BLOGS

Passage-Based Questions on English for CLAT UG [Part 15]

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Passage 1 (P.1)

Modern democracies often assume that transparency is inherently virtuous. Governments publish data, institutions release internal documents, and citizens demand access to information under the belief that openness guarantees accountability. The logic appears straightforward: when power operates in the open, abuse becomes difficult. Yet this assumption, while appealing, may oversimplify the relationship between visibility and responsibility. Transparency does not automatically produce understanding. An overwhelming release of information can generate confusion rather than clarity. When thousands of pages of data are made public without interpretation, citizens may lack the expertise or time required to meaningfully analyze them.

In such cases, transparency becomes symbolic rather than substantive. Information exists, but comprehension does not. Moreover, visibility may alter behavior in unintended ways. Decision-makers who know that every discussion may later be scrutinized often avoid candid internal debate. Instead of encouraging honesty, excessive exposure can produce strategic communication — language crafted to appear defensible rather than thoughtful. The result may be a political culture that prioritizes performance over genuine deliberation. This is not an argument for secrecy. Rather, it suggests that transparency is a procedural value, not a moral cure-all.

Accountability depends not merely on access to information but on institutions capable of interpreting, contextualizing, and acting upon it. Without such structures, openness may create the illusion of control while power quietly adapts to new forms of visibility. In this sense, transparency should be understood not as an end in itself but as one component within a broader democratic ecosystem. When treated as an absolute virtue, it risks obscuring the more complex work required to sustain responsible governance.

1. The author’s central claim is that transparency:

a) is necessary but insufficient

b) guarantees accountability

c) should be eliminated in democracies

d) produces secrecy

2. The phrase “symbolic rather than substantive” most nearly suggests:

a) legally binding

b) emotionally powerful

c) financially costly

d) superficial in effect

3. The author suggests that excessive transparency may:

a) increase corruption

b) reduce honest internal discussion

c) eliminate public debate

d) simplify governance

4. Which assumption does the passage challenge?

a) Democracy requires elections

b) Citizens distrust institutions

c) Openness automatically ensures responsibility

d) Data is dangerous

5. The tone of the passage is best described as:

a) celebratory

b) skeptical but balanced

c) cynical

d) indifferent

Passage 2 (P.2)

When Mishti returned to her childhood home after twelve years, she was struck not by how much had changed but by how precisely certain things had remained the same. The corridor still carried the faint scent of sandalwood; the clock above the staircase ticked with the same uneven rhythm

she remembered from exam nights. Yet the familiarity did not comfort her.

Instead, it created a peculiar dislocation – as though she were inhabiting a preserved version of herself rather than the present moment. Her mother moved through the house with practical efficiency, discussing electricity bills and neighborhood gossip, while Mishti listened with the attentiveness of a guest. She noticed how conversations circled around trivial matters, carefully avoiding the period when she had left abruptly after a disagreement that neither had since named.

Silence, she realized, had become their shared language. In the evenings, she would sit in her old room and open drawers she once considered private territories. The notebooks filled with teenage declarations felt theatrical now, almost authored by someone else. She wondered whether memory edits the past to protect the present. Perhaps what she called “home” was merely an arrangement of objects that once held emotional certainty. On her final night, during an unexpected power outage, the house fell into darkness.

Without electric light, the walls seemed less rigid, more tentative. Her mother entered quietly and sat beside her. No apologies were exchanged. Instead, they began describing ordinary memories – a monsoon leak in the ceiling, a failed birthday cake, a school performance gone wrong. In recounting shared imperfections, something eased. Mishti understood then that reconciliation does not always require resolution. Sometimes, it emerges from acknowledging that both past and present are incomplete narratives, constantly revised by those who inhabit them.

6. Mishti’s primary emotional response to the unchanged house is:

a) joy
b) comfort
c) anger
d) disorientation

7. The “silence” between Mishti and her mother suggests:

a) mutual indifference
b) unresolved conflict
c) lack of memory
d) boredom

8. The notebooks symbolize:

a) academic success

b) childhood innocence

c) distance from former identity

d) maternal expectations

9. The power outage functions in the narrative as:

a) comic relief

b) external conflict

c) catalyst for emotional shift

d) symbol of fear

10. The passage ultimately suggests that reconciliation:

a) may occur indirectly

b) is impossible without apology

c) requires direct confrontation

d) demands forgetting the past

Passage 3 (P.3)

Artificial intelligence systems increasingly operate in domains once reserved for human judgment: medical diagnosis, judicial risk assessment, hiring decisions, and credit evaluation. Proponents argue that algorithmic systems reduce bias by relying on data rather than intuition. Critics counter that data itself reflects historical inequalities, meaning algorithms may replicate or even amplify discrimination under the appearance of neutrality. The difficulty lies not merely in technical design but in epistemology – how knowledge is constructed.

Machine learning systems identify statistical correlations within existing datasets. They do not independently understand causation, morality, or context. When trained on past decisions, they inherit embedded patterns, including unjust ones. The output may appear objective, yet its foundations remain socially conditioned. Defenders of algorithmic governance emphasize efficiency and consistency. Unlike human decision-makers, machines do not experience fatigue or emotion.

However, efficiency cannot substitute for accountability. When an algorithm denies a loan or recommends a harsher sentence, responsibility becomes diffused among programmers,

institutions, and opaque computational processes. The debate therefore extends beyond technology into political theory. Who bears responsibility when automated systems cause harm? Can accountability exist without transparency in design?

And should certain decisions remain fundamentally human, even if imperfect? As AI continues to integrate into governance, society must confront a paradox: systems designed to minimize human error may simultaneously distance humans from moral responsibility. The challenge is not whether to use algorithms, but how to embed them within frameworks that preserve both fairness and answerability.

11. The author argues that algorithmic bias arises primarily from:

a) machine malfunction
b) programmer laziness
c) historical patterns embedded in data
d) excessive transparency

12. The term “epistemology” in context refers to:

a) coding language
b) theory of knowledge formation
c) legal doctrine
d) economic efficiency

13. The passage suggests efficiency:

a) replaces fairness
b) guarantees justice
c) cannot replace accountability
d) eliminates discrimination

14. The “paradox” mentioned refers to:

a) faster decisions causing confusion
b) human error being superior
c) transparency limiting governance
d) machines reducing bias while complicating responsibility

15. The author’s overall stance is:

a) anti-technology

b) uncritical acceptance

c) cautious and analytical

d) dismissive

Answers

1. A – The author isn't rejecting transparency; they're saying it helps but doesn't automatically create accountability on its own.
2. D – "Symbolic rather than substantive" means it looks meaningful on the surface but doesn't actually create real change.
3. B – The passage explains that constant scrutiny may make officials speak strategically instead of honestly.
4. C – The author questions the common belief that simply making information public guarantees responsibility.
5. B – The tone is thoughtful and critical but not extreme,here the author weighs both sides carefully.
6. D – Mishti feels unsettled because everything feels frozen in time, making her feel out of place.
7. B – The silence suggests something unresolved between them , sort of an issue which no one is ready to directly address.
8. C – The notebooks show how different her younger self feels now, highlighting emotional distance from her past identity.
9. C – The darkness creates a softer, more intimate setting that allows emotional connection to happen.
10. A – The ending shows that reconciliation doesn't always need dramatic confrontation — it can happen quietly.
11. C – The passage clearly says algorithms reflect historical data, and that data may already contain bias.
12. B – Here, epistemology refers to how knowledge is formed , especially how algorithms "know" what they know.
13. C – The author stresses that being efficient doesn't automatically make a system fair or accountable.

14. D – The paradox is that AI aims to reduce human error but may blur who is responsible when things go wrong.
15. C – The author doesn't reject AI but examines it carefully, pointing out both benefits and risks.