

CAE COMPREHENSION CHILDREN'S DOLLS

Instructions : Answer the questions below with reference A-H to the passages which follow.

Which child liked a doll because of

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| 1. its realism? | |
| 2. her ability to wear it? | A. Alice |
| 3. the fashionable colour of its clothing? | B. Rebecca |
| 4. its hair? | C. Emily |
| 5. its ability to travel as a passenger? | D. David |
| 6. the way it performs exercises? | E. William |
| | F. Adam |

Which toy

7. is politically correct?
8. was designed in Britain?
9. has some illogical accessories?
10. acts like a naughty baby?
11. attracted adults more than children?
12. was considered likely to be played with longest?
13. is a symbol of the way of life of an affluent society?
14. was likely to catch cold?
15. was least popular?

A. BARBIE WITH SHELLY SHOPPING FUN £20

Getting two dolls in one packet was the ultimate value-for-money principle applied by our young testers to this "Shoppin' Fun" ensemble, which features buxom Barbie and her baby sister Shelly in a supermarket setting. A mechanism causes Shelly to bounce up and down on the seat of her supermarket trolley as it is pushed and, in a nice twist, a magnet on Shelly's hand enables her to pick up tiny cereal and cookie packets. The irony was lost on Alice, who declared Shelly's behaviour to be "just like a real baby". All in all, this perfect image of consumerism in miniature was a major hit with the girls, who also heaped praise on Barbie's short skirt, cooed over Shelly's bottle and dummy and "took a great deal of interest in her nappy." They voted it the winner - even though their parents felt "Workin' Out" Barbie was better value in terms of cost versus hours of distraction.

B. WORKIN' OUT BARBIE £12

Not yet in the shops but bound to be popular, "Workin' Out" Barbie was the favourite with Rebecca, mostly due to her trendy outfit in sickly pink and super-long blonde hair. On the plastic accessories front, she also has a matching personal stereo, dumbbells and water bottle. Barbie is fully articulated, has suction pads on her feet and comes with a full-size music tape, so little girls can hold her hands and dance with her. Rebecca quickly disappeared into another room with the Barbie and tape to do some serious exercising. She loved the fact that the doll can do the splits and her arms bend and stretch.

C. PET DOCTOR BARBIE £20

In a puzzling, but too frequent demonstration of the generation gap, "Pet Doctor Barbie" - this year's hot new launch which benefits the RSPCA, appealed greatly to the testers' parents, but not especially to the children. The package includes plastic dog bones, pet bowls, pet basket stethoscope, medical clipboard, bandages, grooming brush, doctor's bag and, most importantly, dog and cat. Her leggings even have paw prints on them. Alice thought it was pretty silly having a brush for the animals when they were made of hard plastic. Barbie's arms were thought to have too little movement. As usual, Emily liked Barbie's hair, which is long and silky, if not ethnically correct in the black version sampled. Meanwhile, the adults laughed themselves silly over the meowing mouse and barking bone buttons in the pet basket.

D. KEN AND BROTHER TOMMY £15

"Hair is a very important factor when choosing dolls - part of the lasting appeal of glamour dolls is the ability to do their hair and dress them up after the gimmicks have lost their novelty," mused Rebecca Jones's mother in her report about Barbie's male friend, now produced in tandem with his baby brother, Tommy. The New Man caring and sharing theme made no impact on the testers, it seemed; they were appalled by Ken's hair, since it felt as if it had gel on it. The accessories in this packet include a "special baby carrier pack" which takes Tommy, his bottle, rattle, dummy, nappy and baby lotion on Ken's back. The testers thought Tommy was rather "cute", but were concerned that he was only wearing dungarees with no shirt underneath and that his dummy was too large, covering half of his face. The fact that Tommy can wave did not impress the testers.

E. SINDY SKATER £4.90

Alas, Britain's answer to Barbie did not score well in our trial. Evidently more cheaply produced, "Sindy Skater" has the obligatory long hair, but is adorned only in a pink, sparkly tutu. "Her bodice is painted on!" said Rebecca. They soon discovered that her hair and boots could not be removed either. "She's no good", was the unanimous verdict.

F. BASEBALL CAP CINDY £3.50

Emily Buckett immediately fell in love with the "Baseball Cap Sindy", which Rebecca and Alice attributed to her age. For once, the doll itself is the accessory, capable, with the help of ankle straps, of assuming several acrobatic positions on the cap wearer's head. Rebecca and Alice "wouldn't be seen dead wearing it." Emily wouldn't take it off. The older two lost interest altogether when they discovered Sindy was made of foam and therefore not a real doll. The mothers declared this Sindy to be more of a clothing item than a toy and wondered how long any child would want to wear a doll on their head?

G. ACTION MAN SPORT EXTREME £10.99

Action Man, parents will be glad to know, has been updated. His jaw is now squarer, his cheekbones more sculpted and his flock hair has metamorphosed into a sleek, painted, plastic style with two locks falling over one eyebrow, "as they would do whenever he does something heroic," a spokesman from the manufacturer said firmly. His new character is sport oriented, which is why he has "super active limbs~, according to the packaging. Our testers were not taken in. "He's a toy man who fights," David said. "He has bendy legs and arms for kicking and punching." He also comes equipped with designer shades, a 9mm automatic pistol and suction pad for climbing rocky terrain. He does not come with a shirt, presumably this is intended to allow the consumer to appreciate his very muscular torso. In response to the politically leading question, "Would he still be a good Action Man without a proper gun?" the boys answered (somewhat uneasily) "Yes." William was impressed with the way his sun-glasses stayed on. Only later did the children notice a scar on Action Man's cheek. "Brilliant," said David. Adam voted Action Man the winner, even though Batman "is just as good, but Action Man is bigger."

H. ROCKETPAK BATMAN AND AIR STRIKE ROBIN £6.99 each

Never mind the Batmobile - Batman and Robin now come with any number of more complex, bellicose accessories. In our samples, Batman "flies" about with the aid of a rocket backpack, while Robin has an airship and peg-on bomb. At first, Batman's "lovely velvet" cape was thought a great accessory, but it was soon discarded for the better performance of his rocket engines. Our testers also took pleasure in holding the backpack themselves "for shooting". Robin's accessories were more difficult to assemble, and David Jones's mother said: "The rocket engines took a bit of manipulating for a six year old - they're afraid of breaking them if they're too forceful." The boys were not the least bit interested in Robin's windswept hair. The packaging of Air Strike Robin enticingly shows how he can be joined up with Turbo Surge Batman to form "a high-tech team with double the powerful capacity to conquer Gotham City's most diabolical villains!" But the fact that this device wasn't in the pack was noticed immediately by the children. Only later, when David discovered that Batman has holes in his feet and that he could hitch a ride on Robin's airship, was all forgiven.

ANSWERS

1. D or A
2. C
3. B
4. C
5. D
6. B
7. D
8. E
9. C
10. A
11. C
12. B
13. A
14. D
15. E