TODAY'S SKILL

SEE THE ARGUMENT

Thesis • Evidence • Assumptions • Counterargument • Conclusion

Reading level	Reading	Total workout
Moderate-Advanced	~3,200 words	35-45 minutes

ANCHOR READING

What we think is a decline in literacy is a design problem

Aeon Essays • Carlo Iacono • 3,200 words

The essay challenges the simple claim that screens are destroying literacy. It argues that the deeper problem is how attention environments are designed - and that better habits, spaces and digital architecture can support serious thinking.

Scan to read the original essay.

WHY THIS READING?

This is not today's current-affairs reading. It is a **skill workout**. The essay contains a clear disagreement, historical examples, research-based evidence, analogies, qualifications and policy implications. That makes it ideal for practising the exact habits CLAT rewards: locating the main point, tracking arguments, drawing inferences and testing how conclusions depend on evidence.

TODAY'S 35-45 MINUTE PLAN

18-22 min	**READ** Read continuously. Do not stop for every unfamiliar word.
6-8 min	**MAP** Return to the essay and mark thesis, evidence, counterargument and conclusion.
10-12 min	**WORK** Complete the six tasks on Pages 2-3 without rereading everything.
3 min	**CHECK** Use the answer guide and record one weakness for tomorrow.

READING MISSION

1	**Find the author's real opponent.** The essay is not merely about books versus screens. Identify the view the author is arguing against.
2	**Track the turn.** Find the point where the author moves from diagnosing the problem to proposing what should change.
3	**Watch the evidence.** Separate historical examples from empirical/research claims and from the author's own observations.

WORKOUT - PART A

MAP THE ARGUMENT

Do not answer with quotations. Reconstruct the reasoning in your own words.

1. CENTRAL CLAIM - 3 marks

Write the author's central claim in **one sentence, maximum 25 words**. Your sentence must explain what the author thinks the literacy/attention problem really is.

2. ARGUMENT MAP - 6 marks

Fill this structure in your notebook:
A. Popular diagnosis the author rejects
B. Author's alternative diagnosis
C. Two kinds of evidence used
D. Practical implication / proposed response

3. NECESSARY ASSUMPTION - 3 marks

The author argues that changing environments and design can improve deep attention. What must be true for that recommendation to make sense? Write one assumption in your own words.

4. COUNTERARGUMENT - 3 marks

Write the strongest objection a thoughtful defender of the "screens are the problem" view could make after reading the essay. Do not use a weak or emotional objection.

MICRO-DRILL: WHICH FACT MATTERS?

Assume the author's claim is: **attention problems are driven more by specific design features than by screens as a medium.**

5. Which new finding would most strongly SUPPORT that claim?

A. Students who own more digital devices also spend less time reading printed novels.
B. When notifications, infinite scroll and variable-reward features are removed, users show substantially longer periods of sustained attention on the same screens.
C. Printed books remain popular among university professors.
D. Many people report that they prefer watching videos to reading essays.

6. Which new finding would most strongly WEAKEN that claim?

A. Across controlled studies, sustained comprehension falls by a similar amount whenever the same long text is read on a screen, even after distracting design features are removed.
B. Some social-media companies make money from advertising.
C. Libraries increasingly offer digital resources.
D. People often use phones while travelling.

WORKOUT - PART B

COMPRESS + INTERPRET

7. THE 75-WORD TEST - 5 marks

Summarise the essay in **60-75 words**. Your summary must include: (i) the view being challenged, (ii) the author's alternative explanation, and (iii) the practical consequence. Do not include examples unless essential.

8. TONE - 2 marks

Choose the best description and justify it in one sentence:

A. nostalgic and resigned
B. analytical but combative
C. detached and purely descriptive
D. celebratory and uncritical

9. INFERENCE - 3 marks

Which statement is most consistent with the author's position?

A. Any shift away from printed books inevitably weakens serious thought.
B. Deep thinking depends partly on designing environments that protect attention, regardless of medium.
C. Audio and video are cognitively superior to written text.
D. Individual discipline is the main solution to attention problems.

10. META-READING - 2 marks

What was hardest for you today? Tick ONE:

■ finding the main claim ■ staying focused ■ separating evidence from examples
■ identifying assumptions ■ summarising without copying ■ evaluating the argument

YOUR SCORE

Argument structure /9	Critical reasoning /8	Compression + inference /12	Total /29

Today's rule: Do not reward yourself for finishing the article. Reward yourself if you can reconstruct the argument after closing it.

ANSWER GUIDE

CHECK YOUR THINKING - NOT YOUR MEMORY

1. Central claim

A strong answer should say that the decline in sustained attention is not an inherent result of screens; it is substantially shaped by attention-fragmenting design and environments, which can therefore be redesigned.

2. Argument map

A. Rejected diagnosis: screens/new media have inherently degraded literacy and deep thought.
B. Alternative diagnosis: specific platform incentives and environmental design fragment attention.
C. Evidence types: recurring historical media panics; research/psychology on attention and variable rewards; observations from learning environments.
D. Implication: build "containers for attention" and redesign tools/institutions rather than simply retreating from screens.

3. Necessary assumption

Any defensible version of this idea works: attention is meaningfully responsive to environmental/design changes; therefore changing the environment can improve sustained thought.

4. Counterargument

A strong objection would challenge the author's causal diagnosis - for example, even distraction-free screens may reduce comprehension or sustained attention compared with print, suggesting the medium itself could matter independently of platform design.

5. Strengthen

B. It isolates the design features while keeping the screen medium constant. That directly supports the causal distinction the author is making.

6. Weaken

A. If comprehension falls on screens even when distracting design is removed, then the medium itself may contribute to the problem.

7. 75-word summary

No single wording is required. Give yourself full marks only if your summary captures the rejected view, the design/environment explanation and the practical response without becoming a list of examples.

8. Tone

B - analytical but combative. The essay builds an evidence-based case, but it also openly attacks fatalistic accounts of technological decline and ends with an argumentative call to redesign attention environments.

9. Inference

B. This best matches the essay's repeated distinction between medium and habitat/design.

10. Meta-reading

There is no correct option. Record the weakness because the purpose of the programme is to make the next day's reading more deliberate.

CLAT SKILL CONNECTION

The current official CLAT 2027 syllabus explicitly tests main point, arguments/viewpoints, inference, summarisation, premises/conclusions and how conclusions are strengthened or weakened by changes in evidence. Day 1 deliberately trains those foundational abilities. The 2026 Expert Committee proposals are not treated here as the adopted CLAT 2027 pattern.