



ABOUT YOU

Answer the questions and compare your ideas.

- 1 What do you think are the advantages and disadvantages of growing up in a large or small family?
- 2 What kinds of things do brothers and sisters argue about?
- 3 Do you like being with very young children? Why? / Why not?
- 4 Why do you think some children have imaginary friends that other people can't see?

First published in 1913 and set in mid-Victorian England, Flora MacDonald Mayor's novel, *The Third Miss Symons*, focuses on Henrietta, a plain, difficult child who grows into an even more plain and difficult woman. One of seven children, and with three sisters, poor Henrietta cannot find her place in the world.

1 Read the text. As you read, think about this question.

In what way is Henrietta different from her brothers and sisters?

The Third Miss Symons Flora MacDonald Mayor

Mrs. Symons was not fond of children and Henrietta's main memories of her mother were being told off when she had done something naughty.

- If she had been one of two or one of three in a present-day family she would have had more attention. But as one of four daughters—another girl was born when she was eight—she was not much wanted by her parents.
- The two older boys had a partnership together, into which they occasionally **admitted** Minna and Louie. Besides their secrets, Minna and Louie had a friend named Rosa. Harold, the youngest boy, did not want anyone—only toy engines. He and Etta should have been companions, but he said she cried a lot and told tales, which wasn't true.
- A large family should be such a happy community, but sometimes there is a girl or boy who is nothing but a middle one, and just doesn't **fit in**. So it was with Henrietta, until the youngest child was born.
- She would have given anything to have heard Minna and Louie's secrets, not because of the secrets, but as a sign that they trusted her. She grew fast and was a rather delicate child. It made her bad-tempered, but her brothers and sisters, who weren't growing so rapidly, just couldn't understand why she was like this. She always said she



- was sorry after she had been angry, but they couldn't see how that made things better because they weren't bad-tempered.

- Like many other lonely children, she made an **imaginary** friend. It was a little girl, two years older than she was, for Henrietta preferred to look up to her friend, and to be in an **inferior** position. For this reason, she did not much care for dolls, where she was decidedly **superior** to them. She called her friend Amy. Amy slept with her, helped her with her lessons, constantly told her secrets, and **grumbled** about the other children.
- One day they all had a game of hide and seek. With William, now 14, she hid in a dark spot among the trees at the end of the garden. The others could not find them, and there was plenty of time to talk. William was a kind boy and was rather a **chatterbox**, ready to talk to any listener, even to a sister of nine. Henrietta didn't know why she told him about Amy. It had always been her **resolve** that this was to be her own secret, and one never to be revealed.

GLOSSARY

admitted	allowed to join or enter
fit in	to feel that you belong to a particular group and are accepted by that group
imaginary	not real and something that is created in your mind
inferior	not as good as someone or something else
superior	better than someone or something else
grumbled	complained about someone or something
chatterbox	someone who likes to talk a lot
resolve	the decision that you will do something with determination

2 Read the text again and answer the questions.

1 Why do you think the other children didn't make an effort to be nicer to Henrietta?

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2 What does Henrietta's attitude to dolls tell us?

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3 Why do you think Henrietta told William about Amy?

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4 Do you think William will tell the others about Amy? Why? / Why not?

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VOCABULARY

3 Complete sentences 1-4 with words from the box. Change the form of the word, if necessary.

admit grumble inferior superior

1 At first, I felt a bit because I knew more about science than anyone else in my class.

2 Kim is always about the amount of homework we have to do.

3 The trainers are poor quality because they are made of materials.

4 After a long wait they were finally to the concert hall.

4 Put the words in the correct order in sentences 1-4.

1 took / it / fit in / Terry / new school / long time / a / to / at the

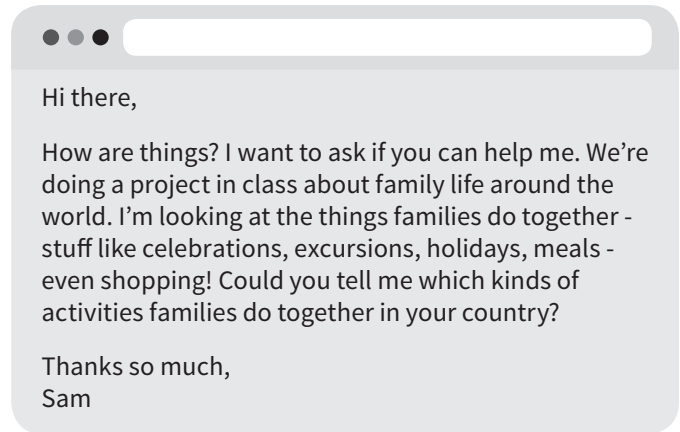
2 novel / imaginary / the / about / people / is

3 team / resolved / year / our / win / to / league / last / the

4 friend / Alain / such / chatterbox / my / a / is

WRITING

5 You have received the following email from a friend of yours, who lives in an English-speaking country. Write your reply to Sam (120-160 words).



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SPEAKING

6 Read the list of things in the box below that people can do on their own or with others. Decide if these activities are better done alone or with others. Then work in a group and compare and explain your reasons and ideas. The group should then agree on three activities best done alone and three activities best done with others.

- Buying someone a birthday present
- Choosing which clothes to wear
- Doing a jigsaw
- Doing homework
- Going to the doctor
- Listening to music
- Playing an online game
- Reading a book
- Swimming
- Tidying your room
- Watching a sporting event on TV