

Reading and Use of English Part 7 Gapped text

You are going to read an extract from a newspaper article. Six paragraphs have been removed from the extract. Choose from the paragraphs A–G the one which fits each gap (1–6). There is one extra paragraph which you do not need to use.


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LEARNING TO LIVE with FACE-BLINDNESS

Sunday morning. I walk down to the beach with the dog. I'm already on high alert. It's the moment in the week when people are most likely to be wandering along the seafront, feeling chatty. I should have gone to the woods today.

1

'Hi!' I say, as warmly as possible. 'How are you?' This can sometimes elicit clues. Not today. The dog pulls in the direction of the sea. 'Looks like she's desperate to get going!' I say, laughing. 'So sorry! Lovely to see you!' And I'm off before this woman, whoever she is, can think about joining me.

2

It's not just that faces don't stick in my mind; I seem to only be able to perceive them in fragments that won't piece together as a whole. I couldn't pick out my own son from all the other little blond boys at nursery, and still now in the playground I often have to ask other parents if they can spot him. If I know them well, I can explain. If I don't, I have an armoury of excuses. He moves too fast! He must have been hiding!

3

At least I knew what it was by then. I only learnt the term in my mid-30s, when I read a tweet by somebody explaining her own face-blindness. It was a heart-stopping moment for me; a spark of grateful recognition. 'Is that an actual thing?' I replied. 'I'm not just a terrible person?'

4

Take my former colleague Carolyn, for example. Her ability to recognise people seems even more limited than mine. When she sought a formal diagnosis in the hope of making her working life easier, she discovered that her disorientation extended to places and shapes too.

5

However, another face-blind friend would love to find a cure. 'I'm an extrovert. I need people,' she says. 'Face-blindness is a terrible blight on that. I've offended too many people by walking past them in the street, and I've spent too many parties thinking I don't know anyone when I know plenty of people.'

6

Despite my prosopagnosia, I recognise my loved ones just as intensely as a person who could bring their faces easily to mind. My sense of connection is multi-faceted, engaging all my senses, and it's full of wonder, because each time I look at them, I am seeing something new. I know them no less deeply. I just find my home in a different way.





A As for me, I've never bothered with a diagnosis. There's no treatment and no cure. Even if there were, I'm not sure I'd take it. Strange as it seems, my face-blindness feels innate to me. Carolyn agrees with me. 'I don't know if I enjoy being face-blind; I just know that I've created a way of understanding it as part of the way I navigate life,' she says. 'To change that would be like suddenly having a different name.'

B It is a shameful thing for a mother not to recognise her son, but then again I could sniff him out blindfolded in a crowd: his voice, the way he walks, the perpetual motion of his face. This is how I remember people. I also store certain people in words. There was a man at my last workplace whose moustache grew outwards. I always recognised him, while routinely blanking the members of my team.

C I cross the road and hear, 'Katherine! Hello!' I wonder if I can get away with pretending I didn't notice, but this woman is determined. She crosses the road, waving. Her face is plain, unremarkable. I have no idea who she is, but she knows me.

D I tell people about it on our first meeting, and the way they respond reveals a lot. Some are touchingly helpful – one friend always finds a way to shoe-horn her name into the first sentence while I orient myself – but I'm surprised at the number of people who don't think I'll be blind to their face, uniquely.

E Research into prosopagnosia, to give it its official name, is in its infancy, but we know that face recognition is dependent on a network of brain regions across the right and left hemispheres. There is so much that can disrupt these connections, and so it's likely that there are multiple ways of being face-blind.

F Perhaps that's why I'm more accepting of my own face-blindness – it's the perfect complement to my introversion, to my sense that I don't really want to socialise anyway. I'm best off avoiding busy rooms, because they exhaust me, and my prosopagnosia relieves me of having to process all those different personalities.

G I didn't always know I was face-blind. I grew up thinking that I just didn't remember people. This, as a friend once told me, seems a lot like arrogance – an aloof lack of interest in others. But that's not how it feels on the inside.

Don't forget!

- Use a process of elimination: start with the easiest gaps and leave the most difficult ones till last.
- In most cases, there will be clear links between paragraphs. However, there may be one or two examples where there are no such links. In such cases, instead of finding one paragraph that fits perfectly, you should eliminate all the paragraphs that clearly don't fit. Hopefully, there'll be only one left.
- Look out for the names of people, technical names and so on, which are used several times in the text. Work out which of those examples introduces the name and which examples expect the reader to already know it. This will tell you which mention comes first in the text.
- Check the extra paragraph carefully. Think about why it doesn't fit anywhere in the text.

