

Comprehension Practice

Children growing up too quickly

This article is from the DfE website

In preparation for the QTS Literacy Skills Test this article should be read carefully before attempting the questions that follow.

- *Establish that you know what themes and opinions are contained in the article.*
- *Check out any vocabulary of which you are unsure or are unfamiliar with.*
- *Read the questions carefully before you begin to write your answers.*

Nearly half of parents are unhappy with programmes or adverts on TV before the 9pm watershed.

A survey of over 1000 parents of all backgrounds has revealed that 88 per cent think that children are under pressure to grow up too quickly.

The survey forms part of the independent Bailey Review of Commercialisation and Sexualisation of Childhood, commissioned by the Department to unravel and tackle issues around the premature sexualisation and commercialisation of children.

Celebrity culture, adult style clothes and music videos are all guilty in parents' eyes of encouraging children to act older than they are.

The survey aimed to find out what parents think and what help they need to manage the pressures on their children. The Bailey Review has also been listening to parents through focus groups and a call for evidence, which received an overwhelming response from parents.

Specific areas of concern are emerging from parents. These include:

- Clothes to be clearly age appropriate and not simply scaled down versions of adult fashion.
- Increasingly sexualised content in music videos and pre-watershed TV with 'too adult' themes in some soap operas.
- Pressure to buy non-essential items for their children so they don't feel left out.

Reg Bailey, Chief Executive of the Mothers Union, is leading an independent review into the Commercialisation and Sexualisation of Childhood.

He said:

Parents are telling us in no uncertain terms that they are worried about the pressures on children to grow up too quickly. It is clear that their concerns have not been created out of a moral panic but from their everyday experience. They are struggling against the slow creep of an increasingly

commercial and sexualised culture and behaviour, which they say prevents them from parenting the way they want.

Parents are disappointed that some of the existing regulation and self-regulation is starting to let them down. They feel that traditionally trusted controls like the TV 'watershed' have become less rigorous and the lines have become more blurred.

They are also uneasy about marketing to children through new digital media. Almost all the parents that responded did not think it was appropriate for companies to send phone and text adverts to children. They are particularly frustrated when sophisticated marketing techniques are used which they are unaware of and therefore unable to manage the pressure it creates.

It is very interesting to look at why parents are not complaining directly to companies and regulators about this in the numbers we might expect given the strength of feeling. In the busy hectic schedule of families' lives it is understandable that many parents feel it would be too difficult and time consuming. But a large number of parents told us they are worried that they will be seen as prudish or out of touch if they complain. They have little faith in regulators or businesses taking their concerns seriously.

The increasingly commercialised and sexualised world we live in can be a challenging environment for adults, but even more so for children. So far I have encountered two very different approaches in dealing with this. Either we can try and keep children wholly innocent until they are adults, which I believe is unrealistic and unhealthy. Or we accept the world the way it is and simply give children the tools to navigate their way through it better. Neither approach works in my view.

For us to let children be children, we need to let parents be parents. That means giving parents the support and encouragement they need to help their children understand and resist the harms they face. But it also means putting brakes on ever greater commercialisation and sexualisation facing children in modern society. Only then can we look to create a truly family friendly society that protects children.

Findings from the survey show that:

- 40 per cent of parents said they had seen things in public places (shop window displays, advertising hoardings) that they felt were inappropriate for children to see because of their sexual content.
- 41 per cent of parents said they had seen programmes or adverts on TV before 9pm that they felt were unsuitable or inappropriate for children due to their sexual content.
- Of those parents who had felt the need to complain about these issues but hadn't, over 60 per cent said that they had not done so either because they didn't think anything would be done or they didn't know who to complain to.
- Around half of parents felt that celebrity culture, adult style clothes and music videos are encouraging children to act older than they are.

Other emerging findings from the call for evidence and focus groups show:

- Two thirds of parents had come across clothes, toys, games, music videos or other products that they thought were inappropriate for the age group they were aimed at.
- Almost all parents did not think it was appropriate for companies to use phone and text adverts when promoting products for children.
- Parents feel that children are behaving in an overtly sexual manner before they are old enough to really understand what sexually provocative behaviour means.
- Parents have said they want to deal with these pressures themselves but they want more responsible action from business and help from Government to support them in this role.

The survey results, focus groups responses and findings from the call for evidence will be published in the final report of the Bailey Review in May.

Notes to Editors:

1. A face to face survey of 1,025 parents of five to 16 year olds was carried out between 16th February and 6th March 2011 by TNS Omnibus.
2. A call for evidence ran from 11 February to 18 March 2011. There were 997 responses from parents and over 100 responses from industry and stakeholders.

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From:

<http://www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/healthandwellbeing/a0076619/almost-nine-out-of-ten-parents-think-children-are-being-forced-to-grow-up-too-quickly>

accessed 21/02/13

The questions are on the following page

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Questions

Task A

Read the statements below and decide which refer to the opinions of:

P – Parents

BR – The Bailey Review

RB – Reg Bailey

- listening to parents through focus groups.
P BR RB
 - They observe that elements of society encourage children to act older than they are.
P BR RB
 - parents need the support and encouragement to help them to understand and resist the harms they face.
P BR RB
 - it is inappropriate for companies to use phone and text adverts aimed at children.
P BR RB
-

Task B

From the list below select and mark four statements that most accurately describe the nature of the problem:

- Children are encouraged to act older than they are by the celebrity culture and other commercial interests.
 - Parental concerns are driven by moral panic.
 - Parents are questioning the value of existing regulation and self regulation in certain aspects of the media.
 - Although parents are very anxious about the situation they do not complain to the companies concerned in great numbers.
 - Parents do not fear being branded as prudish or out of touch.
 - In order to solve this problem the engines of commercialisation and sexualisation need to be slowed down.
-

Task C

Select and underline the most suitable alternative for the phrase at is appears in the context of the passage.

- tackle issues around premature sexualisation (para 2)
 - tackle the early sex education of children
 - to understand the culture that makes children sex objects through commercial pressure.

- c. To appreciate how society is becoming unravelled.
2. pressure to buy non-essential items (para 4)
 - a. pressure to conform to pressures set up by marketing activity.
 - b. pressure to buy material things just so that children feel up to date.
 - c. pressure to buy things that children don't want.
 3. let children be children (para 11)
 - a. let children run wild.
 - b. be indulgent and lacking in discipline.
 - c. allow children to develop at their own pace.

Answers are on the next page

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Answers

Task A

1. BR, 2. P, 3. RB, 4. P.

Task B

Statements 1, 3, 4, & 6 are accurate.

Task C

1. B, 2.B, 3.C.