

Day 11

READING PASSAGE 2

You should spend about 20 minutes on **Questions 14–26**, which are based on Reading Passage 2 below.

Questions 14–19

The reading passage has six paragraphs, **A–F**.

Choose the correct heading for each paragraph from the list of headings below.

Write the correct number, **i–ix**, in boxes 14–19 on your answer sheet.

List of headings

- i** Children's views on birth order
- ii** Solutions are more important than causes
- iii** Characteristics common to all children regardless of birth order
- iv** Doubts about birth-order theory but personal experience supporting it
- v** A theory that is still supported
- vi** Birth-order characteristics continuing as children get older
- vii** A typical example of birth-order behaviour in practice
- viii** Exceptions to the rule of birth order
- ix** A detailed description of each child in families in general

14 Paragraph **A**

15 Paragraph **B**

16 Paragraph **C**

17 Paragraph **D**

18 Paragraph **E**

19 Paragraph **F**

ESTABLISHING YOUR BIRTHRIGHTS

Position in the family can play a huge role in shaping character, finds Clover Stroud

- A** Last week I was given a potent reminder of how powerful birth order might be in determining a child's character. My son, Jimmy Joe, nine, and my daughter, Dolly, six, were re-enacting a TV talent show. Jimmy Joe elected himself judge and Dolly was a contestant. Authoritative and unyielding, he wielded a clipboard, delivering harsh criticisms that would make a real talent show judge flinch. Initially Dolly loved the attention, but she soon grew tired of his dominance, instigating a pillow fight, then a fist fight. It ended, inevitably, in tears. A visiting friend, with an older, more successful sister, declared it 'classic first child behaviour of dominance and supposed authority'. Dolly's objection to her brother's self-appointed role as leader was justified, he announced, while Jimmy Joe's superiority was characteristic of the forceful personality of firstborns. Birth order, he said, wasn't something they could just shrug off.
- B** Debate about the significance of birth order goes right to the heart of the nature versus nurture argument and is, consequently, surrounded by huge controversy. This controversy has raged since the 19th century, when Austrian psychiatrist Alfred Adler argued that birth order can define the way someone deals with life. He identified firstborns as driven and often suffering from a sense of having been 'dethroned' by a second child. Younger children, he stated, were hampered by having been more pampered than older siblings. It's a view reiterated by Professor Frank Sulloway's influential work, *Born to Rebel*. Sulloway, a leading proponent of the birth order idea, argued it has a definitive effect on the 'Big Five' personality traits of openness, conscientiousness, extroversion, agreeableness and neuroticism.
- C** According to the birth-order theory, first children are usually well-organised high achievers. However, they can have an overdeveloped sense of entitlement and be unyielding. Second children are sometimes very competitive through rivalry with the older sibling. They're also good mediators and negotiators, keen to keep everyone happy. Middle children, tagged the 'easy' ones, have good diplomacy skills. They suffer from a tendency to feel insignificant beside other siblings and often complain of feeling invisible to their parents. Youngest children are often the most likely to rebel, feeling the need to 'prove' themselves. They're often extroverts and are sometimes accused of being selfish. Twins inevitably find it harder to see themselves as individuals, unless their parents have worked hard to identify them as such. It's not unusual for one twin to have a slightly dominant role over the other and take the lead role.
- D** But slapping generalised labels on a child is dangerous; they change all the time, often taking turns at being the 'naughty one' or the 'diligent one'. However, as one of five children, I know how hard it is to transcend the tags you earn according to when you were born. It is unsurprising then that my eldest sister is the successful entrepreneur, and that, despite covering all the big bases of adult life like marriage, kids and property, my siblings will probably always regard me as their spoilt

younger sister.

E 'As the oldest of three, I've found it hard not to think of my own three children as having the same personality types that the three of us had when I was growing up,' says Lisa Cannan, a teacher. 'I identify with my eldest son, who constantly takes the lead in terms of organisation and responsibility. My daughter, the middle child, is more cerebral than her brothers. She's been easier than them. She avoids confrontation, so has an easy relationship with both boys. My youngest is gorgeous but naughty. I know I'm partly to blame for this, as I forgive him things the elder two wouldn't get away with.'

F As a parent, it's easy to feel guilty about saddling a child with labels according to birth order, but as child psychologist Stephen Bayliss points out, these characteristics might be better attributed to parenting styles, rather than a child's character. He says that if a parent is worried about having encouraged, for example, an overdeveloped sense of dominance in an older sibling or spoiled a younger child, then it's more useful to look at ways this can be addressed than over-analysing why it happened. Bayliss is optimistic that as adults we can overcome any negative connotations around birth order. 'Look at the way you react to certain situations with your siblings. If you're unhappy about being treated as a certain type of personality, try to work out if it's a role that you've willingly accepted. If you're unhappy with the role, being dynamic about focusing on your own reactions, rather than blaming theirs, will help you overcome it. Change isn't easy but nobody need be the victim of their biography.'

Questions 20–23

Look at the following statements and the list of people below.

Match each statement with the correct person, **A–D**.

Write the correct letter, **A–D**, in boxes 20–23 on your answer sheet.

NB You may use any letter more than once.

- 20 Experience as a child can affect behaviour as a parent.
- 21 Birth order may not be the main reason why children have the personalities they have.
- 22 There is a link between birth and a group of important characteristics.
- 23 It is possible for people to stop feeling bad about how family members behave with them.

List of people

- A** Alfred Adler
- B** Professor Frank Sulloway
- C** Lisa Cannan
- D** Stephen Bayliss

Questions 24–26

Complete the sentences below.

Choose **ONE WORD ONLY** from the passage for each answer.

Write your answers in boxes 24–26 on your answer sheet.

- 24 First-born children have expectations that are too high with regard to
- 25 Middle children are often considered by their parents.
- 26 Youngest children may be described as by other people.