

Family ties

1 Warm up. Which alternative correctly completes the definition?

- a. A stepsister is
 1. an older sister.
 2. the daughter of the new partner of your mother/father.
 3. the daughter of your mother/father and new partner.
- b. A half-brother is
 1. an older brother.
 2. the son of the new partner of your mother/father.
 3. the son of your mother/father and new partner.
- c. Adoptive parents are
 1. parents for the first time.
 2. parents of an adopted child.
 2. single parents.



- A** Winters are sometimes very cold in Ontario, but Maya Ross likes that. Maya and her brothers and sisters (seven of them altogether) have their own ice-hockey team. They practise every afternoon after school, and while being a big family is fun, it is not always easy. “We try to support each other and my older sister helps me with my homework when I need it. A good thing is that there is always somebody around to play or talk with, a bad thing is that I have to share a room with Alina. She’s the youngest. She sings and shouts when I’m studying and it really annoys me.”
- B** Vic Bothe is from India and he’s an only child. His family is living in Liverpool at the moment because of his mother’s job. Here’s what he thinks about not having any brothers or sisters: “Well, on the one hand it is good because I have my own room and my parents usually give me whatever I want. On the other hand, I sometimes feel lonely. I often do not have anyone to play with, so I always try to keep in touch with my friends back in India by email. It’s funny – they are always complaining about their younger brothers or sisters, whereas I’d love to have someone to play with.”
- C** Abigail Mc Cormack lives with her mother in New York. Abigail’s parents divorced when she was just one and her father remarried after a short time. Abigail says that she likes her stepbrother Thomas and stepsister Janice and they get on well. “My parents are still friends and meet every now and then. I spend every summer with Dad and live the rest of the year with Mum here. It is like having two families. I like it because I do not have any real brothers or sisters and now I have friends of my age who I know care about me.”

D Even though being adopted can be difficult for a child, Scott Brown thinks he is very lucky. His adoptive parents adore him and his brother and sisters all the same. “I sometimes wonder about my real mum and dad, but only for a while. My real family is the one I live with and I wouldn’t live anywhere else. I love Mum, Dad, Jessie, Carol and Rosie. Sometimes people ask me about being adopted, but it’s just the way our family is: I love them and they love me.”



E Angelina Wood from Australia says, “I have got a sister, a stepsister and a half-brother. It sounds complicated, doesn’t it? But it isn’t, really. My sister is a year older than me. We are from our father’s first marriage. Then our parents got divorced and Dad married Lindsay. She’s got a daughter, Elizabeth who’s our stepsister. George was born five years ago. George and me have the same father but different mothers, so he’s my half-brother. Nobody really cares... we are just kids together in a big family.”



2 Read the article again and identify the children below by putting a letter (from A to E). The same child may be chosen for more than one answer.

- Who has members of his/her family he/she is not biologically related to? 1 2 3
- Who talks about the disadvantages of his/her family? 4 5
- Who lives in different places at different times? 6
- Who says his/her life is simpler than it seems? 7
- Who has moved to another country with his/her family? 8
- Who doesn’t know his/her biological parents? 9
- Who takes part in a group activity with their family? 10
- Who hasn’t got a room of his own? 11
- Who considers the pros and the cons of his/her situation? 12 13
- Who has been living with just one parent for quite a long time? 14
- Who has to answer questions about his situation? 15