BLOGS

Practice Passage-based English Questions for CLAT 2026

Ruchika Mohapatra · 08 Apr 2025

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PASSAGE

“You can do better than this, Jo. Aim at the highest, and never mind the money.”

“I think the money is the best part of it. What will you do with such a fortune?” asked Amy, regarding the magic slip of paper with a reverential eye.

“Send Beth and Mother to the seaside for a month or two,” answered Jo promptly.

To the seaside they went, after much discussion, and though Beth didn’t come home as plump and rosy as could be desired, she was much better, while Mrs. March declared she felt ten years younger. So Jo was satisfied with the investment of her prize money, and fell to work with a cheery spirit, bent on earning more of those delightful checks. She did earn several that year, and began to feel herself a power in the house, for by the magic of a pen, her ‘rubbish’ turned into comforts for them all. The Duke’s Daughter paid the butcher’s bill, A Phantom Hand put down a new carpet, and the Curse of the Coventrys proved the blessing of the Marches in the way of groceries and gowns.

Wealth is certainly a most desirable thing, but poverty has its sunny side, and one of the sweet uses of adversity is the genuine satisfaction which comes from hearty work of head or hand, and to the inspiration of necessity, we owe half the wise, beautiful, and useful blessings of the world. Jo enjoyed a taste of this satisfaction, and ceased to envy richer girls, taking great comfort in the knowledge that she could supply her own wants, and need ask no one for a penny.

Little notice was taken of her stories, but they found a market, and encouraged by this fact, she resolved to make a bold stroke for fame and fortune. Having copied her novel for the fourth time, read it to all her confidential friends, and submitted it with fear and trembling to three publishers,

she at last disposed of it, on condition that she would cut it down one third, and omit all the parts which she particularly admired.

“Now I must either bundle it back in to my tin kitchen to mold, pay for printing it myself, or chop it up to suit purchasers and get what I can for it. Fame is a very good thing to have in the house, but cash is more convenient, so I wish to take the sense of the meeting on this important subject,” said Jo, calling a family council.

“Don’t spoil your book, my girl, for there is more in it than you know, and the idea is well worked out. Let it wait and ripen,” was her father’s advice, and he practiced what he preached, having waited patiently thirty years for fruit of his own to ripen, and being in no haste to gather it even now when it was sweet and mellow.

“It seems to me that Jo will profit more by taking the trial than by waiting,” said Mrs. March. “Criticism is the best test of such work, for it will show her both unsuspected merits and faults, and help her to do better next time. We are too partial, but the praise and blame of outsiders will prove useful, even if she gets but little money.”

“Yes,” said Jo, knitting her brows, “that’s just it. I’ve been fussing over the thing so long, I really don’t know whether it’s good, bad, or indifferent. It will be a great help to have cool, impartial persons take a look at it, and tell me what they think of it.”

“I wouldn’t leave a word out of it. You’ll spoil it if you do, for the interest of the story is more in the minds than in the actions of the people, and it will be all a muddle if you don’t explain as you go on,” said Meg, who firmly believed that this book was the most remarkable novel ever written.

“But Mr. Allen says, ‘Leave out the explanations, make it brief and dramatic, and let the characters tell the story’,” interrupted Jo, turning to the publisher’s note.

“Do as he tells you. He knows what will sell, and we don’t. Make a good, popular book, and get as much money as you can. By-and-by, when you’ve got a name, you can afford to digress, and have philosophical and metaphysical people in your novels,” said Amy, who took a strictly practical view of the subject.

“Well,” said Jo, laughing, “if my people are ‘philosophical and metaphysical’, it isn’t my fault, for I know nothing about such things, except what I hear father say, sometimes. If I’ve got some of his wise ideas jumbled up with my romance, so much the better for me. Now, Beth, what do you say?”

“I should so like to see it printed soon,” was all Beth said, and smiled in saying it. But there was an unconscious emphasis on the last word, and a wistful look in the eyes that never lost their childlike candor, which chilled Jo’s heart for a minute with a forboding fear, and decided her to make her little venture ‘soon’.

So, with Spartan firmness, the young authoress laid her first-born on her table, and chopped it up as ruthlessly as any ogre. In the hope of pleasing everyone, she took everyone’s advice, and like the old man and his donkey in the fable suited nobody.

Her father liked the metaphysical streak which had unconsciously got into it, so that was allowed to remain though she had her doubts about it. Her mother thought that there was a trifle too much description. Out, therefore it came, and with it many necessary links in the story. Meg admired the tragedy, so Jo piled up the agony to suit her, while Amy objected to the fun, and, with the best intentions in life, Jo quenched the spritly scenes which relieved the somber character of the story. Then, to complicate the ruin, she cut it down one third, and confidingly sent the poor little romance, like a picked robin, out into the big, busy world to try its fate.

Well, it was printed, and she got three hundred dollars for it, likewise plenty of praise and blame, both so much greater than she expected that she was thrown into a state of bewilderment from which it took her some time to recover.

“You said, Mother, that criticism would help me. But how can it, when it’s so contradictory that I don’t know whether I’ve written a promising book or broken all the ten commandments?” cried poor Jo, turning over a heap of notices, the perusal of which filled her with pride and joy one minute, wrath and dismay the next. “This man says, ‘An exquisite book, full of truth, beauty, and earnestness.’ ‘All is sweet, pure, and healthy.’” continued the perplexed authoress.

“The next, ‘The theory of the book is bad, full of morbid fancies, spiritualistic ideas, and unnatural characters.’ Now, as I had no theory of any kind, don’t believe in Spiritualism, and copied my characters from life, I don’t see how this critic can be right. Another says, ‘It’s one of the best American novels which has appeared for years.’ (I know better than that), and the next asserts that ‘Though it is original, and written with great force and feeling, it is a dangerous book.’ ’Tisn’t! Some make fun of it, some overpraise, and nearly all insist that I had a deep theory to expound, when I only wrote it for the pleasure and the money. I wish I’d printed the whole or not at all, for I do hate to be so misjudged.”

Source: **Little Women by Louisa May Alcott**

QUESTIONS

1. What is a central theme of the passage?

A) The sacrifices required for artistic success

B) The importance of family and financial independence

C) The role of fate in determining one's success

D) The dangers of seeking fame

Correct Answer: B) The importance of family and financial independence

Explanation: The passage emphasizes Jo's commitment to supporting her family through her writing, showing the value of financial independence and familial love.

2. What theme is evident in Jo's struggle with her novel's publication?

A) The conflict between artistic integrity and commercial success

B) The impact of wealth on personal relationships

C) The struggle between traditional and modern literature

D) The superiority of critical reviews over personal opinions

Correct Answer: A) The conflict between artistic integrity and commercial success

Explanation: Jo wants her book to be artistically meaningful, but she also needs to make money, leading to a compromise that leaves her dissatisfied.

3.Choose the word that is closest in meaning to "reverential" as used in the passage.

A) Careless

B) Admiring

C) Mocking

D) Indifferent

Correct Answer: B) Admiring

Explanation: "Reverential" means showing deep respect or admiration, which is how Amy views the slip of paper (prize money).

4. What is the closest synonym of "bewilderment" as used in the passage?

A) Confusion

B) Excitement

C) Satisfaction

D) Arrogance

Correct Answer: A) Confusion

Explanation: Jo is overwhelmed by the mixed reviews of her book, which puts her in a state of confusion or “bewilderment.”

5. What does the phrase “Spartan firmness” suggest about Jo’s attitude?

A) She is emotional and easily discouraged.

B) She is strict and disciplined in her decision.

C) She is careless and unmotivated.

D) She is dependent on others for guidance.

Correct Answer: B) She is strict and disciplined in her decision.

Explanation: The phrase “Spartan firmness” refers to being strong-willed and resolute, much like the disciplined Spartans of ancient Greece.

6. What does the phrase “the sweet uses of adversity” imply?

A) There are benefits to struggling in life.

B) Only poor people can be happy.

C) Wealth is necessary for success.

D) Writing is an easy way to earn money.

Correct Answer: A) There are benefits to struggling in life.

Explanation: The passage suggests that hard work and overcoming financial struggles bring personal growth and satisfaction.

7. What can be inferred about the role of criticism in Jo’s life?

A) It motivates her to improve despite its contradictions.

B) It makes her doubt her talent completely.

C) It convinces her to stop writing.

D) It has no impact on her decisions.

Correct Answer: A) It motivates her to improve despite its contradictions.

Explanation: Although Jo finds criticism confusing, she acknowledges its value in helping her grow as a writer.

8. What does the phrase "like a picked robin" imply about Jo's novel?

A) It was carefully prepared and polished.
B) It was weak and vulnerable after excessive editing.
C) It was colorful and full of energy.
D) It was rejected outright by publishers.

Correct Answer: B) It was weak and vulnerable after excessive editing.

Explanation: The phrase compares Jo's novel to a plucked bird, suggesting that after so many changes, it lost its original charm and strength.

9. What literary device is used in the line "chopped it up as ruthlessly as any ogre"?

A) Simile
B) Metaphor
C) Alliteration
D) Hyperbole

Correct Answer: A) Simile

Explanation: The phrase compares Jo's editing process to an ogre's ruthlessness using "as," which makes it a simile.

10. Which of the following statements best captures Amy's view on publishing?

A) Artistic integrity should come before profit.
B) Jo should write for commercial success first.
C) It is important to wait before publishing.
D) Only serious novels deserve recognition.

Correct Answer: B) Jo should write for commercial success first.

Explanation: Amy advises Jo to focus on making a popular book first and write deeper novels later when she is well-known.

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