

Strengthen Challenge Explanation 17.3.12

First, translate.

So a local government financed an anti-smoking ad campaign with a 20 cent tax on cigarettes. A year later, the number of smokers was down 3%; therefore, the ads reduced the number of smokers.

So our conclusion here is that the anti-smoking ad campaign caused the number of smokers to go down, but what about this tax? They added a 20 cent tax on every pack of cigarettes. When prices go up, people buy less. That's our Omitted Option; there's a New Factor Causing One or Both.

LOOPHOLE

What if the 20 cent tax, not the ad campaign, caused the number of smokers to go down?

Our Loophole is shining a light on the other reason the number of smokers could have gone down. Now that we see it's a Strengthen, we have to patch up this gap in the reasoning as powerfully as we can. We need to say the tax isn't an issue; it must be the ad campaign.

STRENGTHEN

The tax wasn't what caused the number of smokers to go down.

Now we're ready to head to the answer choices!

- A)** *So residents haven't increased non-cigarette tobacco use, like snuff and chewing tobacco, since the campaign started. **A** is pretty meh. All we care about is cigarette smokers — it doesn't really matter to the argument if other tobacco use goes up or not. Even the campaign was anti-smoking only; it didn't address other kinds of tobacco. **A** isn't a powerful approach.*
- B)** *So a bunch of smokers who didn't quit smoke less than they did before. The conclusion only references the number of smokers, so less intensity within people who still smoke doesn't matter to us. We're trying to prove that the **number of smokers** went down because of the ads, not the number of packs sold. If they still smoke even one cigarette, they count. Since **B** isn't targeted at our conclusion, it's just not powerful.*
- C)** *So hospital admissions for chronic lung problems were down 15% a year after the ads. Just like **B**, **C** doesn't speak to the number of smokers. It's a big leap to go from hospital admissions a year after the ads (for a chronic condition that probably takes years to develop) to fewer smokers. That's not the kind of favor you can do for answer choices on the LSAT, especially when it could still be the tax indirectly causing the decrease in hospital admissions. **C** isn't connected to the conclusion enough to strengthen.*
- D)** *So stores reduced cigarette prices by 20 cents to compensate for the tax. Perfect! **D** keeps the price of cigarettes the same post-tax, meaning people quitting smoking aren't responding to a price increase. This neutralizes the Omitted Option in the argument and makes the ads a more likely cause of the decline. **D** is a powerful remedy for what ails our conclusion.*
- E)** *So smokers had 25% lower incomes than non-smokers. Who cares? **E** doesn't make the ad campaign any more or less effective. The stimulus isn't comparing smokers and non-smokers, so a Comparative like **E** isn't going to be powerful.*



Check out Chapter 12, The Answer Choices, for more info on the dangerous world of Comparatives & Absolutes.

D is the correct answer. It knocks our Loophole out of contention, making the conclusion far more likely.

Strengthen Challenge Explanation 17.3.18

First, translate.

Tales of wonder are in all world literature, but fantasy just got to be more commercially successful in North America. In the last 20 years, fantasy went from 1% to 10% of adult fiction sales. There have also been a lot more good reviews of fantasy books in the same time period. Some booksellers think the increased fantasy sales are because of the good reviews.

This is a classic correlation \neq causation stimulus. Just because better reviews and better sales are happening at the same time doesn't mean that the reviews are causing the increased sales. There are a ton of other possible explanations for the increased sales. Let's start with our Omitted Options.

What if the increased sales caused there to be more good reviews (Backwards Causation)? What if a resurgence in fantasy TV shows caused both the books to become more popular and the reviews to be more positive (New Factor Causing One or Both)? What if nobody even cares about reviews in their book-buying decisions (No Relationship)? All of these Loopholes boil down to:

LOOPHOLE What if all the Omitted Options?

Now we see it's a Strengthen question, so we need to prove that these Omitted Options aren't a factor. We have to show that something else did not cause the rise in fantasy sales. It has to be the good reviews.

STRENGTHEN It wasn't the Omitted Options. It has to be the good reviews.

Now we're ready for the answer choices!

- A)** *So experts say reading levels of book buyers have gone down over the past 20 years. We don't know that fantasy books are at a lower reading level than other adult fiction, so **A** doesn't affect our conclusion. It's not powerful.*
- B)** *So because life has gotten hard over the past 20 years, readers prefer the happy endings in fantasy. **B** is an Omitted Option; it's offering another reason why the sales of fantasy books could be rising. If it's just that readers want the happy ending, that makes the reviews less likely to matter. **B** is weakening the conclusion, not strengthening it.*
- C)** *So some fantasy publishers take advantage of popularity by commissioning similar books. This is fine, but it doesn't tell us why the popularity is rising in the first place. **C** doesn't affect whether the reviews are the thing causing the jump in fantasy popularity. It's not strengthening.*
- D)** *So fantasy publishers started advertising to mystery readers 10 years ago because they weren't reading fantasy. Just like **B**, **D** is another Omitted Option. It's offering another reason why the fantasy popularity rose, instead of making us believe that it was the reviews. **D** is weakening, not strengthening.*



This conclusion is a great example of a nested claim! Notice how we critique the booksellers' conclusion because the author doesn't supply one themselves.

- E)** *So after the favorable reviews from respected critics 20 years ago, book buyers thought fantasy was suitable for adults. E cements the relationship between favorable reviews and adults buying fantasy books. If buyers only began to think of fantasy as suitable for adults after the good reviews started, that makes it much more likely that the reviews caused the rise in popularity. E is a powerful option for strengthening our conclusion.*

E is the correct answer. It is the only answer that strengthens the connection between good reviews and rising fantasy popularity.