SERP

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IF YOU WERE A PARENT, WOULD YOU BUY A DOLL THAT MISREPRESENTED YOUR VALUES?

Word Generation - Unit 3.22

Focus Words

undergo | empower | implications | deny | role

WEEKLY PASSAGE

Cindy Jackson loves Barbie. When she was a little girl, she thought her Barbie doll was beautiful and glamorous. As an adult, she decided to **undergo** surgery to look more like Barbie. Doctors made her lips and breasts larger and her waist, legs, and nose thinner. She wrote a book about her life called *Living Doll*.

Of course, Cindy Jackson is an isolated case. Many children love Barbie, but very few will go to such extremes. Still, many adults worry about the **implications** of Barbie's body-type as an ideal. They say that Barbie's thinness makes her a dangerous **role** model. If Barbie were made the size of a real person, her waist would be narrower than a gallon bottle of milk. Real girls will never look like Barbie, even if they starve themselves, but they may try.

Adults also worry about Barbie's emphasis on appearance. Some popular Barbies include Totally Hair Barbie and Top Model Barbie. Adults worry that Barbie's glamorous looks, fancy clothes, and handsome boyfriends encourage girls to focus on beauty and boys instead of school, sports, and other interests. Focusing too much on appearance may hurt girls' self-esteem. To some people, Barbie represents women as pretty, but shallow.

Mattel, the company that makes Barbie, **denies** that the doll hurts girls' self-esteem. Instead, it calls Barbie "a girl-**empowering** pioneer" who is "an inspiration to millions." Before Barbie, most dolls were babies or little girls, not women. The woman who created Barbie thought that giving girls dolls that looked like beautiful women would make them feel good about growing up.
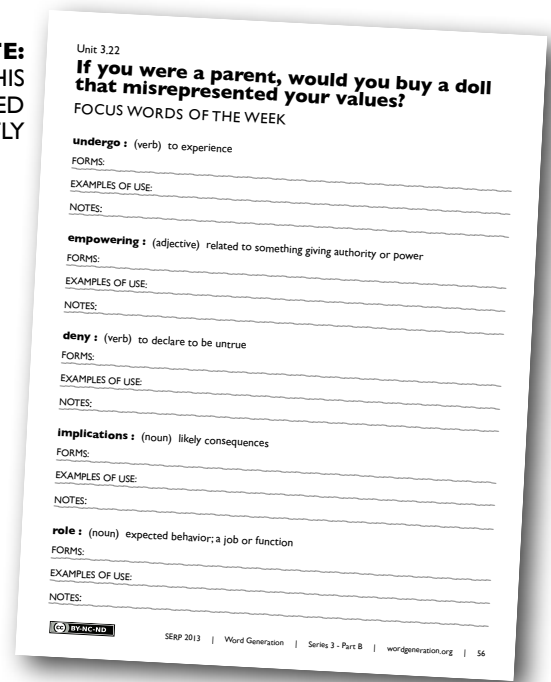
There are some reasons for thinking that Barbie could be a positive role model. Some Barbies are shown in strong roles, such as the Olympic Gymnast Barbie and the Barbie for President doll. Seeing a woman in these roles may encourage girls to set high goals. Also, Barbie's body has changed over time. In 1997, Mattel made Barbie's waist slightly thicker and her hips and breasts slightly smaller. The company said Barbie's new body would look better in new clothing styles. But many think the company was responding to criticism.

What do you think? Would you buy a Barbie for your child?

TEACHER: Discussion Questions

▸ Why did Cindy Jackson title her book *Living Doll*?
▸ What is unusual about Barbie's body type, and why are some concerned about it?
▸ How is a Barbie different from other dolls children play with?
▸ Does the Mattel company's position surprise you? Do you feel it is reasonable?
▸ Are the recent changes to the Barbie product likely to satisfy the critics?

Unit 3.22
If you were a parent, would you buy a doll that misrepresented your values?
FOCUS WORDS OF THE WEEK

undergo : (verb) to experience
FORMS:

EXAMPLES OF USE:

NOTES:

empowering : (adjective) related to something giving authority or power
FORMS:

EXAMPLES OF USE:

NOTES:

deny : (verb) to declare to be untrue
FORMS:

EXAMPLES OF USE:

NOTES:

implications : (noun) likely consequences
FORMS:

EXAMPLES OF USE:

NOTES:

role : (noun) expected behavior; a job or function
FORMS:

EXAMPLES OF USE:

NOTES:

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Unit 3.22
WORD CHART FOR TEACHERS
This chart is not in the student book. It is a resource for teachers to support students in the use of the focus words each week. Students are provided one page in each unit immediately following the weekly passage with a basic definition printed and space for taking notes.

Word	Meaning	Forms			Related Words
		Inflectional	**Basic Word Classes**	**Prefixes/ Suffixes**	
undergo	(v.) - to experience	undergoes undergoing underwent undergone	go		
empowering	(adj.) - related to something giving authority or power	empower empowers empowered	power	empowerment	
deny	(v.) - to declare to be untrue	denies denied denying		denial undeniable deniable	
implications	(n.) - likely consequences	implication	implicate	implicative implicatively implicativeness	imply implicit
role	(n.) - expected behavior; a job or function	roles			role model role-play

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PROBLEM OF THE WEEK

Option 1: In 1965, the "Slumber Party" Barbie doll came with an additional toy: a pink bathroom scale. The toy scale was set to 110 pounds. Some people were angry. They said the toy scale was **disempowering** to girls. They said it could play a dangerous **role** in girls' lives. The scale **implied** that 110 pounds was a good weight. Girls who believed this might **undergo** dangerous dieting to be skinnier.

Doctors **deny** that 110 pounds is a good weight for a woman with Barbie's height and shape. They say she should weigh at least 145 pounds. How many pounds should Slumber Party Barbie gain?

A) 30

B) 35

C) 40

D) 5

Option 2: In 1965, "Slumber Party" Barbie came with a toy bathroom scale showing a weight of 110 pounds. Some people **denied** that this toy had negative **implications** for a girl's body image. Instead, they said Barbie **empowered** girls by reflecting their real-life concerns. But can Barbie be a good **role** model if she's too thin to be healthy? If Barbie were a real person with a height of 5'9", her body mass index (BMI) would be 16.2.

What if Barbie decided to **undergo** a plan to gain weight to reach a healthier size? At what weight would Barbie reach the minimum healthy BMI of 18.5?

Formula for BMI: $\dfrac{\text{weight in pounds} \times 703}{(\text{height in inches})^2}$

Answer: about 125 pounds

Math Discussion Question: Every day, we see thin female celebrities celebrated as beauty ideals. Commercials showing skinny models promise us our bodies will **undergo empowering** transformations if we join a gym or buy a diet plan. When we see so many distorted images, how do we know what healthy bodies should look like? While BMI can play an important **role**, doctors **deny** that BMI is always accurate. For example, a muscular athlete might have a BMI in the overweight range, but the **implication** that the athlete should lose weight would be false. What is the best way for a person to know if his or her weight is a healthy one?

Note for Teachers: Doctors advise that Barbie should weigh at least 145 pounds. This takes her shape into account, which BMI does not. Also, it should be emphasized that 18.5 is considered the *minimum* healthy BMI ("minimum" is a WG word from week 15), and that BMI is an imperfect tool. Students will have a chance to think about BMI in the Math Discussion Question.

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THINKING SCIENTIFICALLY

Mr. Seemy's class was discussing the **implications** different cultural images have for the way people see themselves. "I read about a study done in 2006," said Jacky, "where they found that the type of doll young girls are exposed to plays a **role** in how the girls see their own bodies. Experimenters read the same story to a group of 5-8 year old girls, but had the girls follow along with books that had different sets of illustrations. One set of illustrations used the well-known, super-thin Barbie doll. Another set of illustrations featured the Emme doll, which looks like a real woman. A third set of illustrations didn't show any dolls, just images of objects and scenery relating to the story. After **undergoing** this process, girls in Kindergarten and first grade who looked at the Barbie illustrations were less satisfied with their own bodies' appearance than girls who looked at the Emme illustrations or the illustrations without any dolls."

"That's interesting," said Aliyah. "I think its important to **empower** kids at an early age to resist unrealistic expectations of how they ought to look. Some girls wind up feeling so bad about their bodies that they end up **denying** themselves enough food."

"Why did they have some of the girls in the experiment look at pictures without any dolls?" asked Manvi.

"Great question," said Mr. Seemy. "Those pictures were used as what's called a 'controlled variable.' A variable is anything that can change or differ in an experiment. Researchers distinguish between three basic kinds of variables: independent variables, dependent variables, and controlled variables.

"An *independent variable*," continued Mr. Seemy, "is a variable that is changed by the scientists in an experiment."

"A *dependent variable* is something scientists observe that is caused by, or depends on, the influence of the independent variable."

"And a *controlled variable* is something that remains constant in any experiment, regardless of changes to the independent variable."

→ Mr. Seemy drew the first table below and helped his students check off which variables were independent, dependent, and controlled. Then he drew a second table for another experiment, and challenged his students to identify the variables correctly.

Experimental question: Do different types of dolls affect girls' satisfaction with their own bodies?			
Variables in this experiment	Independent variable	Dependent variable(s)	Controlled variable(s)
Amount of satisfaction girls report with their bodies		✗	
Story that is read aloud to girls			✗
Which set of illustrations girls see	✗		

Experimental question: Does the amount of fertilizer affect how quickly a plant grows?			
Variables in this experiment	Independent variable	Dependent variable(s)	Controlled variable(s)
Pot, soil, amount of water, amount of light			
Amount of fertilizer			
Rate of plant growth			

✎ Why did you identify each of the variables in the fertilizer experiment the way you did?

The amount of fertilizer is the independent variable because it is the thing the experimenters change, so that they can see its effect on plant growth. The rate of plant growth is the dependent variable: the experimenters are studying its dependence on the amount of fertilizer. The pot, soil, amount of water and amount of light are the controlled variables that are held constant regardless of changes in the independent variable.

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DEBATING THE ISSUE

1. Get ready...

Pick one of these positions (or create your own).

A I would not buy a Barbie doll for my child. Barbie is a bad role model. Her thin body and her focus on clothes and boys have negative implications.

B I would only buy a "girl-empowering" Barbie for my child. Her exciting careers encourage girls to set high goals.

C I would buy any Barbie for my child, but I would talk to my child about Barbie's unrealistic figure.

D I would buy Barbie or any doll my child wanted. Dolls are not role models.

E _____
_____
_____

2. Get set...

Be ready to provide evidence to back up your position during your class discussion or debate. Jot down a few quick notes:

_____

_____

_____

GO!

Be a strong participant by using phrases like these.

I think it's more accurate to say...

That's interesting – can you tell why you think that?

I think the evidence is contrary to what you're saying because. . .

Let me share something from the reading that will help us...

TEACHER
Whatever debate format you use in your class, ask students to use academically productive talk in arguing their positions. In particular, students should provide reasons and evidence to back up their assertions. It may be helpful to read these sample positions to illustrate some possibilities, but students should also be encouraged to take their own positions on the issue at hand.

Unit 3.22

If you were a parent, would you buy a doll that misrepresented your values?

WRITE ABOUT IT

Support your position with clear reasons and specific examples.
Try to use relevant words from the Word Generation list in your response.

Focus Words

undergo | empower | implications | deny | role

TEACHER

Ask students to write a response in which they argue a position on the weekly topic.

Put the writing prompt on a projector (or the board) so that everyone can see it. Remind students to refer to the word lists in their Word Generation notebooks as needed.