

Introduction

Download the LearnEnglish Themes podcast. You'll find more information on this page:
<http://www.britishcouncil.org/learnenglish-podcasts-themes.htm>

This support pack contains the following materials:

- The article that you can listen to in the podcast
- A pre-reading vocabulary activity
- A language activity based on the article
- Links to other activities on the LearnEnglish website on this theme (twins).

Before you read

Before you read the article, have a look at the glossary, which explains some of the more difficult words and expressions.

Glossary

<i>have in common</i>	when two things or people are the same in some way
<i>there are more of them about these days</i>	you can see more of them now than in the past
<i>increase the probabilities of</i>	it is more possible that it will happen
<i>grown up</i>	adult
<i>after 40 years apart</i>	they were separated for forty years
<i>short-sighted</i>	when you have difficulty seeing things far away from you
<i>picked up the local accent</i>	started speaking with the same pronunciation as people who live near him
<i>was obsessed with</i>	thought continually about the same thing
<i>telling which is which</i>	to distinguish one person from another
<i>had similar tastes in</i>	like the same things as someone else
<i>time to themselves</i>	time alone
<i>take the words out of her mouth</i>	to say exactly what another person is going to say

Read the article

Twins

by Richard Sidaway

What do the singer Alanis Morissette, the supermodel Gisele Bundchen and the head of the United Nations Kofi Annan all have in common? The answer is that they all have a brother or sister who was born on the same day as them – a twin. And what links actresses Julia Roberts, Geena Davis and Holly Hunter? They all have twin children.

You probably either have some twins in your family or you knew some at school – there are more of them about these days. This is because women are older when they have their first child and because more women are having fertility treatment. Both of these things increase the probabilities of two babies developing from the same egg.

The USA seems like a particularly good place to have a similar sibling. At the University of Minnesota they have been studying 8,000 pairs of twins since they were born. In the state of Ohio, there is a festival for twins every year in a place called... Twinsburg. And in New York there is even a restaurant which employs 37 sets of identical twins!

Scientists love twins. Because they share the same genes, any differences between them must be because of environmental factors. Science now understands more about heart disease, cancer, and getting old from studying twins.

Sometimes twins are separated at birth and only meet again when they are grown up. Even so,

they sometimes make choices in life which are strangely similar. One pair only met each other after 40 years apart and found that their wives had the same name. And so did their children and their pets!

Is there a difference between being physically identical and only being born on the same day? I knew a pair of non-identical twins when I was a boy. They were proud to be completely different from each other. One was very short-sighted from an early age and wore glasses. He picked up the local accent and was obsessed with trains. His brother spoke with a posh accent and was very musical. The first became a train driver and moved to Scotland. His brother went to a music college in London and became a concert pianist.

I have recently been the teacher of two pairs of identical twins - I often have difficulty telling which is which. Luckily they don't seem to mind. One day, I gave them a list of questions to see what they felt about being so close. Each twin answered the questions in a separate room.

Both pairs said they did many everyday activities together – studying, shopping, watching TV, or

After reading - Exercise

Below are 7 facts from the article, but they are not in the order that they appear in the text. Decide which is the correct order.

A	Non-identical twins often have very different lifestyles
B	Studying twins can help us know if illness is related to genetics or upbringing
C	Identical twins say they sometimes read each other's thoughts
D	There were fewer twins in the past because women didn't use fertility treatments
E	Some twins take similar decisions in life even when they live completely separate lives
F	Identical twins sometimes have very similar personalities
G	An American university is studying thousands of twins from the moment of their birth

More activities on this topic

You'll find links to all the following activities connected to the theme of twins at:
<http://www.britishcouncil.org/learnenglish-central-themes-twins.htm>

- **Word games: Homophones.** Homophones are words that sound the same but are spelt differently. In these 4 games you match homophones to pictures that illustrate them.
- **Story: Two Peas in a Pod.** Edie and Evie are identical twins. Identical in appearance, but their personalities are not at all identical. Things get very weird when one of them pretends to be the other ...
- **Trivia:** Everything you (n)ever wanted to know about twins.
- There is also a twins-related cartoon and some carefully selected external links.

Answers to Exercise: 1. D; 2. G; 3. B; 4. E; 5. A; 6. C; 7. F

just spending time together. Both pairs had similar tastes in music and food, and even thought their voices sounded the same sometimes. Both pairs also commented that they would like more time to themselves...

When I asked them what they were good at in school, one pair wrote the same five subjects almost in the same order. The other pair only had three subjects in common - one was interested in the Arts and the other more in science subjects.

I also asked them if they ever had the same thoughts as their twin. The first pair said yes – for example, one of them often started talking about what the other one was thinking. Strangely, the other pair disagreed about whether this was true. One of the twins said that her sister would take the words out of her mouth, while the other said this never happened to her.

The most interesting thing for me was studying the results of the psychological part of the test. I asked them to describe their personality using twelve different pairs of sentences. I found that each twin gave almost identical answers to her sister!