



Clever Kids

1 Have you ever heard the term prodigy? A prodigy is a child who has displayed high skill in an area that even a lot of adults would find difficult. They are rare talents, but as these examples show, such children can be found all over the world.

2 Ernesto Sánchez Shaida Yevgueni was declared a prodigy by a panel of Russian academics in 2002. A resident of Siberia, the then 11-year-old Ernesto astounded his country's scientific community with his

inventions. These included a 3-D image television and a refrigerator that doesn't run on electricity.

Apparently, Ernesto's fridge at home had stopped working and he asked his father about how it could be fixed. Ernesto was intrigued. He continued researching refrigeration technology at the library and devoted himself to the project until he found a way to operate a fridge without electricity.

3 Michael Kearney was four months old when he started speaking. By eight months he could read captions from the *TV Guide*. A month later he was reading entire children's books. His favourite books as a three-year-old were *Treasure Island* and *The Count of Monte Cristo*. Michael sped through his education, graduating high school at the age of six.

Michael went on to become the *Guinness Book of Records*' youngest, most educated person in the world. He has a Bachelor Degree in Anthropology, a Degree in Geology, Masters Degrees in Chemistry and Computer Science and has even taught at an American university. All of this was achieved between the ages of eight and seventeen.

4 South Korean born Nicole Dah On Lee moved to America with her family at the age of three. At that time, the shy girl barely spoke in public. Yet a year later, Nicole was reading books in English at a Montessori school. Her academic abilities grew more evident with age. By third grade, Nicole was comparing acid levels in rainwater. In fifth grade, she created diagrams of how machines operated.

5 By the age of ten, Abigail Sin was Singapore's most celebrated young pianist. She started reading at age two. The youngest Singaporean ever to obtain the coveted Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music Diploma in Piano Performance, Abigail took her first lesson at age five. These days she practises on average for twenty-five hours each week.

6 Adam Baratz started working for Borland International, a leading computer software maker after meeting the company's chairman

at the age of nine. Adam also found work with other major software companies by directly contacting their CEOs – the highest position in a business. To Microsoft chief, Bill Gates, he wrote, "Don't let my age fool you. I found my first bug when I was five."

7 Another truly clever child is English boy, Mikhail Ali. Mikhail was only three in 2004 when he became the youngest member of Mensa. Mensa is a worldwide organisation which is only open to people whose level of intelligence puts them in the top two per cent of the population.

When Mikhail applied he had an IQ of 137, which is very high for someone of his age. At university, he completed a series of tests involving maths, number sequences, logic and picture puzzles. Mikhail learned to read and write basic words at the age of two and understands the Arabic alphabet.

8 From Tamil Nadu in India, Aadhirai was a world-renowned child prodigy, a walking encyclopedia on the *Kamba Ramayana*. This is a verse story about the hero, Rama, that has more than 10,000 verses. It is the oldest epic in history, revered as a holy book by devout Tamil Hindus. As a three year old, Aadhirai used to sit and listen to the *Ramayana* stories read out by her father. Soon Aadhirai was able to recite all the verses, word for word.

Psychologists classify Aadhirai as a *hypermnestic*, or one having a very vivid memory. In the world there are probably less than 50 of her kind and for her age, even fewer.

9 These children are very rare talents, however, in all of these cases it was not their intelligence that brought them success and recognition. All pursued a goal they had established from their interests, working hard to fulfill their desires. Now might be a good time for you to get started on your own big project! What do you think?



Questions

- 1 What was one achievement that led to Ernesto being called a prodigy?
 - a reading at the age of three
 - b inventing a refrigerator
 - c being Siberian
- 2 What was the first thing that Michael Kearney could read?
 - a *TV Guide*
 - b *Treasure Island*
 - c *The Count of Monte Cristo*
- 3 In third grade, Nicole Dah On Lee
 - a read books in Korean.
 - b compared acid levels in rainwater.
 - c created diagrams of how machines operated.
- 4 What is the worldwide organisation for people who are in the top two percent of the population for their intelligence?
 - a Montessori
 - b *Guinness Book of Records*
 - c Mensa
- 5 A person who has an abnormally vivid memory is called a
 - a *hypermnestic*.
 - b *Kamba Ramayana*.
 - c psychologist.
- 6 This text suggests we can all achieve success and recognition
 - a if we are intelligent.
 - b if we invent something.
 - c if we have a goal and work hard to achieve it.

Vocabulary

Find words in the text that match the meanings below. The word is in the section shown in brackets.

- 7 Uncommon (1)
- 8 A group that lives or works together (2)
- 9 Complete (3)
- 10 Obvious and clear (4)
- 11 A set (8)

Grammar

The words in **BLUE** appear in the text. Match them by writing the correct synonym shown in **RED**.

E.g. *under* / *below*

- | | |
|---------------------|------------------|
| 12 coveted | drawings |
| 13 practises | genuinely |
| 14 truly | desirable |
| 15 diagrams | rehearses |

Back To The Text...

- 16 In section 8 the word *devout* is used as
 - a a noun.
 - b an adjective.
- 17 Key words are important words that help you understand the main ideas. Which of the following is a key word in section 5?
 - a pianist
 - b associated
- 18 Prediction: What is Adam likely to do in the future?
 - a Design clever computer programs.
 - b Perform at musical concerts.

Think About This

- 19 The word *intrigued* that appears in section 2 is best replaced with
 - a excited.
 - b distracted.
 - c bored.
 - d fascinated.
- 20 In section 6, the sentence "I found my first bug when I was five" means
 - a he discovered an insect when he was five years old.
 - b he unfortunately fell ill with an infection at five years of age.
 - c he diagnosed a computer system problem at five years of age.
- 21 According to the text, which of the following statements is not true?
 - a Clever kids can come from any country.
 - b Clever kids usually like to work with computers.
 - c Clever kids can show talent in very different ways.
- 22 The items on either side of the title are likely to be
 - a newspapers.
 - b diplomas.
 - c hand wipes.
- 23 According to the text which child's talents were identified at the earliest age?
 - a Michael Kearney
 - b Mikhail Ali
 - c Aadhirai

Challenge Option

Research: Find out all you can about the Mensa organization.

