

MSS Challenge Explanation 18.4.24

First, translate.

Around ancient human settlements, the only large prey fossils you find have big teeth marks from non-human predators on the meatiest areas and cut marks from humans on the non-meaty areas. Predators of large prey always ate the meatiest parts and left the rest.

So it looks like the ancient human were scavengers, right? They came and ate what the other animals left behind. Pretty strategic. Let the big predator do the hard work of actually killing the large prey. Let them eat the best parts, and then swoop in after they leave for the free leftovers.

INFERENCE Early humans were scavengers of large prey left behind by predators.

Now we see it's an MSS question so we're just looking for our CLIR Inference. Awesome! Let's go find it in the answer choices.

- A)** *So early humans were predators of small prey, not large prey. Eh, for all we know humans weren't real predators at all and only subsisted on the leftovers of large prey. The stimulus gives us no information about small prey, so we're not clear to choose **A**. It's not provable.*
- B)** *So early humans ate fruits, roots, and meat. Who knows if humans ate these plants? **B** is just like **A**; they're giving us all these other foods that have no relation to the stimulus. Don't fall for the trap. **B** isn't provable.*
- C)** *So early humans would have been better at hunting large prey if they hunted in groups instead of solo. **C** is a Dormant Conditional. We have no idea what would have happened if humans had hunted differently. Also, the stimulus doesn't even tell us whether humans hunted individually or in groups, so **C** is extra difficult to prove. Not a provable option.*
- D)** *So humans weren't large prey hunters; they just scavenged large prey left behind by other predators. **D** is similar to our CLIR Inference! The only difference is the part about humans not being predators of large prey themselves, which is true given that predators of large prey always eat the meatiest parts and humans weren't doing that. With the MSS lower burden of proof, **D** is a provable option.*
- E)** *So early humans were nomads and followed large prey in their migration patterns. Who knows if early humans were nomadic? All these fossils could be surrounding one static settlement. The stimulus doesn't tell us whether humans were moving around, so **E** isn't provable.*

D is the correct answer. It comes directly from the stimulus and doesn't bring in any unprovable new information.

MSS Challenge Explanation 20.1.6

First, translate.

So wood ducks lay eggs in their own nests and then in any nearby unattended wood duck nest. Usually with natural nests, they're hidden, so egg free riding isn't too common. But when people put up nesting boxes to help the ducks out, they're actually hurting the ducks. The nesting boxes get so many eggs that almost none of the eggs hatch.

These well-intentioned bird enthusiasts are totally messing with the ducks. Unless there would be really nowhere else for the natural nests to go, it seems like fewer of the eggs are hatching because of the nesting boxes. But we did just come upon a valid objection. What if there would be no eggs at all for these ducks without the nesting boxes? If there would be no natural nests anyway, maybe then the few eggs we get out of the boxes could be worth it.

LOOPHOLE

What if we'd get no eggs at all without the nesting boxes?

Now we see it's MSS, so we have to get into our provable mindset. If everything in the stimulus is true, what else has to be true? **We can just flip our Loophole for a necessary assumption, Inference's best bud.** If the conclusion is true (that the boxes are hurting the ducks' reproductive efforts), **it has to be true that they would have more hatching eggs without the boxes.**

Let's go find something provable in the answer choices!

- A)** *So wood ducks will put nests in the boxes only when natural nesting sites aren't around. Does this have to be true? No, we don't know why ducks choose to put their nests where they do. The stimulus gives us no information on the hierarchy of duck nest selection criteria. Remember, speculating about intentionality is dangerous, even with ducks. **A** isn't provable.*
- B)** *So female wood ducks see who other female wood ducks are the most successful reproductive-wise. **B** is totally trying to trick us into thinking "see other female wood duck" = "lay free-riding egg in other wood duck nest." Don't take the bait. That's not what **B** means, and even if it did, it's waaaaay too hard to prove that any particular duck is the most successful. Best Way answers like this are not good choices on Provable Questions. **B** isn't provable.*
- C)** *So nesting boxes have less egg space than natural nests. We have no clue if this is true; nesting boxes could be larger, but attract so many more eggs that everyone still gets crowded. **C** isn't provable.*
- D)** *So nesting boxes would work better for wood duck breeding if they were more hidden. Perfect! The problem with the nesting boxes is that all the wood ducks can see them so they're throwing free-riding eggs in there all the time. If the nests were hidden like natural nests are, the free-riding egg problem would probably be rare, like it is for natural nests. Then the nesting boxes would likely enjoy similar success. **D** is provable.*
- E)** *So we need nesting boxes in addition to the natural nest sites because the ducks' habitat is being destroyed. **E** is a little like our Loophole, right? It's saying the nesting sites could be better than nothing; hence they wouldn't be hurting the ducks' reproductive efforts. But that means **E** is powerful, not provable. We don't know for sure that habitats are being destroyed, so **E** isn't provable.*

D is the correct answer. It takes support directly from the stimulus to create a provable Inference.