

Select Readings, Second Edition
Upper-Intermediate, Chapter 2 Test

Read the passage and answer the questions that follow.

Changing Roles

by Christopher Hanzie

Watching television recently, I came across a very interesting program. On the show, a journalist was interviewing people from two distinct age groups. The first group was all people in their 40s and 50s, chosen randomly on a street in the U.S. The second group was elementary school children from the U.S., mainly between the ages of eight and twelve.

The interview was simple. The journalist explained the situation: A father and his young son were driving along the highway, when they were in a serious accident. They were both rushed, unconscious¹, to a nearby hospital, in critical condition. The child was immediately prepared for emergency surgery. However, the surgeon took one look at the child and said, "I cannot operate on this boy. He is my son." Then the journalist asked the interviewees, "If the man in the car is the boy's father, who is the surgeon?"

While the question seems like an easy one, many of the people in the older group had a very difficult time answering it. In fact, only a handful of the people interviewed were able to come up with the correct answer. "Maybe the man in the car was the boy's step-father," some said. Others even suggested that the question was a trick, and the term 'father' actually meant that the man in the car was a priest². And many just admitted that they simply had no idea who the surgeon could be.

In contrast to the older group, nearly all of the children were able to produce the correct answer with almost no hesitation at all. "The surgeon is the boy's mother!" many of them shouted.

What the experiment clearly illustrates is the vast difference in the way different generations have come see the roles of males and females in society. From this simple survey, it is easy to draw the conclusion that the older people were simply unable to imagine that the surgeon might be a woman. Most of these people grew up in an era when a woman's main role was as a mother and caregiver. The idea that there might be female surgeons, soldiers, and CEOs might not have gained currency with them, even to this day.

The youngsters, on the other hand, did not hold such obsolete notions of a woman's role in society. Many, growing up with mothers who are doctors, lawyers, and even soldiers, saw straight through the 'tricky' question.

¹ **unconscious** not aware of what's happening

² **priest** a minister in the Catholic church

This program pointed out to me just how much our society is changing. At 45 years old, I, myself had a hard time answering the question. How did you answer the question?

1. True or false? The author makes his main point and then follows it with an example.
 - A. True
 - B. False
2. The journalist interviewed _____.
 - A. two groups of people who were very different ages
 - B. two groups of people who were very close in age
 - C. three groups of people who were all of different ages
 - D. one group of people of mixed ages
3. The article's main point is that _____.
 - A. young people want to be surgeons
 - B. older people are trying to keep women at home
 - C. older people aren't as well informed as younger people
 - D. the way people of different generations think about male and female roles has changed
4. Which of the following is not a supporting example for the first statement in paragraph 5?
 - A. "...the older people were simply unable to imagine that the surgeon might be a woman."
 - B. "the youngsters... did not hold such obsolete notions of a woman's role in society."
 - C. "Most... grew up in an era when a woman's main role was as a mother and caregiver."
 - D. "This program pointed out to me just how much our society is changing."
5. True or false? In the story, both the father and the son were in an accident but the father was not hurt.
 - A. True
 - B. False
6. Which of the following is not mentioned about the older people's responses to the question?
 - A. Many had no idea what the answer was.
 - B. Some thought it was a trick question.
 - C. Some said the man in the car was the boy's step-father.
 - D. No one came up with the correct answer.
7. In the third paragraph, 'only a handful' means _____.
 - A. none
 - B. a few
 - C. many
 - D. exactly five
8. From the use of the words 'obsolete notion' we can infer that _____.
 - A. the author has no opinion about the views held by the older group
 - B. the author prefers the older group's ideas about women's roles
 - C. the author thinks the roles of males and females in society have not changed
 - D. the author prefers the children's ideas about women's roles
9. The term 'gained currency' does not mean _____.
 - A. increased in use
 - B. became accepted
 - C. became more expensive
 - D. became more familiar

10. In paragraph 6, because 'tricky' is in quotation marks, we can infer that the writer thinks _____.
- A. the question was too tricky for children
 - B. the question was not tricky because he was able to answer it himself
 - C. the question was not tricky, and he is criticizing the older group for thinking it was tricky
 - D. the question was tricky and was not fair