

College Guild
PO Box 6448 Brunswick, Maine 04011

Families

Unit 4 of 5: Families in Songs

Remember: Some of the questions may ask you to put yourself in the place of another gender (for example, asking you how a mother or father would feel in a certain situation). Please answer these questions regardless of your gender - just try to put yourself in their shoes!

* If there are any questions about family, friends, or anything else that you feel uncomfortable answering - just make up fictional characters for these questions. *

In previous Units, we've taken a look at the impact of the immediate family. Mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, stepparents, stepsiblings, half-siblings, and others all play an important role in your life. However, the extended family, made up of grandparents, cousins, aunts, and uncles can also shape your life and give you support.

1. **Grandparents are often very excited at the prospect of having grandchildren. How does this excitement differ from that of an expecting parent?**
2. **How do kids change their grandparents' lives?**
3. **Would you like to have cousins who are your own age, or those who are younger or older? Explain your answer.**
4. **Do you think it is the responsibility of the extended family to step in if the immediate family is having trouble (for instance, if a kid is not getting enough attention)? Why or why not?**
5. **Make up a story about a child who was helped by a member of his/her extended family. Give a description of the main characters in the story and outline the plot.**

Songs

In Unit 1 we looked at families in TV Shows, in Unit 2 we saw a family in a famous musical, and in Unit 3 we looked at the dynamics of a family in a movie. In this Unit, we look at songs. On the following page are excerpts from three songs about relationships between family members.

"Children Will Listen" was written by Stephen Sondheim for the Broadway musical *Into the Woods*. Adults so often complain that their children never listen to them.

6. **Why "be careful" before telling children to listen?**
7. **Should you tell a child "it will be all right" if you don't know whether that's true?**

excerpt from “Children Will Listen” from Into the Woods

How do you say to your child in the night?
Nothing's all black, but then nothing's all white
How do you say it will all be all right
When you know that it might not be true?
What do you do?

Careful the things you say
Children will listen
Careful the things you do
Children will see and learn
Children may not obey, but children will listen
Children will look to you for which way to turn

To learn what to be
Careful before you say "Listen to me"
Children will listen.....

excerpt from “I’m Already There” by Lonestar

He called her on the road
From a lonely, cold hotel room
Just to hear her say I love you one more time
But when he heard the sound
Of the kids laughing in the background
He had to wipe a tear from his eye
A little voice came on the phone
Said, “Daddy when you coming home?”
He said the first thing that came to his mind

I’m already there
Take a look around
I’m the sunshine in your hair
I’m the shadow on the ground
I’m the whisper in the wind
I’m your imaginary friend...
Oh, I’m already there...

**excerpt from “Cat’s in the Cradle”
by Harry Chapin**

My child arrived just the other day
He came to the world in the usual way
But there were planes to catch, and bills to pay
He learned to walk while I was away
And he was talking ‘fore I knew it, and as he grew
He’d say “I’m gonna be like you, dad”
“You know I’m gonna be like you”

And the cat’s in the cradle and the silver spoon
Little boy blue and the man in the moon
“When you coming home, dad?” “I don’t know when”
But we’ll get together then
You know we’ll have a good time then

My son turned ten just the other day
He said thanks for the ball, dad, come on let’s play
Can you teach me to throw, I said, not today
I got a lot to do, he said, that’s okay
And he walked away, but his smile never dimmed
It said, I’m gonna be like him, yeah
You know I’m gonna be like him

And the cat’s in the cradle and the silver spoon
Little boy blue and the man in the moon
“When you coming home, dad?” “I don’t know when”
But we’ll get together then
You know we’ll have a good time then

Well, he came from college just the other day
So much like a man I just had to say
Son I’m proud of you, can you sit for a while?
He shook his head, and he said with a smile
What I’d really like, dad, is to borrow the car keys
See you later, can I have them please?

And the cat’s in the cradle and the silver spoon
Little boy blue and the man in the moon
“When you coming home, son?” “I don’t know when”
But we’ll get together then, dad
You know we’ll have a good time then....

8. What do the lyrics to “I’m Already There” mean to you?
9. What would these lines mean to a small child? Why might they be comforting?
10. Think of another image of how the child’s father is already there: “I’m.....”
11. What is the message of this song?
12. Think of two different lines for the chorus to replace:
And the cat’s in the cradle and the silver spoon
Little boy blue and the man in the moon
13. What title would you now give the song?

Story

In *Frontiers of Justice, Volume 3: The Crime Zone*, we’ve read excerpts from Russell, Diane, and Willie. In this Unit, we’ll hear from Blake.

"I grew up with two involved and committed parents. My father was a 'man's man' who worked his whole life to provide for his family. He taught us to hunt and fish, ride motorcycles, work on our bikes and how to build or fix just about anything. He did not believe in allowances and taught us a very strong commitment to work. He always made us understand not to get caught up in what people thought or said about us. But my father was also a very complicated man, for the only emotion he ever showed was anger. He was impossible to get close to. He was very strict and used to discipline us in extreme ways that most people nowadays would say was abusive. My father's fault as a man was that he was extremely violent and felt the need to make everyone fear him. And we did! We always did our chores on time and walked on egg shells around him for fear of putting him in a bad mood."

"My mother was a housewife and a very loving and giving woman. She was always there for us when we came home from school or were sick or hurt. She always made sure we had good meals, clean clothes, and a clean house. There was nothing she would not do for her children. Because of that, she suffered a lot of abuse from my father, for she would step in when he was disciplining us. With my dad, that was the wrong thing to do, for women had no say. As strict as my father was, my mother was just the opposite. She was soft and easy, would let us children get away with stuff and keep our misbehavior from my dad. It was a terrible combination for us kids. We picked up on it and knew that if we got in trouble, didn't do well in school, etc., Mom would protect us."

"Being the eighth child of eleven, I learned that it was very easy to go unnoticed in my family. So I started to do things to get noticed, a lot of them good, some bad - - it just didn't matter as long as I got the attention I was looking for."

"By the age of 17, I had tried every drug you could think of. I bounced around from job to job; I could never keep one for any length of time, for I couldn't stop stealing from the people I worked for. I was always in and out of jail for theft and different property crimes, nothing ever too serious. And I never lived in a place for over six months, for I would never pay my bills."

"When my dad died, I was filled with so many conflicting emotions; I was hurting, I was angry, I was sad and my heart was shattered. There were so many things I felt the need to talk to him about and now he was gone. So I took a page out of his book and held everything inside, letting no one know I was dying inside, and my life fell apart."

"It took me three or four years in prison to accept my own faults and mistakes in life. Once I was able to do that, I was able to accept all of my father's shortcomings and I was once again able to see and acknowledge all the good he did."

14. Do you think it helps parents get respect when a child fears them? Why?

15. What are some other ways parents can earn respect from their children?

16. What is Blake's father greatest strength?

Blake describes his mother as "soft and easy", and says she would often protect the kids from their father by ignoring their bad behavior.

17. Write a story about a family whose parents have very different personalities. One is serious and into computers. The other has a great sense of fun and likes to collect.... you decide!

Blake also mentions he was the eighth out of eleven children in his family.

18. List at least two advantages and two disadvantages of having a large family.

Blake ends his story by acknowledging he must accept his own mistakes instead of blaming them on his family. Many people today are having this debate over "nature vs nurture". This means some people believe the environment around you (including family, friends, location), and the personal experiences that result from this environment shape who you are; this is nurture. Those who believe in nature think that a person's characteristics and personality exist right from birth, and are innate within a person.

19. Do you believe "nature" or "nurture" is stronger? In other words, how responsible do you think a family is in causing a child to participate in bad behaviors?

20. Write the lyrics for a song about any topic we've covered in this course so far.

Remember: First names only & please let us know if your address changes