

CBSE Class 12 — ENGLISH ELECTIVE (001)

Sample Paper: Questions and Solutions · Academic Session 2026–27

Complete Questions, Answers, Solutions and Marking Scheme

Total Time: 3 hours

Marks: 80

General Instructions

- This paper is divided into THREE sections:
Section A — Reading · Section B — Applied Grammar & Writing · Section C — Textbook & Fiction
- Separate instructions are given with each part and question wherever necessary. Read the instructions very carefully and follow them faithfully.
- Do not exceed the prescribed word limit while answering the questions.
- If more than one option is mentioned in the answer to a multiple-choice question, no marks are awarded.

The marking scheme carries suggested value points only. These are guidelines and do not constitute the complete answer; a student's own correct expression earns due credit.

SECTION A · READING

20 marks

Question 1

12 × 1 = 12 marks

Read the passage given below and answer the questions that follow.

The Quiet Measure of Success

In the early hours of the morning, before the city fully awakened to its usual urgency, the park belonged to a small group of regular visitors. Elderly men walked steadily along familiar paths, their steps measured and unhurried. A woman practised yoga beneath a neem tree, her movements slow and deliberate, flowing with quiet concentration. Nearby, a gardener trimmed hedges with careful precision, shaping growth that would soon go unnoticed by the casual eye. Among them was Raghav, who arrived each day at exactly six o'clock, carrying nothing but a notebook and a quiet, deliberate sense of purpose. He would pause for a moment at the entrance, inhaling the cool morning air, letting the scent of damp earth and dew-laden grass settle into his mind.

Raghav had retired five years earlier after spending nearly four decades in a government office. His career had been steady rather than remarkable, marked by routine responsibilities and modest promotions. He had fulfilled his duties diligently, though without distinction that demanded attention. When he retired, colleagues congratulated him politely, shook his hand, and returned quickly to their desks. There were no speeches celebrating his service, no lingering acknowledgements of lasting contribution. At the time, this absence unsettled him more than he was willing to admit, leaving an unexpected void he had never anticipated.

In the months following his retirement, Raghav struggled with an unfamiliar sense of invisibility. The structured routine that had once governed his life disappeared suddenly, leaving long stretches of unclaimed time. Days blended into one another without clear purpose. He found himself questioning the value of years spent meeting deadlines, filing reports, and following procedures that seemed to vanish from collective memory the moment he stepped away. Success, he felt, had not rejected him openly; it had simply passed him by without recognition. Some evenings, he would sit by his window, watching the city lights blink on one by one, and wonder whether the efforts of a lifetime truly mattered if they left no visible trace.

It was during this uncertain phase that Raghav began visiting the park. Initially, he came only to occupy his mornings, to impose some structure upon otherwise empty hours. Gradually, however, the routine of walking the familiar paths offered him something more enduring. The park revealed a rhythm untouched by ambition or competition. Trees shed their leaves without regret, birds rebuilt their nests season after season, and the gardener returned daily to his work regardless of whether anyone noticed. Dew glistened on blades of grass, reflecting the pink and gold of the rising sun, and even the air seemed to hum with a gentle, unspoken constancy. There was no applause for consistency, yet the park thrived because of it, reminding Raghav that quiet effort could sustain life in subtle, profound ways.

One morning, Raghav noticed a young boy seated alone on a bench, struggling to read from a torn textbook. The child's lips moved hesitantly over the words, his brow creased with effort and frustration. On impulse, Raghav paused and offered help. The boy hesitated, uncertain, then nodded. What began as a brief explanation soon became a longer conversation, and eventually a daily habit. Within a week, two more children joined them. Over



time, the small group grew, forming an informal circle of learning beneath the neem tree, their laughter mingling with the morning birdsong. Raghav would bring stories, illustrations, and small exercises to engage the children's curiosity. Sometimes he paused to let them explore their surroundings, showing them that learning could be discovered as much in observing the rustling leaves or the path of an ant as in reading books.

Raghav did not announce these informal lessons to anyone. He sought no permission, kept no record, and followed no timetable. He simply arrived each morning with his notebook and waited. He explained concepts patiently, repeated ideas without irritation, and treated every small improvement as a quiet achievement. There were no examinations, no rewards — only the slow, visible growth of understanding. Often, he would smile at a child's tentative progress or quietly encourage a hesitant hand to raise a question. These moments became his quiet triumphs, delicate yet profoundly satisfying.

Parents gradually began to notice changes. Children who once avoided books now carried them with tentative pride. Some performed better at school; others showed improvement less measurable but equally significant. Confidence replaced hesitation. Curiosity replaced fear. When parents thanked him, Raghav listened politely and deflected their gratitude with a gentle smile. Praise, he had discovered, felt less necessary than it once had. He had learned to treasure the process rather than the recognition.

What surprised him most was the shift within himself. The absence of formal recognition no longer troubled him. Satisfaction emerged not from outcomes that could be counted or displayed, but from moments that resisted measurement — a child reading fluently for the first time, a hesitant hand raised with confidence, a question asked without fear of error. These moments, fleeting though they were, carried a sense of permanence. Raghav began to notice that the smallest gestures — a thoughtful question, a spark of understanding in a child's eyes — could feel more profound than any accolade he had received in his professional life.

Raghav realised that much of his earlier dissatisfaction had come from equating success with visibility. Society, he observed, tended to celebrate achievements that could be displayed, compared, and publicly acknowledged. Quiet contributions, though essential, often remained unnoticed. Yet their impact endured, shaping lives subtly and steadily over time. He reflected on how the steady rhythm of the park, the patience of the gardener, and the persistent growth of the children had taught him that significance often lies beneath the surface.

As seasons changed, the park remained constant. Leaves fell and returned, paths wore smoother under repeated footsteps. The gardener continued trimming hedges, the elderly men walked on, and Raghav arrived each morning, notebook in hand. He no longer thought of himself as retired. He felt engaged — connected to a purpose that did not depend on position or title. Even the changing light of the dawn seemed to mirror his own inner illumination, reminding him that life's quiet acts carried meaning beyond the world's notice.

One evening, as Raghav prepared to leave, the gardener looked up briefly and said, "You come every day. That matters." The remark was simple, almost casual, yet it lingered. In those few words, Raghav recognised a truth he had spent years overlooking: that consistency, care, and quiet commitment often defined success more meaningfully than recognition ever could. He smiled to himself, feeling the subtle, enduring power of ordinary actions, and realised that the park had become both a classroom and a mirror — reflecting the growth of the children and the transformation of his own heart.

970 words. Source: created for academic usage.

On the basis of your reading of the above excerpt, answer **any TWELVE** of the following fifteen questions.

I What best describes Raghav's relationship with his professional life before retirement? [1]

- A. Emotionally fulfilling and rewarding
- B. Competitive and ambitious
- C. Stable but lacking public recognition
- D. Frustrating and unsuccessful

ANSWER

| C. Stable but lacking public recognition

II The phrase 'quiet, deliberate sense of purpose' suggests that Raghav's actions are ____. [1]

- A. impulsive and unplanned
- B. driven by external expectations
- C. internally motivated and thoughtful
- D. uncertain and experimental

ANSWER

| C. internally motivated and thoughtful

- III Raghav's feeling of 'invisibility' after retirement primarily arises from** [1]
- A. reduced interaction with colleagues
 - B. loss of professional relevance and routine
 - C. lack of financial stability
 - D. inability to adapt to leisure time

ANSWER

| **B. loss of professional relevance and routine**

- IV How does the description of the gardener contribute to the central idea of the passage?** [1]
- A. It contrasts physical labour with intellectual work
 - B. It reinforces the idea of unnoticed but meaningful effort
 - C. It highlights social inequality
 - D. It introduces a parallel narrative

ANSWER

| **B. It reinforces the idea of unnoticed but meaningful effort**

- V The author's use of recurring daily routines in the park mainly serves to ____.** [1]
- A. create a slow-paced narrative
 - B. emphasise monotony in retired life
 - C. suggest consistency as a meaningful form of contribution
 - D. contrast leisure with responsibility

ANSWER

| **C. suggest consistency as a meaningful form of contribution**

- VI It can be inferred that Raghav's satisfaction from teaching the children is rooted in ____.** [1]
- A. public appreciation from parents
 - B. measurable academic improvement
 - C. personal fulfilment beyond recognition
 - D. nostalgia for his professional life

ANSWER

| **C. personal fulfilment beyond recognition**

- VII The statement "Praise, he had discovered, felt less necessary than it once had" implies that Raghav** [1]
- A. had become indifferent to people
 - B. valued internal satisfaction over validation
 - C. was uncomfortable receiving appreciation
 - D. doubted the sincerity of others

ANSWER

| **B. valued internal satisfaction over validation**

- VIII The park, as a setting, symbolically represents:** [1]
- A. retirement and withdrawal
 - B. social equality
 - C. continuity independent of ambition
 - D. freedom from responsibility

ANSWER

| **C. continuity independent of ambition**

- IX Assertion (A): Raghav finds fulfilment in activities that are not formally acknowledged. Reason (R): He derives meaning from consistent, small contributions that positively affect others.** [1]
- 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. Both A and R are false.

ANSWER

| **A. Both A and R are true, and R is the correct explanation of A.**

X The tone of the passage is best described as ____. [1]

- A. argumentative and critical
 B. reflective and understated
 C. nostalgic and sentimental
 D. optimistic and celebratory

ANSWER

| **B. reflective and understated**

XI What change occurs in Raghav's response to gratitude offered by parents? [1]

- A. He begins to expect appreciation
 B. He feels embarrassed by praise
 C. He acknowledges it calmly without relying on it
 D. He openly rejects it

ANSWER

| **C. He acknowledges it calmly without relying on it**

XII What is the significance of the gardener's remark, "You come every day. That matters"? [1]

ANSWER

| The gardener's remark underscores the value of consistency and presence over recognition. It reinforces the passage's theme that small, repeated efforts have a meaningful impact, even when they go unobserved.

XIII State whether the following statement is TRUE or FALSE: Raghav's sense of fulfilment in the park depends largely on the recognition and appreciation he receives from others. [1]

ANSWER

| **FALSE**

SOLUTION

| The passage states that "the absence of formal recognition no longer troubled him" and that he "learned to treasure the process rather than the recognition".

XIV What literary device is used in the following lines? "The absence of formal recognition no longer troubled him. Satisfaction emerged not from outcomes that could be counted or displayed, but from moments that resisted measurement." [1]

- A. Metaphor
 B. Personification
 C. Hyperbole
 D. Simile

ANSWER

| **A. Metaphor**

SOLUTION

| Abstract experience is spoken of as though it were a physical quantity that can be 'counted', 'displayed' and 'measured' — an implied comparison, made without 'like' or 'as'.

XV Assertion (A): Raghav's dedication to teaching the children reflects his personal growth after retirement. Reason (R): Engaging in meaningful work outside formal employment helped him realise the value of consistent effort over public recognition. [1]

- 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. Both A and R are false.



ANSWER

A. Both A and R are true, and R is the correct explanation of A.

Marking scheme: 1 mark for each of any twelve questions attempted.

Question 2

4 × 1 = 4 marks

Read the poem **Aspiration** by Emily Dickinson given below.

*We never know how high we are
Till we are asked to rise;
And then if we are true to plan
Our statures touch the skies.*

*The heroism we recite
Would be a daily thing,
Did not ourselves the cubits warp
For fear to be a king.*

— Emily Dickinson

Answer **any FOUR** of the five questions given below.

I What does the phrase ‘statures touch the skies’ represent in the line ‘Our statures touch the skies’? [1]

ANSWER

It represents our highest potential — the reaching of our fullest capabilities.

II How does the poet redefine the trait of ‘heroism’? [1]

ANSWER

The poet treats heroism as a natural quality that exists within us on an everyday basis. It is **not** an extraordinary event reserved for a few; it “would be a daily thing” if we did not shrink from it.

III Identify the irony related to human capabilities as highlighted in the poem. [1]

- A. People only strive for greatness when they are rewarded publicly.
- B. Humans possess immense potential but dismiss it out of fear.
- C. Heroism is an inherited trait which cannot be developed.
- D. The skies are accessible to those who are born into royalty.

ANSWER

B. Humans possess immense potential but dismiss it out of fear.

IV What could be the possible reason behind individuals failing to tap their heroic potential, as per the second stanza? [1]

ANSWER

Fear — of failure, or of the responsibility that greatness brings. We ourselves ‘warp the cubits’, shrinking our own measure “for fear to be a king”.

V Comment on the tone of the poet in the poem. [1]

ANSWER

Reflective and critical.

Marking scheme: 1 mark for each of any four questions attempted.

Question 3

4 × 1 = 4 marks

Read the passage given below.

Girls and Sport

The world of women’s sports is undergoing a game-changing transformation, capturing unprecedented attention and recognition. The Paris Olympics will be the most gender-equal in history.

- Girls who play sports develop self-esteem, confidence and resilience, and learn to work in teams. They tend to stay in school longer, delay pregnancy, and get better jobs.

- Eighty per cent of female Fortune 500 CEOs played sports in their formative years, emphasising the profound impact of early exposure to sports on women's development and their ability to reach their full potential.
- Ninety-two per cent of global audiences surveyed by Parity Now agree it is important for girls to play sports growing up, with 61 per cent deeming it "very important".
- Despite the evidence of clear benefits, by the age of 14 girls drop out of sports at twice the rate of boys, due to several factors such as social expectations and lack of investment in quality programmes. (153 words)

Source: knowledge.unwomen.org — Facts and figures: Women in sport

Table 1: Media Coverage and Influence Growth

Metric	Percentage	Context / Comparison
Female commentators (Paris 2024)	Nearly 40%	Nearly 80% increase compared to Tokyo 2020.
Women's sports coverage share (2022)	16%	Tripled since 2019, up from a stagnant 5% for three decades.
Projected coverage share	20%	Expected by 2025 if the current growth rate continues.
Social media conversation share (2022)	18.5%	Marks a 2.53% average annual increase in share.
Impactful role models	88%	Regard professional women athletes as impactful role models for young women.
WNBA airing	Prime-time in 2024	2nd consecutive year in the US.

Table 2: Audience and Attendance Records

Aspect	Details / Statistics	Year / Date
Global viewership of women's sports	FIFA Women's World Cup — most viewed women's sports event — nearly 2 billion viewers worldwide	2023
Largest attendance at a women's sports event	92,003 spectators attended a volleyball doubleheader in Lincoln, Nebraska	30 August 2023
Previous attendance record	91,648 spectators at Camp Nou, Spain, for Barcelona vs Wolfsburg (UEFA Women's Champions League semi-final)	20 April 2022
Overall audience reach	7 out of 10 people watch women's sports	Recent years
Frequency of viewership	73% watch women's sports at least a few times a year; 81% watch men's sports with the same frequency	Recent years
New audience growth	54% of women's sports fans began watching within the last three years	Last 3 years

Based on your reading, answer **any FOUR** of the questions given below.

I Which of the following statements accurately reflects a major obstacle identified in the passage despite the documented benefits of sports for girls? [1]

- (A) The influence of pro-women athletes as role models is still limited to less than 50% of young women.
- (B) The gender-equal status of the Paris Olympics has not yet led to increased investment in quality grassroots programmes.
- (C) The rate of girls dropping out of sports is nearly 200% higher than the rate for boys by the age of 14.
- (D) Media coverage of women's sports is stagnant, reflecting the three decades prior to 2019.

ANSWER

(B) The gender-equal status of the Paris Olympics has not yet led to increased investment in quality grassroots programmes.

SOLUTION

The passage names 'lack of investment in quality programmes' as a reason girls still drop out. (A) is contradicted by the 88% figure; (C) misreads 'twice the rate', which is 100% higher, not 200%; (D) is contradicted by coverage having tripled since 2019.

- II The passage suggests that the growth of women's sports viewership is a relatively new phenomenon. By what percentage of total fans has the audience grown within the last three years?** [1]

ANSWER

54% — over half of all women's sports fans began watching only within the last three years.

- III State TRUE or FALSE: The increase in female commentators for the Paris 2024 Olympics is only a marginal improvement, reflecting less than double the percentage from Rio 2016.** [1]

ANSWER

FALSE

SOLUTION

Table 1 records nearly 40% female commentators at Paris 2024, a rise of nearly 80% on the previous Games. An increase of that size cannot be called marginal.

- IV Explain the symbolic significance of the world record for the largest attendance at a women's sports event being set by a volleyball doubleheader in the US, rather than by a globally dominant sport like football.** [1]

ANSWER

It demonstrates that the surge in audience interest is broad-based rather than confined to the traditional giants. A university volleyball match setting a global attendance record shows that enthusiasm extends beyond major professionalised sports such as European football, which held the previous record, to grassroots and non-professional women's events — a fundamental shift in fan culture.

- V The passage implies that the long-term professional success of women is correlated with early sports participation because:** [1]

- (A) Sports programmes offer specialised networking opportunities not available in academic environments.
- (B) The historical lack of investment forced early athletes to become resourceful managers of their careers.
- (C) Early exposure to sports guarantees better job placement immediately after graduation.
- (D) The skills developed — such as resilience, teamwork and confidence — are critical determinants of leadership ability.

ANSWER

(D) The skills developed — such as resilience, teamwork and confidence — are critical determinants of leadership ability.

Marking scheme: 1 mark for each of any four questions attempted.



SECTION B · APPLIED GRAMMAR & WRITING**28 marks****Question 4****8 × 1 = 8 marks**Transform the following sentences as per the given instructions. (**Any EIGHT**)

No.	Sentence and instruction	Answer
I	“Why didn’t you send the application on time?” the manager asked the clerk. (Start with — The manager asked...)	The manager asked the clerk why he had not sent the application on time.
II	He was very tired. He could not complete the work. (Start with — Being too tired...)	Being too tired, he could not complete the work.
III	He is an author. He has won several national awards. (Combine using ‘who’.)	He is an author who has won several national awards.
IV	The man was arrested yesterday. He is a notorious thief. (Start with — The man who...)	The man who was arrested yesterday is a notorious thief.
V	As soon as the thief saw the policeman, he ran away. (Begin with — No sooner...)	No sooner did the thief see the policeman than he ran away.
VI	He will succeed. I am confident of this. (Combine using ‘that’.)	I am confident that he will succeed.
VII	The master appointed him as the manager. (Start with — He was appointed...)	He was appointed as the manager by the master.
VIII	She finished her work. She left the office. (Begin using — Having...)	Having finished her work, she left the office.
IX	Besides being a singer, she is a painter. (Rewrite using — Not only...but also...)	She is not only a singer but also a painter.
X	“Bravo! You have played exceptionally well,” said the coach to the players. (Begin with — The coach applauded...)	The coach applauded the players, saying that they had played exceptionally well.

Marking scheme: 1 mark for each of any eight sentences correctly transformed.

Question 5**3 × 5 = 15 marks**Attempt **any THREE** of the following four questions in 120–150 words each.**MARKING SCHEME**

Content	Organisation	Expression	Total
2	1	2	5

Organisation covers fluency, coherence and logical flow; expression covers vocabulary, originality of ideas and grammatical accuracy.

- I** You recently returned from a trip where you deliberately chose to avoid all digital navigation tools (GPS, online maps, hotel apps) and relied only on locals and paper maps. Write a discursive essay describing the challenges you faced and the unique connections you made. Also set out your impressions of digital fasting. [5]

SUGGESTED VALUE POINTS

- Unlike the ‘blue dot’ on a GPS, a paper map demands spatial awareness; describe the initial withdrawal symptoms — the phantom itch to reach for the phone when a turn is missed.
- Following a local’s recommendation — the scenic route — often leads to hidden gems such as cafés and viewpoints that no travel algorithm indexes.
- Relying on people allows you to pick up local dialects, gestures and hospitality, all absent from a voice-guided AI.



- Without a screen as intermediary, the senses sharpen: you see the city rather than merely follow a path.
- Digital fasting reveals how much of our identity is tied to being reachable; the trip becomes an internal journey of self-reliance.

II Draft a reflective essay on the theme ‘The Weight of Expectations: Navigating Personal Desire vs Societal Norms’. Evaluate its effect on youth and the outcomes it leads to, and share an anecdote or example to illustrate your point. [5]

SUGGESTED VALUE POINTS

- Young people today are driven by a pre-scripted definition of success — high grades, prestigious degrees, conventional careers.
- This creates a psychological burden in which self-worth is tied exclusively to external approval.
- Chronic pressure to conform leads to performance anxiety, burnout and a sense of alienation.
- When personal desire is suppressed for too long, the result is often deep resentment towards the very society one sought to please.
- One illustrative anecdote or example should be developed.

III Artificial Intelligence is the defining architect of the twenty-first century. Analyse the impact of AI on diverse fields of study and justify the proposal to introduce it as a mandatory subject in the high school curriculum for Arts, Commerce and Science students alike, in the form of an analytical essay. [5]

SUGGESTED VALUE POINTS

- AI is no longer a sub-branch of computer science but a horizontal technology; AI literacy is the foundational tool for navigating twenty-first-century data in any field.
- **Science:** AI accelerates data analysis and predictive modelling, for example in climate science or genomics.
- **Commerce:** it redefines market logistics, algorithmic trading and consumer behaviour analysis.
- **Arts:** it challenges the definitions of creativity and authorship through generative art and the digital humanities.
- Students must understand algorithmic bias, data privacy and the black-box problem in order to become responsible citizens of an automated society.
- The aim is not to teach every student to code but to teach them to collaborate with machines, complementing AI rather than being replaced by it.

IV The recent triumph of the women’s football team in the World Cup has been hailed as a ‘watershed moment’ for the nation. Write an expository essay discussing how such international sporting successes contribute to social engineering and the redefinition of gender roles in traditional societies. Use the recent victory as a case study to argue whether sporting glory alone is sufficient to bridge the gender gap in professional opportunities. [5]

SUGGESTED VALUE POINTS

- When women succeed on a global stage, a conservative society is forced to re-evaluate its assumptions about the physical and mental capabilities of women, shifting the cultural needle towards equity.
- A World Cup win offers young girls tangible proof that sport is a viable career, not merely a hobby; such representation dismantles psychological barriers.
- It creates a new iconography in which strength, strategy and national pride are embodied by women, diversifying the nation’s collective identity.
- A win brings visibility but does not automatically repair institutional disparities — the gender pay gap, weak school-level infrastructure, the scarcity of female coaches and administrators.
- **Conclusion:** sporting glory is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for bridging the gender gap.

Question 6

1 × 5 = 5 marks

Attempt **any ONE** of the following in 120–150 words.

MARKING SCHEME

Format	Content	Expression	Total
1	2	2	5

Format covers the heading and the name of the contributor; expression covers grammatical accuracy, vocabulary, coherence and fluency.

- I As the Cultural Secretary of your school, write a report for the annual school bulletin on the inauguration of the new 'Community Story-Telling Club'. Include details about the club's objective, the inaugural interactive session and the student turnout.** [5]

SUGGESTED VALUE POINTS

- Title or headline.
- Byline.
- Introduction covering the five W's (who, what, when, where, why), with the date and location of the inauguration.
- The vision behind the club — the 'why'.
- The interactive session, the guest speaker if any, or the first story shared.
- The turnout, the atmosphere and the response of the audience.
- A closing statement on future meetings or an invitation to join.

- II Write an article for a youth magazine on the topic 'The Future of Work is Freelance: Preparing Students for the Gig Economy'. Focus on the skills needed — adaptability, time management, networking — and the mindset shift required.** [5]

SUGGESTED VALUE POINTS

- A catchy title.
- Byline.
- Contrast the cubicle life of earlier generations with the laptop lifestyle of today; define the gig economy as a market of short-term contracts and freelance work.
- The technical and soft skills needed to survive without a fixed employer.
- The mindset shift — from an employee mindset to that of a solopreneur.
- The challenges — lack of benefits, income instability — for a balanced view.
- Conclude on future-proofing, ending with an empowering note about autonomy and self-reliance.

SECTION C · TEXTBOOK & FICTION**32 marks****Question 7 (I)****1 × 6 = 6 marks**

Attempt **any ONE** of the two extracts, (A) or (B), given below.

(A) A Wedding in Brownsville

Dr. Solomon Margolin was one of the two hundred guests. Although he was a physician, he had the appearance of a Talmudic scholar who had strayed into modern life. His face was pale, his beard sparse and red, his eyes blue and vague. He wore a tuxedo, but his bow tie was askew. His trousers were too long and his shoes looked too large. When he began to dance, he did it with the gravity of a man performing a religious duty. The bride, Gertrude, whom he had delivered fifteen years ago, was getting married. Dr. Margolin was a widower; his wife, the former Bronia Tyszowiec, had died ten years ago in an automobile accident. But as he watched the young couple — the bride pale and shy, the groom dark and confident — he had the absurd notion that Bronia was here, among the guests. He searched for her face, his eyes sweeping the room. It was true that the mind played tricks.

- I State TRUE or FALSE: Dr. Margolin was able to attend the wedding immediately after having delivered the bride, Gertrude.** [1]

ANSWER

FALSE — he had delivered Gertrude fifteen years earlier.

- II Describe the appearance of Dr. Solomon Margolin.** [1]

ANSWER

He had the appearance of a Talmudic scholar who had strayed into modern life. His face was pale, his beard sparse and red, his eyes blue and vague. He wore a tuxedo, but his bow tie was askew; his trousers were too long and his shoes looked too large.

- III How did his wife die?** [1]

ANSWER

Bronia died ten years earlier in an automobile accident.



IV Give one piece of evidence to show that he was still not a part of the modern world. [1]

ANSWER

| When he began to dance, he did it “with the gravity of a man performing a religious duty”.

V Which tricks are being mentioned here? [1]

ANSWER

| The tricks of the mind — his imagining that his dead wife Bronia was present among the guests.

VI Which word is a perfect antonym of ‘vague’? [1]

- A. foggy
- B. precise
- C. confusion
- D. pending

ANSWER

| **B. precise**

Marking scheme: 1 mark for each sub-question.

OR

(B) Chandalika

PRAKRITI: I want him. All unlooked for — he came, and taught me this marvellous truth, that even my service will count with the God who guides the world. O words of great wonder! That I may serve, I, a flower sprung from a poison-plant! Let him raise that truth, that flower from the dust, and take it to his bosom.

I Who is the ‘him’ referred to in the opening line? [1]

ANSWER

| ‘Him’ refers to Ananda, the Buddhist monk.

II What does the ‘dust’ symbolise in the context of Prakriti’s social standing? [1]

ANSWER

| The ‘dust’ symbolises the lowest stratum of the caste hierarchy, to which Prakriti has been consigned by birth.

III What ‘marvellous truth’ has the speaker discovered about human nature? [1]

ANSWER

| That everyone has the right to serve and to be acknowledged by the divine — no human being is inherently unclean by birth.

IV Why does Prakriti use the contrasting images of a ‘flower’ and a ‘poison-plant’? [1]

ANSWER

| To show the paradox of her life: society treats her as poisonous — unclean and untouchable — because of her birth, yet her inner self is as pure and beautiful as a flower.

V Identify the literary device used in ‘dust’. [1]

ANSWER

| **Metaphor** (used symbolically) — ‘dust’ stands for the degradation and social lowliness into which Prakriti has been cast.

VI The speaker’s tone in this extract can best be described as: [1]

- (A) Arrogant and demanding of attention.
- (B) Transformed, reverent and spiritually awakened.
- (C) Sceptical and doubtful of the monk’s intentions.
- (D) Indifferent to the social norms of her community.

ANSWER

| **(B) Transformed, reverent and spiritually awakened.**

Marking scheme: 1 mark for each sub-question.

Question 7 (II)**1 × 6 = 6 marks**

Attempt **any ONE** of the two extracts, (A) or (B), given below.

(A) Kubla Khan

*In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
A stately pleasure-dome decree:
Where Alph, the sacred river, ran
Through caverns measureless to man
Down to a sunless sea.
So twice five miles of fertile ground
With walls and towers were girdled round:
And there were gardens bright with sinuous rills,
Where blossomed many an incense-bearing tree;
And here were forests ancient as the hills,
Enfolding sunny spots of greenery.*

I What is the central structure decreed by Kubla Khan, and where is it located? [1]

ANSWER

A stately pleasure-dome, located in the exotic region of Xanadu.

II What is the significance of the river Alph running “Through caverns measureless to man”? [1]

ANSWER

It signifies the sublime power and mystery of nature, suggesting depths that lie beyond human comprehension and control.

III What contrast in the environment is established by the final two lines of the extract? [1]

ANSWER

The contrast between dark, untamed wildness — ‘forests ancient as the hills’ — and cultivated, bright beauty — ‘sunny spots of greenery’ and ‘gardens bright’.

IV The description of the ground as ‘girdled round’ suggests a sense of ____ [1]

- (A) Boundless freedom and natural spontaneity.
- (B) Artificial enclosure and controlled perfection.
- (C) Spiritual openness and accessibility.
- (D) Threatening wildness and danger.

ANSWER

(B) Artificial enclosure and controlled perfection.

V Identify the figure of speech in the phrase ‘Down to a sunless sea.’ [1]

ANSWER

Alliteration — the repetition of the initial consonant sound /s/ in ‘sunless sea’.

VI Find a word in the extract that means ‘ordered’ or ‘commanded’. [1]

ANSWER

Decree

Marking scheme: 1 mark for each sub-question.

OR**(B) Time and Time Again**

*One day you look up and see one of them
eyeless, silent, a zigzag sky showing
through the knocked-out clockwork, after a riot,
a peace-march time bomb, or a precise act
of nature in a night of lightnings.*



I Identify the poetic device used in the phrase ‘eyeless, silent’. [1]

ANSWER

Transferred epithet / personification — human attributes of sight and speech are transferred to the ruined clock tower.

II How does the poet distinguish between human-made chaos and natural chaos in this extract? [1]

ANSWER

Human-made chaos is listed as riots and a ‘peace-march time bomb’, while natural chaos is described as a ‘precise act of nature’ in a night of lightnings.

III What is the significance of the word ‘precise’ when describing the act of nature? [1]

ANSWER

It implies that although nature may appear chaotic, its power is exact and purposeful — unlike the random, senseless destruction wrought by human violence.

IV The ‘knocked-out clockwork’ and the ‘zigzag sky’ seen through the eyeless tower symbolise _____ [1]

- (A) The technological advancement of a modern city.
- (B) The triumph of human engineering over nature.
- (C) The vulnerability of human structures to the chaos of violence.
- (D) A celebration of a successful peaceful protest.

ANSWER

(C) The vulnerability of human structures to the chaos of violence.

V Find a word in the extract which means ‘crooked’. [1]

ANSWER

Zigzag

VI Explain the irony in the phrase ‘peace-march time bomb’. [1]

ANSWER

A peace march is meant to mourn destruction and restore calm, yet it can itself ignite fresh communal conflict. The very gathering intended to promote peace becomes a bomb waiting to go off — the means defeat the end.

Marking scheme: 1 mark for each sub-question.

Question 8

1 × 2 = 2 marks

Answer **any ONE** of the following two questions in 30–40 words.

I Why did the protagonist in the short story ‘Eveline’ ultimately choose not to leave Dublin with Frank? [2]

- She feels bound by her promise to her dying mother to keep the home together and care for her family.
- She is overwhelmed by anxiety about leaving familiar surroundings, even though her life in Dublin is unhappy.
- She proves incapable of decisive action at the critical moment.

OR

II In ‘I Sell My Dreams’, what is the significance of the woman’s ability to interpret and sell dreams? [2]

- Selling dreams is a means of economic survival, reflecting human ingenuity in uncertain circumstances.
- Her interpretations show how narratives can shape reality and influence people’s lives.
- Her accurate readings suggest that destiny is inescapable.

Marking scheme: Any one point, or any other relevant point. 2 marks.

Question 9

1 × 3 = 3 marks

Answer **any ONE** of the following two questions in 40–50 words.

I Explain the key contrast that the speaker draws between himself and the fifty-nine swans in the fourth stanza of the poem ‘The Wild Swans at Coole’. [3]

- The speaker contrasts his own ageing and weariness with the swans’ unchanged vitality.

- He emphasises that the swans remain beautiful and energetic, while he feels loss and decline.
- The swans symbolise permanence and continuity, unlike the speaker's changing life.
- The contrast highlights the theme of passing time and human transience.

OR

II Explain what Amartya Sen means by the term 'argumentative tradition' in the context of Indian history, and briefly state one significant positive consequence he attributes to this tradition.[3]

- Sen refers to India's long history of reasoned debate and dialogue in public life.
- It includes discussion in religion, philosophy, politics and society.
- The tradition values pluralism and tolerance of differing views.
- A major positive consequence is the strengthening of democracy and of critical thinking in Indian society.

Marking scheme: Any two points, or any other relevant points — for Q9(II) the last point must be included. 3 marks.

Question 10

1 × 5 = 5 marks

Answer **any ONE** of the following two questions in 120–150 words.

I Critically analyse John Donne's 'A Lecture Upon the Shadow'. How does the poet use the metaphor of shadows to explore the phases and vulnerabilities of love? [5]

- Donne uses shadows to represent concealment and misunderstanding in the early stages of love.
- At noon, when shadows disappear, love reaches a phase of complete honesty and clarity.
- As shadows lengthen again, they signify decline, doubt and emotional vulnerability in mature love.
- The shifting shadows reflect love's changing nature over time, not its permanence.
- Donne suggests that love is most fragile when self-interest and fear replace mutual openness.

OR

II Virginia Woolf, in 'The Mark on the Wall', uses the 'stream of consciousness' technique. Discuss how this narrative style helps the author explore the themes of war, gender and the limitations of conventional thought. [5]

- The stream-of-consciousness style allows Woolf to move freely between thought, memory and perception.
- Reflections on war emerge indirectly, showing its psychological impact rather than physical events.
- Gender norms are questioned through the narrator's resistance to male-dominated authority and logic.
- The fluid narration challenges rigid, conventional ways of thinking and categorising reality.
- The technique emphasises subjective truth, suggesting that reality is shaped by individual consciousness.

Marking scheme: Any three points, or any other relevant points. 5 marks.

Question 11

1 × 2 = 2 marks

Answer **any ONE** of the following questions in 30–40 words.

I Why does the Master decide to lock himself and the tiger in the small cage? ('A Tiger for Malgudi') [2]

- The Master seeks to assert moral and spiritual control over the tiger through self-sacrifice rather than force.
- The act symbolises his belief in non-violence and inner transformation rather than physical domination.
- It marks the turning point at which teacher and beast confront fear and instinct, leading to Raja's submission.

OR

II What is Margayya's initial motivation for wanting to raise his social standing in Malgudi? ('The Financial Expert') [2]

- Margayya desires social respectability and recognition in Malgudi.
- His humiliation at the hands of authority fuels a need to prove his worth and power.
- Economic success becomes, for him, the means to social dominance and self-validation.

Marking scheme: Any one point, or any other relevant point. 2 marks.

Question 12**1 × 3 = 3 marks**Answer **any ONE** of the following questions in 40–50 words.**I Describe the significance of the villagers' reaction when Raja first appears in Malgudi. ('A Tiger for Malgudi')** [3]

- The villagers are initially terrified, which highlights Raja's reputation as a powerful and dangerous creature.
- Their fear reflects the natural awe and respect humans feel for untamed wildness.
- As they observe him over time, some show curiosity and fascination, symbolising the human tendency to be drawn to the exotic and unknown.
- Narayan uses the moment to contrast instinctive fear with moral understanding.

OR**II What specific ritualistic objects did Margayya procure and use in his attempt to secure wealth and prosperity, and what does this reliance on ritual suggest about his approach to finance? ('The Financial Expert')** [3]

- Margayya procures sacred threads, incense, charms and astrological charts — for example, charms tied about his body for luck.
- He performs rituals advised by priests to appease the deities associated with wealth.
- These objects show his superstitious dependence on external forces for success.
- His reliance on ritual suggests a shortcut mentality, blending faith with financial ambition in place of ethical practice.

*Marking scheme: Any two points, or any other relevant points. 3 marks.***Question 13****1 × 5 = 5 marks**Answer **any ONE** of the following questions in 120–150 words.**I In 'A Tiger for Malgudi', R. K. Narayan explores the theme of freedom and captivity through different stages of Raja's life. How does true freedom, according to the novel, relate to self-realisation? Substantiate through various examples.** [5]

- Narayan presents freedom not as physical independence but as inner awakening and moral understanding, traced through Raja's changing life stages.
- Raja's early life in the jungle appears free, yet he is ruled by instinct, fear and hunger — his constant need to hunt and kill — showing that freedom without awareness is incomplete.
- Though physically enslaved in the circus, Raja begins to observe human cruelty and discipline, marking the first stage of consciousness even while chained and beaten.
- Living in the cage with the Master limits Raja physically, but the Master's non-violence and compassion awaken his reflective self — for example, the Master's refusal to use force.
- Raja ultimately understands restraint, acceptance and compassion, proving that freedom comes from self-control and awareness, not from escape or dominance.

OR**II Margayya's life is defined by cycles of gain and catastrophic loss, often linked directly to his son, Balu. Analyse the symbolic significance of Balu's presence in the narrative, arguing how the relationship between father and son functions as a metaphor for the inherent instability and moral cost of Margayya's greed. ('The Financial Expert')** [5]

- Balu is not merely Margayya's son but a symbolic extension of his unchecked greed and moral decay, shaping the novel's cycle of rise and fall.
- Margayya sees Balu as a means to social success — the excessive spending on education and indulgence — reflecting his belief that money can manufacture respectability.
- Balu's recklessness — drinking, gambling and squandering wealth — directly causes Margayya's financial collapse, symbolising how ill-gotten wealth destroys itself.
- Margayya's failure to instil values in Balu mirrors his own ethical emptiness, showing that material success without morality produces decay.
- Each financial rise tied to Balu ends in catastrophe, making the father-son relationship a metaphor for the inherent instability of greed-driven success.

Marking scheme: Any three points, or any other relevant points. 5 marks.