



B.K. BIRLA CENTRE FOR EDUCATION

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

ANNUAL EXAM - 2025-26
ENGLISH SET 2 (301)

Class: XI
Date: 16.02.26
Admission no:

Time: 3 hr.
Max Marks: 80
Roll no:

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS:

1. The question paper is divided into three sections:
Section A – Reading Comprehension
Section B – Writing Skills
Section C – Literature
2. Read the questions carefully and follow the given instructions.

SECTION A

READING SKILLS

Q1. Read the passage given below carefully and answer the questions that follow: (12 marks)

Nelson Mandela is remembered not only as South Africa's first black President but also as a global symbol of peace, resilience, and moral courage. Born in 1918 in the village of Mvezo, Mandela grew up witnessing racial discrimination under colonial rule. These early experiences deeply influenced his sense of justice and equality.

Mandela studied law and soon became actively involved in the fight against apartheid, a system that enforced racial segregation and denied basic human rights to the majority population. His political activism led to his imprisonment for 27 years, most of which he spent on Robben Island. Despite harsh conditions, Mandela never allowed bitterness or hatred to dominate his thoughts.

After his release in 1990, Mandela chose the path of reconciliation rather than revenge. He worked tirelessly to unite a divided nation and played a crucial role in the peaceful transition to democracy. In 1994, he became South Africa's President and focused on healing the wounds of the past through dialogue, forgiveness, and cooperation.

Mandela believed that education was the most powerful weapon to change the world. Even after retirement, he continued to advocate for social justice, equality, and human dignity. His life proves that true leadership lies in humility, patience, and unwavering commitment to one's principles.

Mandela's legacy extends far beyond the political boundaries of South Africa. He redefined the meaning of freedom by linking it inseparably with responsibility, empathy, and ethical

leadership. For Mandela, liberation was not merely the removal of chains but the creation of a society where every individual could live with dignity and mutual respect. His willingness to listen to former oppressors, acknowledge their fears, and guide them toward a shared future demonstrated extraordinary emotional intelligence and statesmanship. In a world often driven by conflict and division, Mandela's approach remains a powerful reminder that lasting peace is built through understanding rather than domination.

Even today, Nelson Mandela's life continues to inspire movements for justice and human rights across the globe. His journey teaches us that courage is not the absence of fear, but the determination to act despite it. By choosing forgiveness over resentment, Mandela transformed personal suffering into a force for collective healing. His story urges humanity to rise above prejudice, embrace compassion, and work tirelessly for a more just and inclusive world. In remembering Nelson Mandela, we are reminded that one individual, guided by conscience and conviction, can indeed change the course of history.

On the basis of your reading of the passage, answer the following questions:

I. Nelson Mandela is regarded as a global symbol of peace because he:

- (i) ruled South Africa for many years
- (ii) chose reconciliation over revenge
- (iii) led violent revolutions
- (iv) avoided political responsibilities

II. Which quality best defines Mandela's leadership as described in the passage?

- (i) Aggression
- (ii) Pride
- (iii) Moral courage
- (iv) Indifference

III. Assertion (A): Mandela's imprisonment strengthened his resolve for equality.

Reason (R): He allowed hatred and anger to guide his actions.

- (i) Both A and R are true and R explains A
- (ii) Both A and R are true but R does not explain A
- (iii) A is true but R is false
- (iv) A is false but R is true

IV. Complete the sentence:

Mandela believed that education was the most powerful _____ to change the world.

V. Complete the analogy:

Apartheid : Injustice :: Reconciliation : _____

VI. How did Mandela's early life influence his fight against apartheid? (2)

VII. Why is Mandela's choice of forgiveness considered remarkable? (2)

VIII. Explain how Mandela's leadership helped heal a divided nation. (2)

IX. State whether true or false: Mandela supported violence as the primary means to achieve equality.

Q2. Read the passage given below carefully and answer the questions that follow: (10 marks)

In recent years, urban gardening has emerged as a significant movement as city dwellers increasingly adopt sustainable living practices. Rapid urbanisation has led to shrinking green spaces, compelling residents to creatively utilise rooftops, balconies, terraces, and small backyards for growing plants. According to urban development surveys, nearly 50% of urban households are expected to engage in some form of gardening by 2025, compared to just 18% in 2015, indicating a sharp rise in environmental consciousness and self-sufficiency.

Beyond sustainability, urban gardening has proven benefits for food security and mental health. Studies suggest that households growing even a small portion of their vegetables can reduce monthly food expenses by 30–40%. Additionally, psychological research reveals that over 65% of urban gardeners report reduced stress levels, while 58% experience improved focus and emotional well-being. Gardening acts as a therapeutic activity, helping individuals disconnect from digital stress and reconnect with nature, even within densely populated cities.

Urban gardening also plays a vital role in reducing environmental impact. Home-grown produce significantly cuts down on carbon emissions associated with transportation and excessive plastic packaging. Environmental analysts estimate that locally grown food can reduce food-related carbon footprints by up to 25% per household annually. Composting kitchen waste for gardening further promotes waste reduction and soil regeneration, reinforcing circular economy practices.

Another notable outcome of urban gardening is community engagement. Nearly 40% of urban gardeners report stronger neighbourhood connections through the exchange of seeds, plants, and cultivation techniques. Schools, housing societies, and municipal bodies are increasingly introducing gardening initiatives to foster environmental awareness among children. These programmes help young learners understand ecological balance, responsibility, and the importance of sustainable food systems from an early age.

Experts now recognise urban gardening as more than a recreational activity—it is a meaningful step toward ecological responsibility, healthier lifestyles, and resilient urban ecosystems. As cities continue to expand, integrating green practices like urban gardening will be essential in addressing food security, mental health challenges, and environmental sustainability. The data clearly demonstrates that nurturing plants in urban spaces ultimately nurtures healthier communities and a greener future.

I. Which of the following combinations best explains why urban gardening is considered a sustainable practice?

- A. It enhances neighbourhood interaction and beautifies cities
- B. It reduces food costs and improves mental well-being
- C. It decreases carbon emissions and minimises packaging waste
- D. It promotes leisure activity and educational engagement

II. The sharp rise in urban gardening participation between 2015 and 2025 mainly reflects:

- A. Increased availability of vacant land in cities
- B. Growing awareness of ecological responsibility and self-sufficiency

- C. Government enforcement of rooftop farming laws
- D. Decline in commercial agricultural production

III. Mention two psychological benefits of urban gardening as highlighted in the passage.
(Any two)

IV. Assertion (A): Urban gardening contributes to the reduction of carbon footprint in cities.
Reason (R): Home-grown produce eliminates long-distance transportation and excessive plastic packaging.

Choose the correct option:

- A. Both A and R are true, and R is the correct explanation of A
- B. Both A and R are true, but R is not the correct explanation of A
- C. A is true, but R is false
- D. A is false, but R is true

V. Complete the Sentence

Urban gardening strengthens community bonding as neighbours exchange _____, _____, and cultivation techniques.

VI. Urban gardening has been adopted by schools and housing societies. (2)

- a) State one educational benefit of introducing gardening projects in schools.
- b) How does this practice promote environmental responsibility among young learners?

VII. Match the items in Column A with the most appropriate impacts in Column B. Each item in Column A may have more than one correct match.

Column A (Aspect) Column B (Impact)

- | | |
|--------------------------|---|
| A. Home-grown vegetables | 1. Improved neighbourhood relationships |
| B. Gardening activities | 2. Reduced carbon emissions |
| C. Exchange of seeds | 3. Stress reduction |
| D. Local food production | 4. Lower food expenses |

Options:

- A. A-4, B-3, C-1, D-2
- B. A-2 & 4, B-3, C-1, D-2
- C. A-4, B-1 & 3, C-2, D-2 & 4
- D. A-2, B-3 & 1, C-4, D-1

VIII. Explain how urban gardening contributes to both environmental sustainability and economic savings. (2)

SECTION B – WRITING SKILLS

Q3. Attempt ANY ONE of the following:

(4 marks)

A. Your school is organising a Career Guidance Seminar for students of Classes XI and XII. As the Head Boy/Head Girl of Green Valley School, draft a notice informing students about the event. Include all relevant details. You are Riya/Rohan. Put the notice in a box.

OR

B. The Eco Club of your school is organising a Cleanliness Drive in the neighbourhood. As the Secretary of the Eco Club, write a notice inviting students of Classes IX–XII to participate. You are Neha/Nikhil. Put the notice in a box.

Q4. Attempt ANY ONE of the following in not more than 50 words: (4 marks)

A. You are Mr. Arjun Mehta. Draft a formal invitation card for your daughter's graduation ceremony. Include necessary details.

OR

B. You are Ms. Kavita Sharma, a social worker. Write a formal letter accepting an invitation to speak on 'Youth and Social Responsibility' at a school function.

Q5. Attempt ANY ONE of the following in 120–150 words: (5 marks)

A. You are Ananya/Anay Sharma, a graduate student residing in Indirapuram, Ghaziabad. You came across an advertisement on an online job portal inviting applications for the post of a freelance content creator. Write a letter to the HR Manager expressing your interest in the position and highlighting your suitability for the role.

WANTED: FREELANCE CONTENT CREATOR

☞ IMMEDIATE OPENING

Eligibility: Graduate / Undergraduate with strong command of English

- Excellent writing, editing, and research skills
- Ability to meet deadlines
- Prior experience preferred (freshers may apply)

Remuneration: Attractive payment on a per-assignment basis

Contact:

The HR Manager

BrightEdge Digital Solutions

Email: hr.brightedge@gmail.com

OR

B. Increasing noise pollution has become a serious concern in urban areas. Write a letter to the Editor of a national daily highlighting its harmful effects and suggesting measures to control it. You are Ayana/ Arun Bose, a concerned citizen.

Q6. Attempt ANY ONE of the following in 120–150 words: (5 marks)

A. You are Soham/Suhani Sahani of class XII-B. Write an article for your school magazine on the importance of time management for students. Use the given cues along with your own ideas to compose this article.

- Meaning and Importance of Time Management for Students
- Challenges Faced by Students Due to Poor Time Management
- Strategies to Develop Time Management Skills
- Benefits of Time Management in Student Life

OR

B. As a reporter for ‘The Daily Herald’, write a report in 120-150 words on a Blood Donation Camp organised by a local NGO in your city. Include all the details of the programme.

SECTION C – LITERATURE

Q7. Read the given extracts and answer the questions for ANY ONE of the two, given. (6 marks)

A. “He stood on the last of his strength,
Supported on his staff.”

(Father to Son)

- i.** Who is ‘he’ in the extract?
- ii.** What does the staff symbolise?
- iii.** Which feeling of the father is most evident here?
- iv.** How does the poet portray emotional distance between father and son?
- v.** The extract suggests the father is:
 - (a) angry
 - (b) helpless
 - (c) indifferent
 - (d) proud
- vi.** What theme of the poem is reflected in this extract?

OR

B. “My grandmother sang of gods and scriptures,
Her lips moved softly with every prayer.”

(The Portrait of a Lady)

- i.** The grandmother is portrayed as:
 - (a) carefree

- (b) religious
- (c) careless
- (d) proud

ii. The word 'scriptures' refers to _____.

iii. Find a word meaning 'spoken quietly' from the extract.

iv. What activity reflects the grandmother's faith?

v. The mood of the stanza is:

- (a) tense
- (b) peaceful
- (c) humorous
- (d) fearful

vi. What does this extract reveal about the grandmother's routine?

8.A Read the given extracts and answer the questions for ANY ONE of the two, given.

MRS FITZGERALD: They've not had as long as I'd like to have given 'em-another hour or two's rough treatment might have made it certain...

MRS PEARSON: I'm sure they'll do better now-though I don't know how I'm going to explain...

MRS FITZGERALD: [severely] Don't you start any explaining or apologising-or you're done for.

MRS PEARSON: [with spirit] It's all right for you. Mrs Fitzgerald. After all, they aren't your husband and children...

MRS FITZGERALD: [impressively] Now you listen to me. You admitted yourself you were spoiling 'em-and they didn't appreciate you. Any apologies-any explanations-an' you'll be straight back where you were. I'm warning you, dear. Just give 'em a look-a tone of voice-now an' again, to suggest you might be tough with 'em if you wanted to be-an' it ought to work. Anyhow, we can test it. *(Mother's Day)*

i. Mrs Fitzgerald's warning to Mrs Pearson suggests that real change in family relationships requires:

- A. Continuous harsh behaviour
- B. Emotional manipulation
- C. Consistent self-respect and firmness
- D. Complete silence

ii. Why does Mrs Fitzgerald insist that Mrs Pearson should not explain or apologise to her family?

iii. What is the tone of Mrs Fitzgerald in the line, "Now you listen to me"?

iv. According to Mrs Fitzgerald, what simple actions should Mrs Pearson use to maintain control over her family?

OR

B. 'Long live the King!' the Ministers said. 'Long live the King! The King is dead.'

They pondered the dilemma; then, Being practical-minded men,
Sent out the heralds to proclaim (In His [former] Majesty's name):
The next to pass the City Gate Will choose the ruler of our state,
As is our custom. This will be Enforced with due ceremony.'
A man passed by the City Gate. An idiot. The guards cried, 'Wait!

Who is to be the King? Decide!' 'A melon,' the idiot replied. *(Tale of the Melon City)*

i. Why did the Ministers choose the next passer-by to decide the ruler?

- A. To test public opinion
- B. To follow tradition and remain practical
- C. To avoid choosing among themselves
- D. To entertain the people

ii. What is ironic about the Ministers crowning a melon as the King?

iii. The man who passed through the City Gate was considered an idiot because

_____.

iv. What does the act of the Ministers carrying the melon to the throne suggest about their character?

Q9. Read the given extracts and answer the questions for ANY ONE of the two, given.

A. "Suddenly the bird came,
And settled in the Laburnum tree."

(The Laburnum Top)

i. What change occurs with the arrival of the bird?

ii. Identify the poetic device used to describe the sudden movement.

iii. Find a word from the stanza that conveys quickness.

iv. How does the bird's arrival affect the tree's silence?

v. What does the bird symbolise in the poem?

vi. How does the poet contrast stillness and movement?

OR

B. My headache soon cleared as we careered down the other side of the pass. It was two o'clock by the time we stopped for lunch. We ate hot noodles inside a long canvas tent, part of a workcamp erected beside a dry salt lake. The plateau is pockmarked with salt flats and brackish lakes, vestiges of the Tethys Ocean which bordered Tibet before the great continental collision that lifted it skyward. This one was a hive of activity. Men with pickaxes and shovels trudging back and forth in their long sheepskin coats and salt-encrusted boots. All wore sunglasses against the glare as a steady stream of blue trucks emerged from the blindingly white lake laden with piles of salt. *(Silk Road)*

i. Why did all the men working at the salt lake wear sunglasses?

- A. To protect their eyes from dust
- B. To look uniform
- C. To shield their eyes from the intense glare
- D. To follow work camp rules

ii. Complete the Line

The plateau is described as being pockmarked with salt flats and brackish lakes because _____.

iii. Explain the meaning of the line: “*vestiges of the Tethys Ocean.*”

iv. What mood is created by the description of the salt lake as “a hive of activity”?

- A. Lonely and desolate
- B. Chaotic and fearful
- C. Lively and industrious
- D. Calm and peaceful

v. Why did Tsetan want the punctured tyres repaired immediately?

vi. What does the comparison “*as smooth as my bald head*” suggest about the tyre?

Q10. Answer ANY FIVE of the following questions in about 40–50 words each: 5×2 = 10

i. How does the poet describe the loss of innocence in ‘*Childhood*’?

ii. What challenges did the narrator face during the sea voyage in ‘*We’re Not Afraid to Die...*’?

iii. How does the author use images of sunlight and nature to reflect the atmosphere in the house after the grandmother’s demise? *(Portrait of a lady)*

iv. Why were Tibetan mastiffs considered valuable in royal Chinese courts? *(Silk Road)*

v. How does ‘*Discovering Tut: The Saga Continues*’ highlight human curiosity about the past?

vi. The poet contrasts the past captured in the photograph with her present emotions. How does this contrast help the reader understand the theme of loss in the poem? *(Photograph)*

Q11. Answer ANY TWO of the following questions in about 40–50 words each: $2 \times 2 = 4$

i. Why was Aram morally conflicted after seeing Mourad with the horse? (*The Summer of the Beautiful White Horse*)

ii. How does the author show the importance of memories over material possessions in '*The Address*'?

iii. How did public opinion influence justice in '*The Tale of the Melon City*'?

Q12. Answer ANY ONE of the following questions in about 120–150 words: (5)

A. The poem '*Voice of the Rain*' presents rain as a symbol of renewal. Discuss how the poet personifies rain and explains its role in nature.

OR

B. How does Professor Gaitonde's experience challenge the idea that history follows only one fixed course? Discuss how the concept of alternative realities is developed in the chapter. (*Adventure*)

Q13. Answer ANY ONE of the following questions in about 120–150 words: (5)

A. Describe the series of challenges faced by Dr Andrew Manson on the night of the childbirth. How do these challenges bring out his professional competence and sense of duty? (*Birth*)

OR

B. Mourad and Aram return the horse despite enjoying their adventure. Explain the values that guide their final decision. (*The Summer of the Beautiful White Horse*)

— ALL THE BEST —