

a In pairs, do the names quiz.

- 1 'What's in a name?' is a quotation from which Shakespeare play?
a *Hamlet* b *Romeo and Juliet* c *Othello*
- 2 'Tom' is short for Thomas. What are these names short for?
a Kate b Bill c Dick d Bob e Sam f Liz
- 3 In the UK, parents often name their children after celebrities or TV/film characters. Who do you think might have inspired these names which have been popular in the UK in the last few years?
a Harry b Keira c Bradley d Kylie e Victoria
- 4 Match the celebrity couples to their children:

<input type="checkbox"/> Gwyneth Paltrow and Chris Martin	a Romeo (M)
<input type="checkbox"/> Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt	b Suri (F)
<input type="checkbox"/> Victoria and David Beckham	c Apple (F)
<input type="checkbox"/> Tom Cruise and Katie Holmes	d Shiloh (F)



b Talk to a partner. Do you think the following are true or false?

- 1 Your name doesn't have any influence on how happy you are.
- 2 Your name could prevent you from getting a job.
- 3 People with attractive names work harder than people with unattractive ones.
- 4 An actor called Norman might want to change his name.
- 5 Being named after a celebrity probably makes you more popular when you are a teenager.

c Read the article and check. Do you agree with what it says?

What's in a name?

'What's in a name?' asked Shakespeare's Juliet. 'A rose by any other name would smell as sweet...', that is to say, the name of a person is irrelevant. However, research by psychologists suggests that our names can have a direct effect on our happiness.

Having a popular name, it seems, can make other people think you are intelligent and attractive even before they have met you. This is because, according to psychologist Dr Philip Erwin, people associate a particular name with a stereotyped image. However, having an unpopular name can have the opposite effect. 'It can even affect your employment prospects,' says Dr Erwin. 'The first thing employers read is your name on your CV, which may immediately create a negative stereotype in their mind.'

As a result, people with less attractive names tend to work harder to get on in life. According to Dr Erwin's research, students with unpopular old-fashioned names did significantly better in exams. This suggested that they were aware they had an unattractive name and were working harder to overcome negative attitudes. Names

considered to be less attractive were, for example, Norman, Ronald, and Albert for men, and Gillian, Pauline, or Agnes for women. Actors and pop stars certainly seem to take this into account, and they often swap the name they were born with for a more glamorous stage name. Elton John, for example, was born Reginald Dwight.

In the last two decades there has been a definite tendency both in the UK and USA for parents to choose unusual names, or to name their child after a celebrity. But the question is, will these names still be considered attractive when the children grow up? 'When I was at school there was no one in my class with the same name as me,' says 30-year-old Farrah Stephens, who was named after the Charlie's Angels actress, Farrah Fawcett-Majors. 'By the time I was 15, everybody had forgotten about the actress, and I was left with this really stupid name. In the end I decided to use my middle name.'

Dr Erwin's advice is: 'Choose names for your children which they will be happy with in 20 years' time, and choose a second name in case your child doesn't like the first one.'

d Talk to your partner.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ What's your first name? Do you have any others? ■ Do you like your first name? Why (not)? ■ Do you know why your parents chose it? ■ Do you have a nickname? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Do people have a stereotype which they associate with your name? ■ Do you think your name has had an effect on your life? ■ Would you like to change your name? |
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