
FULLY SOLVED & ANNOTATED

FEDERAL PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

Competitive Examination for Recruitment to Posts in BPS-17 Under the Federal Government — 2006

Solved Past Paper with Model Answers

ENGLISH — Précis & Composition

Time Allowed: 3 Hours | Maximum Marks: 100

Includes: Précis Writing · Comprehension · Essay Note ·
Vocabulary (Synonyms & Antonyms) · Narration & Grammar · Idioms · Word Pairs

A complete reference edition prepared with detailed model answers, explanations, and highlighted key points for focused exam preparation.

Question 1 — Précis Writing

20 + 5 Marks

Make a précis of the given passage (on the spirit of Greek philosophy) and suggest a suitable heading.

Original Passage (Summary of Theme)

The passage contrasts dry, narrow scholastic philosophy with the vigorous, worldly spirit of the Greek philosophers — from the pre-Socratics through Plato to Aristotle — who treated epistemology as merely a starting point and extended philosophy into every realm of human life and knowledge.

Suggested Heading: "The Greek Ideal: Philosophy as Active Engagement with Life"

(Alternative: "From Epistemology to the Illumination of Human Life")

MODEL PRÉCIS (≈ 115 WORDS)

Unlike modern scholastics absorbed in narrow disputes, Greek philosophers engaged directly with life. The pre-Socratics grounded their inquiries in observation and experience rather than abstract dialectic; figures such as Democritus, Thales, Anaxagoras, and Socrates combined intellectual inquiry with vigorous worldly engagement — making fortunes, transforming statesmen, and challenging governments. For Plato, epistemology was merely a preliminary stage of philosophy, not its ultimate purpose; his deeper concern lay in envisioning ideal states and reflecting on human destiny. Aristotle finally extended philosophy's scope to embrace every field of knowledge, ordering all sciences toward wisdom. These thinkers understood that philosophy's true function was to illuminate human character and life through active, comprehensive inquiry, not to retreat into narrow technicalities.

Examiner's Tip

As in the previous year, this question carries 5 extra marks for the heading. Keep the précis close to one-third of the original length, written entirely in your own words, and always end with a crisp, representative title.

Question 2 — Comprehension

20 Marks

Read the passage from "Cranford" about "elegant economy" and Captain Brown's candour about his poverty, and answer the questions that follow.

(a) Give in thirty of your own words what we learn from this passage of Captain Brown. (4)

ANSWER

Captain Brown was a plain-spoken, half-pay officer who openly admitted his poverty in public, without shame or secrecy — unlike the genteel ladies of Cranford, who concealed financial hardship behind polite pretence, making his bluntness both shocking and socially unwelcome to them.

(b) Why did the ladies of Cranford dislike the Captain? (2)

ANSWER

He was a man intruding into their close-knit, female-dominated society, connected with the unpopular new railway, and — worst of all — openly and loudly confessed his poverty, violating their unspoken code of genteel pretence.

(c) What reasons were given by the ladies of Cranford for "not doing anything that they wished"? (2)

ANSWER

They attributed their restraint to personal preference rather than poverty — claiming they walked instead of taking sedan chairs because the weather was fine, and wore cotton prints instead of silk because they simply preferred washable fabric.

(d) "Ears Polite." How do you justify this construction? (2)

ANSWER

This is a deliberate grammatical inversion — placing the adjective "polite" after the noun "ears" instead of before it — a stylistic device common in formal or archaic English (echoing 18th-century usage, e.g. Alexander Pope) used here for elegant, slightly ironic emphasis.

(e) Meaning and implication of the phrases (2 marks each)

VOCABULARY EXPLAINED

- (1) **Sour-grapeism** — pretending not to want something one cannot actually have (from Aesop's fable); here, disguising poverty as a matter of taste or choice.
- (2) **The invasion of their territories** — the ladies' resentment at a man intruding into their exclusively female social circle, treated as trespass on their domain.
- (3) **Sent to Coventry** — to be deliberately ostracized and excluded from social company.
- (4) **Tacitly agreed** — agreed silently and implicitly, without ever stating the agreement openly.
- (5) **Elegant economy** — a genteel euphemism dressing up poverty and frugality as a matter of refined taste rather than necessity.

Question 3 — Comprehensive Note

20 Marks

Write a comprehensive note (250–300 words) on ONE of the following. Topic selected: "**Where ignorance is bliss, it is folly to be wise.**"

Model Note (≈ 280 words)

This line, from Thomas Gray's *Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College*, suggests that in certain situations, knowledge brings not comfort but sorrow, and that innocence untouched by painful truth can be a genuine form of happiness. Gray, watching carefree schoolboys unaware of the hardships awaiting them in adult life, reflects that their blissful ignorance of future suffering is, in that moment, preferable to a painful awareness of what is to come.

The statement carries a paradox at its heart: society generally prizes knowledge as an unqualified good, yet this line questions that assumption. Not all knowledge uplifts; some truths — of loss, mortality, betrayal, or inevitable hardship — burden the mind with anxiety that ignorance would have spared. A child, unaware of the family's financial troubles, plays happily, while the informed adult carries the weight of worry. In such cases, awareness offers no power to change the outcome, only foreknowledge of pain.

Yet this idea should not be mistaken for a blanket endorsement of ignorance. Willful ignorance that prevents growth, responsibility, or the pursuit of truth is rarely praised, and knowledge remains indispensable for progress, self-improvement, and informed decision-making. The line is best understood as applying specifically to unavoidable future sorrows — knowledge that changes nothing except one's peace of mind.

In practical life, the principle finds an echo in how we sometimes shield children from adult burdens, or choose not to dwell needlessly on troubles beyond our control. The deeper wisdom of Gray's line, therefore, is not a rejection of knowledge itself, but a reminder that some forms of awareness, when powerless to change reality, only add suffering to a life that might otherwise have enjoyed its present moment in peace.

Question 4(A) — Synonyms

5 Marks (1 each)

Choose the word that is nearly similar in meaning to the word in capital letters.

1. FINICKY →(c) **Fussy**
2. SAMIZDAT →(a) **Underground press**
3. VELD →(c) **South African grassland**
4. CAJUN →(a) **French-Canadian descendant**
5. LOGGIA →(c) **Gallery**

Question 4(B) — Antonyms

5 Marks (1 each)

Pick the word most nearly opposite in meaning to the capitalized word.

1. CAPTIOUS →(a) **Tolerant**
2. PENCHANT →(a) **Dislike**
3. PUTATIVE →(c) **Undisputed**
4. FACSIMILE →(c) **Mutation**
5. LARCENY →(d) **Indemnification**

Quick Meanings

Finicky: excessively fussy about details | **Samizdat:** clandestine publishing of banned literature | **Veld:** open grassland of Southern Africa | **Cajun:** descendant of French-Canadian (Acadian) settlers in Louisiana | **Loggia:** a roofed gallery or arcade open on one side | **Captious:** fond of finding fault | **Penchant:** a strong liking or inclination | **Putative:** generally considered/supposed to be | **Facsimile:** an exact copy | **Larceny:** theft of personal property.

Question 5(A) — Narration

5 Marks

Change the narration from direct to indirect and from indirect to direct speech (only five required — all eight solved below).

1. He said, "Let it rain ever so hard, I shall go out."

→ He said that even if it rained ever so hard, he would go out.

2. The mother said to the young girl, "Do you know where Salim is?"

→ The mother asked the young girl if she knew where Salim was.

3. The officer said, "Hang it all! Can you not do it more neatly?"

→ The officer exclaimed with vexation and asked if it could not be done more neatly.

4. Invoking our help with a loud voice she asked us whether we would come to her aid.

→ Invoking our help, she said loudly, "Will you come to my aid?"

5. He exclaimed with an oath that no one could have expected such a turn of events.

→ He said, "By God! No one could have expected such a turn of events!"

6. The teacher said to his students, "Why did you come so late?"

→ The teacher asked his students why they had come so late.

7. They applauded him saying that he had done well.

→ They applauded him, saying, "You have done well!"

8. "You say," said the judge, "the bag you lost contained one hundred and ten pounds?"

→ The judge asked if he/she said that the bag he/she had lost had contained one hundred and ten pounds.

Question 5(B) — Sentence Correction

5 Marks

Correct *ONLY FIVE* of the following (all eight solved below).

1. **Playing a game regularly is better than to read books always.**
→ **Playing a game regularly is better than reading books always.**

2. **A good reader must be hardworking and possess intelligence.**
→ **A good reader must be hardworking and intelligent.**

3. **I noticed Akbar was carrying a bag in his hand.**
→ **I noticed Akbar carrying a bag in his hand.**

4. **Having entered his house, the door was shut at once.**
→ **Having entered his house, he shut the door at once.**

5. **He thinks that his writing is better than his friend.**
→ **He thinks that his writing is better than his friend's.**

6. **He is such a man who is liked by everyone.**
→ **He is such a man as is liked by everyone.**

7. **I sent a verbal message to my friend.**
→ **I sent an oral message to my friend.**

8. **He has visited as many historical places as one has or can visit.**
→ **He has visited as many historical places as one could visit.**

Question 6(A) — Idioms

5 Marks

Use *ONLY FIVE* of the following in sentences to bring out their meaning (all eight solved below).

1. Twiddle with — meaning: to fiddle idly with something

He kept twiddling with his pen throughout the lecture, clearly bored.

2. Vamp up — meaning: to improvise or patch something together quickly

The team vamped up a makeshift presentation minutes before the client arrived.

3. Whittle away — meaning: to gradually reduce or erode something

Rising costs whittled away the company's profits over the year.

4. Winkle out — meaning: to extract information or someone with difficulty

The detective finally winkled out the truth after hours of questioning.

5. Give someone the bum's rush — meaning: to forcibly and abruptly remove or dismiss someone

The bouncer gave the unruly guest the bum's rush out of the club.

6. Loom large — meaning: to appear as an imminent, often worrying, presence

The exam deadline loomed large over the students all week.

7. Besetting sin — meaning: a persistent personal fault or weakness

Procrastination has always been his besetting sin.

8. To hang fire — meaning: to delay or hesitate to act

The committee decided to hang fire on the decision until further data arrived.

Question 6(B) — Word Pairs

5 Marks

Use *ONLY FIVE* pairs of the following words in sentences (*all eight solved below*).

1. Veracity / Voracity

Veracity (truthfulness): The witness's veracity was questioned during cross-examination.

Voracity (greediness, ravenous appetite): The voracity of the wolf pack was evident as they devoured the carcass within minutes.

2. Persecute / Prosecute

Persecute (to oppress or harass): The regime persecuted political dissidents mercilessly.

Prosecute (to conduct legal proceedings against): The state decided to prosecute the fraud case vigorously.

3. Moat / Mote

Moat (a defensive ditch around a fort): The castle was surrounded by a deep moat filled with water.

Mote (a tiny particle): A single mote of dust floated visibly in the sunbeam.

4. Loath / Loathe

Loath (reluctant, unwilling): She was loath to leave her hometown after so many years.

Loathe (to hate intensely): He loathes dishonesty in any form.

5. Ingenious / Ingenuous

Ingenious (clever, inventive): The engineer devised an ingenious solution to the problem.

Ingenuous (innocent, frank, naive): The child's ingenuous remarks amused the entire room.

6. Fair / Feign

Fair (just, impartial): The judge is known for being fair in every verdict.

Feign (to pretend): He decided to feign sleep to avoid the conversation.

7. Emigrant / Immigrant

Emigrant (one who leaves their own country): The emigrant left his homeland in search of better opportunities.

Immigrant (one who enters another country to settle): The immigrant quickly adapted to her new country's customs.

8. Wreak / Wreck

Wreak (to inflict or cause, as damage): The storm wreaked havoc across the coastal town.

Wreck (to destroy; or a destroyed structure): The ship was wrecked on the rocky shore during the tempest.