StudyBy U

CBSE BOARD EXAMINATION 2025
CLASS X — ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE (Code 184)
SET 2 | Set Code: 2/1/2 | Date: 15 February 2025

Time Allowed: 3 Hours Maximum Marks: 80

General Instructions: (i) This paper is divided into three sections — A, B, and C. All questions are compulsory. (ii) Separate instructions are given with each section. Read these carefully and follow them. (iii) Do not exceed the prescribed word limit.

SECTION A — READING SKILLS [20 Marks]

Read the following passages carefully and answer the questions that follow.

Passage 1 (Q1–Q7) — Discursive Passage [10 Marks]

The rise of Artificial Intelligence (AI) is one of the most transformative developments of the 21st century. From facial recognition on our smartphones to algorithms that recommend music and films, AI is woven into the fabric of daily life. In medicine, AI can diagnose diseases from X-rays with accuracy that rivals experienced doctors. In agriculture, AI-powered drones monitor crop health and predict yields. In education, adaptive learning platforms adjust to the pace and style of each student. Despite these remarkable advances, concerns about AI are growing. One major worry is job displacement. As machines become capable of performing tasks that once required human intelligence — from data analysis to creative writing — millions of workers may find their skills redundant. The World Economic Forum estimates that while AI will create 97 million new jobs by 2025, it will displace 85 million existing ones, a net gain but also a massive disruption. Algorithmic bias is another concern. AI systems learn from historical data, which often reflects existing social inequalities. An AI used in hiring that was trained on decades of male-dominated corporate data may systematically disadvantage women. Similarly, facial recognition systems have been found to be less accurate for darker-skinned individuals. Privacy too is at stake. Every search, every purchase, every click feeds data into AI systems. Our digital footprints are profiled and monetised without our full understanding or consent. As AI grows more powerful, questions about who controls it and for what purpose become ever more urgent. Experts argue that AI is a tool — and like all tools, its impact depends on the intentions and values of those who wield it. International regulation, ethical guidelines, and digital literacy for all citizens will be essential if humanity is to harness AI's potential while guarding against its dangers.

Answer the following questions based on Passage 1:

Q1. List any two areas mentioned in the passage where AI is being used beneficially. [1]

❖ Answer: (i) Medicine: AI diagnoses diseases from X-rays with accuracy rivalling experienced doctors. (ii) Agriculture: AI-powered drones monitor crop health and predict yields. (Also acceptable: Education — adaptive learning platforms.)

Q2. What does the World Economic Forum estimate about AI's impact on employment? [2]

❖ Answer: The World Economic Forum estimates that by 2025, AI will create 97 million new jobs but will also displace 85 million existing jobs — a net gain of 12 million jobs, but also a massive disruption to the workforce as many existing roles become redundant.

Q3. What is 'algorithmic bias' and why is it a concern? Explain with one example from the passage. [2]

❖ Answer: Algorithmic bias occurs when AI systems, trained on historical data that reflects existing social inequalities, produce biased outcomes. It is a concern because it can perpetuate and amplify discrimination. For example: an AI used in hiring that was trained on decades of male-dominated corporate data may systematically disadvantage female applicants, even if the designers had no intention of being unfair.

Q4. 'AI is a tool.' What does this comparison suggest about responsibility for AI's impact? [2]

❖ Answer: Calling AI a 'tool' suggests that AI itself is neither good nor bad — its impact depends entirely on the intentions and values of the human beings who design, deploy, and control it. This places the responsibility for AI's effects squarely on humans — developers, corporations, governments, and society — rather than on the technology itself.

Q5. Find a word from paragraph 3 of the passage that means 'an unfair preference built into a system'. [1]

❖ Answer: Bias (algorithmic bias)

Q6. According to the passage, what three measures do experts recommend to manage AI responsibly? [2]

❖ Answer: (i) International regulation of AI, (ii) ethical guidelines for AI development and use, and (iii) digital literacy for all citizens so people understand how AI works and affects them.

Passage 2 (Q7–Q13) — Case-Based Passage with Visual Data [10 Marks]

The bar graph below shows the average daily water usage (litres per person) in five Indian cities in 2022 and 2024: City | 2022 | 2024 | National Standard (CPHEEO) Delhi | 235 L | 248 L | 135 L Mumbai | 192 L | 201 L | 135 L Chennai | 112 L | 109 L | 135 L Bengaluru | 168 L | 175 L | 135 L Kolkata | 145 L | 152 L | 135 L India faces a severe water crisis. According to NITI Aayog, 21 major cities — including Delhi and Bengaluru — will run out of groundwater by 2030 if current trends continue. Despite this alarming forecast, per capita water usage in most Indian metros exceeds the national standard set by the Central Public Health and Environmental Engineering Organisation (CPHEEO) of 135 litres per person per day. Wastage occurs at every level — leaking pipes in municipal distribution systems lose up to 40% of water before it reaches homes. Household activities like running taps while brushing teeth, over-irrigating gardens, and washing cars with hosepipes add to the problem. However, some cities are responding. Chennai, the only city in the data set below the national standard, has invested heavily in rainwater harvesting and desalination plants. Bengaluru has introduced 'smart metres' to detect leaks and incentivise conservation. Experts urge every citizen to adopt simple water-saving habits, including fixing drips, installing low-flow fittings, and collecting rainwater.

Q7. Which city in the data shows water usage below the CPHEEO national standard in both years? [1]

❖ Answer: Chennai — with 112 litres per person per day in 2022 and 109 litres in 2024, it is the only city in the dataset that falls below the CPHEEO national standard of 135 litres.

Q8. By how many litres did Delhi's per capita water usage increase from 2022 to 2024? How does Delhi's 2024 usage compare to the national standard? [2]

❖ Answer: Delhi's per capita water usage increased by 13 litres (from 235 L to 248 L) between 2022 and 2024. Delhi's 2024 usage of 248 litres is 113 litres above the CPHEEO national standard of 135 litres — nearly 84% higher than the recommended limit.

Q9. What is the significance of NITI Aayog's forecast about groundwater by 2030? [2]

❖ Answer: NITI Aayog's forecast that 21 major Indian cities will run out of groundwater by 2030 is deeply significant because it signals a critical water emergency that is not a distant possibility but will occur within this decade. It underscores the urgent need for water conservation, sustainable usage, and policy reforms in urban water management before the crisis becomes irreversible.

Q10. What measures has Chennai taken that have helped it stay below the national water usage standard? [2]

❖ Answer: Chennai has invested heavily in two key measures: (i) Rainwater harvesting — capturing and storing rainwater to supplement supply, and (ii) Desalination plants — treating seawater to make it usable. These investments have helped Chennai manage water demand more sustainably than other major cities.

Q11. Suggest a suitable headline for the data and information presented in Passage 2. [1]

❖ Answer: A suitable headline: 'India's Cities Are Running Dry: Why Water Conservation Can No Longer Wait' OR 'Most Indian Metros Waste Water Even as 2030 Groundwater Crisis Looms'.

Q12. Name any one water-saving technique mentioned in the passage that an individual can adopt at home. [1]

❖ Answer: Any one of: fixing drips/leaks; installing low-flow fittings; collecting rainwater; not running taps unnecessarily (e.g. while brushing teeth).

Q13. What does 'per capita' mean as used in the passage? [1]

❖ Answer: 'Per capita' means 'per person' — in this context, the average amount of water used by each individual person per day.

SECTION B — WRITING SKILLS AND GRAMMAR [20 Marks]

Q14. Formal Writing [5 Marks each — attempt either 14(a) or 14(b)]

Q14(a). You are Priya Sharma, Head Girl of Modern Public School, Lucknow. Write a letter to the Principal requesting permission to organise an Inter-School Environmental Awareness Drive. Include details of the planned activities and how it would benefit students. [5]

❖ Answer: Modern Public School Lucknow 15 February 2025 The Principal Modern Public School Lucknow Sub: Request for Permission to Organise Inter-School Environmental Awareness Drive Respected Ma'am, I, Priya Sharma, Head Girl of Class XII, am writing to seek your kind permission to organise an Inter-School Environmental Awareness Drive on 22 March 2025 (World Water Day) at our school premises. The planned activities include: (1) Poster and slogan-making competitions on water conservation and climate change; (2) A street play performed by our Drama Club on the theme of deforestation; (3) A guest lecture by Dr. Nandita Singh, an environmental scientist from IIT Lucknow; (4) Distribution of saplings to participating students. This event will benefit students by sensitising them to pressing environmental concerns, fostering creativity, and building a spirit of collaboration between schools. It will also earn our school recognition as a socially responsible institution. I assure you that all necessary arrangements will be handled responsibly. I humbly seek your approval and guidance. Yours obediently Priya Sharma Head Girl, Class XII

Q14(b). Study the data below and write an analytical paragraph: Students' preferred mode of learning — Online: 55%, Hybrid: 30%, Offline only: 15%. [5]

❖ Answer: The data on students' preferred mode of learning reveals a decisive shift towards digital and flexible learning formats. A clear majority — 55% of students — prefer online learning, reflecting the growing comfort with technology-enabled education and the convenience of studying from home. The second most popular mode is hybrid learning at 30%, suggesting that many students value the flexibility of combining online access with some in-person engagement, perhaps recognising the benefits of direct teacher interaction alongside digital convenience. Only 15% prefer entirely offline or classroom-based learning, a striking minority that indicates a significant transformation in educational preferences over the past few years, likely accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The data suggests that educational institutions must invest in robust digital infrastructure and teacher training for online platforms, while also preserving the collaborative and social elements of in-person learning that the hybrid group values. A one-size-fits-all approach to teaching may no longer serve the majority of today's learners.

Grammar (Q15–Q21) [10 Marks]

Q15. Fill in the blank with the correct tense: 'She _____ (practise) the piano every evening since she was six years old.' [1]

❖ Answer: has been practising — Present Perfect Continuous is used to describe an action that began in the past and continues in the present.

Q16. Choose the correct option: 'The jury _____ divided in its opinion.' (a) is (b) are (c) were (d) have [1]

❖ Answer: (a) is — 'Jury' is a collective noun. When referring to the body as a whole, a singular verb is used in formal/American English. (Note: 'are' is also accepted in British English if the jury acts as individuals.)

Q17. The following sentence has an error. Identify and correct it: 'Despite of the heavy rain, the match was not cancelled.' [1]

❖ Answer: Error: 'Despite of'. Correction: 'Despite the heavy rain, the match was not cancelled.' ('Despite' is a preposition and is never followed by 'of'.)

Q18. Rewrite the following in reported speech: 'Riya said, "I will finish the project by tomorrow."' [2]

❖ Answer: Riya said that she would finish the project by the next day. (Note: 'will' → 'would'; 'tomorrow' → 'the next day'; pronoun 'I' → 'she'.)

Q19. Rewrite in passive voice: 'Scientists across the world are studying the effects of microplastics on marine life.' [2]

❖ Answer: The effects of microplastics on marine life are being studied by scientists across the world.

Q20. Fill in the blank with the correct option: 'You _____ consult a doctor if the fever persists.' (a) can (b) should (c) would (d) might [1]

❖ Answer: (b) should — 'Should' expresses strong advice or recommendation, which fits the context.

Q21. Rearrange the following to form a meaningful sentence: 'are / for / solar panels / the / responsible / producing / most / electricity / of' [1]

❖ Answer: Solar panels are responsible for producing most of the electricity. (OR: Most of the electricity is produced by solar panels.)

SECTION C — LITERATURE TEXTBOOKS [40 Marks]

Extract-Based — Prose (Q22) [5 Marks]

Q22. Read the extract: 'His manner of making a request amused me greatly. He had come on such a serious errand, and here he was walking about with his head bowed, thinking of proposing to Natalya!' (From: The Proposal — Anton Chekhov) (i) Who is 'he' referred to in the extract and what is his 'serious errand'? [2]

❖ Answer: 'He' refers to Ivan Vassilevitch Lomov. His 'serious errand' is to visit the house of his neighbour Stepan Chubukov to formally propose marriage to Chubukov's daughter, Natalya. He is dressed in formal evening wear, indicating the gravity of the occasion.

(ii) What does the speaker's tone reveal about the situation? [2]

❖ Answer: The speaker's tone is gently ironic and amused. The phrase 'such a serious errand' contrasts with Lomov's nervous, almost comical manner — walking about with bowed head. This sets up the comic tone of the play, hinting that what should be a straightforward, happy occasion will instead descend into absurdity and farce.

(iii) What does 'errand' mean in this context? [1]

❖ Answer: 'Errand' here means a specific task or mission — in this context, the formal and important purpose of Lomov's visit, which is to propose marriage to Natalya.

Extract-Based — Poetry (Q23) [5 Marks]

Q23. Read the extract: 'The fog comes on little cat feet. It sits looking over harbour and city on silent haunches and then moves on.' (From: The Fog — Carl Sandburg) (i) What literary device does the poet use in this poem and how? [2]

❖ Answer: The poet uses Extended Metaphor / Personification — the fog is compared to a cat throughout the poem. Like a cat, fog moves silently and stealthily ('on little cat feet'), sits quietly ('on silent haunches'), surveys its surroundings ('looks over harbour and city'), and then quietly moves on. The fog is given animal characteristics.

(ii) What two things does the fog 'look over'? [1]

❖ Answer: The fog looks over the harbour and the city.

(iii) How does the image of a cat effectively capture the nature of fog? [2]

❖ Answer: The image of a cat effectively captures fog because cats, like fog, move silently without warning, appear and disappear unpredictably, settle in quietly without being noticed, and leave

without announcement. The comparison conveys fog's eerie, soft, and mysterious nature — it does not announce itself; it simply arrives, observes, and departs.

Short Answer — First Flight (Q24–Q27) [2 Marks each]

Q24. How does Mandela describe the beauty of the inauguration ceremony at the Union Buildings? [2]

❖ Answer: Mandela describes the inauguration as a breathtaking ceremony with colourful leaders from across the world gathered together. Military generals who had once enforced apartheid now saluted him. He found it one of the most moving experiences of his life. He also notes the beauty of the setting — the stunning Union Buildings amphitheatre with its rolling hills and blue African sky — and the extraordinary rainbow gathering of humanity it represented.

Q25. In 'The Ball Poem', what does the boy learn from losing his ball? [2]

❖ Answer: The boy learns the irreversibility of loss — that some things, once lost, cannot be retrieved. The poet says money can buy another ball, but the boy must learn to accept that his particular ball — with all its memories and attachment — is gone forever. This experience initiates the boy into the adult world of grief, responsibility, and the acceptance of loss as a part of life.

Q26. Why was Wanda Petronski's surname mocked by her classmates? [2]

❖ Answer: Wanda Petronski's surname was mocked because it was Polish and sounded unusual to the American children at her school. They found it strange, difficult to pronounce, and considered it 'funny'. The mockery reflected prejudice against her immigrant, working-class Polish background. Her unusual name, combined with her shabby dress and quiet nature, made her an easy target for teasing.

Q27. In 'The Sermon at Benares', what does Buddha's method of teaching Kisa Gotami reveal about his wisdom? [2]

❖ Answer: Buddha's method reveals his profound wisdom and compassion. Rather than simply telling Kisa Gotami that death is universal — which she might have dismissed in her grief — he sent her on a journey to discover the truth herself. By asking for mustard seeds from a house where no one had died, he ensured she would visit every household and experience, firsthand, that no family is exempt from death. This experiential method made the lesson unforgettable and helped her achieve genuine understanding rather than just intellectual acceptance.

Short Answer — Footprints Without Feet (Q28–Q30) [2–3 Marks each]

Q28. How did Griffin manage to escape from the Omniums department store? What does this tell us about his character? [2]

❖ Answer: Griffin slipped into the Omniums department store, put on warm clothes, ate, and slept through the night. When morning came and the store staff began to arrive, Griffin had to undress quickly to become invisible again and escaped. This reveals Griffin's opportunistic, selfish, and criminal nature — he steals food, clothing, and shelter shamelessly. His invisible state enables him to satisfy his needs at others' expense without consequences.

Q29. Why did the author of 'The Hack Driver' feel embarrassed the second time he went to New Mullion? [3]

❖ Answer: The author felt deeply embarrassed on his second visit to New Mullion because he realised he had been completely fooled. The friendly, helpful 'hack driver' called Bill who had spent the entire first day supposedly helping him search for Oliver Lutkins was, in fact, Oliver Lutkins himself. Lutkins had been playing along, pretending to help while actively ensuring the lawyer could not find him. The author's naive trust had made him look foolish in front of his senior and in his own eyes.

Q30. What is the central message of the story 'The Book That Saved the Earth'? [3]

❖ Answer: The central message of 'The Book That Saved the Earth' is that knowledge, literature, and the interpretation of information can be powerful tools — both for understanding and for misunderstanding. The Martians plan to invade Earth but their invasion is stopped because their leader, Think-Tank, completely misinterprets a nursery rhyme book. The story uses humour to suggest that even powerful entities can be defeated by something as simple as a book. It also underscores the importance of books and literature as timeless and unexpectedly influential. The play is also a celebration of the power of words and human creativity.

Long Answer Questions (Q31–Q32) [6 Marks each]

Q31(a). 'The story of Bholi is essentially about the transformative power of education and a compassionate teacher.' Discuss with reference to the text. (Footprints Without Feet) [6]

❖ Answer: 'Bholi' is a deeply moving story about Sulekha, nicknamed Bholi (simpleton), who is considered worthless by her family due to her stammer, pockmarks, and perceived lack of intelligence. Her life is a series of humiliations — even when she is sent to school, it is partly because her family thinks she has no marriage prospects. School, however, becomes the turning point of her life. The catalyst for Bholi's transformation is her teacher — a kind, patient woman who neither mocks Bholi's stammer nor recoils from her appearance. Instead, she speaks gently, shows Bholi colourful picture books, and encourages her to speak without fear. This is perhaps the first time any adult has treated Bholi with respect. The effect is profound. Education gives Bholi knowledge, confidence, and a sense of self-worth that she had never had. The ultimate proof of her transformation comes at her wedding. When her prospective groom Bishamber Nath, a greedy, lame old man, demands a dowry of five thousand rupees despite the pre-arranged terms, Bholi refuses. She stands in front of the entire community, removes her veil, and declares firmly that she will not marry him — he is a coward and a greedy man unworthy of her. This act of courage is extraordinary for a girl once too afraid to speak. The story thus powerfully argues that education — delivered with compassion — can liberate even the most marginalised individual from self-doubt and social oppression.

Q32(a). 'In The Proposal, the characters allow trivial matters to overshadow the important things in life.' Critically examine this statement with reference to the play. [6]

❖ Answer: Anton Chekhov's one-act farce 'The Proposal' is a brilliant satire on human ego, stubbornness, and the tendency to allow petty issues to derail what truly matters. All three characters — Lomov, Natalya, and Chubukov — are guilty of this flaw to varying degrees. Lomov visits the Chubukovs for the important purpose of proposing marriage to Natalya. Yet within minutes, a casual mention of the Oxen Meadows sparks a full-blown quarrel. Both Lomov and Natalya argue loudly and stubbornly about land ownership, citing dead relatives and fabricated historical claims. The proposal — which both parties actually want — is completely forgotten. When Lomov leaves in anger without proposing, Natalya is dismayed. Yet the moment he returns,

another trivial argument erupts — this time about whose dog is superior. Again, the important matter (marriage) is derailed by pride. Even Chubukov, who is eager to see his daughter married, cannot resist joining the arguments and insulting Lomov. The play's humour arises entirely from this absurdity: three people who all want the same outcome (marriage) repeatedly prevent it through petty quarrels. Chekhov uses this comedy to satirise the landed Russian gentry of his time — preoccupied with property, status, and pride to a degree that makes them ridiculous. The deeper message is universal: how often do we allow ego and trivial disputes to damage relationships, miss opportunities, and waste time? The engagement that finally occurs is almost accidental, happening only when Lomov collapses and Chubukov seizes the moment. It is a comic but pointed critique of human irrationality.