

What's in a name?

Discussion

Write down your five favourite and five least favourite names for boys and girls:

Favourite boys' names:

Boys' names you don't like:

Favourite girls' names:

Girls' names you don't like:

Compare your answers in small groups and discuss why you like or dislike these names.

Reading

Read the text below about where names come from. Think of some examples of names in your language from as many of the sources listed below as possible. Compare your answers in pairs.

Where do names come from?

Traditional names

Traditional names are those handed down from long ago through a particular culture. These names may once have had a meaning, but that will now be a minor factor in their choice and use. From Germany there are names like Frederick and Matilda; from Scandinavia Ingrid and Gustav; from Slavic culture Pavel and Kazimiera.

Scriptural and religious names

Many names are scriptural names. From Christian scriptures Matthew and Mary are examples from the New Testament; Jacob and Rebecca from the Old Testament. Islam gives us many forms of the name Muhammad, and of his descendants, for example Omar and Fatima. Ibrahim and Mariam are examples from the Muslim scripture, the Koran. Hinduism brings us Krishna and Sita, the names of traditional Hindu deities.

Names from mythology and literature

Daphne and Hector are examples of names which derive from Greek mythology; Arthur and Elaine from Arthurian legend. Shakespeare gave us Cordelia, and Jessica.

Days and position in the family

These concepts are particularly common in African names. For example, the name Esi means 'Sunday' and 'Kunto' means third child. These ideas are unusual in western culture, although the American actress Tuesday Weld is a notable exception.

Family names

These have become more commonly used as first names in recent times: for example, *Cameron Mackintosh* and *Beverly Sills*.

Vocabulary words

Many new names are also created from ordinary words. Jade (Jade Jagger) and River (River Phoenix) are well-known current examples.

Variations

And, of course, the total is considerably increased by the number of variations of each name that can be created. Robert can also be Rob, Robbie, Bob or Bobby; Jessica can be Jess or Jessie. And boys' names can be made into girls' names. Robert becomes Roberta, Nicolas becomes Nicola or Nicole or Nicky or Nikki.

Discussion

Discuss these questions with a partner, then report to the whole class:

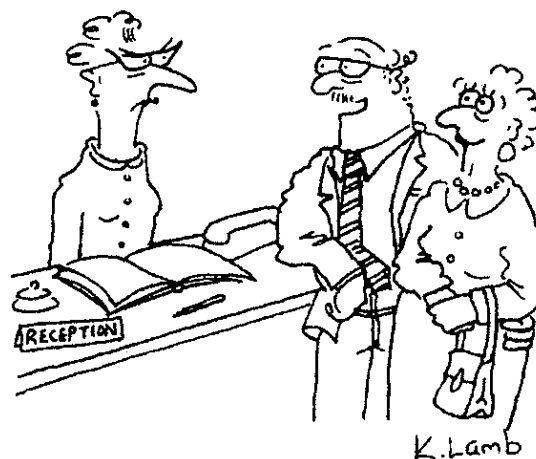
1. Tell a partner the origin of your names. What about your parents' names?
2. Is there a tradition in your family of using names of grandparents for children?
3. If you have children, why did you choose the names you did?

The origin of names

Work in pairs. Match the names on the left with their origins on the right:

Names	Origin
Cara	Slavic
Andrew	Celtic/Gaelic
Pavel	Japanese
Fatima	Welsh
Tokala	Vietnamese
Kunto	British
Meredith	African
Duc	Greek
Washi	Native American
Chloe	Arabic

Some names have special meanings. For example, Andrew can mean *brave, little one, moral, good, eagle, and fox*. Cara can mean *sweet melody, daughter of the prophet, and third child*. Does your name have a special meaning?



"Yes, we are Mr and Mrs Smith, but we want to book in as Mr Pearson and Miss Jones, just to make it more exciting."

Discussion

Discuss these questions in small groups:

1. Which first names are most popular in your country at the moment?
2. Were the same names popular amongst your parents' generation? What names were popular then?
3. Which are more popular in your country – birthdays or name days? What happens on these days?

Language

Here are 8 verbs and 8 adjectives we use to talk about things we do or do not like. Mark them in the following way:

+ like very much	– dislike	o no strong feelings
I love ...	I quite like ...	beautiful
I loathe ...	I don't mind ...	ugly
I hate ...	I adore ...	gorgeous
I'm fond of ...	I detest ...	powerful
		awful
		OK
		strong
		pathetic

Work in pairs. Do you like the following names or not? Use the words and phrases above to help you talk about them. For example: *I just love Anastasia. I think it's a beautiful name.*

Hilda	Bernard	Jemima	Madonna	Roger	Cynthia
Arnold	Dolores	Gwyneth	Russell	Wayne	Edith

Discussion

Work in pairs. Decide which of the following ideas you want to discuss. When you are ready, tell the rest of the class what you think:

1. **Changing names:** Everyone knows that Marilyn Monroe's real name was Norma Jean Mortenson. Why did she change it? Why do people change their names? Would you like to change your name? Should women be forced to change their name when they get married?
2. **Nicknames:** The former British Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, was known by two nicknames – Maggie or The Iron Lady. It is common for schoolchildren to give each other nicknames such as Ears (for someone with large ears); Curly (for someone with curly hair). What nicknames can you remember from school?
3. **Pet names:** Can you think of typical names in your country for the following animals?
 a dog a cat a fish a pet bird