English for PS, Sek I and Sek II

**Cultural Phenomena**

Laughing – crying (22)

14:15 minutes

1. **What significance did laughter have in the past?**

Laughing used to be considered unseemly. If you really had to laugh, you covered your mouth with your hand. This doubtless also had to do with less-than-perfect oral hygiene. Until the end of the 19th cen-tury, laughter was frowned upon, in particular among women. Smiling was allowed, but women who laughed out loud were deemed vulgar. The Christian faith rejected all kinds of sensual pleasure.

1. **What is the status of laughter today?**

People laugh joyfully, maliciously, in embarrassment, because of a funny film or a joke … Laughter brings people together. We laugh much more in company than alone. People who make others laugh are popular.

People all around the world enjoy a bit of merriment. There may be cultural differences about what makes them laugh, but these are becoming less significant in the age of globalisation. The differences between individuals are more obvious than those between countries. People’s sense of humour says a lot about their personality.

1. **Explain the term «laughing club».**

Laughing is healthy. Laughing is contagious. There are about 1’500 laughing clubs worldwide, where people laugh in public, on com-mand. One of these clubs meets at Stadelhofen in Zurich.

1. **How are children helped to get better at the children’s**

**hospital in Zurich?**

The young patients receive a weekly visit from the clown doctors. Laughing has a curative effect. Laughing stimulates the immune system. It produces feel-good hormones (endorphins) and sup-presses stress hormones (adrenaline). These changes in the hor-mone balance can ease pain. In addition, these visits help both the children and their parents to relax.

1. **What else have laughter scientists found out about laughing?**

Laughter scientists have identified 25 different kinds of laughter. Only five of them are genuine – the others are all put on. Laughing tenses about 300 muscles from the head to the stomach, 17 in the face alone. Fake laughter requires considerably fewer. Laughing really does ease pain. Test subjects who watch funny films have a higher pain-toleration limit than people who have not been laughing.

1. **Which animals other than human beings can laugh? What do you know about this?**

Primates react by laughing when they are tickled. In apes, however, laughter is also an automatic reaction that plays an important role in communal life. This baring of the teeth shows that there is no ques-tion of any aggression or hostility.

1. **What significance did crying have in the past?**

In the Middle Ages, if a woman was suspected of being a witch, she was tortured. If she screamed in pain and fainted without shedding a tear, she was convicted of witchcraft. The torturers were convinced that the devil spared witches from crying.

In the 18th century, men were allowed to cry. In the upper classes, it was considered good form to cultivate one’s melancholic side. It was a time of great political, economic and cultural change in Europe. In the last century, by contrast, men who cried were generally consid-ered crybabies and cowards.

1. **Explain how crying changes as a child grows into an adult.**

Boys and girls cry roughly the same amount until they reach puberty – but then, boys’ behaviour changes. Men cry much less often than women.

1. **Describe modern attitudes towards crying.**

Today, crying is regarded as a sign of emotional intelligence. Politi-cians who shed a tear are not regarded as weak any more, but rather as strong.

In some cultures, crying is frowned upon. In patriarchal societies and where war and violence shape people’s lives, men’s tears are seen as a sign of weakness and tend to be suppressed.

1. **When do people cry most frequently? Why?**

Crying is commonest between 7 and 10 o’clock in the evening – partly because that is the time for family crises and lovers’ tiffs, and partly because it is when people watch slushy films and tearjerkers. People are readier to cry when they are tired.

1. **Laughter and crying are good for you! Explain.**

Laughter and crying are related to each other. Both express strong feelings. Both relax the muscular system and relieve mental tension.

1. **Write down your favourite joke!**

(Individual answers)