

Designer babies row in Britain (Fri 25 Mar, 2005)

WARM-UPS

CHAT: Talk in pairs or groups about babies / designer babies / natural selection / Frankenstein / boys / girls / hereditary diseases / family planning / ...Change topic / partner frequently to increase conversation.

BABY BRAINSTORM: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with the word 'baby'. Share your words with your partner / group and talk about them.

BOYS & GIRLS: Which are better? With your partner / group, write down five reasons why boys are better, and five reasons why girls are better. Discuss each of these reasons. Change partners / groups and discuss further.

ME AS A BOY / GIRL: Talk with your partner about the good and bad things you experienced growing up as a boy / girl. Were you jealous of a brother or sister? Did everyone get treated fairly? Would you like to have been born a different sex? Were you a typical boy/girl? Did you do all the "boys/girls" things? ...

OPINIONS: Talk about these with your partner.

- a. If the science is available, there is nothing wrong with sex selection.
- b. Society already accepts IVF (in vitro fertilization). Sex selection is the same.
- c. Sex selection treats children like consumer products or fashion items.
- d. We must never interfere with God's work. Creation is sacred.
- e. Sounds fun.
- f. It'd help couples who already have three boys, or five girls.
- g. It's useful because you can get the babies bedroom ready and buy lots of pink or blue clothes.
- h. Sex selection takes away the fun of not knowing your child's sex. That's a special surprise.
- i. If there's a good chance a girl might get the same disease from her mother, then isn't it better to choose a boy?
- j. This is the first step along the road to choosing hair colour and intelligence - risky.

PRE-READING IDEAS

WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... of the words 'one' and 'day'.

TRUE FALSE: Guess whether the following statements about the article are true or false:

- a. British parents can choose the sex of their children. T / F
- b. A government report says parents should only have children in spring. T / F
- c. Everyone who created the report agreed with one another. T / F
- d. The British public is totally ready for sex selection. T / F
- e. A top doctor said sex selection would be disastrous for British society. T / F
- f. Many British couples want to choose the sex of their child. T / F
- g. There are medical reasons for parents choosing the sex of their child. T / F
- h. Getting the balance right between boys and girls in a family is important. T / F

SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article:

- | | |
|----------------|------------|
| (a) committee | sex |
| (b) gender | effect |
| (c) offspring | virtue |
| (d) blasted | inherited |
| (e) dignity | structure |
| (f) endorsed | think tank |
| (g) impact | damned |
| (h) fabric | issue |
| (i) hereditary | children |
| (j) question | supported |

PHRASE MATCH: Match the following phrases from the article:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------|
| (a) parents may one | eleven committee members |
| (b) select the gender of | of our society |
| (c) split | majority |
| (d) five of the | their offspring |
| (e) the dignity of | impact on British society |
| (f) slight | diseases |
| (g) would not have a negative | sure |
| (h) damage the fabric | day be able to |
| (i) hereditary | human life |
| (j) make | in opinion |

GAP FILL

Designer babies row in Britain

BNE: British parents may one day be able to choose the sex of their children. A report from a government science and technology _____ has recommended giving parents the right to select the _____ of their offspring. However, the politicians involved in creating the report were split in _____ over its recommendations, with five of the eleven committee members refusing to sign it. They _____ it, saying it was like “Frankenstein”. They added, "The report is completely wrong - it is so ridiculous you couldn't make it up." They also said it “_____ the dignity of human life”. Many politicians feel the British public is not yet ready to accept such interference in the process of creation.

opinion *ignores* *gender* *committee* *blasted*

The slight majority who _____ the report, including chairman Dr. Ian Gibson, said they saw little wrong with sex selection, and that it would not have a _____ impact on British society. Dr. Gibson said, “People will not go through IVF to choose the sex of their baby and even if they did, it would not ... damage the _____ of our society.” There are many medical reasons why parents might want to choose the sex of their child. One example is the various hereditary diseases that are more likely to be _____ on to a male or female baby. There is also the question of “sex selection for family _____”. Parents that already have three boys may want to make sure their next child is a girl.

fabric *endorsed* *negative* *passed* *balancing*

HOMEWORK

- 1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION:** Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google’s search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.
- 2. INTERNET:** Search the Internet and find information on designer babies. Share your findings with your class next lesson.
- 3. DESIGNER BABY:** Imagine you are boss of CREATE-A-KID, the world’s largest designer baby company. Create the choices / options available to parents for choosing the characteristics of their next child. Use these in your next class.
- 4. LETTER TO COMMITTEE:** Write a letter to the British committee telling them your feelings about their recommendations.

DISCUSSION:

- a. What was interesting in this article?
- b. Were you surprised by anything in this article?
- c. Do you agree with the report?
- d. What are the dangers of sex selection?
- e. Would you prefer a boy or a girl?
- f. How many kids are best?
- g. What do you think of babies?
- h. Are we entering the world of “Frankenstein” with sex selection?
- i. Would you like to choose the intelligence level of your children?
- j. Would you like to select an option that guarantees your children would be free from cancer?
- k. What would happen to society if most parents chose to have girls?
- l. Is the sex of a child something only God should decide?
- m. Would sex selection damage the fabric of society?
- n. Would a sex selection policy work in your country?
- o. Isn't sex selection the same as IVF?
- p. Isn't having a balanced family a great reason for sex selection?
- q. What did you like best about this discussion?
- r. Teacher / Student additional questions.

TEXT

Designer babies row in Britain

BNE: British parents may one day be able to choose the sex of their children. A report from a government science and technology **committee** has recommended giving parents the right to select the **gender** of their offspring. However, the politicians involved in creating the report were split in **opinion** over its recommendations, with five of the eleven committee members refusing to sign it. They **blasted** it, saying it was like “Frankenstein”. They added, “The report is completely wrong - it is so ridiculous you couldn't make it up.” They also said it “**ignores** the dignity of human life”. Many politicians feel the British public is not yet ready to accept such interference in the process of creation.

The slight majority who **endorsed** the report, including chairman Dr. Ian Gibson, said they saw little wrong with sex selection, and that it would not have a **negative** impact on British society. Dr. Gibson said, “People will not go through IVF to choose the sex of their baby and even if they did, it would not ... damage the **fabric** of our society.” There are many medical reasons why parents might want to choose the sex of their child. One example is the various hereditary diseases that are more likely to be **passed** on to a male or female baby. There is also the question of “sex selection for family **balancing**”. Parents that already have three boys may want to make sure their next child is a girl.