Inference Questions

Module 1 Homework

Now put it all together. Here are twenty questions at Module 1 level, with all six skeletons mixed and nothing to tell you which is which. Work each one through the three steps: strip the passage to its skeleton, predict, then match and eliminate. To keep pace with the real test — about 71 seconds a question — give yourself 24 minutes.

Question 1

Many marine biologists blame the decline of one well-studied reef in the western Pacific on a surge in fishing, which, they argue, strips a reef of the grazing fish that keep coral-smothering algae in check. The reef's coral cover began to shrink in the late 1980s, fell most steeply around 2000, and reached its lowest point in 2015. Yet cooperative logbooks recording every fishing trip to the reef since 1970 show no surge in fishing around any of those times. These records suggest that

_____

Which choice most logically completes the text?

A) fishing took a heavier toll on some of the reef's coral species than on others.
B) the reef saw more fishing at its low point in 2015 than at the start of its decline in the late 1980s.
C) the reef's decline did not depend on a surge in fishing.
D) a modest increase in fishing would likely have slowed the reef's decline.

Question 2

Urban planners have long argued that adding lanes to highways relieves traffic congestion by giving drivers more room. Yet when economists compared commutes in several metropolitan areas before and after major highway expansions, they found that five years later, average commute times were the same or longer. Population growth in those areas had been too modest to explain the pattern. Instead, the new lanes had quickly filled with drivers who had previously taken public transit or avoided traveling at rush hour. Taken together, these findings suggest that

_____

Which choice most logically completes the text?

A) the expansions eased congestion at first, but population growth soon erased the gains.
B) adding highway lanes may not bring the lasting relief from congestion that planners expect.
C) public transit systems may become less efficient when highways are expanded.
D) commuters will always choose to drive rather than take public transit whenever highway lanes are available.

Question 3

Accounts of engineer Samuel Keating's career often highlight his partnership with inventor Lila Moreau, noting that several of his early patents came out of their joint work. As a result, Moreau is usually remembered as a supporting figure in Keating's story. Archival records, however, show that Moreau independently designed several navigation systems and patented them under her own name. Those who view Moreau mainly as a supporting figure in Keating's story may therefore

_____

Which choice most logically completes the text?

A) understate the extent of Moreau's independent contributions to technology.
B) overlook the broader industrial context in which Keating and Moreau worked.
C) assume that Keating's patents were more valuable than Moreau's.
D) exaggerate the scope of Moreau's independent work.

Question 4

The interior monologue, a technique that presents a character's unspoken thoughts as they occur, is closely associated with James Joyce's novel *Ulysses* (1922), and many readers assume that Joyce invented it. Yet Édouard Dujardin's *Les Lauriers sont coupés*, a French novel told entirely through interior monologue, was first published in 1887, when Joyce was five years old. It follows that _____

Which choice most logically completes the text?

A) Joyce was probably unaware of Dujardin's novel when he wrote *Ulysses*.
B) the interior monologue did not originate with Joyce.
C) Dujardin's novel was more widely read in its day than *Ulysses* was in 1922.
D) Joyce could not have arrived at the technique without reading Dujardin's novel.

Question 5

The wood frog of North America can survive being frozen: in winter, ice fills the spaces between its cells, and its heart stops beating. Ice that forms inside cells, however, destroys them. As freezing begins, the frog's liver converts stored glycogen into glucose, a sugar that acts as a cryoprotectant, reducing how much ice forms and how much water cells lose to it. Wood frogs from interior Alaska, where winters are far colder than in Ohio, store more glycogen in their livers than Ohio wood frogs do and convert it to glucose faster once freezing begins. These findings suggest that the frogs' production of glucose _____

Which choice most logically completes the text?

A) helps them attract mates once they thaw in the spring.
B) is greatest in frogs from regions where winters are mildest.
C) prevents ice from forming anywhere in their bodies.
D) is an adaptation that helps them survive being frozen.

Question 6

Botanists studying an alpine wildflower compared plants growing wild at high elevations with genetically identical plants raised in a greenhouse at sea level. When the greenhouse was lit to match the wild plants' daylight hours, the two groups grew and flowered on the same schedule. Only the high-elevation plants, however, developed thick, waxy leaf coatings and high levels of pigments that shield leaves from intense sunlight. The researchers therefore concluded that _____

Which choice most logically completes the text?

A) the two groups differed genetically in ways that shaped their leaves.
B) the environment in which the plant grows affects whether it develops its protective traits.
C) the plant's protective traits depend entirely on its surroundings and not at all on its genes.
D) the pigments that shield the plant's leaves also control when it flowers.

Question 7

Although handheld calculators are widely available, some primary schools in several countries still teach students to use the abacus. At first glance, the practice may seem outdated, since calculators perform arithmetic faster and more accurately. Teachers at those schools have found, however, that students trained on the abacus often develop strong mental-math skills and the ability to picture quantities in their heads—abilities that students who rely mainly on calculators tend to lack. These observations suggest that some schools _____

Which choice most logically completes the text?

A) keep teaching the abacus mainly to preserve a cultural tradition.
B) will increasingly replace calculators with the abacus in their mathematics classes.
C) continue to teach the abacus because it builds skills that calculators do not.
D) teach the abacus because it performs arithmetic faster than calculators do.

Question 8

People who admire the soft, smoky shading of Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa* sometimes wonder how the portrait would look if he had painted it in fresco instead of oil. But a painting grows out of many interlocking conditions—its medium, its surface, the years spent on it, the artist's skills at the time—and changing any one of them would have changed how all the others played out. Therefore, _____

Which choice most logically completes the text?

A) no one can reliably say how the portrait would have looked in a different medium.
B) portraits painted in oil are generally more admired than those painted in fresco.
C) Leonardo chose oil mainly because it was less expensive than fresco.
D) the portrait would have looked much the same had Leonardo painted it in fresco rather than oil.

Question 9

In one species of dung beetle, many males grow a pair of long horns, which they use to fight rivals at the entrances of the tunnels where females lay their eggs. Some biologists have proposed that horns are essential to a male's success in fathering offspring. However, a genetic study of several populations found that more than 60 percent of the males that fathered offspring had no horns at all, even in the most crowded populations, where competition for females was fiercest. Biologist Rosa Delgado argues that if horns were essential to a male's success in fathering offspring, then _____

Which choice most logically completes the text?

A) males with horns would live longer than males without them.
B) the horns would also help protect males from birds and other predators.
C) horns would be more common in populations where competition for females is weakest.
D) far more of the males that fathered offspring would have horns.

Question 10

When architect Nadia Vance presented her first designs for a new city hall—a building meant to house the mayor's office, the council chamber, and a public records room—the city council criticized them as "austere and imposing," objecting in particular to their heavy concrete walls. A year later, at a meeting that stretched late into the evening, the same council praised her revised plans for their "openness and civic warmth." This shift in the council's response suggests that Vance's revisions _____

Which choice most logically completes the text?

A) successfully addressed the concerns the council had raised about her first designs.
B) made the building appear even more austere than her first designs had.
C) were made mainly to lower the building's construction costs.
D) were required by building codes that the city adopted during that year.

Question 11

Social scientists once regarded public opinion polls as a kind of thermometer: a tool that could measure the political climate without changing it. Recent research complicates that view. When poll results are widely publicized, undecided voters tend to shift toward whichever candidate appears to be winning, and candidates revise their campaign messages in response to their latest numbers. These findings suggest that rather than simply measuring the political climate, polls _____

Which choice most logically completes the text?

A) influence how candidates campaign but not how voters decide.
B) often misrepresent the views of voters who decline to answer pollsters' questions.
C) can help shape the very climate they are meant to measure.
D) now shape elections more than candidates' own campaign messages do.

Question 12

Among makers of luxury watches, an in-house movement—the mechanical engine of a watch, designed and built entirely by one company—has long signaled that a brand is both experienced and well funded, since developing one takes years of expertise and far more money than a young firm could normally raise. Recently, however, several new microbrands have begun offering in-house movements, using government subsidies to cover the costs and automated production to make up for their limited experience. This development suggests that _____

Which choice most logically completes the text?

A) established watchmakers may need to lower their prices in order to compete with the new microbrands.
B) an in-house movement may no longer set experienced, well-funded brands apart from newcomers.
C) the microbrands have found ways to appear credible without offering in-house movements.
D) government subsidies are as valuable to a watch company as decades of experience.

Question 13

Archaeologists excavating a temple complex in southern Mesopotamia have found a group of clay tablets recording astronomical observations, stored together in one of its rooms. Inscriptions in the complex's foundations show that it was built around 250 BCE, but the style of the tablets' script shows that the tablets themselves were written in the 600s BCE, the same century as the eclipses they record. Since both dates are considered secure, the presence of the tablets in the complex suggests that _____

Which choice most logically completes the text?

A) tablets from the 600s BCE are more common at the site than tablets from later centuries.
B) the tablets are later copies of observations that were first recorded in the 600s BCE.
C) the tablets were written long before the complex was built and were later placed in it.
D) the observations were recorded by astronomers who worked at the complex.

Question 14

On the island of Isla Roja, finches have a sharply curved beak that lets them reach the nectar deep inside the long, tube-shaped flowers of a local vine, and fossils show that the island's finches have had this beak for at least 50,000 years. Finches on Isla Verde, more than 300 kilometers away, have the same curved beak, even though the vine does not grow there. DNA evidence shows that the Isla Verde finches descend from a small group of birds that arrived from Isla Roja less than 5,000 years ago. It is therefore likely that _____

Which choice most logically completes the text?

A) the Isla Verde finches will soon evolve a beak better suited to their island's plants.
B) the vine once grew on Isla Verde but died out after the finches arrived.
C) the two populations developed their curved beaks independently in response to similar conditions.
D) the Isla Verde finches inherited the curved beak from their Isla Roja ancestors.

Question 15

Antivirus programs often catch malicious software by scanning for a "signature," a string of code known to belong to a particular virus. So-called polymorphic viruses defeat this method by rewriting their outer code each time they copy themselves, so every new copy carries a different signature. Beneath that shifting outer layer, however, every copy of a given polymorphic virus depends on the same unchanging core routine to take control of a computer. To protect computers against such a virus, therefore, it would be most effective to _____

Which choice most logically completes the text?

A) count how many differently coded copies of the virus currently exist.
B) build a single defense that targets the core routine that every copy shares.
C) update signature lists more often so that each new copy is added as soon as it appears.
D) study whether future versions of the virus might operate without the core routine.

Question 16

Traditional chemotherapy drugs fight cancer by attacking cells that divide rapidly. Because the drugs cannot tell cancer cells from healthy ones, they also damage healthy cells that divide quickly, such as those in the bone marrow and the lining of the digestive tract. Researchers have now identified a protein, OR-72, that appears on the surface of cells from one aggressive type of cancer but is absent from healthy tissue. By treating patients with a drug that attacks only cells carrying OR-72, doctors could therefore _____

Which choice most logically completes the text?

A) fight this cancer while sparing the healthy cells that traditional drugs damage.
B) speed the regrowth of bone marrow that earlier treatments have damaged.
C) make healthy cells resistant to the effects of traditional chemotherapy drugs.
D) shrink this cancer's tumors more quickly than traditional chemotherapy drugs can.

Question 17

The American painter Mary Cassatt, who worked in Paris in the late 1800s, is best known for tender scenes of women and children in the privacy of their homes. Some art historians see this focus as a deliberate choice: a way of giving women's private lives a prominence that male painters of the era, who favored cafés, dance halls, and busy streets, seldom gave them. Others argue that it was a practical necessity, since social customs barred respectable women from many of the public places where male painters found their subjects. Whatever her motives, both groups would likely agree that _____

Which choice most logically completes the text?

A) Cassatt's paintings were more popular in her lifetime than those of male painters.
B) Cassatt would have painted cafés and busy streets if social customs had allowed it.
C) Cassatt's subjects differed from those that most male painters of her time favored.
D) Cassatt resented the social customs that limited where she could work.

Question 18

Because most lichens take in water and nutrients directly from the air, many species die off where the air contains sulfur dioxide, a pollutant released by burning coal. For much of the twentieth century, tree trunks thickly covered with lichens were therefore taken as a sign of clean air. As sulfur dioxide levels have fallen, however, lichens that grow best where nitrogen compounds from vehicle exhaust and livestock emissions are abundant have spread across tree trunks in many cities and farming regions. These observations suggest that a thick covering of lichens on tree trunks _____

Which choice most logically completes the text?

A) may no longer serve as a reliable indicator of clean air.
B) can gradually harm the trees on which the lichens are growing.
C) now serves as a reliable indicator that nitrogen compounds are scarce.
D) is now more common in farming regions than it is in cities.

Question 19

When wild wheat ripens, its seed head breaks apart on its own into small pieces, each carrying one or two seeds and ending in a smooth scar. Domesticated wheat, by contrast, holds on to its seeds until people thresh the harvested plants, which breaks the head into pieces with rough, torn ends. Examining ancient seed-head pieces from a site in southwestern Asia, archaeobotanist Samira Haddad and colleagues found that nearly all of those dating to about 10,500 years ago end in smooth scars, whereas most of those from about 9,000 and 8,500 years ago have rough, torn ends. From these results, Haddad and her colleagues inferred that _____

Which choice most logically completes the text?

A) the site was first settled more recently than archaeologists had previously thought.
B) most of the wheat eaten at the site over its history came from domesticated plants.
C) domesticated wheat had replaced wild wheat at the site by about 10,500 years ago.
D) domesticated forms of wheat had emerged no later than about 9,000 years ago.

Question 20

When a city launched a program through which neighbors could lend one another tools and household equipment, from ladders and power drills to sewing machines, its planners predicted that few residents would take part. The prediction proved wrong, partly because the planners had misjudged the residents themselves. Sharing programs tend to thrive when members can borrow things they lack by lending things they have. Having badly underestimated how varied the residents' hobbies and household projects were, the planners assumed that _____

Which choice most logically completes the text?

A) residents would own largely the same tools despite having widely varied hobbies.
B) residents would be willing to lend their tools only to neighbors they already knew well.
C) the program would attract few borrowers from other parts of the city.
D) the program would offer residents access to few tools they did not already own.