

Select Readings, Second Edition
Intermediate, TOEFL®iBT-Style Final

Read the passage and answer the questions that follow.

A Success Story

Elizabeth "Liz" Murray is an American inspirational speaker who is best known for her incredible story of being homeless in her youth, and then overcoming her hardships to achieve success. This is her story.

Born in 1980 in the Bronx, New York, Liz's earliest memories are of her parents spending their welfare payments¹ to buy drugs, while she and her sister went hungry. The girls survived on ice cubes—sometimes even having to eat toothpaste to satisfy their hunger. Liz was often **bullied** by other kids at school for being smelly and looking unclean, and was eventually forced to drop out of school.

Liz's mother always told her that 'one day life is going to be better.' However, still repeating those words, she died of complications from AIDS when Liz was just 15 years old. When Liz's father could no longer take care of himself and moved into a homeless shelter, Liz and her sister were out on the streets. Her sister managed to find shelter on a friend's sofa, but Liz slept on New York City's 24-hour underground trains, or on park benches.

With the words of her mother still ringing in her ears—'one day life is going to be better'—Liz had an epiphany². Liz decided that she had to make her own life better now, or maybe it never would be. She had nowhere to live and had not attended school regularly for several years, but Liz **pledged** to become a straight-A³ student and complete her high-school education by the time she was 19 years old.

Liz attended day and night classes. Studying in a friend's hallway, she completed a year's work in one term. Liz's dedication caught the eye of one of her teachers, and he agreed to **mentor** her. A year later when he took 10 of his top students on a visit to Harvard University, Liz just stood outside the university, admiring its beauty. Her mentor decided then and there that Liz might just have what it takes to make it into Harvard. That's when Liz heard that the *New York Times* gave scholarships.

Liz graduated from high school in just two years. She was awarded the *New York Times* scholarship for needy students and was accepted to Harvard University in 2000. Although she was forced to leave in 2001 to take care of her sick father, Liz returned to Harvard in 2006 and graduated in 2009. Despite all the hardships, Liz never stopped loving her parents and never doubted that **they** loved her. She says that they were highly intelligent people who allowed drug

¹ **welfare payments** money from the government for people in need

² **epiphany** a sudden idea

³ **straight-A** with grades of all 'A,' all good grades

dependence and eventually poverty to take over their lives. Liz now spends her time and effort trying to make sure this same situation does not happen to others.

Since her graduation from Harvard, Liz has continued her education while publishing a book of her memoirs⁴. She has met Oprah Winfrey and Bill Clinton. She has spoken alongside the Dalai Lama, Tony Blair, and Mikhail Gorbachev. She is the founder and director of *Manifest Living*, a company that provides a series of workshops that empowers adults to create the extraordinary in their lives.

Liz talks to teenagers about resisting the temptations of drugs and gangs. She also urges them not to use childhood hardship as an excuse not to take opportunities. Liz doesn't want her Harvard education and clean appearance now to overshadow her story. "Remember," she says, "I was one of those people on the streets you walk away from."

1. According to the story, Liz was bullied by other children because
 - had to eat ice cubes and toothpaste.
 - she smelled badly and looked dirty.
 - she and her family were homeless.
 - she had to take care of her sick mother.

2. The word **bullied** in the passage is closest in meaning to
 - depressed
 - fought
 - failed
 - harassed

3. Which of the following can be inferred from paragraph 3?
 - Liz's sister didn't want to take Liz to sleep at her friend's house.
 - Liz's father was in a hospital before going to the homeless shelter.
 - Liz didn't have any friends' homes she could go to for shelter.
 - Liz found it easy to get shelter in New York City.

4. The following statements are true about Liz's decision to return to school EXCEPT
 - she wanted to be a straight-A student.
 - she was 19 when she returned to school.
 - it took her two years to finish her high school work.
 - she had not been in school for several years when she returned.

5. What is the main use of the **pledged** mentioned in the passage?

⁴ **memoirs** a biography

- honored
 - promised
 - imagined
 - considered
6. All of the following are true about Liz's return to high school EXCEPT
- she got a part-time job at the *New York Times* to help save for university.
 - she studied in a friend's hallway.
 - she took both day and night classes.
 - she finished one year's work in just one school term.
7. When Liz first saw Harvard University, she
- was studying there on a *New York Times* scholarship.
 - was taken by her mentor, who taught at the university.
 - was unable to go inside and look at the campus.
 - just stood there and thought about how beautiful it was.
8. The word **mentor** in the passage is closest in meaning to
- confide
 - advise
 - promote
 - authorize
9. Which of the following can be inferred from paragraph 6?
- Liz never blamed her parents for the problems she had growing up.
 - Liz also had to fight drug dependence of her own while in school.
 - Liz regretted having to leave Harvard to take care of her father.
 - Liz was never really sure about her parents' feelings for her.
10. In paragraph 6, **they** refers to
- students
 - parents
 - hardships
 - lives
11. The word **dependence** in the passage is closest in meaning to
- addiction
 - control
 - disability
 - trust

12. Each of the following things is true about Liz's life after university EXCEPT
- she has met and given speeches with many celebrities.
 - she has founded her own company.
 - she lets her Harvard education and clean appearance hide her past hardships.
 - she has written a book of her memoirs.
13. The author's purpose in writing this article is primarily to
- reveal the hardships young people may face if they use drugs.
 - give information about a scholarship provided by the *New York Times* for needy students.
 - tell an inspirational story of a woman who has succeeded despite many hardships.
 - talk about how going to Harvard University can change a person's life.
14. Look at the four squares (labeled A–D) that indicate where the following sentence could be added to the paragraph.

As she stood there, Liz wondered how her life might change if she could go to a prestigious school like this.

Liz attended day and night classes. Studying in a friend's hallway, she completed a year's work in one term. [A] Liz's dedication caught the eye of one of her teachers, and he agreed to mentor her. [B] A year later when he took 10 of his top students on a visit to Harvard University, Liz just stood outside the university, admiring its beauty. [C] Her mentor decided then and there that Liz might just have what it takes to make it into Harvard. [D] That's when Liz heard that the *New York Times* gave scholarships.

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.
- Liz Murray had an unhappy childhood, her parents addicted to drugs, never having enough to eat, and dropping out of school at a young age.**

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Answer Choices:

1. Liz got into Harvard University in 2000, but had to leave in 2001 to take care of her father, who died a year later.
2. While back at high school, a teacher who had served as Liz's mentor suggested that she apply to Harvard University, and Liz received a *New York Times* scholarship to study there.
3. Since graduating, Liz has formed a company called *Manifest Living*, giving workshops to adults, and inspirational speeches to teenagers.
4. When Liz graduated from Harvard, she was one of the top ten students in her class.
5. Liz attended day and night classes, studying in a friend's hallway, and finished two years' worth of classes in one term.
6. After her mother died, Liz was homeless for a while, but one day she decided that she wanted to go back to school and try to make her own life better.