Cactus plants, which grow in deserts, have a thick waxy coating that helps prevent water loss. The plants’ sharp spines provide protection from predators.

Which of the following statements best explains why cactus plants evolved to have these traits?

A. The genes of individual cactus plants mutated to develop these traits.

B. Individual cactus plants developed these traits to fill an environmental niche.

C. Cactus plants with these traits were better able than other cactus plants to interbreed with invasive species.

D. Cactus plants with these traits were better able than other cactus plants to survive and pass these traits on to their offspring.