

Join the national conversation!



## 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?

## Unit 3.22 - If you were a parent, would you buy a doll that misrepresented your values?

### Focus Word Chart

Word	Meaning	Forms	Examples of Use	Notes
undergo	(v.) - to experience			
empowering	(adj.) - giving authority or power to			
deny	(v.) - to declare to be untrue			
implications	(n.) - likely consequences			
role	(n.) - expected behavior; a job or function			

## Unit 3.22 - If you were a parent, would you buy a doll that misrepresented your values?

### 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: 
$$\frac{\text{weight in pounds} \times 703}{(\text{height in inches})^2}$$

**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?

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

## Debating the Issue

### I. 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...*

## Unit 3.22 - If you were a parent, would you buy a doll that misrepresented your values?

### Science Activity



This activity is designed to help you practice thinking like a scientist and to use this week's focus words. Sometimes the data are based on real research, but they should never be considered true or factual.

Professor Lexie Kahn and Professor Paul E. Seemy know that many girls worry about their weight. Some women **deny** themselves food with unhealthy diets, and others even **undergo** expensive surgery to look thinner. Instead of **empowering** women of all sizes to feel proud of the way they look, advertisements play a **role** in making girls feel bad about themselves. Many advertisements in the media include very, very thin women and ignore all other body shapes. The professors decided to see what **implications** these advertisements have for the way girls think about their own appearance.

---

#### Question:

Can viewing advertisements featuring extremely thin women make girls of normal weight feel like they are fat?

#### Hypothesis:

Girls who see a lot of advertisements featuring thin women will be more likely to describe themselves as overweight.

#### Materials:

- ▶ Two surveys about body image (how a person feels about their appearance)
- ▶ 15-minute DVD containing advertisements featuring very thin women
- ▶ 15-minute DVD containing advertisements featuring women of all different weights

**Procedure:**

1. Gather a group of 100 12-year-old girls with healthy weights.
2. Give all girls the first survey, asking them if they are too thin, just right, or too fat.
3. Divide the girls into two equal groups.
4. Show Group A the DVD containing advertisements featuring very thin women.
5. Show Group B the other DVD.
6. Give all girls the second survey, again asking if they are too thin, just right, or too fat.

**Data:**

	Before watching DVD			After watching DVD		
	Number who say they are:			Number who say they are:		
	Too thin	Just right	Too fat	Too thin	Just right	Too fat
	Group A	5	35	10	2	28
Group B	4	37	9	3	39	8

**Conclusion:**

Is the hypothesis supported or not by the data?

What evidence supports your conclusion?

How would you make this a better experiment?



## Writing Prompt

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

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

### A tool to help you think about your own writing!

Remember you can use focus words from any of the WG Units.

Check off what you accomplished:

#### Good Start

- ☐ Stated my own position
- ☐ Included 1 focus word

#### Pretty Good

- ☐ Stated my own position clearly
- ☐ Included 1-2 arguments
- ☐ Included 1-2 focus words

#### Exemplary

- ☐ Stated my own position clearly
- ☐ Included 1-2 arguments
- ☐ Included 1 counterargument
- ☐ Used 2-5 focus words

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.