

Select Readings, Second Edition
Intermediate, IELTS™-style Final

Read the passage and answer **Questions 1–15** which 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 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.

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

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."

QUESTIONS 1–5

The Reading Passage describes several cause and effect relationships. Match each Cause in List A (1–5) with an Effect in List B (A–H).

Write the correct letter A–H in boxes 1–5 on your answer sheet. There are more Effects than you will need, so you will not use all of them.

Causes: List A

- 1 Liz's parents used the little money they had to buy drugs.
- 2 Liz was often bullied by other students.
- 3 Liz attended day and night classes.
- 4 Liz found out about the *New York Times* scholarship.
- 5 Liz founded a company called *Manifest Living*.

Effects: List B

- A Liz's mentor took her and a group of students to visit Harvard University.
- B Liz and her sister often had nothing to eat.
- C Liz pledged to become a straight-A student.
- D Liz provides workshops to empower adults to have better lives.
- E Liz was able to complete one year's high school work in one term.
- F Liz had to leave the university to take care of her sick father.
- G Liz ended up quitting school at a young age.
- H Liz was able to get into Harvard University.

QUESTIONS 6–9

Do the following statements agree with the information given in the Reading Passage?

In boxes 6–9 on your answer sheet write

⁴ **memoirs** a biography

TRUE	<i>if the statement agrees with the information</i>
FALSE	<i>if the statement contradicts the information</i>
NOT GIVEN	<i>if there is no information on this</i>

- 6 Liz was able to move into a homeless shelter after her mother passed away.
- 7 Liz was taken to see Harvard University by a teacher who served as her mentor.
- 8 Liz thinks that if her parents had been more intelligent, they could have avoided drugs.
- 9 Liz's father passed away in 2006.

QUESTIONS 10–12

Complete the summary of the reading. Choose ONE word from the Reading Passage for each blank.

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. After her mother died and her father went to a shelter, Liz was (10)_____ for a while, but one day she decided that she had to make her own life better. She went back to school, studied hard, and graduated from high school two years later. A teacher who had served as Liz's (11)_____ suggested that she apply to Harvard University, and Liz received a *New York Times* scholarship to study there. Since graduating, Liz has formed a company called *Manifest Living*, giving workshops to (12)_____ adults, and inspirational speeches to teenagers.

QUESTIONS 13–15

Choose the correct letter, A, B, C or D. Write your answers in boxes 13–15 on your answer sheet.

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

- 14 When Liz first saw Harvard University, she
 - A was studying there on a *New York Times* scholarship.
 - B was taken by her mentor, who taught at the university.
 - C was unable to go inside and look at the campus.
 - D just stood there and thought about how beautiful it was.

- 15 Each of the following things is true about Liz's life after university EXCEPT
 - A she has met and given speeches with many celebrities.
 - B she has founded her own company.
 - C she lets her Harvard education and clean appearance hide her past hardships.

D she has written a book of her memoirs.