

A tyrant is born

The business of bringing up children used to be taken for granted, then along came something called parenting. Allison Pearson reports

1 **I**T IS a commonplace that each generation thinks it has invented sex, but it has taken my own generation to push that belief to its logical conclusion: we are the first parents. Now, older readers may cite evidence to the contrary: our own mothers and fathers, for example. 2 But I'm not sure that our parents or their parents really qualify as parents in any sense that is meaningful to my contemporaries.

3 Photographic records suggest 15 that they brought us home from the hospital, they fed us toast and Marmite, they cleaned out the guinea-pigs, they provided food, stories, affection, complicated 20 lessons in table manners, occasional smacks, caravan holidays in Devon and so on. But there was little or no self-consciousness about their role: they did not waste 25 time fretting about the meaning or the consequences of their actions.

3 These mothers and fathers were not laboratory assistants in the new science of "parenting"; 30 for the most part, they were happy if the kids were bathed and in bed before *Call My Bluff* was on TV. Children could be both seen and heard, in moderation, but it was 35 the grown-ups who held the reins of power. "Remember, the world doesn't revolve around you," my mother would chide, and I think of her words often these days as I 40 look at my own daughter.

4 "The joys of parents are secret, and so are their griefs and fears," wrote Francis Bacon in the 17th century. For almost 400 years, to 45 confess that you found parenthood intolerable or had awful children whom you couldn't handle was more shameful than unemployment or debt.

5 50 Not any more. The shattered whispers about tantrums or sleepless nights are growing into a chorus of exasperation. In "Family Values", a *Modern Times* 55 BBC2 documentary, two couples owned up to being driven bonkers by their kids. They charge through their parents' pleasant homes like a herd of stubborn ponies. Amalia and John, who both had strict 60 upbringings, say they wanted something more relaxed for their own infants: the result has been chaos and attention deficit 65 disorder.

6 But why do modern parents face these kinds of problems? There are a number of answers. 70 Firstly, the move from adult-centred families to child-centred ones has been the source of punishing stress. As Kate Figs points out in her timely and 75 gloriously sane new book, *Life After Birth (What Even Your Friends Won't Tell You About Motherhood)*, technology was liberating womankind from 80 domestic tasks just as a new wave of childcare theories came in to swamp her: theories such as Carl Rogers's "unconditional positive regard", which stipulates that 85 children must still feel valued even when behaving badly.

7 Like Figs, I have seen mothers who are afraid to chastise their own young, even when they are being a danger 90 to themselves and others, because they are under the impression that it will do untold psychological damage. 95 "Because I say so," is no longer an acceptable clincher; instead, subtle arguments must be used to persuade little 100 Matthew to stop pouring sand into Alice's ear.

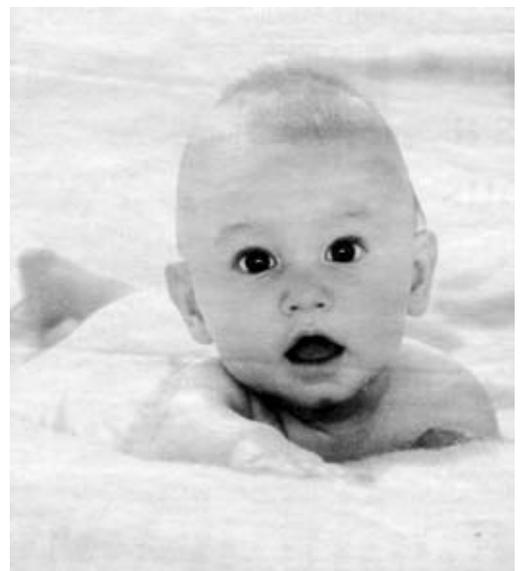
8 Of course, we now have our offspring much later. In the Fifties, the 105 gap between school and motherhood was just a

few years. Liberty was a holiday in between. Today, the maternity wards of Britain are bulging with 110 elderly women who are about the age my grandmother was when my mother had me. Women in their late thirties and early forties have grown so used to their 115 independent life that the sudden wrenching away of freedom feels like having a leg cut off.

We place more importance on children than ever before and yet 120 we spend less time with them. To resolve this painful contradiction, we have developed advanced categories of being – the New Mother, who puts in eight hours at 125 the office and then further exhausts herself with weekends doing "quality time" with the kids, and the New Man who tries to do the same.

130 The New Man and the New Mother are products of cultural hopefulness, but children are not susceptible to social and political pressure. They remind us of the 135 fact that we cannot always engineer the world according to our requirements. We have made our children the kings and queens of the castle: little wonder if they 140 take us prisoner and throw away the key.

'The Weekly Telegraph', March 4, 1998



Tekst 4 A tyrant is born

- ‘It is ... the first parents.’ (regels 1–6)
- 1p 15 Welke zin uit alinea 1 of 2 maakt duidelijk welk verschil er bestaat tussen de huidige generatie ouders en vorige generaties ouders?
Citeer de eerste twee en de laatste twee woorden van deze zin.
- ‘Remember ... my own daughter.’ (lines 36–40)
- 1p 16 Which of the following can be concluded from this sentence?
- A Allison Pearson follows her mother’s example in the way she raises her child.
 - B Allison Pearson is a less authoritarian parent than her mother was.
 - C In the past parents hardly paid any attention to their children’s needs.
 - D Modern parents object to the strict way they were brought up.
- 1p 17 What is the main point made in paragraph 5?
- A An unhappy childhood turns children into miserable parents.
 - B Children are no longer taught to respect their parents’ privacy.
 - C Modern parents no longer try to control their children.
 - D Problems that go with raising children are discussed openly nowadays.
 - E There are more and more TV programmes about parenting these days.
- 1p 18 What conclusion do paragraphs 6 and 7 lead up to?
- A Children have always questioned their parents’ authority.
 - B Kate Figes’s approach to dealing with unruly children makes good sense.
 - C Modern mothers spend too much time and energy on their children.
 - D Recent theories about bringing up children have made parents uncertain.
- ‘Of course, we now have our offspring much later.’ (regels 102–104)
- 1p 19 Waarom is dit voor vrouwen een probleem volgens alinea 8?
- 1p 20 What characterises the New Mother, according to paragraph 9?
- A She has a career and devotes much of the remaining time to her children.
 - B She is capable of managing family life to her children’s satisfaction.
 - C She is prepared to share the responsibility for the children with her husband.
 - D She prefers her job to taking care of her husband and children.
- 1p 21 What is implied in the last paragraph?
- A Children will eventually get used to new patterns in family life.
 - B It is virtually impossible for both parents of a family to have a full-time job.
 - C Modern parents have themselves to blame if their children act up.
 - D The old-fashioned way of raising children should not be re-introduced.
- Een schrijver kan verschillende middelen hanteren om standpunten kracht bij te zetten.
- 2p 22 Geef voor elk van de onderstaande middelen aan of dit voorkomt in het artikel *A tyrant is born*.
- 1 de mening van een deskundige weergeven;
 - 2 de voordelen van een nieuwe aanpak opsommen;
 - 3 eigen ervaringen beschrijven;
 - 4 voorstellen voor verbetering van een situatie doen.
- Noteer het nummer van elk middel, gevolgd door "wel" of "niet".