



FLOWERS FALL

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YET, THOUGH IT IS LIKE THIS, SIMPLY, FLOWERS FALL AMID OUR LONGING,
AND WEEDS SPRING UP AMID OUR ANTIPATHY.

— Dogen Zenji, *Genjokoan*

Love is in the Air: Let's Play Parenting Trivia!

It's February. What better time to ask what we mean when we say, "I love you"?

It seems that historians agree that parents have always loved their kids, maybe not in the super snugly way that we love our kids, but in that impossible-to-describe way of just really caring about them. With that said, parental love has taken extremely different forms throughout our history and even now, in different parts of the world. I happen to think this difference is a gift, permission for all us parents to relax and realize there really is no one way to do this crazy job. Having a sense of the big picture, we can, to use the Buddhist term, detach a bit and learn how we came to hold our very dear opinions, rules, and preferences. And of course remembering what other people—parents and kids—have lived through can be very humbling.

So instead of a chalky heart inscribed with "Let's be friends," I offer this totally random, things-that-make-you-go-hmmmm... little quiz on parenting trivia. It's my Valentine to all the good-enough parents out there. 🍷

1) Of all the "Classical" civilizations, which promoted a mother-child bond most similar to contemporary "attachment parenting" and included breastfeeding on demand, sensitivity to an infant's individual needs, potty-training "when ready," and the like?

- A.) Chinese
- B.) Greco-Roman
- C.) Indian
- D.) All of the above

Correct Answer: C.) India. Due to the Hinduism practiced in India, children were viewed as one part of a web of ritualistic indulgence and appreciation, as opposed to the more authoritarian attitudes of other religions/cultures.

2.) The New England Puritans were the first white Americans to:

(Choose as many as apply)

- A.) Consider breastfeeding a sin
- B.) Criminalize child abuse
- C.) Encourage child abuse
- D.) Discourage wet nursing in favor of maternal breastfeeding

Correct Answer: B.) and D.) Apparently, the Puritans' concerns with a child's nature, though believed to be sinful, encouraged a kind of conscious care, which made assault and battery less appealing. And in terms of nursing, as one Puritan minister eloquently put it, "You will Suckle Your Infant your Self if you can; Be not such an Ostrich as to Decline it, merely because you would be One of the Careless Women Living While at Ease."

3.) When Colonial Americans swaddled a baby and then placed it on a hook on the wall, this was an early form of:

- A.) Daycare

- B.) Sleep training
- C.) Time-out
- D.) The doorway jumpy thing

Correct Answer: A.) Daycare. When mother and dad both had to go out to the fields and babies numbers 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 had not yet been born to watch baby number 1, apparently the hook-hang was the best way to keep the kid safe.

4.) "That evel hour I loock forward to with dread" is an early American woman's reference to:

- A.) Conjugal relations
- B.) Between 5 and 6pm, when her infant was colicky
- C.) Weaning
- D.) Childbirth

Correct Answer: D.) Childbirth. In the 17th-century US, between 1 and 1.5 percent of all births ended in a mother's death. And remember, these women had seven or eight babies on average.

5.) Of all the "major" world religions, which considered childbirth a "polluting act"?

- A.) Christianity
- B.) Buddhism
- C.) Judaism
- D.) Islam

Correct Answer: B.) Buddhism. Ops.

6.) What is the most significant contribution John Locke has made to our conception of modern childhood?

- A.) The belief that all children should have a liberal education
- B.) The belief that children are blank slates full of potential
- C.) The belief that the island can heal all childhood trauma
- D.) The belief that children are born sinners

Correct Answer: B.) The belief that children are blank slates full of potential. This is perhaps the most significant shift in thought regarding what we now consider childhood. Prior to Locke and others' Enlightenment views, children, in the West at least, were treated almost more like animals that needed to be tended and trained, rather than the post-Enlightenment, modern conception of children as cute, innocent vessels waiting to be influenced. It was then, around the late 18th century, that children (of a certain race and class, of course) began to be treated as individuals with their own names, middle names, bedrooms, personalities, and capacity to learn.

7.) What was the source of the pink-for-girls and blue-for-boys craze, which began in the 1920s?

- A.) Coeducation. The need to differentiate between genders in the new regime of boys and girls going to school together.
- B.) Coco Chanel. A gender-bending, flapper fashion statement, since pink was originally a color associated with men, and blue with women.
- C.) The first Winter Olympics. Male and female athletes needed different colors for their uniforms.
- D.) The founding of *Parents* magazine and the first how-to-decorate-the-nursery article. Some random freelance writ-

er chose pink and blue as the color scheme and it stuck.

Correct Answer: A.) Coeducation. When boys and girls started attending the same schools regularly, gender distinction became heightened.

8.) What mental illness became more common in the middle and upper classes in the 1860s, as families tried harder to be "happy," and guess whose fault, so says at least one historian, it was?

- A.) Anorexia Nervosa: mom
- B.) Depression: mom
- C.) Hypochondria: mom
- D.) Delusions of grandeur: grandparents

Correct Answer: A.) Anorexia Nervosa: mom. According to one source, mothers' increasing pressure to maintain a "sunny disposition" in the "modern," middle-class home, "doting" on their children by preparing meals (yup), combined with the fact that girls were not encouraged to express any discord in the home, resulted in the refusal to eat as one way to covertly manifest female malaise.

9.) What aspect of human life was "invented" in the 19th century?

- A.) The belief in a separate self, otherwise known as delusion
- B.) Jealousy/competition
- C.) Adolescence
- D.) The family vacation

Correct Answer: C.) Adolescence. Due to the growing amount of more time spent as non-working dependents, as well as the earlier onset of puberty, kids' sexual and other appetites became unruly. The concept of "adolescence" was coined to describe this new stage in life, helping parents of crazy Victorian teens understand what was going on.

10.) What was the biggest difference in toys developed before the turn of the 20th century and after? (Choose as many as apply.)

- A.) Early toys tended to be homemade, like rag dolls, and later toys were mass-produced, like the doll Patsy.
- B.) Early toys such as marbles and kites were made for group play, while later toys like Lincoln Logs and Crayons were intended for solitary play.
- C.) Early toys were marketed to parents, while later ones were marketed to children.
- D.) Early toys were somewhat static, while later toys began to be tied to popular figures, such as Shirley Temple.

Correct Answer: All of the above.

REFERENCES

Huck's Raft: A History of American Childhood by Steven Mintz (Harvard University Press, 2004)

Childhood in World History by Peter N. Stearns (Routledge, 2006)