

TEXT BOOKLET

Cambridge English Skills Test: General

Reading

Sample Test

Access Arrangements Version

SUITABLE FOR VISUALLY IMPAIRED CANDIDATES

PART 4

TEXT FOR QUESTIONS 8 – 12

LUCY BROOKS – PIANO PLAYER

I've played the piano and violin since I was 3. Now I'm studying at music college, and some months ago I took part in a national piano competition. My teachers had kept suggesting I should enter, but I wasn't sure – I was worried I'd be too nervous. However, I was able to play plenty of complicated piano pieces, so I felt I'd probably be as good as some of the other competitors, and decided to give it a try. But no-one was more surprised than me when I eventually reached the final!

To be honest, I can't remember that day very clearly because I hadn't slept well the night before. I'd set my alarm so that I wouldn't arrive at the concert hall late. My sisters planned to listen to it on the radio at home, but my parents were there in the hall. Suddenly it was my turn! As usual, the moment I went on stage and began playing, all I thought about was the music, not who was watching. In fact, I hardly even noticed the full orchestra performing with me.

Then the results were announced – and I'd won! We were presented with our prizes, and I had to make a speech. I hadn't prepared anything, but I managed to say quite a lot, luckily. However, the real high point came when the conductor brought a woman over to say

hello. I didn't recognise her initially, but when he said her name, I realized I'd seen her on TV playing in concerts all over the world. Anyway, it all felt like a huge achievement, and my teacher said I'd done brilliantly.

Life wasn't quite the same after the competition was over, though. Plenty of students at my college had won big competitions, so I wasn't considered particularly special there. But the competition made me think about where I was going next, and that if I was going to carry on playing the piano and being successful, as I hoped, then there would be plenty more studying ahead.

Anyway, I'm hoping something good will come from my win. For example, it's difficult for young people to get music lessons where I live, and I've met talented teenagers who can play any type of music from classical to jazz, but can't get proper training. So, it'd be great if publicity from the competition could help to change that. I've also written piano music especially for teenagers who are learning – that might encourage them to practise more!

PART 6

TEXT FOR QUESTIONS 15 – 19

HOW DO YOU KNOW IF SOMETHING IS WET?

Do your hands feel wet when you're washing them under running water? It seems like a silly question. But in fact humans cannot sense water on their skin – at least not technically, because our bodies don't have sensors used for the sole purpose of detecting liquids. Rather, we rely on a combination of other sensors to inform us when something's wet.

In the human body, a network of specialised neurons (cells in the brain and nerves) processes everything we touch by sending information from the skin to the brain. (15) _____ What humans lack, however, is 'hygroreceptors'. These are neurons used specifically to detect water or changes in moisture levels in an environment. Scientists have discovered that several animal species, including cockroaches and bees, have these on their antennae, the two long, hair-like 'feelers' on their heads. (16) _____ These are based on sensory input from our immediate surroundings.

We certainly use sight and touch to identify wetness: we see flowing water and feel it hitting us during a shower, for example. But many biologists in this field think temperature is the most important cue we use to sense water through the skin. (17) _____ One expert who has

gathered much of it is Davide Filingeri, a British physiologist whose team is pioneering research in this area. To test our ability to detect wetness, his researchers covered the eyes of nine individuals, then touched their arms with dry probes chilled to a range of cold temperatures. Most participants perceived the probes as wet if they were around 0 degrees Celsius. (18) _____ We do indeed rely on temperature to detect whether something is moist.

Filingeri provides a possible explanation for this merging of sensations. 'If you've got some moisture on the skin, chances are that it's going to evaporate from the skin and it's going to cool you.' (19) _____ That is, people learnt to perceive coolness and wetness as the same sensation.

So the next time you're finding it difficult to tell if your laundry on the line outside is dry when it also feels cold, you'll know why!

BLANK PAGE