

PASSAGE 1

(12 Marks)

Some people get emotional satisfaction from talking about how awful other people are. But research has found that when you talk negatively to, say, a friend about how awful a colleague is, the listening friend is more likely to associate the negativity to you rather than to the person you're describing. Researchers call this 'spontaneous trait transference'. So, it's best to go easy on bad-mouthing others because it may backfire anyway.

It takes a big person to accept outwardly and inwardly that they screwed up. I'm not saying we should never blame other people. Sometimes others are at fault and they need to know it and stand up. But being able to accept responsibility when that's right means we actually become less helpless and passive.

If everything is someone else's fault, then what part do I play in my own life? Are my actions entirely without consequence? Am I that powerless? Or do all my actions only lead to good outcomes?

Knowing we can accept responsibility when things go wrong means we can also accept credit when things go well. We do, as individuals, have an effect on life; and that's a good thing.

But we need to develop the capacity to be objective enough about ourselves to avoid assuming we could never possibly have created problems ourselves. We also need to distinguish between accepting responsibility and punishing ourselves unduly.

Ever noticed how some people get more hung up on assigning blame than actually fixing a problem? If people feel you blame them unfairly, they will resent you. They may even come to hate you. People instinctively hate injustice. People can be shouted at, cursed at, and blamed, but still not know what it is they did wrong.

Calling someone an idiot or telling them they "always do everything wrong!" is not feedback; it's just abuse, no matter why you think you're doing it. This kind of emotional incontinence may make people anxious, but they'll never respect you because it displays your weaknesses so clearly.

As the wise Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius, said, "How much more grievous are the consequences of anger than the causes of it."

Life is full of people who take emotional shortcuts and blame other people unfairly or aggressively; for the sake of the human race, don't be one of them. But I wouldn't blame you if you were.

Questions

1. Why is it best to go easy on bad-mouthing? (2)
2. What makes a person less helpless and passive? (2)
3. What objective quality should a person develop? (2)
4. What is the meaning of the quote by Marcus Aurelius in the passage? (2)
5. Find the synonym of the word 'associate' (paragraph 1) from the following. (1)
(a) result (b) link (c) attitude (d) blame
6. Find the correct meaning of the word 'outwardly' in paragraph 2. (1)
(a) externally (b) extrovert (c) behind the back (d) emotional
7. Which word from the passage means 'allowing what happens without active response'? (1)
(a) passive (b) feedback (c) powerless (d) weakness
8. Find the antonym of the word 'cursed' (paragraph 6) from the following. (1)
(a) right (b) helpful (c) prayer (d) blessed

PASSAGE 2

(12 Marks)

The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge filed a lawsuit in the French courts on Friday against a publication house for publishing inappropriate photos of the Duchess; this is the first time legal action has ever been implemented against the international press by the Royal Family. The shots were taken by a paparazzi that was utilising a telephoto lens from a distance of a half-mile while the Royal couple were on vacation at the private home of a family member in southern France.

Frequently the public hears about a celebrity, such as an actor or musician, being the prey of a ruthless paparazzi hoard. At night the celebrities have camera flashes in their eyes as they try to walk or drive and during the day they can feel threatened if they are being closely followed by a photographer desperate to catch an exclusive shot that could end up being worth thousands. There's an age-old debate within the entertainment industry on whether a celebrity is entitled to a private life or do they relinquish all rights in exchange for the fame.

Stars have their private information on display for the world to see. Yet most of the time, snippets of their lives get distorted and repackaged by tabloids to generate sales.

Everything the rich and famous do is under scrutiny and, if they happen to be caught appearing to do something slightly scandalous, it's on tomorrow's headlines. Why should celebrities be subject to such a shocking lack of privacy? Aren't they just humans with the same rights as other citizens? Everyone has a basic right to privacy under the law, and that includes celebrities. They shouldn't have their personal and intimate details splattered across magazine pages every time they go out. Celebrities may deliberately leak personal details to generate publicity, but that's their own choice. It doesn't justify spying.

Most celebrities should and do know what they're getting into when they choose their occupation. But that doesn't make it right to invade their lives and broadcast them to all. Celebrities have every inch of their lives examined, talked about, and criticised. Some can't even order a meal at a restaurant without the paparazzi pointing their cameras. We live in a society that's supposed to be governed by law and order. Everyone is entitled to protection under the law, even publicity-seeking celebrities.

Questions

1. Why and against whom did the Duke and the Duchess of Cambridge file a lawsuit? (2)
2. What do celebrities face during the day and at night? (2)
3. What age-old debate is talked about in the passage? (2)
4. Do celebrities deserve privacy, according to the writer? (2)
5. Find the synonym of the word 'paparazzi' (paragraph 1). (1)
(a) photographers (b) journalists (c) managers (d) common persons
6. Find the word in paragraph 2 that means 'unshared or private'. (1)
(a) criticised (b) threatened (c) ruthless (d) exclusive
7. Find the antonym of the word 'fame' (paragraph 2). (1)
(a) obscurity (b) popular (c) famous (d) celebrity
8. Find the meaning of the word 'scandalous' (paragraph 4). (1)
(a) proper (b) elegant (c) disgraceful (d) urgent

PASSAGE 3

(12 Marks)

Many of us grew up hearing the admonition that money is the root of all evil. Money, in and of itself, neither evil nor good; it is only what happens with money once it is in our hands that gives it qualities of being either good or evil. Money can be a tool, and it is a necessary tool for simply maintaining our daily lives. We need money to put a roof over our heads so that we are safe, warm and dry. Money provides food to keep us alive so that we can continue to function and clothes us so that we can function in a socially acceptable manner. And it takes money to keep us healthy so that we can continue to lead productive, meaningful lives. Money can also be a test. Needing to earn money can test our ingenuity, our determination and even our humility when we find it necessary to generate work for ourselves or we have to take a job that feels like it is several steps back from where we rightfully could be in our employment. Being financially unable to do all we have many of the things we'd like to do and have for ourselves, as well as for sharing with others, can test our attitudes and our willingness to live our lives realistically.

Ironically, having an abundance of money can be an even more challenging test of the persons that we truly are. When we can afford to do anything we want to do and to have anything we want to have, we are faced with the choice of whether we use our money solely to benefit ourselves or we use it to make the world a better place for others, as well as for ourselves. Having significant wealth can open our eyes to the opportunities available to reach out to others who need our help, or it can blind us to anything and everything beyond our own ever-escalating desires for possessions, prestige and power, thereby testing to the very limit the true nature of our character as human beings.

CBSE 2014 (Modified)

Questions

1. What gives money the attributes of good or evil? (2)
2. Why do we need money? (2)
3. Why is lack of money referred to as a test? (2)
4. Having abundant money is challenging, according to the author. Why? (2)
5. Find the meaning of the word 'productive' (paragraph 1). (1)
(a) beneficial (b) fruitful (c) powerful (d) healthy
6. Find the synonym of the word 'challenging' (paragraph 3). (1)
(a) agreement (b) victory (c) demanding (d) easy
7. Find the word from the paragraph 3 which means 'only'. (1)
(a) prestige (b) abundance (c) significant (d) solely
8. Find the antonym of the word 'escalating' (paragraph 3). (1)
(a) extending (b) diminishing (c) mounting (d) speeding

PASSAGE 4

(12 Marks)

Article 48A of the Constitution of India provides that the state shall endeavour to protect and improve the environment and safeguard the forests and wildlife of the country. But what causes endless anguish is the fact that laws are neither respected nor enforced in India. A recent report of our Parliament's Estimates Committee has highlighted the near catastrophic depletion of India's forests over the last four decades. India, according to reliable data, is losing its forests at the rate of 3.7 million acres a year. Large areas, officially designated as forest land, "are already virtually treeless".

The actual loss of forests is estimated to be about 8 times the rate indicated by government statistics. There can be no doubt that the growth of world population is one of the strongest factors distorting the future of human society. It took mankind more than a million years to reach the first billion. That was the world population around the year 1800. By the year 1900, a second billion was added, and the 20th century has added another 3.7 billion. The present world population (as of August 2016) is estimated at 7.4 billion. Every 4 days, the world population increases by 1 million.

The rich get richer, and the poor beget children, which condemns them to remain poor. More children do not mean more workers, merely more people without work. It is not suggested that human beings be treated like cattle, and compulsorily sterilised. But there is no alternative to voluntary family planning without introducing an element of coercion. The choice is really between control of population and perpetuation of poverty.

For the first time in human history, we see a transcending concern — the survival not just of the people but of the planet. We have begun to take a holistic view of the very basis of our existence. The environmental problem does not necessarily signal our demise, it is our passport for the future. The emerging new world vision has ushered in the era of responsibility. It is a holistic view, an ecological view, seeing the world as an integrated whole rather than a dissociated collection of parts.

Questions

1. Article 48A of the Indian Constitution provides for what and what is the result of its non-enforcement? (2)
2. How did the population of mankind grow from the year 1800 till today and how is it affecting society? (2)
3. Why do the poor remain poor? What is the remedy suggested by the author? (2)
4. What is the author's vision of the emerging new world? (2)

5. The synonym of 'highlighted' in paragraph 1 is (1)
 (a) heightened (b) peaked (c) spotlighted (d) covered
6. The synonym of 'distorting' in paragraph 2 is (1)
 (a) twisting (b) prejudicing (c) smoothing (d) changing
7. The word in paragraph 3 is an antonym of 'destroy'. (1)
 (a) condemn (b) beget (c) coerce (d) reach
8. The word in paragraph 4 means the same as 'surpassing'. (1)
 (a) transcending (b) signalling (c) planning (d) holistic

PASSAGE 5

(12 Marks)

"Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." The concept of sustainable development can be interpreted in many different ways, but at its core it is an approach to development that looks to balance different and often competing needs along with an awareness of the environmental, social and economic limitations we face as a society. All too often, development is driven by one particular need, without fully considering the wider or future impacts. We are already seeing the damage this kind of approach can cause, from large-scale financial crisis caused by irresponsible banking, to changes in global climate resulting from our dependence on fossil fuel based energy sources. The longer we pursue unsustainable development, the more frequent and severe its consequences are likely to become, which is why we need to take action now.

Living within our environmental limits is one of the central principles of sustainable development. One implication of not doing so is climate change. But the focus of sustainable development is far broader than just the environment. It's also about ensuring a strong, healthy and just society. This means meeting the diverse needs of all people in existing and future communities, promoting personal well-being, social cohesion and inclusion, and creating equal opportunities for all.

Sustainable development is about finding better ways of doing things, both for the future and the present. People need to change the way they work and live now, but this doesn't mean that the quality of life will be reduced. The impacts of our decisions as a society have very real consequences for people's lives. Poor planning of communities, for example, reduces the quality of life for the people who live in them. Sustainable development provides an approach to making better decisions on the issues that affect all of our lives. By incorporating health plans into the planning of new communities, for instance, society can ensure that residents have an easy access to healthcare and leisure facilities. Small actions, taken collectively, can add up to real change.

Questions

1. What is at the core of the concept of sustainable development? (2)
2. How has 'normal' development caused widespread damage to world climate and financial systems? (2)
3. Explain the focus of the concept of sustainable development. (2)
4. Give an example of the use of the concept of sustainable development for improving the quality of life for people. (2)
5. The word in paragraph 1 means the same as 'reckless'. (1)
 (a) compromising (b) limitations (c) dependence (d) irresponsible
6. The synonym of 'balance' in paragraph 1 is (1)
 (a) accommodate (b) calibrate (c) sharpen (d) repair
7. The antonym of 'promoting' in paragraph 2 is (1)
 (a) defeating (b) hiding (c) suppressing (d) holding
8. The word in paragraph 3 is an antonym of 'harmful'. (1)
 (a) changing (b) improving (c) incorporating (d) sustainable

PASSAGE 6

(12 Marks)

We proud Indians, even in the 21st century, rejoice in celebrations when a boy is born, and if it is a girl, a muted or no celebration is the norm. Love for a male child is so much that, from time immemorial, we are killing our daughters at birth or before birth, and if, fortunately, she is not killed, we find various ways to discriminate against her throughout her life. Though our religious beliefs make women a goddess, we fail to recognise her as a human being first; we worship goddesses but we exploit girls. We are a society of people with double standards as far as our attitude towards women is concerned; our thoughts and preaching are different from our actions.

Let's try to understand the phenomenon of gender inequality and search for some solutions. Gender inequality, in simple words, may be defined as discrimination against women based on their sex. Women are traditionally considered by society as the weaker sex. She has been accorded a subordinate position to men. She is exploited, degraded, violated and discriminated both in our homes and in the outside world. This peculiar type of discrimination against women is prevalent everywhere in the world and more so in Indian society. Therefore, what is needed is a movement for women's empowerment where women can become economically independent and self-reliant; where they can fight their own fears and go out in the world fearless; where they can snatch their rights from the clutches of men and they don't have to ask for them; where women have good education; a good career, ownership of property and, above all, where they have freedom of choice and also the freedom to make their own decisions without the bondages of age old sayings of Manu.

Let's hope and wish that our participative democracy, in times to come, and with the efforts of both women and men, would be able to find solutions to the problem of gender inequality and would take us all towards our cherished dream of a truly modern society in both thought and action.

CBSE 2014

Questions

1. What norms are followed in our society on the birth of a child? (2)
2. How are our thoughts and preachings different from our actions? (2)
3. What is gender inequality? (2)
4. What freedom should women have? (2)
5. Find the antonym of the word 'rejoice' (paragraph 1). (1)
 (a) joy (b) great (c) mourn (d) celebrate
6. Find the synonym of the word 'discriminate' (paragraph 1). (1)
 (a) agree (b) differentiate (c) recognise (d) support
7. Find the meaning of the word 'phenomenon' (paragraph 2). (1)
 (a) situation (b) object (c) issue (d) environment
8. Which word in the passage means 'to give power or authority to' (paragraph 2)? (1)
 (a) democracy (b) bondages (c) exploited (d) empowerment

PASSAGE 7

(12 Marks)

Literacy means "ability to read and write", the act of being educated. Literacy is an essential need for development. The countries with low literacy have are economically failed and their progress rate is very slow. The personality of an individual is polished if he or she is educated, but an illiterate person can be disrespected in society. The value of literacy can be imagined by taking the example of some African areas where literacy rate is much below the average; therefore they are still working as slaves of other countries.

To produce sense and awareness about the value of literacy and education, United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) announced to celebrate International Literacy Day on 8th September every year. This was decided in 1965 and from 1966 onwards, this day is celebrated each year on 8th September. Every year UNO organises conferences and seminars to highlight the importance of literacy. Governments of all countries also organise programmes and expeditions to create awareness in people about literacy. Governments force people to get necessary education and send their children to school. Literacy programmes are also organised at school and college level, where the students present speeches and models to demonstrate the value of literacy.

Parents have an important role in the development of children, but if the parents are illiterate, they are not able to cope with the needs of the new century, so that their children suffer. So, programmes must be organised to teach the parents to read and write. Such steps must be taken so that any child should not be deprived of going to school. It is their right to get education. We should promise ourselves, on this coming International Literacy Day, that we will be the part of a literacy campaign.

Questions

1. What is literacy and how does it affect one's personality? (2)
2. When is International Literacy Day celebrated and why? (2)
3. What steps are taken by the governments to promote literacy? (2)
4. Why is it important for parents to be literate? (2)
5. Find the synonym of the word 'progress' (paragraph 1). (1)
(a) forward (b) condition (c) continue (d) development
6. Find the antonym of the word 'polished' (paragraph 1). (1)
(a) skilful (b) inexperienced (c) rough (d) elegant
7. Which word in paragraph 2 means 'a journey undertaken with a particular purpose'? (1)
(a) slaves (b) demonstrate (c) expedition (d) essential
8. Find the meaning of the word 'deprived' (paragraph 3). (1)
(a) lacking something important (b) undertaking a task
(c) a journey (d) state of being numb

PASSAGE 8

(12 Marks)

Is your glass half-empty or half-full? How you answer this age-old question about positive thinking may reflect your outlook on life, your attitude toward yourself, and whether you're optimistic or pessimistic — and it may even affect your health. Indeed, some studies show that personality traits like optimism and pessimism can affect many areas of your health and well-being. The positive thinking that typically comes with optimism is a key part of effective stress management. And effective stress management is associated with many health benefits. If you tend to be pessimistic, don't despair—you can learn positive thinking skills.

Positive thinking doesn't mean that you keep your head in the sand and ignore life's less pleasant situations. Positive thinking just means that you approach unpleasantness in a more positive and productive way. You think the best is going to happen, not the worst. Positive thinking often starts with self-talk. Self-talk is the endless stream of unspoken thoughts that run through your head. These automatic thoughts can be positive or negative.

Some of your self-talk comes from logic and reason. Other self-talk may arise from misconceptions that you create because of lack of information. If the thoughts that run through your head are mostly negative, your outlook on life is more likely pessimistic. If your thoughts are mostly positive, you're likely an optimist — someone who practises positive thinking. It's unclear why people who engage in positive thinking experience these health benefits. One theory is that having a positive outlook enables you to cope better with stressful situations, which reduces the harmful health effects of stress on your body. It's also thought that positive and optimistic people tend to live healthier lifestyles. We must try and incorporate positive thinking in our lives to derive countless benefits it has to offer. It will not only help us achieve goals higher than set but will also enhance our ability to perform. The effects of positive thinking don't stop as soon as the good feelings subside, if we practice optimism in every aspect of our lives.

Questions

1. How can one manage stress effectively? (2)
2. What does positive thinking mean, according to the writer? (2)
3. What is self-talk? (2)
4. What is the theory behind experiencing health benefits due to positive thinking? (2)
5. Find the meaning of the word 'pessimism' (paragraph 1). (1)
(a) worth (b) negative thinking (c) unsaid (d) arrogant
6. Find the meaning of the word 'despair' (paragraph 1). (1)
(a) be positive (b) lose hope (c) quit (d) surrender
7. Find the antonym of the word 'incorporate' (paragraph 3). (1)
(a) follow (b) exclude (c) include (d) contain
8. Which word in paragraph 3 means "improving the ability, quality or value"? (1)
(a) subside (b) automatic (c) enhance (d) pleasant

PASSAGE 9

(12 Marks)

How you can best improve your English depends on where you live and particularly on whether or not you live in an English speaking community. If you hear English spoken every day and mix freely with English speaking people, that is on the whole an advantage. On the other hand, it is often confusing to have the whole language, poured over you at once. Ideally, a step-by-step course should accompany this experience. It will also help a great deal if you can easily get the sort of English books in which you are interested.

To read a lot is essential. It is stupid not to venture outside the examination 'set books' or the textbooks you have chosen for intensive study. Read as many books in English as you can, not as a duty but for pleasure. Do not choose the most difficult books you find, with the idea of listing and learning as many new words as possible: choose what is likely to interest you and be sure in advance that it is not too hard. You should not have to be constantly looking up new words in the dictionary, for that deadens interest and checks real learning. Look up a word here and there, but as a general policy try to push ahead, guessing what words mean from the context. It is extensive and not intensive reading that normally helps you to get interested in extra reading and thereby improve your English. You should enjoy the feeling which extensive reading gives of having some command of the language. As you read, you will become more and more familiar with words and sentence patterns you already know, understanding them better and better as you meet them in more and more contexts, some of which may differ only slightly from others.

Some people say that we cannot learn to speak a language better with the help of a book. To believe this is to believe that the spoken language and the written language are quite different things. This is not so. There is a very great deal in common between the two. In learning the patterns and vocabulary of the written form, we are learning to a considerable extent those of the spoken form too. We are, in fact, learning the language and not merely one form of the language.

Questions

1. What advantage does the author talk about in the first paragraph? (2)
2. Why is it essential to read books? (2)
3. Which form of reading may improve your English? (2)
4. Can we learn to speak a language from a book? (2)
5. Find the synonym of the word 'accompany' (paragraph 1). (1)
(a) conduct (b) take (c) assist (d) occur
6. Find the antonym of the word 'essential' (paragraph 2). (1)
(a) necessary (b) urgent (c) fundamental (d) optional
7. What is the meaning of the word 'deadens' (paragraph 2)? (1)
(a) blunts (b) suppresses (c) dulls (d) creates noises
8. Which word in paragraph 3 means 'notably large or significant'? (1)
(a) considerable (b) command (c) merely (d) intensive

PASSAGE 10

(12 Marks)

A great defect of our civilisation is that it does not know what to do with its knowledge. Science has given us powers fit for the Gods, yet we use them like small children. For example, we do not know how to manage our machines. Machines were made to be man's servants. Yet he has grown so dependent on them that they are in a fair way to become his masters. Already most men spend most of their lives looking after and waiting upon machines. And the machines are very stern masters. They must be kept at the right temperature. And if they do not get their meals when they expect them, they grow sulky and refuse to work or burst with rage and blow up and spread ruin and destruction all round them. So we have to wait upon them very attentively and do all that we can to keep them in a good temper. Already we find it difficult either to work or play without the machines and a time may come when they will rule us altogether, just as we rule the animals.

And this brings me to the point where I want to ask, what we do with all the time which the machines have saved for us and the new energy they have given us? On the whole, it must be admitted, we do very little. For the most part we use our time and energy to make more and better machines which will give us still more time and still more energy, and what are we to do with them? The answer I think is that we should try to become more civilised. For, the machines themselves and the power which the machines have given us are not civilisation, but aids to civilisation. But being civilised means making and liking beautiful things, thinking freely and living rightly and maintaining justice. Man has a better chance today to do these things than he ever had before; he has more time, more energy, less to fear and less to fight against. If he will give his time and energy, which his machines have won for him, to making more beautiful things, to finding out more and more about the universe, to removing the causes of quarrels between nations, to discovering how to prevent poverty, then I think our civilisation would undoubtedly be greater, as it would be more lasting than it has ever been.

Questions

1. What is the defect of our civilisation? (2)
2. How can we say that the machines are demanding? (2)
3. What does being civilised mean? How should we use the extra time we have now? (2)
4. Man has a better chance to be civilised now. Support the statement. (2)
5. Find the antonym of the word 'stern' (paragraph 1). (1)
(a) determined (b) rigid (c) friendly (d) stubborn
6. Find the synonym of the word 'sulky' (paragraph 1). (1)
(a) moody (b) cheerful (c) unhappy (d) cooperative
7. Which word in paragraph 1 means 'violent behaviour'? (1)
(a) civilised (b) rage (c) quarrels (d) ruin
8. Find the meaning of the word 'temper' (paragraph 1). (1)
(a) composure (b) anger (c) moderate (d) tendency