

**Select Readings, Second Edition**  
**Elementary, TOEFL®iBT-Style Final**

Read the passage and answer the questions that follow.

**A Musical Genius**

Music teachers in England are surprised by a young man in England who can play very difficult piano pieces just a few minutes after he hears them. Why else are they surprised? He does not read music!

Samuel Osmond is a 19-year-old law student from Cornwall, England. He never studied the piano. However, he can play very difficult musical pieces by composers such as Chopin and Beethoven just a few minutes after he hears them.

He learns a piece of music by listening to it in parts. Then he thinks about the notes<sup>1</sup> in his head. Two years ago, he played his first piece *Moonlight Sonata* by Beethoven. He surprised everyone around him.

His teachers were amazed that he memorized this long and difficult piece of music and played it perfectly. Samuel wanted to become a lawyer, but music teachers told him he should study music instead. Now, he studies law and music. His teachers say Samuel is unbelievable. They say his ability is very rare, but Samuel doesn't even realize that what he can do is special.

Samuel can't understand why everyone is so surprised. "I grew up with music. My mother played piano and I played guitar for six years. About two years ago, I suddenly decided to start playing the piano, without being able to read music and without having any lessons. It comes easily to me—I hear the notes and can memorize them—each individual note." says Samuel.

Experts say that Samuel has 'note perfect memory,' which means he can play very difficult pieces of music just by listening to them. They say that people with this kind of memory are extremely rare.

Recently, Samuel performed a piece during a special event at his college. The piece had more than a thousand notes. The audience was impressed by his amazing performance. He is now learning a piece that is so difficult that many professional pianists<sup>2</sup> cannot play it. Samuel says, "It's all about the ability to memorize—I guess I have that ability."

However, Samuel's ability to memorize doesn't stop with music. His family says that even when he was a young boy, Samuel heard someone read a story, and then Samuel could retell<sup>3</sup> the story word for word.

Samuel is still only a teenager. He doesn't know what he wants to do in the future. For now, he is just happy to play beautiful music and continue his studies.

1. In college, Samuel studies
  - only law.
  - only music.
  - both law and music.
  - none of these.

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<sup>1</sup> **notes** musical sounds

<sup>2</sup> **pianists** piano players

<sup>3</sup> **retell** to tell again

2. Samuel learns music by listening to it
  - in parts.
  - while sitting at a piano.
  - and writing it down.
  - by himself.
  
3. The word **composers** in the passage is closest in meaning to
  - musical groups.
  - music players.
  - music writers.
  - music teachers.
  
4. Samuel can't understand why
  - everyone is surprised at his piano ability.
  - why his teachers want him to study music.
  - he can't read music like his teachers.
  - there are so many notes for him to learn.
  
5. The word **memorized** in the passage is closest in meaning to
  - tested.
  - practiced.
  - wrote down.
  - learned perfectly.
  
6. The following statements are true EXCEPT:
  - Samuel's mother played piano.
  - Samuel's mother taught him to play piano.
  - Samuel played the guitar for six years.
  - Samuel grew up with music.
  
7. The word **individual** in the passage is closest in meaning to
  - written.
  - one of a group.
  - heard.
  - a person.
  
8. Not many people have a \_\_\_\_\_ like Samuel's.
  - remember
  - remembered
  - memory
  - memorize
  
9. In paragraph 6, **them** refers to

- notes
  - memories
  - pieces
  - lessons
10. The word **impressed** in the passage is closest in meaning to
- happy
  - surprised
  - listening
  - studied
11. Samuel recently performed a piece at his college
- with other professional pianists.
  - without memorizing the music.
  - that was too difficult for him to play.
  - with more than 1,000 notes.
12. Samuel can also hear a story and \_\_\_\_\_ it word for word.
- retell
  - retells
  - retelling
  - retold
13. In the passage, all of these are true about Samuel EXCEPT
- he’s still a teenager.
  - he wants to go back to studying only law.
  - he doesn’t know what he wants to do in the future.
  - he wants to keep playing music.
14. Look at the four squares (labeled A–D) that indicate where the following sentence could be added to the paragraph.

**Even Samuel’s teachers don’t know if he’ll be able to do it.**

Recently, Samuel performed a piece during a special event at his college. [A]□

The piece had more than a thousand notes. [B]□ The audience was impressed by his amazing performance. [C]□ He is now learning a piece that is so difficult that many professional pianists cannot play it. [D]□ Samuel says, “It’s all about the ability to memorize—I guess I have that ability.”

Where would the sentence best fit?

- Position [A]

- Position [B]
- Position [C]
- Position [D]

15. **Directions:** An introductory sentence for a short summary of the reading passage is provided below. Choose the THREE sentences that contain the most important ideas in the passage. Some sentences do not belong in the summary because they give information that is not in the passage, or are only minor ideas in the passage.

**Samuel Osmond, a young man in England, has an amazing musical ability.**

**Answer Choices:**

1. Samuel's mother taught him to read music when he was a young boy.
2. Samuel can play difficult pieces of music on the piano just minutes after he hears it.
3. Samuel is thinking about taking guitar lessons as well as playing the piano.
4. Samuel has 'note perfect memory'—the very rare ability to play music after hearing it.
5. Samuel amazed his teachers by playing *Moonlight Sonata*, even though he can't read music.
6. Samuel studies both music and law now, but wants to be a musician in the future.