

## What Children Really Think About Magic

This week we will counter the cold and dark with the warmth and light of fantasy, fiction and magic. Children will listen to tales of dwarves and elves and magic rings in front of an old-fashioned fire or watch them on a new-fashioned screen.



But what do children really think about magic? The conventional wisdom is that young children can't discriminate between the real and the imaginary, fact and fantasy. More recently, however, researchers like Jacqueline Woolley at the University of Texas and Paul Harris at Harvard have shown that even the youngest children understand magic in surprisingly sophisticated ways.

For instance, Dr. Woolley showed preschoolers a box of pencils and an empty box. She got them to vividly imagine that the empty box was full of pencils. The children enthusiastically pretended, but they also said that if someone wanted pencils, they should go to the real box rather than the imagined one.

Even young children make a sort of metaphysical distinction between two worlds. One is the current, real world with its observable events, incontrovertible facts and causal laws. The other is the world of pretense and possibility, fiction and fantasy.

Children understand the difference. They know that their beloved imaginary friend isn't actually real and that the terrifying monster in their closet doesn't actually exist (though that makes them no less beloved or scary). But children do spend more time than we do thinking about the world of imagination. They don't actually confuse the fantasy world with the real one; they just prefer to hang out there.

Why do children spend so much time thinking about wild possibilities? We humans are remarkably good at imagining ways the world could be different and working out the consequences. Philosophers call it "counterfactual" thinking, and it is one of our most valuable abilities.

Scientists work out what would happen if the physical world were different, and novelists work out what would happen if the social and psychological world were different. Scientific hypotheses and literary fictions both consider the consequences of small tweaks to our models of the world; mythologies consider much larger changes. But the fundamental psychology is the same. Young children seem to practice this powerful way of thinking in their everyday pretend play. For scientists and novelists and 3-year-olds to be good at counterfactual reasoning, though, they must be able to preserve a bright line between imaginary possibilities and current reality.

But, particularly as they get older, children also begin to think that this bright line could be crossed. They recognize the possibility of "real" magic. It is conceivable to them, as it is to adults, that somehow the causal laws could be suspended or creatures from the imaginary world could be transported to the real one. Dr. Harris did an experiment where children imagined a monster in the box instead of pencils. They still said that the monster wasn't real, but when the experimenter left the room, they moved away from the box—just in case. Santa Claus is confusing because he is a fiction who at least seems to leave an observable trail of disappearing cookies and delivered presents.

The great conceptual advance of science was to reject this second kind of magic, the kind that bridges the real and the imagined, whether it is embodied in religious fundamentalism or New Age superstition. But at the same time, like the 3-year-olds, scientists and artists are united in their embrace of both reality and possibility, and their capacity to discriminate between them. There is no conflict between celebrating the magic of fiction, myth and metaphor and celebrating science. Counterfactual thinking is an essential part of science, and science requires and rewards imagination as much as literature or art.

### **Vocabulary practice:**

**Match the words in the box with the appropriate line:**

sophisticated	enthusiastically	fiction	creatures	confusing
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This is not real, she said , this must be only.....

All this story seemed to him unclear and by far very.....

She told me that we have to discuss a very ..... matter which appeared only to be simple.

I couldn't believe a word he said, and anyway it was clearly impossible that my office was full of magic..... which came from the future.

He started to scream ..... that he discovered the secret treasure .

### **Grammar: Conditionals**

#### ***1. Complete the sentences using your own ideas***

1 If you trust him,

2 If you trusted him,

3 If you had trusted him,

4 If you leave at 5 o'clock,

5 If she had called you,

6 If he ate that cake,

7 If she is lazy,

8 If they had looked in his pocket,

9 If Mike found his wallet,

- 10 If he came to the party,
- 11 If I'd started learning English a year earlier,
- 12 If a meteor had struck the Earth,
- 13 If I won the lottery,
- 14 If my parents were here,
- 15 If he does his homework,

**2. Complete the gaps in the following sentences with the appropriate form of the verb in brackets.**

- 1 If I ( have ) \_\_\_\_\_ more time, I ( help ) \_\_\_\_\_ you, but I'm afraid I'm just too busy.
- 2 I (buy) \_\_\_\_\_ you a new pair of shoes if you ( promise ) \_\_\_\_\_ to look after them properly.
- 3 Why did you tell your parents? If you ( not say ) \_\_\_\_\_ anything, we (not get ) \_\_\_\_\_ into trouble.
- 4 If he (sleep) \_\_\_\_\_ for less than eight hours, he ( be ) \_\_\_\_\_ bad-tempered all morning.
- 5 It's a shame you weren't at the party. If you ( go ) \_\_\_\_\_, you ( meet ) \_\_\_\_\_ my sister.
- 6 If we ( beat ) \_\_\_\_\_ United next Saturday, we ( go ) \_\_\_\_\_ to the top of the league.
- 7 There's a quicker way to do it. If you ( press ) "control" and "U", it ( underline ) \_\_\_\_\_ your work as you write.
- 8 If I ( be ) \_\_\_\_\_ you, I ( go ) \_\_\_\_\_ to the doctor's.
- 9 We ( be ) \_\_\_\_\_ there by 6 o'clock this evening, if the manager ( leave ) \_\_\_\_\_ early from the office.
- 10 I had to wait two hours to see the doctor. If I ( not take ) \_\_\_\_\_ my book with me to read, I ( get ) \_\_\_\_\_ so bored.

**3. Rewrite sentences below to form second, third or mixed conditional sentences.**

- 1 I don't have to pay to get into the museum because I am unemployed.  
.....
- 2 We didn't go sailing because there wasn't enough wind.  
.....
- 3 We don't go abroad on holiday because I'm afraid of flying.  
.....
- 4 He's broken his leg so he can't drive.  
.....
- 5 I couldn't take any photos because I forgot to pack my camera.  
.....
- 6 He isn't going to the wedding because he hasn't got a suit.  
.....
- 7 He's feeling ill because he drank too much last night.  
.....
- 8 She didn't pass her exams so she couldn't go to university.

.....  
9 They didn't watch the news so they didn't hear about the earthquake.  
.....

***Put the verbs in the brackets into the correct form of conditional:***

1. If I see him, I (greet) him.
2. If you don't hurry, you (be) late.
3. If she finds out what has happened, she (be) very angry.
4. I (lend) you the book if you promise to return it in time.
5. If I tell you something, you (promise) to keep it a secret?
6. Unless you study more, you (not pass) the exam.
7. If it (go on) raining, we shall have floods.
8. If you (take) a dog, you will have to look after it.
9. If I like the dress, I (buy) it.
10. Unless you come at 6, you (not find) me at home.

***Put the verbs in the brackets into the correct form of conditional:***

1. If I (know) his phone-number, I would ring him up.
2. If I (move) to the country-side, would you visit me?
3. You (buy) this house if you had money?
4. If he were more careful, he (not make) so many mistakes.
5. What would you do if you (be) Prime Minister?
6. If I (give up) smoking, I would be nervous.
7. If I won the lottery, I (buy) a car.
8. Should he have a headache, he (take) a pill.
9. Were I in your place, I (not do) this.
10. Where you (go) if you had a holiday?

***Put the verbs in the brackets into the correct form of conditional:***

1. If you had known English, you (read) Shakespeare in the original.
2. If I (work) harder, I would have succeeded.
3. If you had taken my advice, you (not get) into trouble.
4. If I (know) you had no driving licence, I wouldn't have come with you in your car.
5. He would have been arrested if he (try) to leave the country.
6. I wouldn't have come unless you (invite) me.
7. Had I learned English grammar, I (not make) so many mistakes in my translation.
8. If he (realize) it was so late, he would have gone home.
9. If I (not tell) him, he would never have known.
10. Had I been at home, I (answer) the phone.

***Put the verbs in the brackets into the correct form of conditional:***

1. It (be) better if you had waited.
2. If I (be) you, I would go home immediately.
3. I (answer) your question if I can.
4. He (tell) you if you had asked him.
5. If you (drive) more carefully, you wouldn't have an accident.
6. If the child is good, he (get) a bar of chocolate.
7. He will be at the airport in time if he (leave) now.
8. If I (see) him, I would speak to him.
9. If he had written a letter to me, I (answer) it.
10. You (be) sick if you eat so much.

***Translate into English:***

1. Daca va ploua, strazile vor fi ude.
2. Daca ar ploua, strazile ar fi ude.
3. Daca ar fi plouat, strazile ar fi fost ude.
4. Vei prinde trenul daca vei lua un taxi.
5. Ai fi prins trenul daca ai fi luat un taxi.
6. Ai prinde trenul daca ai lua un taxi.
7. Te vei supara daca iti voi lua creionul?
8. Te-ai supara daca ti-as lua creionul?
9. Te-ai fi suparat daca ti-as fi luat creionul?
10. Ce vei face daca il vei intalni pe John?
11. Ce-ai face daca l-ai intalni pe John?
12. Ce-ai fi facut daca l-ai fi intalnit pe John?

***Translate into English:***

1. Il vei vedea daca il vei astepta.
2. Daca un cersetor ti-ar cere bani, I-ai da?
3. Ce s-ar fi intamplat daca ai fi condus cu viteza mare?
4. Nu vom merge la plimbare daca nu va sta ploaia.
5. Mi-ar placea mai mult piesa daca ar fi mai scurta.
6. Daca cina nu va fi gata la timp, voi manca la un restaurant.
7. Daca n-ai fi inchis fereastra, mi-ar fi fost frig.
8. As mai croseta un pulover daca as mai avea lana.
9. Mamaia ar fi un loc ideal pentru o vacanta daca n-ar fi atat de multi oameni acolo.
10. Voi fi dezamagit daca nu voi afla adevarul.

**THE SEQUENCE OF TENSES**

**(Exercitii cu concordanta timpurilor)**

***Put the verbs in brackets in the correct tense/ form(Past Tense Simple sau***

***Continuous), considering the rules of the sequence of tenses***

1. It was clear they (talk) business again.
2. I believed you (be) at the seaside.
3. I understood you (be) a painter.
4. They didn't know that I (play) football.
5. He realized he (not remember) John's phone number.
6. I was not sure if you (speak) English.
7. Looking out of the window, she saw the sun (shine) brightly.
8. He asked me if I usually (read) that newspaper.
9. You didn't tell me you (have to) type this report.
10. He was in a hurry because he (want) to catch the train.

***Put the verbs in brackets in the correct tense/ form, considering the rules of the sequence of tenses(Past Perfect Simple sau Continuous),***

1. She told me his name after he (leave).
2. She didn't even say thank you after all I (do) for her.
3. After I (hear) the news, I congratulated him.
4. When I arrived, the concert already (begin).
5. When it started to rain, we (dig) in the garden for an hour.
6. He didn't admit that he (steal) the book.
7. He just (leave) home when he came across John.
8. Yesterday I bought a new umbrella because I (lose) my old one.
9. When he finally reached London, he was tired because he (travel) for three days.
10. I didn't think that book to be a nice birthday present for you because I (read) it and I (not enjoy) it.

***Put the verbs in brackets in the correct tense/ form, considering the rules of the sequence of tenses(Future-in-the-Past),***

1. They said they (remain) at the seaside for another week.
2. He hoped he (finish) reading the book in two days.
3. I thought you soon (have) a holiday.
4. I was not sure I (remain) at home that evening.
5. He believed the strike (end) very soon.
6. He promised he (drive) me home.
7. We all believed he (win) the competition.
8. As wages had gone up, we supposed prices (go up), too.
9. He was sure he (pass) the exam and he promised he (give) a party afterwards.
10. When I heard the main actor was ill, I was sure the performance (be cancelled).

***Present Simple vs Present Perfect Simple:***

1. I will pay my debts after I (receive) my salary.
2. We shall start dinner as soon as the guests (arrive).
3. By the time you (finish) translating the text, I shall have typed all the letters.
4. After he (repair) the car, he will drive to Sinaia.
5. I will buy a car when I (have) enough money.
6. You will be surprised when you (see) how well she (look).
7. You will be surprised when you (see) how much she (change).
8. As soon as the holidays (begin), this beach will become very crowded.
9. I will go on playing the piano till he (tell) me to stop.
10. After she (learn) to type, she will take a job as a secretary.
11. He will write to me after he (arrive) in England.
12. The train will have left before we (reach) the station.
13. When their first baby (be born), they will have been married for five years.
14. When I (finish) the book, I will lend it to you.
15. I will never forget what you just (tell ) me.
16. Your mother will be upset when she (notice) you (break) the vase.
17. You will get a shock when you (see) the mess in that room.
18. You won't be able to speak about this book till you (read) it.
19. It is said that one Englishman will not speak to another before they (be) introduced.
20. After you (drink) a coffee, you will feel better.

***Put the verbs in brackets in the correct tense/ form, considering the rules of the sequence of tenses***

1. I didn't know at what temperature this metal (melt).
2. The teacher told the pupils what the capital of Mexico (be).
3. I wasn't aware German (be) such a difficult language.
4. In 1998, the Romanians travelled less than they (do) this year.
5. Last year you spoke English less fluently than you (do) now.
6. Last night I (read) the book which you (read) now.
7. Last night I met the couple who soon (move) next door to me.
8. Last year I earned more money than I (earn) in the next five years.
9. The book I (read) in the last few days was lent to me by John.
10. I found out that yoga (be) a very useful practice.

## **FINAL REVISION**