PART 1

6 READING

a What's your position in your family? Are you the oldest child, a middle child, the youngest child, or an only child?

b Look at four groups of adjectives. Which group do you think goes with each position in the family (e.g. the oldest)?

1 outgoing, charming, and disorganized
2 responsible, ambitious, and anxious
3 self-confident, independent, and spoilt
4 sociable, sensitive, and unambitious

c Read the article and check your answers.

d Read the article again and complete it with reasons A–H.

A they grew up between older and younger brothers and sisters

B it's easier for them to break the rules – by the time they were born, their parents were more relaxed about discipline

C their parents were more relaxed themselves by the time the second child arrived

D they are given everything they ask for

E they have always been the baby of the family

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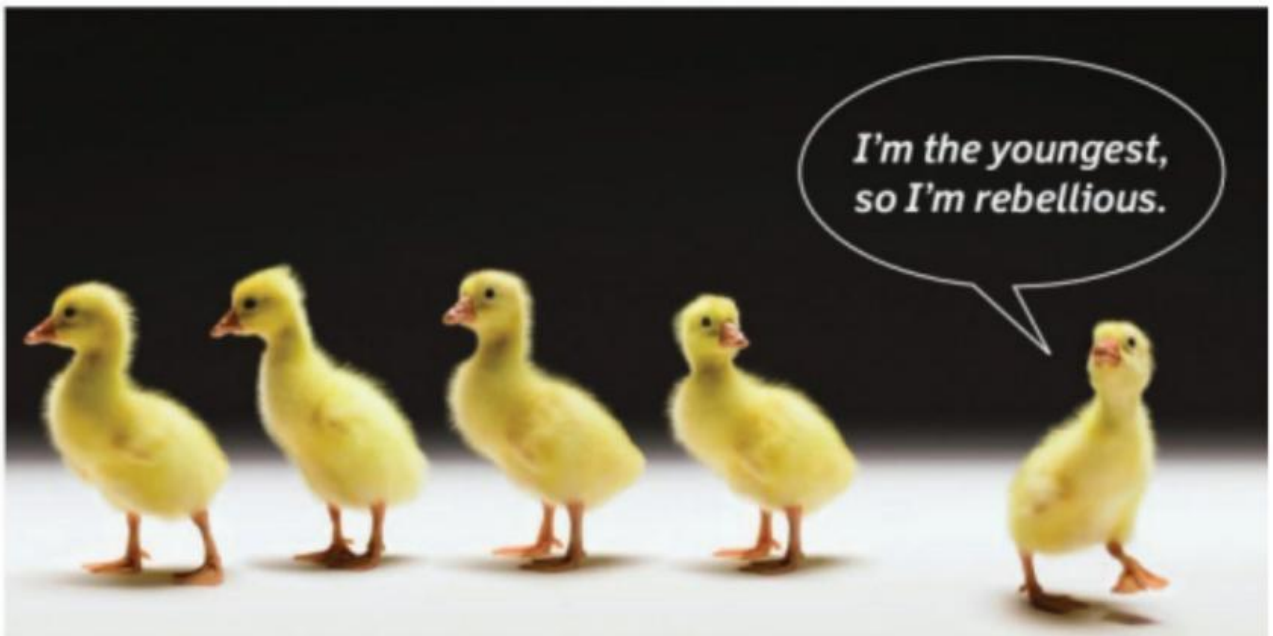
F they spend a lot of time with adults

G they've never had to sort out problems with other brothers and sisters

H ~~when the second child was born, they lost some of their parents' attention, and maybe they felt rejected~~

e Re-read the paragraph that applies to you. Do you think the description of personality is true for you? Are any of the other descriptions true for people you know, e.g. your brothers and sisters, or friends?



How **birth order** influences your personality

Nowadays, it is an accepted fact that our position in the family – that is, whether we're an oldest child, a middle child, a youngest child, or an only child – is possibly the strongest influence there is on our character and personality. So what influence does it have?

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The oldest child

Firstborn children often have to look after their younger brothers and sisters, so they're usually sensible and responsible as adults. They also tend to be ambitious and they make good leaders. On the negative side, oldest children can be insecure and anxious. This is because [1] *H*.

The middle child

Middle children are more relaxed than the oldest children, probably because [2] ___. They're usually very sociable – the kind of people who get on with everybody. They are also usually sensitive to what other people need, because [3] ___. For the same reason, they're often quite good at sorting out arguments, and they're always sympathetic to the ones on the losing side, or in general, to people who are having problems. On the other hand, middle children can sometimes be unambitious, and they can lack direction in life.

The youngest child

Youngest children are often very outgoing and charming. This is the way they try to get the attention of both their parents and their older brothers and sisters. They are often more rebellious, and this is probably because [4] ___. They can also be immature and disorganized, and they often depend too much on other people, because [5] ___.

The only child

Only children usually do very well at school, because they have a lot of contact with adults. They get a lot of love and attention from their parents, so they're typically self-confident. They're also independent, as they spend so much time by themselves. And because [6] ___, they're often very organized. Only children can sometimes be spoilt, because [7] ___ by their parents. They can also be quite selfish and get impatient, especially when things go wrong. This is because [8] ___.

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PART 2

Vocabulary

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7 Replace the phrases in bold with phrases in *italics* from the passage.

1 People are less **dependent on** each other today.
2 Physical distance is less of an issue **because of** technology.
3 Some people worry that the changes have a negative **effect on** society.
4 Independence in old age is **leading to** more people choosing to live alone.
5 Many people are not **happy about** living in larger groups.
6 Organizations are right to be **concerned about** the impact of these changes.

A The global number of people living alone is rapidly increasing. Numbers increased from about 153 million in 1996 to 277 million in 2011 – around 80% in 15 years. In the UK, 34% of households consist of one individual, while in the USA the figure stands at 27%. Sweden has more people living on their own than anywhere in the world, with 47% of households having one person; followed by Norway at 40%. China, India, and Brazil have the fastest growing number of individual households. So why has this happened and what impact on society has this change had?

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B As far as the younger generation is concerned, many are unable to find good jobs so are forced to remain with or move back in with their parents. However, the surprising thing is that even though the economy was weak, between 2007 and 2012 the percentage of young people living alone in the USA hardly changed – dropping from 12% to 11%. The reality is that it has become an enormous priority for young adults to live alone. The explanation is perhaps that they are prepared to do without 'luxuries' like gym membership, as well as to spend less on clothes, travel, and all kinds of other things because they want the experience of living alone. Starting work or getting married were once the indicators of adulthood, now it seems that living alone is the way to achieve it.

C It is not only the younger generation and their families that have been affected – independence is increasingly important to much older adults as well. A century ago, 70% of elderly American widows lived with a grown child; today, only 20% do, *thanks to* increased wealth and government support. According to Eric Klinenberg, Professor of Sociology at New York University, they do value their relationships with their children but they would much prefer 'intimacy at a distance'. In other words, they do not want just to go back into their children's homes and live in a bedroom. So again, we have a situation where society values independence as much as being part of a group. This is a massive cultural change in how society is organized and how it operates.

D The changing roles of family and society and these issues are a concern for many, but are we actually *worried about* the wrong thing? Arguably, many people are *satisfied with* their new living arrangement. The extended family and its role has changed, people move away for work more and

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they are less *reliant on* their family and more so on their friends. Perhaps what we should really be questioning is the environmental *impact* these decisions are actually having *on* our planet.

E According to research, one-person households are the biggest consumers of energy, land and household goods (e.g. washing machines, TVs, etc.). Per person, they consume 38% more products, 42% more packaging, 55% more electricity, and 61% more gas than individuals in a four-person household. In addition, in four-person households each person produces 1,000 kilograms of waste annually, while those living alone create 1,600 kilograms of waste each year. In an era of environmental challenges, this is clearly a great concern. Some also argue that single living is a factor in the breakdown of community, *resulting in* greater isolation and less respect for others. People are perhaps less willing to help or support others as they no longer see a mutual benefit to these relationships.

8 Complete the questions with a preposition.

1 Are you satisfied _____ where and how you live?
2 Are you reliant _____ others or quite independent?
3 What problems in society do you / people you know worry _____ most?
4 Do you think unemployment leads _____ an increase in crime?
5 Thanks _____ social networking sites, fewer people are lonely. Do you agree?
6 What effect has technology had _____ how people behave in your society?

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