

Task 1 – Long reading: Birth order

Level: ISE III

Focus: Task 1 – Long reading

Aims: To develop reading strategies by reading a short article about the impact of birth order on a child's development and answering three sets of questions

Objectives: To scan an article for gist, to skim an article and answer True/False questions and to skim an article to complete sentences with information from the text

Skill: Skimming and scanning

Subject area: Roles in the family – Birth order

Language functions: Developing and justifying an argument, evaluating options, and summarising

Lexis: Lexis related to roles in the family

Materials needed: One student worksheet per student and dictionaries

Timing: 1 hour

Preparation

Print or copy one worksheet per student.

In class

1. Explain to the class that they will be doing a reading activity and that this will help them to prepare for task 1 of the ISE III Reading & Writing exam.
2. Write the following three questions on the board and ask students to discuss them in pairs. When they have finished, carry out group feedback.
 - ▶ **Do you have any siblings?**
 - ▶ **How would people typically describe the eldest child, the middle child and the youngest child of a family?**
 - ▶ **Do you believe that birth order plays an important role in a child's development?**
3. Give each student one worksheet and ask them to carry out task A. Tell them that the eight words or phrases in the box are in a text on birth order. Tell the students to write the correct word or phrase next to the definition. Ask them to work alone first and tell them they can use a dictionary. Then tell them to compare their answers with their partner. Carry out feedback as a group and write the answers on the board. Ask one or more concept-check questions to check if students have understood the words. (Some examples concept-check questions: 'Can you give an example of a household chore?', 'If there are subtle differences between two things, is it easy or difficult to see them?')
4. Tell the class they are going to read about the impact of birth order on a child's development. Ask the students to complete task B. Tell them to read the text quickly and choose the best summary from the descriptions provided. Ask students to compare their answers in pairs and then give feedback as a group.
5. Write 'reading for gist' and 'skimming' on the board. Tell the students that task B asked them to read the text for gist or general understanding without the need to concentrate on all the details. Tell the students that this reading skill is also called skimming.
6. Ask students to read the texts again and complete task C. Ask the students to decide whether each statement is true or false. Ask students to compare answers in pairs and then give feedback as a group.
7. Write 'reading for detail' and 'scanning' on the board. Elicit from the students the difference between this reading task and task B.
8. Ask the students to carry out task D. Tell them to complete the sentences with information from the text. Ask them to compare answers with a partner. Carry out feedback as a group.
9. Tell the students that task D tested their understanding of specific information at word and sentence level. Elicit that this requires scanning the text, not skimming.

Preparation activities for ISE III Reading & Writing

Extension activity

1. Write the following two sentence starters on the whiteboard:

- ▶ **What surprised me most was ...**
- ▶ **I don't really think this is true because ...**

Ask students, in pairs, to discuss their opinion about what they have read and tell them to start the discussion with one of the sentence starters. Carry out feedback as a group.

2. Students who finish the tasks early can write new questions about the text. Then they ask another student the questions.

Further support activity

1. Tell the students finding the task difficult that they can use a dictionary and look up unknown words while reading the text.
2. Ask the students finding the task difficult to work with another student when comparing answers after each reading task.

Homework

Ask the students to interview someone about whether they think birth order matters. Ask the students to report back in the next class.



Student worksheet: Birth order

Task A – Vocabulary

Choose a word or phrase from the box and write it next to the correct definition below.

distort (verb)	prone to error	notorious (adjective)
subtle (adjective)	rebel against (verb + preposition)	chores (noun, plural)
syndrome (noun)	manipulate (verb)	

1. Famous but for a negative reason
2. To give a false meaning to
3. To influence someone skilfully often to get something done for your own benefit
4. Difficult to understand because of fine differences
5. Likely to be wrong
6. The everyday work around the house
7. Resist something or someone
8. A pattern of behaviour

Task B

Read the text below quickly. Choose the best summary of the text from the descriptions below.

1. Middle child syndrome.
2. Birth order has a significant impact on a child's development.
3. Birth order plays only a minor part in the development of a child.

Reading text

JUST LET YOUR CHILDREN BE THEMSELVES

A recent study on the impact of birth order suggests that firstborns have a higher IQ. The problem is that studies such as this distort the bigger picture by confirming birth order stereotypes.

The study was conducted in Norway and showed that the eldest children had a slightly higher IQ on average than their younger siblings. Nobody can explain the results of the study. It has been suggested that the eldest children benefit from more attention before the arrival of their siblings. Another theory is that the eldest children have more responsibility which helps them to develop their brain.

It is a good idea though to look at the study in more detail before blindly applying its results to your own family. The subjects of the study were all male, the area was limited to Norway and IQ test results are notoriously prone to error. Important to note is that the averages for both older and younger children were well within the normal range so it is probably not necessary to start worrying.

It is not advisable to pay too much attention to the rather subtle impact birth order has on the development of your child. There are simply too many contributing factors from genes to life in the womb.

Preparation activities for ISE III Reading & Writing

Firstborns

The eldest children are often said to possess leadership skills such as organising and logical thinking, and to be better at dealing with adults. They often have to take more responsibility but it is not ideal to put more pressure on them by expecting them to behave as a parent to their younger siblings. For parents it is probably better not to pay too much attention to this theory as it may lead to unrealistic expectations.

Middle children

Popular wisdom also has it that middle children are very diplomatic and sociable. In order to stand out they may rebel against their parents. This is often referred to as middle child syndrome. What parents could do to prevent this is to give the middle child the responsibility that normally would be given to the eldest child.

Last children

It is commonly claimed that last-borns are spoiled and good at manipulating others to get things done for them. The youngest may appear cute compared to their older siblings but they obviously need to be shown limitations. Parents should give them their share of chores.

Task C

Read the text again. Are the statements true or false?

1. A Norwegian study suggests that the eldest children in a family have a higher IQ.
2. Results of IQ tests are normally highly reliable.
3. The difference in IQ between the oldest and youngest children is significant.
4. The author suggests giving the eldest child a taste of what it is to have the responsibility of an adult.
5. When middle children feel left out, they may seek attention through defiant behaviour.
6. The youngest children often know naturally what the limits of acceptable behaviour are.

Task D

Complete the sentences with one or two words from the text.

1. It is important to look at the context in which a study took place because it is easy to the results and draw the wrong conclusions.
2. Having more may help develop the mind.
3. Birth order theories may result in of the parents in their firstborn children.
4. Middle children are always caught in the middle which means they may have developed the skill to be more
5. Youngest children are often labelled as

Answers: Birth order

Task A

1. notorious
2. distort
3. manipulate
4. subtle
5. prone to error
6. chores
7. rebel against
8. syndrome

Task B

3. Birth order plays only a minor part in the development of a child.

Task C

1. True
2. False
3. False
4. False
5. True
6. False

Task D

1. Distort
2. Responsibility
3. Unrealistic expectations
4. Diplomatic
5. Spoiled/cute