



FEDERAL PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

Competitive Examination for Recruitment to Posts in BPS-17
Under the Federal Government — 2000

ENGLISH (Précis & Composition)

Time Allowed: 3 Hours | Maximum Marks: 100

FULLY SOLVED & EXPLAINED EDITION

Instruction: Make a précis of the following passage in about one-third of its length. Suggest a suitable title also.

Besant, describing the middle class of the nineteenth century, wrote that it was, in the first place, "a class apart," belonging to society in no real sense. Men in professions (except the Army and Navy) could belong to society only by birth and family connections; men in trade — even bankers — were still regarded as tradesmen and could not belong to society at all. Whether in the country or in town, they were excluded by the established families and clubs. Yet the middle class knew its own place, respected itself, built its own society, and willingly gave rank the deference it was due. Since then, however, the life of the middle classes had changed greatly as their numbers and influence grew. Their sense of their own importance deepened; they became more critical of aristocratic life and more concerned with the condition of the poor, promoting their own values — thrift, hard work, piety, and respectability — as models of behaviour for the lower orders. Above all, they prized respectability, and although opinions differed on its exact meaning, certain things were universally agreed to be disreputable: drunken and wild behaviour, godlessness, open immorality, a disorderly home life, unconventional manners, self-indulgence, and flamboyant dress.

 **Suggested Title: "The Rise and Values of the Victorian Middle Class"**

MODEL PRÉCIS (≈ 78 words)

Besant described the nineteenth-century middle class as socially excluded — neither aristocracy nor accepted by fashionable society — yet self-respecting and self-sufficient. As its numbers and influence grew, this class became more self-aware, more critical of aristocratic privilege, and more sympathetic to the poor. It promoted its own values of thrift, industry, piety, and respectability as ideals for the lower orders. While opinions on respectability varied in detail, certain conduct — drunkenness, godlessness, immorality, domestic disorder, and ostentation — was universally condemned.

Examiner's Tip: A précis must be written in your own words, retain the original's essential meaning, avoid direct quotation, and stay within one-third of the original word count. Always underline or state the title separately.

Instruction: Read the passage and answer the questions in your own words.

The vitality of any teaching or historical movement depends more upon what it affirms than upon what it denies; a movement survives because its positives are not sufficiently valued by its opponents. Bentham's grand positives were benevolence and veracity — a passion for relieving human suffering and a passion for truth. His tireless activity was driven by a desire to improve human life and by his conviction that he had found the key to moral truth: does an institution, law, or custom promote human happiness? Then it is sound. Does a moral teaching rightly explain why virtue is admirable or duty binding? Bentham's limitation lay in his dismissal of nearly all poetry and religion as "misrepresentation." Yet since benevolence and truth are supreme values, his critics must long have been complacent. Bentham believed the Church taught children insincerity by making them affirm things they could not understand — such as promising, through their godparents, to "renounce the devil and all his works, the pomps and vanity of this wicked world." He mockingly asked who or what the Devil was, how a child could be said to have dealings with him, and challenged the Archbishop of Canterbury to explain how his own "works" differed from these renounced "pomps and vanities" — since no king or lord, spiritual or temporal, had ever truly renounced them. (Basil Willey)

(a) Explain the meaning of the following expressions as used in the passage:

Multifarious activities — numerous and varied pursuits
Amelioration of human life — improvement/betterment of human life
It is sound — it is valid, correct, acceptable
Be their special advocate — champion or defend it strongly
Renounce the devil — formally give up/reject evil
Drowsed — became inactive, complacent, half-asleep
Gauged — measured, judged, assessed
Aforesaid — mentioned before, already stated

(b) On what grounds does Bentham believe that the Church teaches children insincerity?

Bentham holds that the Church makes children promise, through godparents, to "renounce the devil" and the "pomps and vanity" of the world — abstract things a child cannot understand or has never encountered. Being forced to affirm what they cannot truly comprehend instils insincerity from an early age.

(c) What is Bentham's philosophy based upon?

On utilitarianism: the twin principles of benevolence (concern for human welfare) and veracity (love of truth). He judged every institution, law, and moral teaching by one test — does it promote human happiness?

(d) According to the writer, what is Bentham's limitation?

His outright dismissal of nearly all poetry and religion as mere "misrepresentation" — a narrow rationalism that failed to appreciate imaginative and spiritual values beyond strict utility.

(e) In what context is the Archbishop of Canterbury quoted — is he praised or condemned?

He is being challenged sarcastically, not praised. Bentham uses the Archbishop rhetorically to expose the emptiness of a ritual no one — not even the clergy or nobility — has ever genuinely honoured, implying criticism of the Church's teaching.

Instruction: Write a comprehensive note (250–300 words) on ONE of the given topics.

Topic Selected: "We learn from history that we do not learn from history." — Hegel

Hegel's paradox captures a recurring truth about human affairs: societies rarely apply the lessons their own past so clearly teaches. History is, in theory, a great instructor — it records the rise and fall of empires, the causes of wars, and the consequences of injustice and greed. Yet nations continue to repeat the very mistakes that destroyed their predecessors, as though each generation must relearn its lessons through fresh suffering.

The evidence is abundant. Wars fought over pride and territorial ambition — from the World Wars to countless regional conflicts — have not deterred later generations from repeating the same follies. Economic crises, born of unchecked greed and speculation, recur cyclically, even though history has already exposed their causes and consequences. Dictatorships collapse under the weight of oppression, and yet new forms of authoritarian rule continue to emerge elsewhere, largely unopposed by the lessons of the past.

Why does this happen? Partly because each generation believes its circumstances are unique, exempting it from the fate of its predecessors. Partly because power and self-interest often override rational judgement, even when history's warnings are well known. And partly because historical knowledge, though widely available, is rarely absorbed as a guide for present action — it remains an academic exercise rather than a living lesson.

Yet Hegel's remark is not a counsel of despair. It is, rather, a call to vigilance. Genuine learning from history demands more than familiarity with facts; it requires the humility to recognise recurring patterns in one's own time and the courage to act differently. Nations and individuals who study history critically — not merely to admire or condemn the past, but to understand causation — stand the best chance of breaking the cycle. In this sense, Hegel's observation is less a fixed law than a challenge: history teaches only those willing to truly listen.

Q4. Sentence Correction

Instruction: Correct the following sentences.

#	Original	Correction	Rule Applied
a	The lake free-zed rapidly.	The lake froze rapidly.	Correct past tense of "freeze"
b	The firm was unwilling to forego its usual commission.	The firm was unwilling to forgo its usual commission.	"forgo" (do without) vs "forego" (precede)
c	We watched the lambs gamble on the green.	We watched the lambs gambol on the green.	"gambol" (frolic) vs "gamble" (bet)
d	He belonged to the gild of carpenters.	He belonged to the guild of carpenters.	Spelling: "guild" (association)
e	He hadn't ought to have spoken.	He ought not to have spoken.	"ought" never takes "hadn't"; use "ought not"
f	Is this his half-brother?	Is this his half-brother?	Correct hyphenation, no spaces
g	Hay! Watch out for the car!	Hey! Watch out for the car!	"Hey" (exclamation) vs "Hay" (dried grass)
h	This is the historical spot where he was shot dead.	This is the historic spot where he was shot dead.	"historic" (famous) vs "historical" (relating to history)
i	We bought a japanee print.	We bought a Japanese print.	Correct spelling: "Japanese"
j	Fresh flowers smell sweetly.	Fresh flowers smell sweet.	"smell" is a linking verb — takes an adjective, not an adverb

Q5. Idioms in Sentences

10 Marks

Instruction: Use any FIVE of the following idioms in sentences (all ten solved below for reference).

1. **Blow one's top** — meaning: to lose one's temper suddenly. *Sentence:* The manager blew his top when he discovered the accounts were missing.
2. **A cock-and-bull story** — meaning: an implausible excuse. *Sentence:* He gave the teacher a cock-and-bull story about his dog eating the homework.
3. **Find one's feet** — meaning: to become settled and confident. *Sentence:* It took Sara a few weeks to find her feet in the new office.
4. **Call it a night** — meaning: to stop an activity for the night. *Sentence:* After finishing the report, the team decided to call it a night.
5. **The tip of the iceberg** — meaning: a small visible part of a much larger problem. *Sentence:* The complaints received so far are just the tip of the iceberg.
6. **Below par** — meaning: below the usual or expected standard. *Sentence:* His performance in the exam was below par this term.
7. **From pillar to post** — meaning: from one place to another without result. *Sentence:* She was sent from pillar to post before her complaint was finally resolved.
8. **Hang up** — meaning: to end a telephone call. *Sentence:* He hung up before I could explain the situation.
9. **Turn someone in** — meaning: to report someone to the authorities. *Sentence:* The witness decided to turn the suspect in to the police.
10. **By and by** — meaning: after some time; eventually. *Sentence:* By and by, the villagers grew used to the new road.

Q6. Word Pairs — Differentiation

10 Marks

Instruction: Use any FIVE of the following pairs in sentences to bring out the difference (all ten solved below for reference).

1. **Knead** — She kneaded the dough before baking the bread. | **Need** — I need a glass of water.
2. **Queue** — Please stand in the queue at the ticket counter. | **Cue** — That remark was his cue to leave the room.
3. **Quarts** — The recipe calls for two quarts of milk. | **Quartz** — The kitchen countertop is made of quartz.
4. **Choral** — The choral society gave a wonderful performance. | **Coral** — We saw a beautiful coral reef while diving.
5. **Discrete** — The data was divided into discrete categories. | **Discreet** — Please be discreet about this confidential matter.
6. **Epoch** — The invention of the internet marked a new epoch. | **Epic** — The Odyssey is considered a great epic poem.
7. **Libel** — Publishing that false statement could amount to libel. | **Liable** — You will be held liable for any damage caused.
8. **Male** — The male peacock has strikingly bright feathers. | **Mail** — I sent the documents by mail this morning.
9. **Banned** — The book was banned in several countries. | **Band** — A rubber band held the papers together.
10. **Barred** — He was barred from entering the club. | **Bard** — Shakespeare is often called the Bard of Avon.

Instruction: Complete the conversation with the correct idiom, in its correct form, chosen from the given list.

A: Morning, Paul! You look tired.

Paul: Yes I am. I had a late night last night. I'm not usually **a night owl**, but I **had a night out** with some friends yesterday. I have been so busy all week that I've hardly **had a minute to call my own**, so I really enjoyed **a night on the town**. I start work early, so I usually **keep regular hours**, but yesterday was an exception. I didn't think. I got into bed and must have fallen asleep, because the next thing I knew my landlady was shaking me, saying she was sorry to wake me at such **an unearthly hour**, but she thought there was a burglar in the kitchen.

A: Well, where was her husband?

Paul: Mr Dick was working on the night shift, and I was the only man in the house. I am usually a coward, but I do **have my moments**, so I grabbed my tennis racket — the only thing I could think of **on the spur of the moment** — and crept downstairs.

A: And then?

Paul: I saw a dark figure in the kitchen with a knife in his hand, ready to strike **at any moment**. I was just about to hit him with the racket, when a voice shouted, "Hey! It's me!" It was Mr Dick — he had forgotten his sandwiches.

Note: The idiom "the small hours" is not required in this passage — it is included in the idiom bank as a distractor, since the blank grammatically requires a singular noun phrase ("such an unearthly hour").