

Britain's mean streets

Staying home in the face of danger isn't the British way. Yet last year more than a fifth of Britons avoided going out at night rather than risk encounters with a new form of terror: groups of children. Britons are frightened of their own young.

On any Saturday night it's easy to see why. "It usually starts outside McDonald's -that's the hot spot", explains one London youth. There are always people there, with nothing to do but intimidate and get kicks.

The English boys and girls who casually pick fights are often fuelled by cheap alcohol. And they try drugs or start smoking earlier than other Europeans. As Gordon Brown has recently said: "Kids are out of control... They're roaming the streets. They're out late at night. There's an issue about gangs in Britain and an issue about gun crime as well as knife crime".

According to one expert, for a "significant minority" of British children, criminality, excessive drinking, drug-taking and promiscuity really have created a crisis. "If I was sitting in government, I'd be really worried, not about terrorist bombs but about this".

All over the world, teenagers give their parents headaches. Why are British kids worse? It may be that parents aren't always around to help socialise their children or even just to show them affection. Compared to other cultures, British kids are less integrated into the adult world and spend more time with other kids. Many British adults seem to view children as an entirely separate species. And if no adult has love for you, you aren't going to feel love for other people when you get older.

Catherine Mayer (Time, 26-3-2008)

I. Answer the following questions using your own words but taking into account the information in the text (2 points: 1 point each)

a. Why did more than a fifth of Britons avoid going out at night last year?

b. According to Gordon Brown, why are British kids out of control?

II. Are the following statements true (T) or false (F)? Identify the part of the text that supports your answer by copying the exact passage on the answer sheet (1.5 point: 0.5 each)

- a. British youngsters' violence is favoured by access to alcohol.
- b. Gordon Brown is worried about terrorist bombs and teenage violence.
- c. Many British children lack affection from their parents.

III. Find a synonym for each of the four words below (1 point: 0.25 each)

- a. substantial
- b. meetings
- c. scared
- d. preoccupied

IV. Choose a, b, or c, in each question below. Only one choice is correct (1.5 points: 0.5 each)

1. Kids intimidate and get kicks outside McDonald's because...
 - a) there are many people outside and cannot enter the restaurant.
 - b) they have no intention to do anything else.
 - c) they can only socialise outside and not inside.

2. Fights and alcohol...
 - a) are the only two factors of kids' lives that the government should be worried about.
 - b) are two of the factors of kids' lives that have caused a crisis in Britain.
 - c) are the two factors that lead to kids' promiscuity and drug-taking.

3. British kids...
 - a) need their parents in order to be positively integrated into society.
 - b) need their parents more than children from other cultures.
 - c) need their parents in order to stop giving them headaches.

Part B. Composition (130-150 words approximately). Choose one of the following topics (4points)

1. Do you think that Spanish kids are like British kids and have similar problems?
2. What can be done to integrate kids into society? How can we prevent kids from being violent, taking drugs, drinking heavily and being promiscuous?

TEACHER'S

II

- a) True (The English boys and girls who casually pick fights are often fuelled by cheap alcohol)
- b) False (As Gordon Brown has recently said: "Kids are out of control... They're roaming the streets. They're out late at night. There's an issue about gangs in Britain and an issue about gun crime as well as knife crime")
- c) True (It may be that parents aren't always around to help socialise their children or even just to show them affection)

III

- a) significant
- b) encounters
- c) frightened
- d) worried

IV.

- 1. b
- 2. b
- 3. a