



B.K. BIRLA CENTRE FOR EDUCATION

SARALA BIRLA GROUP OF SCHOOLS
A CBSE DAY-CUM-BOYS' RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL

ENGLISH CORE — Code No. 301
TERM 1 EXAMINATION (2026-27)
CLASS XII
SET A

Class: XII
Date: 02.09.26
Admission no:

Time: 3hr
Max Marks: 80
Roll no:

General Instructions

Read the following instructions very carefully and follow them:

- This question paper has 13 questions. All questions are compulsory.
- This question paper contains three sections:
Section A: Reading Skills,
Section B: Creative Writing Skills
Section C: Literature.
- Attempt all questions based on specific instructions for each part. Write the correct question number and part thereof in your answer sheet.
- Separate instructions are given with each question/part, wherever necessary.
- Adhere to the prescribed word limit while answering the questions.

SECTION A — READING SKILLS (22 Marks)

1. Read the following passage.

12

Nathu had carried letters up and down the stone steps of Kasoli for thirty-one years, and in that time he had come to believe that a postbag held more than paper — it held the shape of other people's waiting. Every morning, before the mist had cleared from the deodar trees, he shouldered his canvas bag and began the climb, his knees complaining at the same stretch of steps they had complained at for three decades.

He knew which door would open before he knocked, and which would stay shut until he called out twice. He knew that Mrs. Thapa upstairs waited for letters from her daughter in Canada, and that old Colonel Rawat pretended he wasn't waiting for anything at all, though he stood at his gate every morning at nine, hands clasped behind his back, eyes fixed on the bend in the road where Nathu always appeared.

That particular morning, Nathu's bag was heavier than usual, weighed down by a single thick envelope addressed to the small blue house at the end of the lane — the house where Meera lived with her mother, and where no letter had arrived in eleven months, not since the telegram that had told them Meera's brother's unit was missing near the border. Nathu had watched Meera's mother stop coming to her gate altogether after that, as though hope itself had become too heavy a thing to carry to the doorstep.

He climbed the last flight slower than the rest, turning the envelope over once in his hands before he reached the blue gate. The handwriting on the front was unmistakably a soldier's — hurried, slanting, familiar in a way that made Nathu's chest tighten. He called out, and it was Meera who answered, her face already changing before she had even seen what he held out to her.

"It's your brother's writing," Nathu said, though he did not need to say it; she already knew, her hands trembling as she took the envelope from him.

He did not wait to see her open it. He never did. He simply turned back down the steps, his bag lighter now by one letter, and continued toward Colonel Rawat's gate, where a smaller, ordinary parcel waited to be delivered, carrying its own small portion of someone's morning.

Answer the following questions, based on the passage above.

- I. Which detail in the passage shows that Nathu had worked as a postman for a very long time? 1
- II. Complete the following with a suitable reason. Colonel Rawat pretended he wasn't waiting for anything because _____. 1
- III. The writer highlights the emotional weight of Nathu's task through all of the following EXCEPT — 1
- A. the description of Meera's mother's withdrawal from the gate
 - B. Nathu's familiarity with each household's routine
 - C. the mention of Colonel Rawat's ordinary parcel
 - D. Nathu's reaction on recognising the handwriting on the envelope
- IV. What type of statement is "It's your brother's writing"? 1
- A. a reassurance B. a question C. a command D. an apology
- V. Based on the passage, how can we tell that Meera's mother had lost hope over the past several months? (Any one reason) 1
- VI. Which one of the following best explains the phrase "hope itself had become too heavy a thing to carry to the doorstep"? 1
- A) She was physically too weak to walk to the gate
 - B) Waiting for good news had become emotionally exhausting
 - C) She had stopped receiving letters of any kind altogether
- VII. Nathu turned the envelope over 'once in his hands' before delivering it. What does this gesture suggest about his feelings? 1
- VIII. What does Nathu's daily awareness of who is waiting for what suggest about his relationship with the people on his route? (Answer in about 40 words) 2
- IX. How does the description of Nathu's bag growing 'lighter... by one letter' contribute to the meaning of the passage? (Answer in about 40 words) 2
- X. Complete the following with the most suitable option. The central idea of the passage is _____. 1
- A. the hardships faced by postal workers in hill towns
 - B. the emotional significance that ordinary deliveries can carry for people who are waiting
 - C. a soldier's letter reaching his family after months of silence
 - D. the daily routine followed by a postman in a small town

2. Read the following carefully.

10

1 A recent survey was conducted among 1,500 school students aged 13-17 across different cities to understand their reading habits, including preferences for print books, e-books, and audiobooks. The study aimed to identify how digital access has influenced reading patterns among adolescents and what this means for libraries and educators. Participants ranked their preference for each reading format on a five-point scale.

2 The sample included students from government and private schools, ensuring representation across economic and educational backgrounds. Data was gathered using both online forms and classroom surveys. The results are represented in the table given below.

Preference Scale	Print Books (%)	E-books (%)	Audiobooks (%)
Not preferred	10	25	40
Less preferred	15	20	25
Neutral	20	25	20
Preferred	30	20	10
Highly preferred	25	10	5

3 Print books remained associated with focus, memory retention and a sense of ownership, especially among students who read for pleasure. E-books appealed to those who valued portability and instant access to a wide range of titles, particularly students preparing for examinations. Audiobooks, though less popular, were appreciated by students with long commutes or those who preferred listening while doing other tasks.

4 The study identified some challenges. Access to devices and stable internet varied significantly between government and private school students, affecting their ability to use e-books and audiobooks. Many respondents also cited eye strain and difficulty concentrating as reasons for lower engagement with digital reading formats.

5 The findings suggest a need for schools and libraries to maintain a balance between print and digital resources. Future research could explore how reading habits evolve as students' transition to higher education, and whether guided reading programmes can improve engagement with underused formats such as audiobooks.

Answer the following questions, based on the given passage.

- I. What was the main purpose of the survey conducted among 1,500 school students? 1
 - A. To compare the academic performance of government and private school students
 - B. To explore reading format preferences and the factors influencing them
 - C. To determine the most expensive reading format among students
 - D. To assess how many students read books outside the school syllabus
- II. Fill in the blank with the correct option from those given in brackets. The study ensured diversity across economic and educational backgrounds to make the findings _____ (convenient / reliable / representative). 1
- III. Fill in the blank with reference to the given table. The reading format for which schools and libraries need to create the most awareness and encouragement is _____. 1
- IV. Based on the table, which of the following statements best reflects the correct trend in reading preferences? 1
 - A. Audiobooks are more preferred than e-books in the 'Highly preferred' category.
 - B. Print books have a higher percentage of respondents marking them 'Preferred' compared to e-books.
 - C. E-books and audiobooks have an equal percentage in the 'Neutral' category.
 - D. Print books are less preferred than audiobooks in the 'Not preferred' category.
- V. Ravi commutes to school by bus for over an hour every day and wants to read during his commute. Why might an audiobook or e-book suit him better than a print book? (Ref: Paragraphs 3 & 4) 2
- VI. When the researcher states that 'access to devices and stable internet varied significantly,' what does this suggest? 1
 - A. Government schools do not permit the use of devices
 - B. Some students had unequal access to the technology needed for digital reading

C. Private school students preferred not to use digital formats

D. Internet access has no real impact on reading habits

VII. How might guided reading programmes help improve engagement with formats like audiobooks, as suggested in paragraph 5? (Answer in about 40 words) 2

VIII. Select the option that is NOT addressed in this study. 1

A. The purpose of the survey

B. The impact of gender on reading preferences

C. Challenges faced by respondents in accessing digital formats

D. The method used for data collection

E. Recommendations for schools and libraries

SECTION B — CREATIVE WRITING SKILLS (18 Marks)

All the names and addresses used in the questions are fictitious. Resemblance, if any, is purely coincidental.

3. Attempt any one of the two, (A) or (B), in about 50 words 4

A. You are Aakash Verma, Secretary of the Nature Club, Green Valley Public School, Dehradun. The club is organising a tree plantation drive at the school ground next Saturday morning. Write a notice in about 50 words inviting students to participate. Include all the necessary details. Put your notice in a box.

OR

B. You are Ritika Sharma, Head Girl of Sunrise Public School, Bhopal. The school is organising a blood donation camp in collaboration with the local Red Cross Society. Draft a notice in about 50 words informing students and staff about the camp and inviting voluntary donors. Include all the necessary details. Put your notice in a box.

4. Attempt any one of the two, (A) or (B), in about 50 words 4

A. As the Cultural Secretary, Meher Chopra, of Silver Oaks School, Pune, draft an invitation for the school's Annual Art Exhibition, inviting Ms. Radhika Nair, a well-known local artist, to inaugurate the exhibition. Provide the essential details in about 50 words.

OR

B. You are Arjun Malhotra, residing at 22, Lake View Road, Nagpur. You have been invited to be the Chief Guest at the Annual Sports Day of your former school, City Public School, Nagpur. Write a formal reply in about 50 words, accepting the invitation and expressing your gratitude.

5. Attempt any one of the two, (A) or (B), in 120-150 words 5

A. You are Ishaan Roy, residing at 9, Park Street, Kolkata. Write a letter to the editor of The Daily Herald, highlighting the need for more public libraries in your city. Emphasise how accessible libraries can encourage reading habits and support students who cannot afford books. Draft the letter using your own ideas.

OR

B. You are Naina Kapoor from 14, Green Park, Chandigarh. You have come across the following advertisement in The City Times for the post of Content Writer at a leading digital media firm. Write a letter expressing your interest in the position. Include your bio-data along with the application.

Join WordCraft Digital Media

We are looking for dynamic individuals with:

- Strong writing and editing skills

- Familiarity with SEO and content strategy
- Ability to meet deadlines

Educational Requirements: Graduate in English, Journalism, or related field

Experience: Not mandatory, but a writing portfolio is an advantage

Interested candidates should send their applications with a resume.

Contact:

WordCraft Digital Media

Address: 8-C, Sector 17, Chandigarh

6. Attempt any one of the two, (A) or (B), in 120-150 words

5

A. Financial literacy is increasingly being recognised as an essential life skill for young people. You are Devansh Rao. Write an article for the school magazine of Oakridge International School discussing the importance of financial literacy for students. Write the article using your own ideas.

OR

B. The Inter-School Debate Competition was held recently at Greenfield Public School, Hyderabad. As the senior editorial board member, Tanvi Iyer, write a report for the school magazine detailing various aspects of the competition. Write the report using your own ideas.

SECTION C — LITERATURE (40 Marks)

7. Read the following passages and solve ANY ONE of the given two, (A) or (B).

6

A. Read the following description based on the poem 'My Mother at 66' by Kamala Das and answer the questions that follow.

While being driven to the airport, the speaker glances at her mother seated beside her. She notices her mother has dozed off, her mouth slightly open, and is struck by how aged and pale her face appears — almost lifeless. The realisation fills her with a sharp, unexpected sadness, though she quickly turns her attention away, choosing instead to watch the young trees rushing past outside and children playing cheerfully near their homes, as if seeking relief from the painful thought.

I. What does the comparison of the mother's face to something lifeless suggest about the speaker's fear? 1

II. Complete the following with the correct option. The speaker's realisation about her mother's age is best described as _____ (gradual / sudden / expected). 1

III. How does the image of children playing near their homes affect the mood of the passage? 1

IV. Complete the sentence with a suitable phrase. The central theme highlighted in this part of the poem is the speaker's _____ as she confronts her mother's ageing. 1

V. What can be inferred about the speaker's emotional state at this moment? 1

- Distracted by the scenery outside
- Anxious about missing her flight
- Overwhelmed by a fear of loss
- Indifferent to her mother's condition

VI. All of the following are true for this part of the poem EXCEPT — 1

- The speaker briefly shifts her attention to avoid confronting a painful thought.
- The poet uses imagery of youth and vitality to contrast with the mother's frailty.

- c) The speaker openly expresses her fear to her mother during the drive.
- d) The poem captures a universal experience of watching a parent grow old.

OR

B. Read the following description based on the poem 'A Thing of Beauty' by John Keats and answer the questions that follow.

The poet reflects that things of true beauty never fade from memory but continue to bring quiet joy, growing more precious with time. He describes how such beauty removes the gloom that clouds the human spirit, offering comfort like a gentle sleep, or like fresh air that restores health, or like a soft shelter that shields us from despair. Even on the darkest of days, the poet suggests, some form of beauty always moves through our lives, lifting away sorrow, however faint the world's disappointments may make us feel.

- I. What does the poet mean when he says beauty 'never fades from memory'? 1
- II. Complete the following with the correct option. According to the poet, beauty acts upon human sorrow in a manner that is _____ (temporary / healing / indifferent). 1
- III. How does the comparison of beauty to 'fresh air' contribute to the poet's message? 1
- IV. Complete the sentence. The extract suggests that beauty functions primarily as a source of _____ for the human spirit. 1
- V. What can be inferred about the poet's overall attitude towards life's disappointments? 1
 - a) He believes disappointments can never be overcome
 - b) He believes beauty offers a lasting counterbalance to sorrow
 - c) He is indifferent to human suffering
 - d) He believes only nature can offer true comfort
- VI. All of the following are true for this part of the poem EXCEPT — 1
 - a) The poet presents beauty as a lasting source of comfort.
 - b) The poet compares the effect of beauty to physical rest and healing.
 - c) The poet claims that beauty can permanently erase all forms of sadness.
 - d) The poet suggests that beauty continues to influence us despite life's hardships.

8. Read the following passages and solve ANY ONE of the given two, (A) or (B). 4

A. Read the following description based on the story 'The Third Level' by Jack Finney and answer the questions that follow.

Charley recalls how, after buying stamps from an old-style dealer using money from 1894, he found that his three hundred dollars fetched less than two hundred in period currency — though this did not trouble him, since everyday goods, like eggs, had been remarkably cheap at the time. Despite repeated attempts, however, he was never again able to locate the mysterious third-level corridor at Grand Central Station that had once led him there. His wife Louisa grew increasingly anxious about his continued search and initially discouraged him from pursuing it further, though eventually she too began looking for the passage alongside him, every weekend.

- I. What does Charley's indifference to the value of money in 1894 suggest about his attitude towards the past? 1
- II. Complete the sentence suitably. Charley has been unsuccessful in finding the corridor to the third level despite _____. 1
- III. What is ironic about Louisa's eventual reaction to Charley's continued search for the third level? 1
- IV. Complete the following with a suitable option. The phrase 'she too began looking for the passage alongside him' suggests that — 1

- a) Louisa wanted to prove Charley wrong
- b) Louisa had come to share Charley's longing for escape
- c) Louisa was searching only to humour him
- d) Louisa no longer trusted Charley's account

OR

B. Read the following description based on the story 'The Enemy' by Pearl S. Buck and answer the questions that follow.

Dr. Sadao Hoki discovers a badly wounded man washed up on the private beach behind his house and is startled to realise, from his features, that the man is an escaped American prisoner of war. As a surgeon, Sadao feels an instinctive pull to save the man's life, yet he is acutely aware that sheltering an enemy soldier during wartime could endanger his family and invite serious consequences from the authorities. Torn between his duty as a doctor and his duty as a loyal citizen, he hesitates on the sand, unable to simply leave the man to die.

- I. What internal conflict does Sadao experience upon discovering the wounded man? 1
- II. Complete the sentence suitably. Sadao's hesitation on the beach stems from his awareness that _____. 1
- III. What does Sadao's inability to 'simply leave the man to die' reveal about his character? 1
- IV. Complete with a suitable option. Sadao's dilemma primarily reflects a conflict between — 1
 - a) his loyalty to his profession and his loyalty to his nation
 - b) his fear of the sea and his duty as a host
 - c) his ambition as a surgeon and his desire for fame
 - d) his relationship with Hana and his relationship with his father

9. Read the following passages and solve ANY ONE of the given two, (A) or (B). 6

A. Read the following description based on the story 'The Rattrap' by Selma Lagerlöf and answer the questions that follow.

After being turned away by the ironmaster who had mistaken him for an old acquaintance, the peddler is surprised when the ironmaster's daughter, Edla, treats him with unexpected warmth. She invites him to stay at the manor over Christmas despite her father's suspicion, insisting that he be given proper food, a place to sleep, and a chance to feel human dignity again, even though she is fully aware of his rough appearance and uncertain past. The peddler, unused to such kindness, is visibly moved but remains wary, unsure of how to respond to someone who asks for nothing in return.

- I. Which of the following best reflect the qualities Edla shows towards the peddler in this extract?
 - 1. Suspicion
 - 2. Compassion
 - 3. Respect
 - 4. Indifference
 - 5. Generosity — Select the most suitable option. 1
 - A. 1 and 4
 - B. 2, 3 and 5
 - C. 1, 2 and 3
 - D. 4 and 5
- II. Fill in the blank with a correct option from brackets. The peddler reacts to Edla's kindness with warmth mixed with _____ (trust / wariness / hostility). 1

- III. How did the peddler feel towards Edla despite her kindness? 1
- He fully trusted her intentions.
 - He remained uncertain despite being moved by her gesture.
 - He resented her offer of help.
 - He ignored her kindness completely.
- IV. What might have been the most likely reason Edla chose to help the peddler despite her father's suspicion? 1
- V. Justify that Edla's insistence on the peddler's dignity, not just his comfort, was central to her kindness, based on the extract. 1
- VI. Complete the following suitably. When the peddler remains 'wary' despite Edla's kindness, his reaction stems from _____. 1

OR

B. Read the following description based on the essay 'Poets and Pancakes' by Asokamitran and answer the questions that follow.

The narrator describes the make-up department of Gemini Studios as a place where social distinctions briefly dissolved, since everyone — from junior artistes to leading stars — had to pass through the same small room to be transformed for the camera. Among the many figures who worked there was an office boy who dreamt of becoming a scriptwriter, tirelessly reading and observing the world of the studio around him, hopeful that his moment would eventually come, even though his daily duties kept him far from anything resembling creative work.

I. Which of the following best reflect the significance of the make-up department, as described in the extract?

- It served as a great leveller among people of different ranks.
 - It was used exclusively by senior actors.
 - It was a place where everyone underwent the same transformation process.
 - It served as an informal meeting point for studio staff.
 - It was strictly off-limits to junior employees. — Select the most suitable option. 1
- 2 and 5
 - 1, 3 and 4
 - 1, 2 and 3
 - 3, 4 and 5

II. Fill in the blank with a correct option from brackets. The office boy continued in his routine duties _____ (reluctantly / hopefully / indifferently), despite being far removed from creative work. 1

III. What does the office boy's habit of reading and observing suggest about his character? 1

- He was easily discouraged by his circumstances.
- He nurtured his ambition quietly despite his circumstances.
- He was indifferent to his surroundings.
- He actively sought to change his job role.

IV. What might explain why the narrator chooses to highlight the office boy's story within a piece largely about the studio's famous personalities? 1

V. Justify that the make-up department functioning as a 'great leveller' reflects a wider truth about the studio's culture, based on the extract. 1

VI. Complete the following suitably. The office boy's quiet persistence in his ambition suggests that _____.

1

10. Answer any five of the following six questions in 40-50 words each:

10

- I. What role did the German language occupy in the community depicted in 'The Last Lesson', and how does this affect Franz's feelings towards French?
- II. What lesson can individuals learn from Douglas's experience of overcoming his fear of water in 'Deep Water'?
- III. Based on Keats' ideas in 'A Thing of Beauty', how can recognising the lasting value of beauty help someone cope with life's difficulties?
- IV. What does the poet's call to be 'quiet' and 'still' suggest about the kind of change he hopes for in 'Keeping Quiet'?
- V. How does Umberto Eco's response during the interview reveal his attitude towards fame and his own achievements? (Interview)
- VI. What is the significance of using a personal, reflective narrative voice in 'Lost Spring', as opposed to a plain factual account?

11. Answer any two of the following three questions in 40-50 words each:

4

- I. How can programmes like 'Students on Ice' help young people understand the real impact of environmental change, based on 'Journey to the End of the Earth'?
- II. What does Zitkala-Sa's account of resisting the cutting of her hair reveal about her sense of identity, in 'Memories of Childhood'?
- III. What does the Maharaja's growing obsession with hunting tigers reveal about his character in 'The Tiger King'?

12. Answer any one of the following two questions, in about 120-150 words

5

A How do 'Indigo' by Louis Fischer and 'A Roadside Stand' by Robert Frost each portray the exploitation of the underprivileged, and what similarities do they reveal about the plight of marginalised communities?

OR

B Compare Franz's changing attitude towards learning in 'The Last Lesson' with Saheb's circumstances in 'Lost Spring'. What do both texts suggest about the value of opportunities that are taken for granted?

13. Answer any one of the following two questions, in about 120-150 words

5

A Justify how Sadao's character arc is more central to the moral dilemma in 'The Enemy' as compared to Hana's.

OR

B Analyse how the narrative technique used in 'The Tiger King' enhances the impact of the story on the reader.