

ROSIE RUIZ Marathon Fraud

It was the greatest upset in the 84-year history of the Boston Marathon. On April 21, 1980, Rosie Ruiz came out of nowhere to win the women's division. Her time was a record two hours, 31 minutes, and 56 seconds. Only two women had ever run a faster marathon. Incredibly, Ruiz had competed in just one other marathon. That one was in New York City. Yet Ruiz won the Boston race and she won it with style. Although she stumbled across the finish line, Ruiz was hardly sweating. Given the day's heat, that was pretty remarkable.

² The Boston Marathon is America's oldest marathon. It starts in the small town of Hopkinton, Massachusetts. The runners—both men and women—then race 26 miles, 385 yards to downtown Boston. It's a rough and challenging race. There are lots of hills, the most notable being Heartbreak Hill. Every year many of the best runners in the world compete in the Boston Marathon.

³ In the early days of the race, women were not allowed to run. But by the 1970s, they were an accepted and welcomed part of the race. Even though the top men run faster than the top women, the women's division is always as hotly contested as the men's. In 1980, Patti Lyons was the pre-race favorite. Jacqueline Gareau, Ellison Goodall, and Gillian Adams also figured to run well. No one gave Rosie Ruiz any thought at all.

⁴ The 1980 race had a large field—5,364 runners. The male leader, of course, was easy to notice. He was the first one coming down the road behind a fleet of Boston police motorcycles. The top woman, however, was a little harder to spot. She was often buried in a sea of male runners. Still, she could be identified because her race number began with the letter W. Besides, the attentive fans lining the course kept a sharp lookout for "the first woman."

⁵ Ellison Goodall started out on top. She heard shouts from the fans informing her that she was in the lead. That ended at the eight-mile mark. Jacqueline Gareau, with her powerful stride, shot past Goodall. A little while later Patti Lyons went by, too. At the 16-mile mark, Goodall heard a race photographer shout to her, "Number 22 [Gareau] is leading. Number 1 [Lyons] is second. You're third."

⁶ Now running in great pain, Goodall struggled just to get to the finish line. In the last six miles, three more women runners passed her. Goodall reached the finish line in a little over two hours and 42 minutes. Turning to one official, she said, "I guess sixth isn't so bad my first time out."

⁷ "But you were seventh," answered the official.

⁸ Goodall had never seen a sixth woman passing her, but she figured one must have. And that woman was on the winner's stand—with a medal around her neck and a laurel wreath on her head. Rosie Ruiz was wearing Number W50. Naturally, the sports reporters

were showering her with questions. They all wanted to know more about this new racing superstar.

⁹ What Ruiz said made her feat even more astonishing. She had been running only a year and a half. Most top runners belong to a running club, but Ruiz didn't. She said that she had run track in high school and college, where her best time for the mile had been five minutes and 30 seconds. Somehow, she had improved a lot since then. Her average in the Boston Marathon was just five minutes and 46 seconds per mile. That meant she had maintained close to her top speed for over two and a half hours.

¹⁰ Another puzzling aspect to Ruiz's performance was her low profile throughout most of the race. No one saw her until the last few hundred yards. Goodall never saw Ruiz pass her, and neither did Gareau or Lyons. "People were saying I was [the] second woman at the fire station at 17 miles," recalled Lyons. "And no woman could have passed me from then on without my seeing her."

¹¹ As it turned out, there was a good reason why Rosie Ruiz had seemed so invisible. She hadn't run the entire distance of 26 miles, 385 yards. Her total mileage was more like 385 yards. Race officials later examined more than 10,000 photos of the race. Ruiz wasn't in any of them. Word circulated that while the rest of the field had been running, Ruiz had taken the subway. Witnesses later said they saw her climbing up the Kenmore Square subway steps. She had mingled a bit with the fans before stepping off the curb and into the race. She was later suspected of taking the subway in her New York City Marathon win, as well.

¹² A few people smelled something fishy from the start. Bill Rodgers, the winner of the men's division, said, "I don't believe it. I don't believe that woman had run a marathon. She wasn't tired enough."

¹³ Doctor Yale Markle, a race official, examined some of the runners. After looking at Ruiz's feet, legs, ankles, and shoes, he said, "She definitely didn't run the whole race."

¹⁴ Rosie Ruiz, however, tearfully maintained her innocence. "I ran the race," she pleaded. "I don't know how to explain what I did. I just got up this morning with a lot of energy."

¹⁵ But Ruiz's story simply wasn't believable. For instance, she didn't understand racing terms such as "split" times. When asked about the course, all she could remember was that it was beautiful with "lots of houses and churches." When asked why none of the other women saw her, Ruiz said, "Since it was only my second race, I'm not familiar with watching out for where everybody is." Also, there was the problem with her pulse rate. Ruiz had a pulse rate of 76. That's healthy enough—for an office worker. Most world class marathon runners have pulse rates in the low 50s.

¹⁶ It took race officials eight days to check all the photos and interview witnesses. Then they made their decision. They stripped Rosie Ruiz of her title and gave it to Jacqueline Gareau, the rightful winner. When asked to return her medal, Ruiz refused. So officials had a new one made for Gareau. Kevin White, the mayor of Boston, presented the medal to Gareau at the finish line to the loud cheers of marathon fans everywhere.

¹⁷ Since then, Rosie Ruiz has faded into obscurity. But she is not totally forgotten in Boston. Cornwall's is a pub near the marathon finish line. On race day, the owner hangs out a white banner. It reads: "Rosie Ruiz Started Here!"

Name #: _____

Title of Text: _____

A Finding the Main Idea (REG)

One statement below expresses the main idea of the article. One statement is too general, or too broad. The other statement explains only part of the article; it is too narrow. Label the statements using the following key:

M—Main Idea **B—Too Broad** **N—Too Narrow**

- _____ 1. No one in the history of the Boston Marathon has ever fooled race officials as skillfully as Rosie Ruiz.
- _____ 2. Newcomer Rosie Ruiz won the 1980 Boston Marathon, but it was later determined that she hadn't run the entire race, so her medal was taken back.
- _____ 3. Rosie Ruiz won the 1980 Boston Marathon, America's oldest marathon, with its field of 5,364 runners, both male and female.

B Recalling Facts

How well do you remember the facts in the article? Put an X in the box next to the answer that correctly completes each statement about the article.

1. Rosie Ruiz had run in only one other race, in
- a. New York City.
 - b. San Francisco.
 - c. Paris, France.
2. The length of the Boston Marathon is
- a. 25 miles exactly.
 - b. 26 miles, 385 yards.
 - c. 21 miles, 385 yards.
3. In the more than 10,000 photos of the race, Rosie Ruiz
- a. is near the back of the field of runners.
 - b. is leading all the way.
 - c. does not appear.
4. Winning runner Bill Rodgers doubted that Ruiz had run the whole race because
- a. he hadn't seen her at the starting line.
 - b. he didn't think she looked tired enough.
 - c. she didn't know what a "split" time is.
5. When race officials asked Ruiz to return her medal, she
- a. gave it back angrily.
 - b. refused to give it back.
 - c. finally admitted that she had cheated.

C Making Inferences

When you combine your own experience and information from a text to draw a conclusion that is not directly stated in that text, you are making an inference. Below are five statements that may or may not be inferences based on information in the article. Label the statements using the following key:

C—Correct Inference

F—Faulty Inference

- _____ 1. Many people, not just one photographer, took photos of the Boston Marathon.
- _____ 2. It is common for runners in a marathon to run their top speed the entire distance.
- _____ 3. Regular long-distance running usually lowers the runner's pulse rate.
- _____ 4. At the Boston Marathon, the fans stand well back from path that the runners take.
- _____ 5. The only place where marathon fans stand to view the race is the finish line.

Author's Approach

Put an X in the box next to the correct answer.

- 1. The main purpose of the first paragraph is to
 - a. To encourage readers to run in the Boston Marathon
 - b. To describe the route of the Boston Marathon
 - c. To describe an especially unusual moment in the 1980 Boston Marathon
- 2. Judging from the statement in the article "A few people smelled something fishy from the start," you can conclude that the author wants the reader to think that
 - a. Certain people were alert enough not to be deceived.
 - b. The people who didn't believe Ruiz's story were foolish.
 - c. Some people refuse to believe anything good about strangers.
- 3. Choose the statement below that is the weakest argument for believing that Ruiz had really won the race.
 - a. She had been a good runner in high school.
 - b. She was fit and healthy.
 - c. She cried in frustration when no one believed her story.
- 4. In this article, "Another puzzling aspect to Ruiz's performance was her low profile throughout most of the race" means
 - a. no one could understand how Ruiz could look so calm throughout the race.
 - b. it was surprising that no one had noticed Ruiz among the leading runners until the end of the race.
 - c. it didn't make sense that the leading runners ignored Ruiz throughout the race.