

Unit 8: Exercise 2

With a long, complicated passage, always decide *why* you are reading, before you start to read in detail.

Read the information. Then look at the statements and the underlined key words. Match the paragraphs that contain the information you need with the statements.

With *Yes / No / Not Given* tasks, read the statements carefully. Look for key words, for example, names, places or dates, which will help you find the paragraph which contains the information you need.

Why siblings often have little in common

A According to popular theory, a person's birth order – whether they are the first, second or last child to be born in a family – has a large influence on determining their eventual personality. First-born children, it has been claimed, tend to be more dominant, perhaps going on to achieve more in life. Last-born children may become more self-centred and attached to their parents, tending to be 'always the baby' throughout their lives. Only children, who have neither brothers nor sisters, may become more self-confident due to the fact that they have their parents' undivided attention. This, however, may cause them to have difficulty in understanding others.

B Recent research, however, suggests that there is more to be discovered about sibling personalities. Dr Rhys Sheersmith, a child psychologist, raises the following issue. 'We know that birth order can affect personality, but what is also interesting is that two siblings brought up in exactly the same environment, by exactly the same parents, in more or less similar periods of time, may actually have completely different personalities. In fact, they may have very little in common. What we have found out is that one sibling may share a great deal more, in terms of personality, with another child from outside that family, who they never grew up with.'

C We would naturally expect children who were raised in the same household to have similar characteristics, but this is not the case. Dr Norman Kronstadt, another psychologist, claims that the adults that children are surrounded by as they are growing up may have a significant influence. 'In our research, we found that children are often assigned labels as they are growing up. It's the parents who do this, or sometimes the grandparents. For instance, one daughter may be labelled "the clever one" in the family. Her brother may be labelled "the difficult, naughty one". However, this has little to do, really, with how clever the girl is or how naughty the boy is. Compared with other children from other families, they might not be especially clever or naughty, but they will have been given these roles by the adults around them.'

D Child therapist Ben Williams agrees. 'The effect this has is significant. If a child believes he or she is "the clever one", or "the naughty one", or "the one who is good at sports", then they will make different choices in life. They will spend their time differently. They will choose to do or avoid doing certain things, because of what they believe their role to be. Over a period of years, naturally, their personalities will change to fit the role that their parents have given them. So, "the sporty one" will choose sports activities and get better at

them as time progresses. In contrast, “the naughty one” might believe that they aren’t really good at anything, and will make little effort to try hard at anything.’ This, more than anything else, might explain why two siblings from the same family go on to have such different personalities.

Paragraph A	Paragraph B	Paragraph C	Paragraph D
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1. <u>People with no siblings</u> may have both positive and negative characteristics.	
2. <u>Dr Rhys Sheersmith’s research</u> shows that children often make friends with other children, rather than with their own siblings.	
3. <u>Ben Williams</u> states that children’s personalities are fixed early, and stay the same throughout their childhood.	
4. <u>Norman Kronstadt</u> believes that the labels children have may not reflect their actual characteristics.	