

## 5 READING

- a Which do you think has more advantages, being an only child, or having brothers and sisters? Why?
- b Work in pairs. A read *The younger brother*, B read *The only child*.
- c Tell your partner about 1 and 2 below. Whose childhood sounds happier?
  - 1 other family members who are mentioned
  - 2 how the writer's experience as a child affects him/her now
- d Look at the **highlighted** words in the two texts. Try to work out their meaning from the context. Then match them with definitions 1–12.

- 1 *adj* ill
- 2 *it's no surprise that*
- 3 *noun* competition between two people
- 4 *noun* the time when you were a child
- 5 *noun* a meeting of people, e.g. family
- 6 *noun* people who are fully grown
- 7 *adj* knowing about or being conscious of sth
- 8 *noun* a school where children can live during the year
- 9 *verb* think that sb or sth is important
- 10 *verb* divided sth between two or more people
- 11 *verb* try to hurt sb else
- 12 *noun* a group of friends

### each other

When brothers and sisters get older they value **each other** more.

Use **each other** to talk about an action between two people or groups of people, e.g. *I don't get on very well with my dad – we don't understand each other.*

- e Talk to a partner. Do you have brothers and sisters, or are you an only child? Do you feel positive or negative about it?

## Younger brother or only child?

HOW WAS IT FOR YOU?

### THE YOUNGER BROTHER NOVELIST TIM LOTT

Rivalry between brothers is normal, but there was a special reason for the tension between us. I was very ill when I was born, and spent three months in hospital with my mother. My brother did not see her at all during that time, as he went to stay with an aunt. When our mother returned home, it was with a **sick** newborn baby who took all the attention. **No wonder** he hated me (although if you ask Jeff, he will say that he didn't – we remember things differently).

My brother and I were completely different. We **shared** the same bedroom, but he was tidy, and I was really untidy. He was responsible, I was rebellious. He was sensible, I was emotional. I haven't got any positive memories of our **childhood** together, though there must have been good moments. Jeff says we used to play Cowboys and Indians but I only remember him trying to suffocate me under the bedcovers.

My relationship with Jeff has influenced my attitude towards my own four daughters. If the girls **fight**, I always think that the younger child is innocent. But the good news about brothers and sisters is that when they get older, they **value** each other more. Jeff is now one of my best friends, and I like and admire him greatly. For better or for worse, we share a whole history. It is the longest relationship in my life.



### THE ONLY CHILD JOURNALIST SARAH LEE

I went to **boarding school** when I was seven, and the hardest thing I found was making friends. Because I was an only child, I just didn't know how to do it. The thing is that when you're an only child you spend a lot of your time with **adults** and you're often the only child in a **gathering** of adults. Your parents go on living more or less the way they have always lived, only now you are there too.

I found being an only child interesting because it gave me a view of the world of adults that children in a big family might not get. And I know it has, at least partly, made me the kind of person I am – I never like being one of a group, for example. If I have to be in a group, I will always try to go off and do something on my own, or be with just one other person – I'm not comfortable with being one of a **gang**.

My parents are divorced now and my mother lives in the US and my father in the UK. I feel very responsible for them – I feel responsible for their happiness. I'm the closest relative in the world to each of them, and I am very **aware** of that.



Adapted from a British newspaper