, the deserts of Rajasthan or the cathedrals of Europe, but standing before them leaves an impression no description can match. A traveller learns history in ruined forts, geography in changing landscapes and economics in busy markets. Meeting people of other cultures, tasting their food and hearing their languages teaches more about human diversity than any classroom.

Its effect on personality is deeper still. Travel removes us from familiar comforts and forces us to cope with missed trains, strange customs and unknown languages. Such experiences build confidence, patience and adaptability. A person who has managed alone in a foreign city is less easily frightened by the problems of everyday life. Travel also cures narrow-mindedness. When we see that people elsewhere live, worship and think differently yet share the same hopes and fears, prejudice gives way to tolerance and respect.

Travel gives a fresh perspective on one's own country too. Many visitors return home with a new appreciation of its warmth and heritage, and a sharper awareness of what it could learn from others. Indian leaders such as Swami Vivekananda and Rabindranath Tagore were deeply shaped by their journeys abroad, and they brought back ideas that enriched Indian life.

Travel must, however, be undertaken with the right spirit. A tourist who only collects photographs and stays within luxury hotels may see much but learn little. Responsible travellers respect local customs, avoid polluting fragile places and support local communities. Staying in a homestay in a Himalayan village, eating local food and learning a few words of the local language often teach more than a week of guided sightseeing. Nor need travel be expensive or distant: a student who explores the villages, temples and forests of his own district with curiosity is travelling in the truest sense.

In an age of cheaper transport and easier communication, travel is no longer the privilege of a few. Those who travel with open eyes and an open mind return wiser, kinder and more confident, and in that sense they never return quite the same.

(c) Telling Fairy Tales to Children: The Cause and Effect

"Once upon a time" are perhaps the most magical words a child can hear. In every culture, grandparents and parents have told children stories of kings and queens, talking animals, giants, witches and brave young heroes. In Bengal, Thakurmar Jhuli has delighted generations, just as the tales collected by the Brothers Grimm and Hans Christian Andersen have in Europe. Why do adults tell such tales, and what do they do to young minds?

The causes are both natural and purposeful. Children love stories, and a tale at bedtime is a simple way to calm, comfort and bond with them. Fairy tales also carry the values of a society in a form children can grasp: honesty is rewarded, greed punished, kindness repaid and courage victorious. Long before a child can understand moral argument, a story can teach right from wrong. Tales also pass on a community's language, humour and memory: a Bengali child who hears the adventures of the brothers Lalkamal and Neelkamal absorbs something of the culture of his grandparents.

The effects are mostly positive. Fairy tales feed the imagination, encouraging children to picture worlds beyond their own and, later, to think creatively. They enlarge vocabulary and develop listening and language skills, laying a foundation for reading. Many tales show a weak or poor hero overcoming great dangers, which gives children hope and the confidence that difficulties can be faced. Stories also help them deal with fear: a witch or a monster defeated in a story makes real anxieties easier to handle. The shared time of storytelling itself strengthens the bond between child and adult.

There are some concerns. Certain tales are frightening or violent, and young children may be disturbed by them. Others carry outdated ideas, such as the passive princess waiting to be rescued or the wicked stepmother. Critics also worry that magical solutions may give children unrealistic expectations of life.

These problems are easily managed. Adults can choose stories suited to a child's age, soften frightening details, and talk about the story afterwards, asking what the child thinks. Modern retellings with brave girls and kind outsiders can balance the old ones.

In an age of screens, the human voice telling a story remains irreplaceable. Fairy tales, wisely chosen and lovingly told, help children grow into imaginative, hopeful and morally aware adults.

> **EXAM TIP**
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> For a "cause and effect" or "effects" topic, organise the body explicitly under causes and then effects, and add a short paragraph on limitations to show balance.

2019 · Question 3

> **QUESTION 40**
>
> Write a composition on any one of the following topics:
>
> (a) Involvement of the present generation with the Social Media : A Boon or a Bane ?
>
> (b) Global Warming and its impact on us.
>
> (c) 'Fostering Reading Habits in Children in the need of the Day' – Give your views for or against the statement.

(a) The Present Generation and Social Media: A Boon or a Bane?

For today's young people, social media is not a novelty but the air they breathe. They wake up to notifications, share every meal and journey, and form friendships, opinions and even careers online. Whether this deep involvement is a blessing or a curse depends largely on how it is managed.

On the positive side, social media has given the young a voice. A student in a small town can share her art, music or ideas with the whole world. Platforms help young people find information, join study groups, learn skills from free tutorials and discover job opportunities. They keep friends and families connected across distances. During disasters and public campaigns, young volunteers use these networks to gather help within hours; when cyclones strike the Bengal coast, appeals for food, tarpaulins and medicines spread online long before official relief arrives. Many young people have built small businesses or creative careers through these platforms.

The harms are equally real. Excessive use eats into time for study, sleep, exercise and real conversation. Platforms are designed to keep users scrolling, and many young people find it hard to stop. Constant comparison with carefully edited images of other people's lives breeds envy, anxiety and low self-esteem. Cyber-bullying, online predators and the misuse of personal photographs pose serious dangers, especially to adolescents. Fake news and hateful content spread quickly, and young users who do not check sources can be misled or drawn into conflict. Many also share personal information carelessly, unaware of how it may be used, and a careless post written at sixteen can follow a person into college admissions and job interviews.

The answer is not to ban social media but to use it with discipline. Parents and teachers should talk openly with the young about online safety and set sensible limits rather than impose blind restrictions. Schools can teach digital literacy: how to verify information, protect privacy and behave responsibly. Platforms must be held accountable for harmful content and for protecting minors. Young people themselves can switch off notifications, set screen-time limits and keep part of every day free from screens.

Social media, then, is not in itself a boon or a bane. Used with judgment, it informs, connects and empowers; used without restraint, it distracts, divides and harms. Which of the two it becomes will be decided by the habits the present generation forms now.

(b) Global Warming and Its Impact on Us

The summers seem hotter every year, the monsoon less predictable and cyclones more violent. These are not isolated events but signs of global warming, the steady rise in the average temperature of the earth caused mainly by human activity. It is no longer a distant threat discussed by scientists; it is already shaping our lives.

The main cause is the burning of coal, oil and natural gas for electricity, industry and transport, which releases carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases. These gases trap the sun's heat in the atmosphere. Deforestation adds to the problem, since forests that once absorbed carbon dioxide are cut down. Agriculture, cattle-rearing and waste also release methane, another powerful greenhouse gas. Since the Industrial Revolution, the concentration of carbon dioxide in the air has risen sharply, and the warmest years on record have nearly all come in recent decades.

The effects are wide-ranging. Glaciers in the Himalayas and the polar ice sheets are melting, threatening the rivers on which millions depend and causing sea levels to rise. Low-lying coastal areas, including the Sundarbans in West Bengal, face erosion, saltwater intrusion and the loss of homes and farmland. Heatwaves are becoming longer and deadlier, droughts and floods more frequent, and cyclones stronger. Farmers suffer from erratic rainfall and failed crops, which threatens food security. Rising temperatures

also help mosquito-borne diseases spread, and many plant and animal species face extinction. As always, the poor, who contribute least to the problem, suffer most.

Tackling global warming needs action at every level. Under the Paris Agreement of 2015, countries pledged to limit warming and reduce emissions. Governments must shift from coal to solar, wind and other clean energy, improve public transport, protect forests and prepare communities for extreme weather. Industries must adopt cleaner technologies. Individuals, too, can help by saving electricity, using public transport, reducing waste, planting trees and avoiding needless consumption. Rich countries, which have emitted the most in the past, must also help developing nations with money and technology, so that the fight against warming does not keep the poor in poverty.

The earth has no substitute. Global warming is a challenge created by human beings, and it can be checked only by human wisdom and cooperation. What we do in this decade will decide the kind of world our children inherit.

(c) "Fostering Reading Habits in Children Is the Need of the Day": For the Statement

I strongly support the statement. In an age of screens, short videos and instant messages, the patient habit of reading is fast disappearing among children, and its loss would impoverish both individuals and society.

Reading is the foundation of all learning. A child who reads widely develops a rich vocabulary, better grammar and the ability to express ideas clearly. Every subject, from science to history, depends on the capacity to read with understanding. Studies of learning outcomes in India have repeatedly shown that many children cannot read texts suited to their class, and this weakness holds them back in every other field.

Reading also shapes the mind in ways that screens rarely do. A book demands sustained attention, and so trains concentration, a quality badly weakened by the constant switching of digital media. Stories ask the reader to imagine places, faces and voices, which strengthens imagination and creativity. By entering the lives of characters different from themselves, children learn empathy and tolerance. Biographies inspire them, and good literature quietly teaches values without lecturing. A child who has followed Apu through the fields of Nischindipur, or Feluda through a mystery, has exercised a kind of attention that no stream of short videos can build.

Moreover, reading is a lifelong companion. A child who learns to love books will never be truly bored or lonely, and will continue to learn long after formal education ends. Informed and thoughtful citizens, on whom a democracy depends, are usually habitual readers, able to weigh arguments and resist propaganda because they have met many points of view in print.

Some argue that reading on screens or listening to audio content serves the same purpose. Digital formats certainly have a place, and children can read e-books with profit. But the habit itself, of reading attentively and reflectively, must be built first, and it grows best through books and quiet reading time.

The habit has to be cultivated deliberately. Parents should read to young children and keep books at home. Schools must revive libraries, set aside reading periods and let children choose books for pleasure, not only for examinations. Public libraries, book fairs such as the Kolkata Book Fair, and children's magazines can make reading a joy rather than a duty.

Fostering reading habits is not old-fashioned nostalgia but an urgent necessity. A nation that reads is a nation that thinks.

EXAM TIP

"Boon or bane" and "for or against" topics need a clear stand: present both sides, then commit to a reasoned conclusion. Mention local examples (the Sundarbans, the Kolkata Book Fair) to make the essay feel grounded.

2018 · Question 3

QUESTION 40

Write a composition on any one of the following topics :-

(a) Noise ;

(b) Music as therapy;

(c) Lighter school bags for primary school children;

(a) Noise

Noise is often called the unseen pollutant. It leaves no stain on the air or water, yet it harms health, disturbs peace and lowers the quality of life, especially in crowded cities such as Kolkata.

Noise may be defined simply as unwanted or excessive sound. Its sources are many. Road traffic, with its constant honking, is the chief offender in Indian towns. Construction machinery, factories, generators, trains and aircraft add to the din. Social and religious celebrations often bring loudspeakers that blare late into the night, and bursting firecrackers during festivals raises sound levels to dangerous heights. Inside the home, too, televisions, pressure cookers and mixer-grinders add to the daily load on our ears.

The effects on health are serious. Prolonged exposure to loud sound can damage hearing permanently, and traffic policemen, factory workers and street vendors are especially at risk. Even moderate but constant noise causes stress, irritability, headaches and disturbed sleep. Doctors link chronic noise exposure to high blood pressure and heart disease. Students find it hard to concentrate, while patients in hospitals and elderly people suffer greatly. Animals and birds, too, are disturbed, and some abandon noisy habitats; pets cower in terror during festival nights.

India does have laws to control noise. Rules framed under environmental law fix permissible sound levels for industrial, commercial, residential and silence zones around hospitals, schools and courts, and restrict the use of loudspeakers at night. The problem lies in enforcement and public attitude. Many people regard noise as a sign of celebration or even of importance, and neighbours hesitate to complain for fear of quarrels. Silence zones outside hospitals are routinely ignored, and police action usually follows only a court order or a public outcry.

The remedy needs both firmness and awareness. Authorities must strictly enforce sound limits, penalise needless honking and regulate loudspeakers and firecrackers. Better town planning, with trees along roads and industries away from homes, can absorb and reduce noise. Vehicles and machines should be well maintained and fitted with silencers. Above all, citizens must learn that silence is a form of courtesy: lowering a voice, a horn or a loudspeaker shows respect for others.

A peaceful environment is a right, not a luxury. Controlling noise will make our cities healthier, our students more attentive and our lives calmer.

(b) Music as Therapy

Long before modern medicine, people sang to soothe crying infants, chanted to calm troubled minds and played music to lift the spirits of the sick. Today science is confirming what tradition has always known: music can heal. Music therapy, the planned use of music by trained practitioners to improve physical and mental health, is now an accepted part of care in many hospitals and clinics.

Music works on the body and mind together. Slow, gentle music can lower the heart rate and breathing rate and reduce the level of stress hormones, which is why it is used to calm anxious patients before surgery or during painful treatment. Rhythm helps people recovering from strokes or living with Parkinson's disease to improve their walking and movement. Familiar songs can reach people with dementia when ordinary conversation fails, briefly restoring memories and a sense of identity.

Its emotional benefits are equally important. Listening to or making music helps people express feelings they cannot put into words. It is used to support those suffering from depression, grief or trauma, and children with autism or learning difficulties often respond to music when other methods of communication fail. Singing in a group builds a sense of belonging and reduces loneliness, especially among the elderly.

Indian tradition has long linked music with well-being. Classical ragas are associated with particular moods and times of day, and devotional music has comforted countless people in difficult times. Rabindranath Tagore made music central to education at Santiniketan because he believed it shaped the whole personality. Even today, many families find comfort in Rabindrasangeet during illness or bereavement, a practice that anticipates much of what modern therapists recommend.

Music therapy is not a substitute for medicine, and serious conditions need proper diagnosis and treatment. It should be practised by trained professionals who understand both music and health. But as a complement to medical care it is gentle, inexpensive and free of side-effects, and it can be offered in hospital wards, old-age homes and special schools with very simple means.

In a stressful age, everyone can use music as a form of everyday therapy: a song on the way to work, an evening of quiet listening or the joy of singing with friends. Music reminds us that healing concerns the spirit as well as the body.

(c) Lighter School Bags for Primary School Children

Every morning, small children can be seen bending under school bags that seem almost as large as themselves. A heavy school bag has become a symbol of an education system that confuses quantity with quality. Making school bags lighter for primary pupils is a matter of both health and sound teaching.

The health risks are well known. Doctors advise that a child's bag should weigh no more than about a tenth of the child's body weight, yet many primary pupils carry far more. Carrying such loads daily, often up several flights of stairs, can cause back and shoulder pain, poor posture and fatigue. A tired child cannot learn well, and the burden turns school into something to dread rather than enjoy.

The causes lie in the system. Schools often prescribe many textbooks and separate notebooks for every subject, and expect all of them to be carried every day. Some private schools add extra workbooks and guides. Children also carry water bottles, lunch boxes and sports equipment. Lack of lockers or storage space in classrooms makes matters worse, and anxious parents sometimes pack extra books "just in case".

The problem has been recognised officially. Courts and education authorities in India have expressed concern, and the Union Ministry of Education issued a School Bag Policy in 2020 recommending weight limits for each class, broadly in line with the one-tenth rule, and advising that the youngest pupils be

given no homework at all. Policies, however, help children only when schools actually follow them, and many still do not weigh bags or adjust their timetables.

Practical solutions are simple. Schools can follow a timetable that requires fewer books each day and keep some books and notebooks in classroom lockers. Textbooks can be divided into term-wise volumes, and thin combined notebooks can replace separate ones. Homework for primary pupils should be light or replaced by activities. Clean drinking water in schools would remove the need to carry heavy bottles. Parents should check bags daily and remove what is not needed, and teachers can make sure that the timetable printed in the diary is the one actually followed.

Learning at the primary stage should be joyful, active and curious. A lighter bag will not only protect children's growing bodies but also remind us that education is measured by what a child understands, not by what a child carries.

EXAM TIP

Even short topics such as "Noise" need definition, causes, effects and remedies. Cite a law or policy only in general terms unless you are sure of the details.

2014 · Question 1

QUESTION 40

Write an essay on any one of the following :

a) The present status of women in India.

b) Politicians of the new century.

c) Environmental challenges.

d) The objectives of communication in business.

e) The Role of a critic.

(a) The Present Status of Women in India

India has had a woman Prime Minister and a woman President, and its women have excelled as space scientists, Olympic medallists and chief executives. Yet the same country also records female foeticide, dowry deaths and violence against women. The status of Indian women today is a picture of remarkable progress shadowed by stubborn inequality.

The Constitution guarantees equality before the law and forbids discrimination on the ground of sex. Laws against dowry, domestic violence and sexual harassment at the workplace, and reforms giving daughters equal rights in ancestral property, have strengthened women's legal position. Reservation of seats for women in panchayats and municipalities has brought a large number of women into local government, and many have proved capable leaders.

Education has been the greatest force for change. Female literacy has risen steadily, and girls now often outperform boys in school examinations. Schemes encouraging girls to stay in school, such as West Bengal's Kanyashree, have helped. Women are visible in every profession, from the armed forces to the corporate boardroom, and self-help groups have given rural women access to credit and income.

Serious problems remain. The sex ratio at birth in several regions reveals a lingering preference for sons. Women's participation in the paid workforce is low by international standards, and much of their work at

home and on farms goes unpaid and unrecognised. Violence, both within the home and in public places, limits their freedom. Many women still lack control over decisions about their own education, marriage, health and money. Rural, poor, Dalit and tribal women face these disadvantages most sharply. Even educated women in cities often leave their jobs after marriage or childbirth, because the burden of housework and child-care still falls almost entirely on them. Fear of harassment on buses, trains and streets shapes where they study, work and travel.

Real empowerment requires more than laws. It needs safe public spaces, equal pay, child-care support, and stronger enforcement of existing protections. Above all it needs a change of attitude in families and communities, so that sons and daughters are raised as equals and housework is shared rather than assumed to be a woman's duty.

The Indian woman has travelled a long way from the restrictions of the past, but the journey is unfinished. A nation cannot progress fully while half its people are held back.

(b) Politicians of the New Century

Politics was once seen in India as a field of sacrifice. The leaders of the freedom struggle gave up comfortable careers, went to prison and lived simply for the sake of the nation. In the twenty-first century, the image of the politician has changed greatly, and not always for the better.

The new century has produced politicians of a different kind. Many are young, educated and comfortable with technology. They use social media to reach voters directly, run data-driven campaigns and speak the language of development, infrastructure and jobs. Some come from professions such as law, medicine, business and administration, bringing specialised knowledge to governance. Women and members of historically excluded communities are more visible in politics than before, which has broadened representation. At the level of the panchayat, many women and first-generation leaders have shown that politics can still be a means of solving local problems such as roads, drinking water and schools.

At the same time, public trust in politicians has declined. Elections have become enormously expensive, which favours the wealthy and creates pressure to recover costs through corruption. A considerable number of elected representatives face criminal charges. Politics in many families has become a hereditary profession, limiting opportunity for able outsiders. Debate in legislatures is too often replaced by noise and walk-outs, while divisive appeals to caste and religion continue to win votes. The power of social media has also been misused to spread propaganda and personal attacks.

The citizen is not blameless. Voters who accept money or favours, or who vote only along lines of caste and community, encourage such politics. Reform must therefore come from both sides. Electoral funding needs greater transparency; candidates with serious criminal cases should face stricter scrutiny; and political parties should practise internal democracy. Citizens, in turn, must demand performance and integrity. They can study candidates' records, which are now publicly declared, question their representatives at public meetings and refuse to reward those who stir up hatred. A free press and independent institutions such as the Election Commission must also be strong enough to hold the powerful to account.

The politician of the new century has unprecedented tools to understand and serve the people. Whether he or she becomes a true public servant or merely a seeker of power depends on character, and on an alert electorate. Democracy gets the politicians it deserves.

(c) Environmental Challenges

Human progress has always depended on nature, yet in the last century human beings have damaged the natural world faster than ever before. Today environmental problems are no longer local inconveniences but global challenges that threaten health, livelihoods and the future of the planet.

The most serious is climate change. The burning of fossil fuels has increased greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, raising global temperatures, melting glaciers, raising sea levels and making heatwaves, droughts, floods and cyclones more severe. Closely linked is air pollution: smoke from vehicles, industries, power plants and burning crop residue makes the air in many Indian cities hazardous to breathe, causing respiratory and heart diseases.

Water is under equal stress. Rivers are polluted by sewage and industrial waste, groundwater is being pumped faster than it can be replenished, and many regions face severe shortages. Deforestation and the conversion of wetlands and grasslands destroy habitats, leading to the loss of plant and animal species at an alarming rate. Soil is degraded by erosion and excessive chemical fertilisers. Mountains of plastic and electronic waste choke drains, rivers and oceans. Closer home, the Sundarbans face rising seas and saltier soil, the Ganga carries the sewage of hundreds of towns, and the hills of north Bengal suffer from landslides made worse by deforestation and unplanned construction.

These problems arise from rapid population growth, unplanned urbanisation, wasteful consumption and an economic model that has treated nature as an unlimited resource. The poor suffer most, because they depend directly on forests, rivers and land and have the least ability to protect themselves.

Meeting these challenges requires sustainable development, growth that meets present needs without robbing future generations. Governments must promote renewable energy, enforce pollution laws, protect forests and plan cities sensibly. International cooperation is essential, since pollution and climate change respect no borders. Industries must adopt cleaner technologies. Citizens can conserve water and electricity, reduce plastic use, segregate waste and plant trees. Community efforts, such as villages that harvest rainwater or protect sacred groves, show that local people are often the best guardians of their environment when they are given rights and responsibility.

The earth can meet every person's need but not every person's greed, as Gandhi is often quoted as saying. The environmental challenge is ultimately a test of human wisdom and restraint.

(d) The Objectives of Communication in Business

No business can survive without communication. Every order placed, product advertised, instruction given and complaint resolved depends on the exchange of information. Effective communication is therefore not a minor skill but the thread that holds every organisation together.

The first objective is to inform. Within a firm, managers must pass on policies, targets and procedures to employees, and employees must report progress and problems to managers. Outside it, customers need information about products, prices and services, while shareholders, suppliers and government agencies need accurate reports.

The second is to persuade. Advertising, sales presentations and negotiations aim to convince customers to buy, investors to invest and partners to agree. Persuasion in business must rest on honesty; misleading claims may bring short-term profit but destroy long-term trust. A company that exaggerates the virtues of its product may win a few sales, but the angry reviews and complaints that follow can cost it far more.

The third objective is to instruct and coordinate. In a large organisation, different departments such as production, finance and marketing must work together. Clear instructions and regular communication prevent confusion, duplication and costly errors, and help everyone pursue common goals.

The fourth is to motivate and build relationships. Recognition, encouragement and open channels of feedback raise employee morale and loyalty. Good relations with customers, suppliers and the community build goodwill, the most valuable asset of any business.

Business communication also aims to support decision-making, since managers can decide wisely only on the basis of timely and accurate information. Finally, it serves to resolve conflicts, whether between workers and management or between a company and its customers, through dialogue rather than confrontation.

To achieve these objectives, communication must be clear, concise, accurate, courteous and timely. It must suit the audience and the medium, whether a face-to-face meeting, a letter, an email or a presentation. A technical report for engineers and an advertisement for the public need entirely different language. Listening is as important as speaking: managers who pay attention to the complaints of customers and the suggestions of workers often discover problems before they become crises.

In a competitive and global market, firms that communicate well work efficiently, keep their customers and adapt quickly to change. Communication, in short, is what turns a group of individuals into an organisation.

(e) The Role of a Critic

The word "critic" often suggests someone who merely finds fault. In its true sense, however, criticism means judgment and interpretation, and the critic is one who helps readers and audiences understand, enjoy and evaluate works of literature and art.

The first role of the critic is to interpret. A great poem, novel or painting is often complex, and ordinary readers may miss its meaning, its structure or its connection with the age that produced it. The critic explains these, opening doors that might otherwise remain closed. A reader puzzled by the fragments of a modernist poem, or by the many voices in a novel, may find in a good critical essay the key that makes the whole work clear.

The second role is to evaluate. Not everything written or produced is equally valuable. By comparing works, judging their craftsmanship and depth, and separating the lasting from the merely fashionable, the critic helps to form public taste. Critics such as Samuel Johnson and Matthew Arnold shaped how generations of readers judged literature; Arnold described criticism as an attempt to know and spread "the best that is known and thought in the world".

Third, the critic serves the artist. Honest and informed criticism points out strengths and weaknesses, encouraging writers to improve. It can also draw attention to neglected or new talent that the public might otherwise ignore. Many writers have been rescued from obscurity by sympathetic critics.

Fourth, the critic acts as a link between art and society. Criticism connects works to wider questions of morality, politics, history and culture, and so shows how literature reflects and shapes life. Feminist and post-colonial critics, for example, have taught readers to notice whose voices a classic includes and whose it leaves out, and in doing so have changed how whole literary traditions are read and taught.

To fulfil these roles, a critic needs wide reading, sound judgment, sensitivity and, above all, honesty. Personal prejudice, flattery of friends or harshness towards rivals corrupt criticism. A good critic is neither a destroyer nor a publicist, but a fair and thoughtful guide.

In the age of online reviews and instant opinions, everyone has become a critic of sorts. This makes the trained, responsible critic even more necessary, for in the flood of opinion, careful judgment is rare and valuable.

EXAM TIP

Five options are offered; whichever you choose, define the key term in the opening paragraph and keep a logical sequence of points. Use a quotation only if you are certain of its wording and author.

Other Questions

2017 · Question 3

QUESTION 40

Write a dialogue between two elderly persons on the appropriate age of superannuation.

(Mr Haren Sen, a retired schoolteacher, and Mr Arun Basu, a retired bank officer, meet on a bench in the neighbourhood park one morning.)

Mr Sen: Good morning, Arun babu. You look rather thoughtful today.

Mr Basu: Good morning, Haren babu. My nephew has just retired from his government job at sixty, and he is as fit as a young man. I keep wondering whether sixty is really the right age for superannuation.

Mr Sen: Interesting that you raise it. When we were young, sixty seemed old. Today, with better health care, many people at sixty are perfectly capable of working for several more years.

Mr Basu: Exactly. Doctors, professors and judges often do their best work after sixty, because experience matures judgment. Is it not a waste to send such people home?

Mr Sen: I agree that experience is valuable. But think of the young. Lakhs of educated young men and women are waiting for jobs. If we raise the retirement age, vacancies will open more slowly and their frustration will grow.

Mr Basu: That is a fair point. Unemployment among the young is a serious problem. Still, the answer to unemployment should be the creation of more jobs, not the early retirement of capable people.

Mr Sen: True, but there is another side. Not every job suits an older person. A policeman, a soldier or a railway worker needs physical strength and quick reflexes. Should their retirement age be raised as well?

Mr Basu: Perhaps not. That is why I feel there should be no single age for everyone. Physically demanding jobs could keep an earlier age, while intellectual professions could allow people to work longer.

Mr Sen: A flexible system, you mean. Perhaps those who wish to continue after sixty could be retained for a few years after a fair review of their health and performance.

Mr Basu: Yes, and retired people could also serve as mentors, advisers or part-time teachers. That way their experience is not lost, and young people still get the regular posts.

Mr Sen: I like that idea. There is also the question of pensions. Many people in the private sector have no pension, so they cannot afford to stop working at sixty.

Mr Basu: Quite right. Superannuation should be linked to social security. Retirement must mean rest with dignity, not anxiety about the next meal.

Mr Sen: So we agree: sixty may remain the general rule for now, but with flexibility for different professions, chances to continue for those who are fit and willing, and proper pensions for all.

Mr Basu: Well summed up, Haren babu. Shall we walk another round before the sun gets too hot?

Mr Sen: By all means. At least our legs have not retired yet!

EXAM TIP

A good dialogue needs a short scene-setting line, natural turn-taking, both sides of the issue and an agreed or balanced conclusion. Keep each speech short and the register polite but conversational.

2016 · Question 3

QUESTION 40

Write a dialogue between two persons on "Fitness and healthcare".

(Write X & Y instead of name of the persons)

(X and Y, two old college friends, meet at a tea stall after a long time.)

X: Hello! I hardly recognised you. You look much slimmer and fitter than when we last met.

Y: Thank you. Two years ago my doctor warned me that my blood sugar and blood pressure were rising. That frightened me into changing my habits.

X: What did you change?

Y: Quite simple things, really. I walk briskly for forty minutes every morning, I have cut down on fried food and sweets, and I try to sleep on time.

X: I keep meaning to start exercising, but office work leaves me no time. By evening I am too tired to do anything except watch television.

Y: That is exactly the trap. Lack of exercise makes us more tired, not less. Even half an hour of walking or yoga gives you more energy for the rest of the day.

X: You may be right. But I often feel that health is the doctor's business. If I fall ill, I can always take medicine.

Y: That is a dangerous attitude. Medicine can treat a disease, but fitness prevents many diseases from arising in the first place. Diabetes, heart disease and obesity are increasingly linked to the way we live.

X: Still, good healthcare matters too. When my mother needed surgery last year, the cost was enormous.

Y: Certainly. Fitness and healthcare go together. Fitness reduces the need for treatment, and good healthcare is essential when illness does come. That is why everyone should have health insurance and regular check-ups.

X: Do you go for check-ups even when you feel well?

Y: Yes, once a year. Many diseases, such as high blood pressure, show no symptoms in the early stage. Detecting them early makes treatment simpler and cheaper.

X: What about the government's role? Most people cannot afford private hospitals.

Y: The state must strengthen public hospitals and primary health centres and make insurance available to the poor. Schools and offices can also encourage exercise, healthy canteens and sports facilities.

X: And people like me must take some responsibility for themselves, I suppose.

Y: Exactly. No government can walk for you or choose your food. Fitness is a personal duty; healthcare is a shared responsibility.

X: You have convinced me. Will you let me join your morning walk from tomorrow?

Y: Gladly. Six o'clock at the park gate, and no excuses!

> **EXAM TIP**
>
> The question asks for X and Y, so use only those labels and no names. Balance personal fitness habits with the wider issue of affordable healthcare to cover both halves of the topic.

2015 · Question 3

> **QUESTION 40**
>
> Write a dialogue between two elderly persons on the future of the study of Humanities in India.

(Professor Mitra, a retired teacher of history, and Mrs Chatterjee, a retired headmistress, talk over tea in the reading room of a local library.)

Mrs Chatterjee: Professor Mitra, my granddaughter wants to study philosophy, and the whole family is upset. They say she will never find a job.

Prof. Mitra: I hear that complaint everywhere. Today everyone wants their children to become engineers, doctors or managers. The humanities are treated as the last resort of those who score low marks.

Mrs Chatterjee: Is that fear entirely unfounded? Jobs in technology and business do pay far more.

Prof. Mitra: In the short run, perhaps. But a society cannot live on technology alone. Who will study our history, preserve our languages, interpret our literature and ask what is right or wrong?

Mrs Chatterjee: I agree. When I was teaching, the students who read literature and history usually wrote and spoke better and thought more independently.

Prof. Mitra: That is the real value of the humanities. They train the mind to analyse, to argue and to understand other people. These skills are needed in administration, journalism, law, teaching and even in business.

Mrs Chatterjee: Indeed, many of our civil servants come from humanities backgrounds. But I worry about the state of our colleges. Departments have few teachers, libraries are poorly stocked and research funds go mostly to science.

Prof. Mitra: That is the heart of the problem. If the humanities are starved of resources, of course they will decline. Their future depends on whether the government and universities value them.

Mrs Chatterjee: Do you see any hope?

Prof. Mitra: I do. There is a growing feeling that rigid divisions between science and arts are harmful. A student should be able to study physics and music, or computer science and history, together.

Mrs Chatterjee: That would be good. Technology raises new moral questions too, about privacy, machines and the environment. Only philosophers, historians and writers can help us think about them properly.

Prof. Mitra: Exactly. A nation as old and diverse as ours needs scholars of its languages, arts and history more than ever. Without them we would lose our memory and our sense of identity.

Mrs Chatterjee: Then the humanities must also change. Teaching should be livelier, linked to real problems, and should open paths to employment.

Prof. Mitra: Agreed. If teaching improves and society respects these subjects, the humanities will have a bright future in India.

Mrs Chatterjee: Then I shall tell my granddaughter to follow her heart and study philosophy, and to study it well.

Prof. Mitra: Wise advice. Tell her an old historian sends his blessings.

> **EXAM TIP**
>
> Give the two elderly speakers distinct viewpoints at first and let the conversation move towards a reasoned conclusion. Concrete concerns (jobs, funding, interdisciplinary study) earn more than general praise of the humanities.