READING

Read the article and tick A, B, or C.

We all know that men and women have their differences. But do they really think differently? Some people might argue that they don’t, but I disagree. In my opinion, men and women still behave in the same way that they were designed to centuries ago. We have different interests, different ways of speaking, of showing how we feel, and of coping with stressful situations.

In today’s society, where the sexes are considered to be equal, we sometimes forget how different we are. This can have a negative effect on our relationships. We often become angry or frustrated with the opposite sex because we expect them to behave and communicate like we do.

So why does a man behave as he does? There is evidence to suggest that men were programmed with the instinct to hunt silently for animals. They had to be able to focus their attention on one thing. This might explain why it’s so difficult to have a conversation with a man when he’s watching TV! And also why he’s so good at reading maps and giving directions.

Why does a woman act the way she does? Women are usually very good at multi-tasking (doing more than one job at once), but often find it harder than men to concentrate fully on one thing. In the past, women would have worked in groups, which required a lot of communication, so they’re generally more talkative and sensitive to other people’s feelings. A woman can return from a party knowing everything about everyone, but a man will probably have discussed less personal topics like football.

Research has shown that men and women use different parts of their brains for language. Women usually score higher in writing tests. Men are seven times more likely to score in the top 5% in scientific exams. They’re often talented at problem-solving and making quick decisions, whilst women are good at organization, comforting, and giving advice.

Of course, women still do dangerous sports, and men can multi-task without any problem after a strong cup of coffee! I’m not saying that women and men are not equal; it’s just that there are some natural differences – and that’s fantastic! We should appreciate and accept them as being what makes us special.

**2**

READING

Read the article and tick A, B, or C.

We interviewed three people about how family and friends have affected their personalities.

**Maria Stanovich**

I’ve always had a strong relationship with my family. An important influence on my personality was my grandmother, Hannah. She was born in 1930 into a poor family with seven children – they had to take very good care of each other in order to survive. Growing up in such difficult conditions had a positive effect on her, teaching her to share everything, be honest, helpful, hard-working, and affectionate. My grandmother taught me all these things, making me realize that family is more important than material possessions.

**Katie Dupont**

The people around you have the greatest influence on your life – they affect the way you behave and think. As soon as Rob and I met, we connected. When Rob was young, his father died in a motorcycle accident. Being brought up as an only child by a single parent made him independent and ambitious. He left home at 16, and since then has lived in different places and had various jobs. He’s taught me that it’s important to find time for friends and family and to do what makes you happy. He always has fun, trying new things, keeping his mind and body healthy, and he still works hard to achieve his goals. I greatly admire Rob and I hope that one day I can look at life in the way that he does.

**Jed Mitchell**

I spent many hours as a child listening to my uncle Wilson’s stories. He was the youngest of 11 children whose family lived in a fishing town in Scotland. Life was hard and with so many mouths to feed, the children began working from an early age. At just 14, my uncle began his first job as a fisherman. That was the beginning of his adventures – he travelled and worked in Alaska, South-East Asia, India, and Africa. He educated himself, learnt to be a chef, an engineer, a farmer, and photographer. Uncle Wilson taught me that life is special and that you should take every opportunity that you can to fill it with adventure.

3

READING

Read the article and tick A, B, or C.

The best public transport system in the world.

Curitiba in Brazil is no ordinary city; it has the best public transport system in the world. The mayor, Jaime Lerner, along with the council, began developing the world-famous system in 1971.

Mr Lerner had grown up in Curitiba and knew that the street was an important part of city life for the residents. He made many of the streets into pedestrian areas, with no access for cars. The council put in flowers, lights, and kiosks where people could sell food and other products. To encourage shoppers to use the new areas, the mayor gave away free paper so that local children could paint pictures in the street. Cyclists also benefit from 150km of cycle lanes, which follow old river valleys and railway tracks around the city.

Mr Lerner realized that to increase the development and growth of the city in the future, the public transport system also had to improve. Buses were chosen as the main transport because it was the cheapest. Curitiba’s transport system now consists of over 300 routes that use around 1,900 buses to carry approximately 1.9 million passengers every day. Approximately 60km of the roads are for buses only, so traffic jams are unusual. Bus travel is faster and more convenient than using private cars. The city now uses 30% less fuel than other large cities in Brazil and people spend only about 10% of their yearly salaries on transport costs.

Some of the buses are able to carry 170–270 passengers. School buses are yellow, and buses for disabled people are blue. They are designed with three doors – two exits and one entrance – so that people can get on and off quickly. Bus stations provide free maps and facilities to help parents with young children and people carrying heavy bags to board the buses easily. Passengers buy a ticket at the office in advance and then wait for their bus, like in an underground station.

Because of the success of Curitiba’s public transport system, Jaime Lerner now offers advice to city councils around the world on how they can solve their cities’ transport problems.

4

Read the article and tick A, B, or C.

Have you ever thought about changing your appearance? Most of us have complained about having a bad hair day or looking hideous in a photo. But experts say that becoming too obsessed about our appearance can be bad for our health. Psychologist Sue Johnston explains:

‘Of course it’s natural for people to want to change the way they look – have a new haircut, buy something nice to wear to a party or make a good first impression at an interview, and many women don’t like to be seen without their make-up.

But the real problems start when people feel that there’s something they can’t change that makes them feel unattractive. It may be sticking-out ears, an unusually-shaped nose, or perhaps they are overweight. In serious cases this small thing can often take over their lives completely, making them feel anxious about going out in public and making them depressed. In 2006 we did a Body Image Survey to learn more about how people gain confidence in themselves. Below are a few suggestions on how to feel good about yourself.

1 Think about your skills and talents. For example, focus on success at work, participating in sports, and friendships. Once you realize that you can achieve your goals and have a happy, full life, appearance will seem less important. If you do have negative feelings about your appearance, try to do something positive like buying some new clothes or taking up a new hobby.

2 Learn to accept that you are unique. There’s no one else in the world like you and that makes you very special. Love the unusual things about yourself. If you hate your red hair because it’s so different, then teach yourself to think about it as beautiful and exotic!

3 Forget about what you can’t control. There’s one simple rule: be realistic, work on improving what you can change, and don’t spend time worrying about anything else.

4 Stop buying fashion magazines and comparing yourself to the models. This has a very negative effect. Remember – they don’t look that good without a personal hairstylist, make-up artist and computer-generated photography!

5 Finally, if you still feel depressed about the way you look, consider getting professional advice.’

**5 READING**

**Read the article and tick A, B, or C.**

**How green is your house?**

As the UK’s cities expand rapidly, problems are being caused for councils who have to meet the demand for housing. In addition to this, energy prices and pollution levels continue to increase.

A solution has been developed by the Peabody Trust who have worked with environmental experts to build the Beddington Zero Energy housing development (BedZED) in Sutton, England.

This unique development is an environmentally-friendly community of a hundred homes including gardens, offices, and childcare facilities with plenty of surrounding green areas. BedZED’s designers have created an attractive, affordable, urban village whose unique features benefit instead of harm the local community and environment. BedZED is a ‘zero energy’ development – no fossil fuels (coal and gas) are used and homes do not waste energy. Building materials are mostly natural, renewable or recycled. Houses face the south so that they get plenty of sunlight and their roofs are also fitted with solar panels, which change the sun’s energy into electricity. The windows consist of three layers of glass to stop heat from escaping. The homes are also fitted with the most modern energy-saving appliances. It is estimated that families’ electricity bills could be reduced by up to 60% whilst heating bills could be reduced by as much as 90%.

Developers hope to achieve a 50% reduction in fossil-fuel use by residents’ cars over the next decade by reducing the need to travel. Some residents will have the opportunity to work within walking distance of their homes. The Peabody Trust also aim to set up Internet shopping so that food can be delivered by local supermarkets.

As the need for environmentally-friendly, low-energy housing increases, BedZED may change from being a unique model, to a model for all future houses.

6 READING

Read the article and tick A, B, or C.

How I got my dream job

Are you still looking for your dream job? Don’t give up. Here’s how three people achieved their goals.

**Mario Mendes, 29**

I’m doing something I really enjoy. I’m part of a team that develops new technologies. I work with intelligent, interesting people and occasionally get to travel abroad. I won’t pretend it was easy getting my dream job, but it was worth the effort. My advice? Decide exactly what your dream job is and what it involves. Learn about the job. Make contact with companies that could offer your chosen career. Make sure they know your strengths. You may just get that dream job.

**Andy Collins, 46**

As a student, I earned $295 a week in cash working in a beach café. At the time, it was my dream job! Later I became a chef. It was hard work, I was often in a hot kitchen for twelve hours a day, six days a week. But you have to know the meaning of hard work if you want to achieve your goals. I now own five restaurants around the U.S. My best advice is to find out what your skills and talents are. Talent is something you’re born with. Skills are something you’ve learned to do. People like doing things that come naturally to them, so work and enjoy!

**Sarah Cooper, 38**

I’d been working as a secretary for three years when I decided to change my career. My work was often boring and always busy. I started studying to become a teacher. It certainly wasn’t easy; I continued working full-time to pay for my training at night school. I was exhausted most of the time, but after two years, I finally got my qualifications and resigned. I’m now a primary school teacher and it’s as good as I imagined. So don’t wait! Write a list of the things that are stopping you from getting your dream job. Make a plan to deal with each thing. There’s always an answer.

**7**

READING

Read the article and tick A, B, or C.

Shopping in Hong Kong

Ultra-modern, bustling Hong Kong is one of the world’s best shopping cities, an essential visit for all shopaholics searching for a bargain. There are several areas to choose from. The urban district of Kowloon, meaning ‘Nine Dragons’, attracts thousands of tourists every year. A popular first stop here is the modern shopping district, Tsim Tsa Tsui. However, if you prefer to absorb the atmosphere of more traditional markets then the Yau Ma Tei and Mong Kok districts are probably more your style.

A great place to explore at night is Nathan Road and the surrounding streets, which are filled with flashing neon signs. You can buy almost anything here. Look out for bargains on electrical goods and jewellery.

It’s possible to buy traditional items in Hong Kong. You can find wedding clothes on Shanghai Street and shops on Ning Po Street sell the coloured paper models of houses, cars, and bank notes that are burnt at funerals (when a person dies) so that they’re wealthy in the after-life.

Further along Shanghai Street is the popular night market. It’s full of brightly coloured lights and wonderful cooking smells. Watch the fortune-tellers whose trained birds choose pieces of paper to predict a person’s future, and eat delicious noodles, seafood, and other late-night snacks at the inexpensive stalls.

Mong Kok is the place where the famous criminals ‘triad gangs’ are based. As a result most tourists avoid this area, so it remains mainly Chinese. There are many traditional shops, food stalls and markets. This is an excellent place to try local foods, which have not been changed to suit tourists’ tastes as they often have in more popular tourist areas. It’s unlikely to be dangerous for foreigners, so if you’d like to see some of the more unspoilt areas of Hong Kong, Mong Kok is definitely worth exploring.

One thing is certain about a shopping trip to Hong Kong – you’ll leave with a lot less money than you arrived with, and a much heavier suitcase!

8

READING

Read the article and tick A, B, or C.

30 days on the minimum wage

Could you change your life in just 30 days? That’s the question documentary maker Morgan Spurlock asked when he filmed his new Channel 4 TV series, *30 Days*. Martin Grady reviews the first programme of the series, *30 Days on the Minimum Wage\**.

Spurlock, who is most famous for *Supersize Me,* his film about the dangers of eating junk food, became frustrated that few people know about poverty in America. He and his fiancée Alex decided to film an experiment – they’d give up their jobs for a month and try to live on the minimum wage. The resulting documentary, which was filmed reality-show-style using a handheld camera, contains a powerful, social message about the growing gap between rich and poor in the USA.

The couple travel to Columbus, Ohio, one of the poorest cities in the USA. The only apartment that they can afford to rent is filthy, in a dangerous area, and has no heating or furniture. Alex begins working as a dishwasher, whilst Morgan does building work with no safety equipment. Neither of them earns more than the minimum wage.

It’s difficult to watch Morgan and Alex struggling in such terrible conditions. A charity gives them some furniture for free, but they have to live without heating, TV and telephone. They’re exhausted and freezing all the time and begin to argue about money. The couple interview people in the same situation and listen to their stories. It’s difficult to imagine, but these people have lived on the minimum wage for decades and many have children.

When Alex becomes ill and Morgan badly injures his wrist, they go to a free clinic for the poor, but can’t see a doctor because of long queues. People there say that without free medical care they’d die.

After thirty days, the experiment has failed. They have spent over $1,000 more than they have earned. The couple are shocked – they can go back to their comfortable life in New York, but what if they couldn’t? How would they continue to survive?

\*The minimum wage in the US today is $5.15 per hour.

**9 READING**

**Read the article and tick A, B, or C.**

**Keep it in the family**

Wouldn’t it be good to make your own money? Or would it? Well, a family in East London did just that and found out that they had to pay a high price for it! It sounds like a dream – printing millions of £20 and €50 notes. No need to ever go to a bank again! Unfortunately, for this particular family the dream has ended in prison sentences for all of them.

This illegal operation was the biggest that the police have ever seen in the UK. Over 14 million pounds’ worth of fake bank notes have been recovered and they think that this ‘family business’ was producing over 66% of all fake bank notes in the UK. There could be many, many more. Only the family know how many notes are still out there and they’re not going to tell anyone. It was a very large, complicated, and successful business!

The public have become interested in this story because of the family aspect. Four generations of the same family were part of the operation. The ages ranged from 23 to 85 and included grandchildren, parents, grandparents and even a great-grandmother! The great-grandmother, who was 85, lived in special accommodation for older people and the police found £22,000 of notes in a plastic bag on top of her kitchen cupboard, ready to be distributed!

This forgery business was very well organized. It was run like a real business and each person had his / her place. They used very high-tech equipment to print and cut the fake notes and they had 20 different sites to keep the money, such as the great-grandmother’s kitchen. The police watched the operation secretly for over four months before they arrested the gang.

At the trial the judge told the public that they shouldn’t feel sorry for people like this. They are organized criminals and they are stealing from everyone and hurting the economy. However, a lot of people have a secret admiration for the family. Is this a worrying fact or is it human nature? I wonder.