



World Words

Genetics

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Student's Activities

Pre-Listening Activity 1

Genetics: from the Greek, meaning *origin*; the science of genes, heredity and variation in living organisms.

A. It's not uncommon for people to recognise similarities of features between members of the same family. Often what we recognise as being similar are the eyes, or the shape of the nose or face or head. Obviously this is because we are more aware of facial features of strangers or acquaintances than of any other features.

Most of us are aware of inheriting some physical features from our parents, sometimes with one parent being more dominant than the other in our features. What features do you share with your parents?

B. But what of the hands? Think about your own hands. How long are your fingers? How wide is your palm? Do other members of your family have similar hands? Have a look at the following hands. They are all from the same family (parents and two children). Discuss similarities and differences between the different hands.

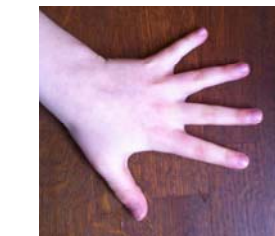
Mum



Dad



Child 1



Child 2

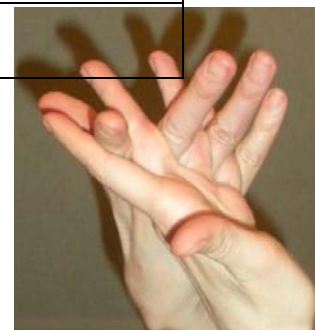


Pre-listening Activity 2

1. You will hear the poet talking about the poem and some students discussing their reaction to it. Read through the following comments which are made in the broadcast and decide first who was speaking - the poet or the students - and then decide if they were discussing **childhood games**, or the **symbolism** with the poem. or were they talking about **relationships** and feelings? On the other hand, they might have been discussing the language and **form** used to create the poem. Then listen to the broadcast to check your answers.

- a. "I understand where she's coming from with this poem - the unity between the mum and the dad. But personally don't see my parents in my hands."
- b. "I think that gives the poem a lot more rhythm and the repetition of the last line ... gives the poem a bit of flow."
- c. "For me it a very optimistic poem. It's hopeful on two levels. It's hopeful because even though my parents are separated the fact of their togetherness continues in the existence of me and my brother."
- d. "A villanelle is structured around the repetition of two lines, all the way through the poem."
- e. "Physically they are separated but maybe on a spiritual level they are still together inside of her and I don't think that there is anything that can take that away from her."
- f. "When I was a child there was a street rhyme and children would do this with other children and say it, folding their hands together at the knuckles, with fingers interlacing together."
- g. "When I'd finished it and was thinking about why this poem had had to be a villanelle, I realised it was to do with the subject matter of genetic materials being repeated through generations."
- h. "I wanted to ask if what she's going through now is the result of her parents having a bumpy break up."
- i. "I looked down and noticed that I have my father's fingers, which are long and thin, and my mother's palm which is quite square."
- j. "She refers to her fingers connected to her palms as how her parents were when they were together."
- k. "This is the church and this is the steeple, Open the doors, and there are all the people."

	games	symbolism	relationships	form
The poet				
The students				



After Listening Activities

A. Let's explore genetic similarity further. Here is a family showing a diagram of the connections between the parents and their children (as seen by the parents).

mouth,
shape of face,
temperament,
creativity,
stubbornness



Poppy

nose,
eye colour,
sense of humour,
generosity,
confidence

nose, mouth,
eyes,
cautiousness,
introspection



Rosie

hair colour,
way of dancing,
flat feet.
expressions,
mischievousnes



Mum



Dad

Answer these questions about the diagram and pictures above

1. What are the facial characteristics that Brigid and Poppy have in common?
2. What is the behavioural characteristic that Dad and Rosie have in common?
3. What are the facial characteristics that Dad and Poppy have in common?
4. What are the behavioural characteristics that Mum and Rosie have in common?
5. What are the behavioural characteristics that Dad and Poppy have in common?
6. What are the facial characteristics that Mum and Rosie have in common?

B. A Project.

This is your opportunity to do the same for your family or a family you know. It doesn't matter how big the family is because one child is enough, and you can add as many as you can deal with.

You need to ask the parents about characteristics which they think they share with their children as well as make your own judgements. Get some photographs and assemble them on a large piece of paper or card (to put on the wall like a poster) and design a poster like that of Poppy and Rosie and their Mum and Dad.

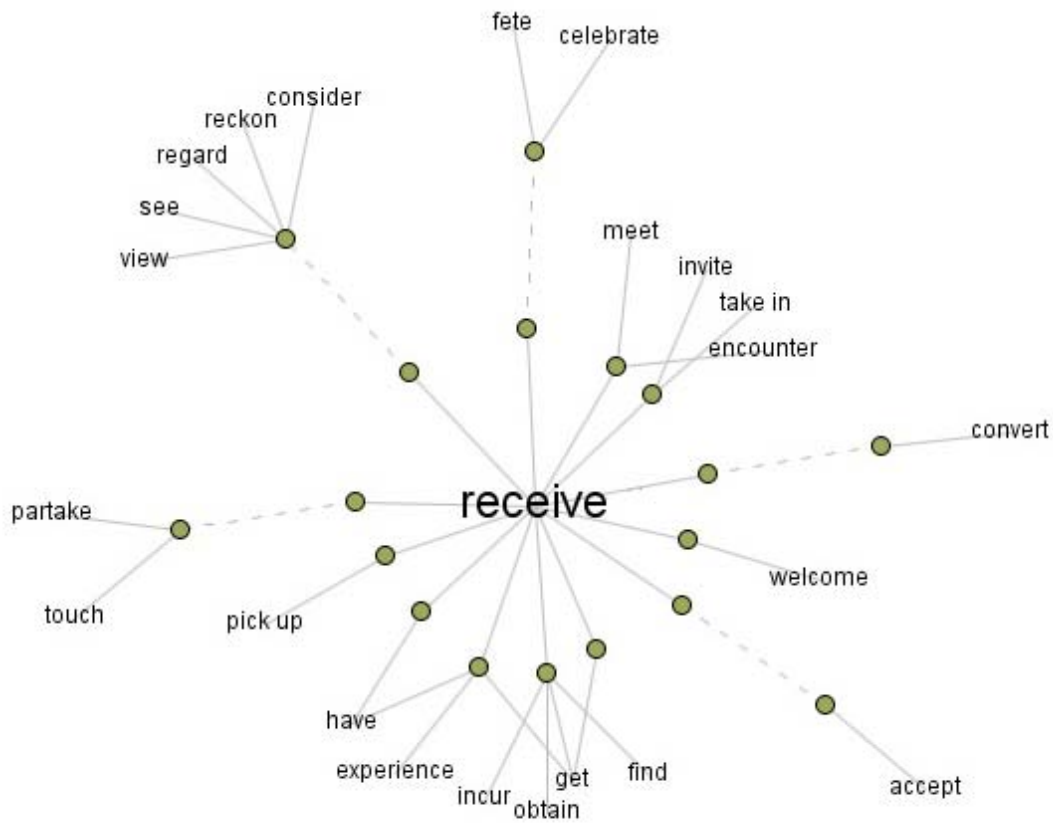
C. Language Point

The poem is about inheritance - what we receive from our parents. The poet uses a number of ways to talk about this, for example the possessive 's' in the first line:

My father's in my fingers, but my mother's in my palms.

In the penultimate line the poet uses the word '*bequeath*' meaning what she will leave for the next generation.

There are many words that are related to receiving something. Here is a map of related words.



To check out more relationships between words like this, go to <http://www.visualthesaurus.com/>

D Discussion

In the interview, the poet says that the poem is an optimistic poem. Do you agree?