



Name: _____

Date: _____

Left - Handed Competition

Most human beings are either right-handed or left-handed, although there are a few who can use both hands equally well. Nobody is sure why most people are one or the other, but experts agree that a mixture of genetic and environmental factors determines which we will be. Another mystery is why so few people are left - handed. Research shows that only about 10 percent of people are left-handed, and it has been this way for at least 5,000 years.

Many scientists believe that the ability of human beings to cooperate - for example by sharing tools - has played an important role in our evolution. From this point of view, it is natural that we have evolved to use the same hand because it allows people to share tools more easily. Why, then, are some people left-handed? One idea is that, when people fight against one another, being left-handed can be an advantage because the opponent does not always know what to expect. Recent research by Daniel Abrams and Mark Panaggio, two mathematicians at Northwestern University in the United States, has give support to this theory.

The two researchers used mathematics to predict how many people in a certain sport would be left-handed. In some sports, such as boxing, participants only compete against one other opponent. In others, such as American football, cooperation between the members of a team is also extremely important to winning. The researchers predicted that there would be many more left-handed athletes in the first kind of sport than in the second. When they examined actual sports, they found that their predictions were accurate. For example, about 25 percent of boxers are left-handed. By contrast, the percentage of left-handed American football players is much lower than the percentage in the rest of the population.

The researchers believe their results can be applied to human evolution as a whole. It seems that, in human evolution, it was very important that the majority of people be right-handed. This is because most of the time cooperation was more important to our survival than competition. However, in certain situations, competition was more important. In these cases, having about 10 percent of the population left-handed was an advantage for human beings.



Left - Handed Competition

1. Experts agree that
 - a. most children are born with the ability to use both hands equally well.
 - b. there are several factors that cause people to be either right or left handed.
 - c. the percentage of left-handed people has been increasing for 5,000 years.
 - d. some children begin using one hand more than the other at about 10 years old.
2. What do scientists think is one reason that most humans have evolved to be right-handed?
 - a. Using the same hand improves people's ability to compete against others.
 - b. Using the same hand helps people to understand mathematics better.
 - c. Using the same hand allows people to share tools with each other easily.
 - d. Using the same hand makes it easier for people to become leaders.
3. What is one thing that Daniel Abrams and Mark Panaggio discovered?
 - a. Sports without teamwork have a larger percentage of left-handed participants.
 - b. American football requires cooperation between 25 percent of the players.
 - c. There are a little less cooperation in boxing than they had first expected to find.
 - d. The theory that they had about left-handed people was very unreliable.
4. What does the research on left and right handed people suggest?
 - a. It is becoming more and more important to have left-handed people in society.
 - b. People who are born left-handed can train themselves to become right-handed.
 - c. There is little evidence that people became left-handed as a result of evolution.
 - d. Having some left-handed people in the population has helped humans to survive.