



Extra training

Reading Task 121

Read the text and choose the correct answer (1, 2, 3 or 4) to answer the questions.

Every single night of the year, around 1,200 people sleep rough on hard benches and in grubby doorways on the streets of various English cities. Jasmine, twenty-two, is one of them. At first, huddled in a door entrance asking passers-by for money, she is reluctant to open up, but then she begins to talk. This is her story ...

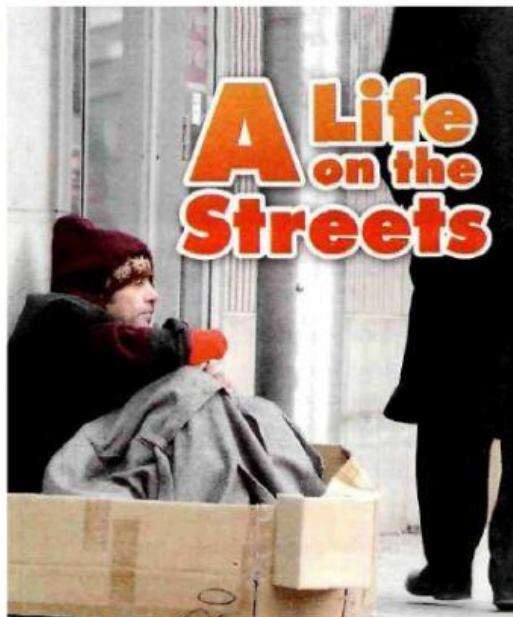
"I've been living on the streets ever since I was sixteen years old, when I ran away from my foster home. My parents died when I was very young so I went into foster care. It wasn't so bad but I wanted to make it on my own, I stayed on friends' couches at first, but eventually their parents grew tired of having me around. So, I caught a train to London, thinking that it would be easier to survive in the big city. How wrong could I be! I tried to find a job but no one would take me on without a fixed address. I slept in a cheap B&B for a few nights, but then my money ran out and I spent my first night in a sleeping bag on a park bench. I'll never forget how alone I felt that night. I lay awake, terrified and shivering with cold.

Living rough, you sort of go back and forth between temporary accommodation and the street. I spend the odd night in a hostel for homeless people, and there are loads of squats around the city centre too. These are usually in abandoned houses, empty office buildings, disused warehouses, places like that. Usually, you share a cramped little room with around fifteen others. Some of these people are drug addicts or alcoholics, and usually the room's filthy and there's no running water or electricity. But at least it's a roof over your head, which can mean the difference between life or death when there are sub-zero temperatures outside. On the streets, the cold eats into your bones. I have my favourite doorways and I try to stick to busy, well-lit streets. Sometimes traffic fumes almost choke me, the noise is deafening and there's no privacy whatsoever. But that's a small price to pay for safety...

So how do I survive? Well, the government gives people like me money, but it's barely enough to eat, I just about make ends meet by begging, selling *The Big Issue** ... whatever I can really. I hate asking for money from people. Some take pity on me and toss me a few coins or buy me a sandwich or a hot drink. But most just rush past me and avoid looking me in the eye. They just want to get back to their posh houses in the suburbs, you know. Basically, you lose your identity, your dignity, everything, on the streets. It's so boring not having a job, having nothing to do during the day, until one of the soup kitchens opens in the evening. It destroys your soul.

I don't know what the future holds. Homelessness is a vicious circle that is very difficult to break out of it's very hard to get work, because no one takes you seriously, and then you lose your confidence and your self-esteem and it becomes even harder. I'm on a council waiting list for a flat though. I want nothing more than to have a place of my own one day. A place that I can call home."

*a magazine sold by homeless people in the UK.



1. Jasmine left home because _____

1. it was bad,
2. she wanted to be independent.
3. her parents died.
4. she wanted to live with her friends.

2. She moved to London because she thought _____

1. life would be easier there.
2. her friends didn't want her any more.
3. she would make new friends there.
4. she would get a job there.

3. She spent the first few nights _____

1. on a park bench.
2. at a fixed address,
3. on the street.
4. in a B&B.

4. The buildings she occasionally stays in _____

1. have plenty of room for the homeless.
2. can be colder than the streets.
3. are not used any more.
4. are used by others during the day.

5. Jasmine thinks the worst thing about being homeless is _____

1. having nothing to do.
2. the cold weather.
3. the noise from the traffic.
4. asking for money from strangers.

6. More than anything, Jasmine wants _____

1. a job.
2. her own home.
3. her self-confidence back.
4. to be taken seriously.

