

## **Born to be brilliant**

1. The Yosuf's house is unlike any other house. In the sitting room, instead of a television, there is a blackboard on the wall. For two hours every day Mr Yosuf writes complex mathematical problems on the board. His daughter, Zuleika, copies them into an exercise book and solves them.

2. Zuleika is special. She's five years old, but instead of watching cartoons or playing video games, her favourite pastimes are solving equations and reading books. She already spends hours a day in a university library. Next year Zuleika will become Britain's youngest 'A' level student.

3. Not surprisingly, the Yosufs are a very clever family. Zuleika's two sisters and brother, aged 16, 14 and 12 are also good at Maths and are already at university. Her father, who specializes in Maths research, has taught them all. 'Zuleika is very competitive,' says her father. 'She sees her brother and sisters working every day and she can't wait to catch up with them. I remember teaching the others Maths when they were eight. Zuleika solves the same problems now, although she took up Maths much earlier. We could see she was interested in numbers at a much earlier age.'

4. So what's the secret of their success? When their first child arrived, Mr Yosuf and his wife made up their minds to teach all their children at home. They say that home tuition combined with love and understanding has helped their children to succeed. 'We've been patient and supportive, and they take pride in what they do,' says Mr Yosuf. 'Maybe Zuleika has a natural talent for Maths, but I believe given the right surroundings that any child could do well.'

5. Unfortunately, talented children like Zuleika are often pushed rather than encouraged by their parents. As a result, their abilities rarely develop beyond their teenage years. Tennis stars such as Tracey Austin, and the *Home Alone* film star Macaulay Culkin are good examples of this. There are some child prodigies who are capable of growing into talented adults, and a few who become geniuses. However, not all geniuses are brilliant youngsters. Einstein, for example, failed his exams at university and worked in an office before writing his theory of relativity.

6. One thing all child prodigies do have in common is complete dedication to and love of their subject. They spend many more hours working on it than the average child, and this extra effort is reflected in their achievements. It is not necessary to be extremely talented to be a child prodigy, but you do have to have a lot of motivation.

1. What is the difference between Zuleika and other five-year-olds?
  - A** She prefers watching education programs to cartoons on TV
  - B** She is so clever that she is doing a university course.
  - C** She can solve very difficult Maths problems.
  - D** She has already passed an 'A' level exam.
2. How is Zuleika different from her brother and sisters?
  - A** She enjoys taking part in competitions.
  - B** She began studying Maths when she was younger.
  - C** She has always been taught at home.
  - D** She is much more intelligent.
3. Mr Yosuf says that his children are successful because:
  - A** they decided that they wanted to be taught at home.
  - B** they have a natural talent for all kinds of subjects.
  - C** they understand the importance of a happy family background.
  - D** they have received the right kind of encouragement.
4. The writer mentions Einstein as someone who:
  - A** was pushed rather than encouraged as a child.
  - B** achieved great success early on in his life.
  - C** was not a child prodigy.
  - D** did not go to university.
5. What does 'this' refer to in paragraph 5?
  - A** the success children can achieve in later life
  - B** an ability which increases with age
  - C** being pushed by one's parents
  - D** the future for children like Zuleika
6. What do all children prodigies have in common?
  - A** They are extraordinarily talented.
  - B** Their success is much easier to achieve.
  - C** They realize that they are different from other people.
  - D** They work harder than most people.