

# OLIMPIADA NAȚIONALĂ DE LIMBA ENGLEZĂ - ETAPA LOCALĂ

**11 februarie 2026**

**CLASA a XII-a, SECȚIUNEA B (regim de studiu intensiv/bilingv)**

* Toate subiectele sunt obligatorii.
* Se acordă 10 puncte din oficiu.
* Timp de lucru: 180 minute

**SUBIECTUL A – USE OF ENGLISH 40 points**

**I. Read the paragraph below and do the tasks that follow 20 points**

**When Financing Spells Disaster**

As devastated Angelenos search for answers to the raging fires that have leveledentire neighborhoods, one oft-repeated explanation has been the slashing of the fire department’s budget. Even Patrick Soon, the owner of The Los Angeles Times, took to X to **blast** Mayor Karen Bass for the cuts. “Fires in LA are sadly no surprise, he wrote, “yet the Mayor cut LA Fire Department’s budget by $23M.”

But as with much of the news **swirling** around the fires, the real picture is complicated. Facing lower tax revenues and higher operating costs, Ms. Bass did indeed approve a budget for the fire department’s current fiscal year that was $23 million less than the previous year.

Chief Kristin M. Crowley of the Los Angeles Fire Department wrote a memo to the fire commission last month saying the overtime cut was creating “unprecedented operational challenges” and highlighting the bigger picture: a fire department that has not changed much in size since the 1960s despite the city’s population **surging** by more than a million people since then. She wrote that the call volume rose by a factor of five between 1969 and 2023, but that the department had not been given the staffing and new fire stations it needs to respond effectively, and that response times were steadily increasing.

Ms. Bass has repeatedly defended her financial support of the fire department this week, saying that with such ferocious winds, the firefighters stood little chance. Freddy Escobar, the president of the local firefighters’ union, said that Ms. Bass was correct that the weather conditions made for a perfect storm, but that her budget cuts had a real impact, too. “If we had more apparatus and more staffing,” he said, “it sure would have given us a better chance.”

**A. Answer the following questions, according to the text: 8 points**

1. What damage have the fires of LA caused, according to the text?

2. What was the context in which Mayor Bass decided to cut the Fire Department budget?

3. What are the two elements diagnosed by Chief Crowley as a minus in the last fifty years of the LA fire department?

4. How does the trade union leader’s perspective differ from the mayor’s when it comes to identifying the causes of the fire?

# B. Choose the right synonym for the words given below, according to their meaning in the text:

**6 points**

**1.** **blast**: a. appraise b. denounce c. flatter d. commend

**2. swirling**: a. spiralling b. dividing c. balancing d. swaying

**3. surging:** a. decline b. lessening c. slackening d. upswing

**C. Rephrase the following sentences so as to preserve the meaning (use up to six words):**

**6 points**

1. The region’s fire management system will soon collapse due to economic pressures. (**BRINK**)

The region’s fire management system …………………….due to economic pressures.

2. I wish I had given the fire department the staffing it needed to respond effectively, confessed the mayor. (**SOONER**)

I……………………………. the fire department the staffing it needed to respond effectively, confessed the mayor.

3. Somebody saw the the president of the local firefighters’ union leave by the back entrance. (**LEAVING**)

The president of the local firefighters’ union ……………………… by the back entrance.

**II. Use the word given in brackets to form a word that fits in each sentence 10 points**

You wouldn’t expect to find a dead king under a city car park, yet, (1) \_\_\_\_\_\_ **ASTONISH,** this was where archaeologists found Richard III, an English king who died in 1485. Always as a (2)\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ **CONTROVERSY** figure, Richard was (3) \_\_\_\_\_\_ **MORTAL** as a villain and murderer by Shakespeare. The accuracy of this portrayal is (4) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ **DEBATE,** but the fact that Richard was killed at the Battle of Bosworth Field is (5)\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ **DISPUTE.** The exact whereabouts of his body after the battle was a mystery but with the discovery of a skeleton in Leicester, people speculated about whether these were the (6)\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ **REMAIN** of the king. The skeleton exhibited similar injuries to those recorded after the battle and scientists carried out carbon dating, which placed the skeleton in the fifteenth century. (7) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ **ANALYSE** of DNA from living (8) \_\_\_\_\_\_ **DESCEND** of the king put (9) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_**IDENTITY** of the skeleton beyond doubt – the evidence was (10)\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ **CONCLUDE.** The last missing king of England had been found.

**III. Read the text below and find the right word for each gap. Use only one word. 10 points**

**The Slow Arrival of the Wheel**

It is nearly impossible in our post-industrial society to conceive (1) …. a world without wheels. From clocks to huge machinery and from cars to computer discs, (2) …. employs cogs, wheels or other types of cylindrical components that spin (3) …. an axis. Yet the wheel took a relatively long time to be invented and several civilisations reached a relatively high level of technological sophistication (4) … it. The most likely explanation is (5) …. neither terrain nor climate suited the wheel. Until 10,000 BC, much of the world was (6) …. the grip of the last vestiges of the Ice Age. (7) …. was not under the ice sheet was covered by desert, jungle or bog – conditions obviously unsuited for something like the wheel. Most experts agree that the wheel evolved (8) …. the fact that Neolithic man was familiar with moving heavy objects (9) …. putting a roller, such as a tree trunk, under the load. (10) …. techniques were used to move the huge stone blocks to build the pyramids around 2980 BC.

**SUBIECTUL B – INTEGRATED SKILLS 50 POINTS**

**Read the text below and do the tasks that follow.**

**A history of colour**

Our book examines how the ever-changing role of colour in society has been reflected in manuscripts, stained glass, clothing, painting and popular culture. Colour is a natural phenomenon, of course, but it is also a complex cultural construct that resists generalization and, indeed, analysis itself. No doubt this is why serious works devoted to colour are rare, and rarer still are those that aim to study it in historical context. Many authors search for the universal or archetypal truths they imagine reside in colour, but for the historian, such truths do not exist. Colour is first and foremost a social phenomenon. There is no transcultural truth to colour perception, despite what many books based on poorly grasped neurobiology or – even worse – on pseudoesoteric pop psychology would have us believe. Such books unfortunately clutter the bibliography on the subject, and even do it harm.

The silence of historians on the subject of colour, or more particularly their difficulty in conceiving colour as a subject separate from other historical phenomena, is the result of three different sets of problems. The first concerns documentation and preservation. We see the colours transmitted to us by the past as time has altered them and not as they were originally. Moreover, we see them under light conditions that often are entirely different from those known by past societies. And finally, over the decades we have developed the habit of looking at objects from the past in black-and-white photographs and, despite the current diffusion of colour photography, our ways of thinking about and reacting to these objects seem to have remained more or less black and white.

The second set of problems concerns methodology. As soon as the historian seeks to study colour, he must grapple with a host of factors all at once: physics, chemistry, materials, and techniques of production, as well as iconography, ideology, and the symbolic meanings that colours convey. How to make sense of all of these elements? How can one establish an analytical model facilitating the study of images and coloured objects? No researcher, no method, has yet been able to resolve these problems, because among the numerous facts pertaining to colour, a researcher tends to select those facts that support his study and to conveniently forget those that contradict it. This is clearly a poor way to conduct research. And it is made worse by the temptation to apply to the objects and images of a given historical period information found in texts of that period. The proper method – at least in the first phase of analysis – is to proceed as do palaeontologists (who must study cave paintings without the aid of texts): by extrapolating from the images and the objects themselves a logic and a system based on various concrete factors such as the rate of occurrence of particular objects and motifs, their distribution and disposition. In short, one undertakes the internal structural analysis with which any study of an image or coloured object should begin.

The third set of problems is philosophical: it is wrong to project our own conceptions and definitions of colour onto the images, objects and monuments of past centuries. Our judgements and values are not those of previous societies (and no doubt they will change again in the future). For the writer-historian looking at the definitions and taxonomy of colour, the danger of anachronism is very real. For example, the spectrum with its natural order of colours was unknown before the seventeenth century, while the notion of primary and secondary colours did not become common until the nineteenth century. These are not eternal notions but stages in the ever-changing history of knowledge.

I have reflected on such issues at greater length in my previous work, so while the present book does address certain of them, for the most part it is devoted to other topics. Nor is it concerned only with the history of colour in images and artworks – in any case that area still has many gaps to be filled. Rather, the aim of this book is to examine all kinds of objects in order to consider the different facets of the history of colour and to show how far beyond the artistic sphere this history reaches. The history of painting is one thing; that of colour is another, much larger, question. Most studies devoted to the history of colour err in considering only the pictorial, artistic or scientific realms. But the lessons to be learned from colour and its real interest lie elsewhere.

**I**. **For questions 1-5, decide which answer (A, B, C or D) fits best according to the text.**

**10 points**

**1. What problem regarding colour does the writer explain in the first paragraph?**

A. Our view of colour is strongly affected by changing fashion.

B. Analysis is complicated by the bewildering number of natural colours.

C. Colours can have different associations in different parts of the world.

D. Certain popular books have dismissed colour as insignificant.

**2. What is the first reason the writer gives for the lack of academic work on the history of colour?**

A. There are problems of reliability associated with the artefacts available.

B. Historians have seen colour as being outside their field of expertise.

C. Colour has been rather looked down upon as a fit subject for academic study.

D. Very little documentation exists for historians to use.

**3. The writer suggests that the priority when conducting historical research on colour is to**

A. ignore the interpretations of other modern day historians.

B. focus one’s interest as far back as the prehistoric era.

C. find some way of organising the mass of available data.

D. relate pictures to information from other sources.

**4. In the fourth paragraph, the writer says that the historian writing about colour should be careful**

A. not to analyse in an old-fashioned way.

B. when making basic distinctions between key ideas.

C. not to make unwise predictions.

D. when using certain terms and concepts.

**5. In the fifth paragraph, the writer says there needs to be further research done on**

A. the history of colour in relation to objects in the world around us.

B. the concerns he has raised in an earlier publication.

C. the many ways in which artists have used colour over the years.

D. the relationship between artistic works and the history of colour.

**II. WRITING 40 points**

Your local council is concerned about the preservation of historic buildings and local architecture. You have been asked to write a **proposal** suggesting ways to protect these landmarks. In your proposal, you should include suggested actions and explain their effect on the community.

**(250-280 words)**