

A Slimy Surprise.

A poet called Robert Southey who lived in the late 1700's and early 1800's wrote:

What are boys made of?

Slugs and snails and puppy dog tails.

That's what boys are made of.

What are girls made of?

Sugar and spice and all things nice.

That's what girls are made of.

I think that there is some truth to this poem. I know we can't always generalize, but I have noticed some differences between my boys and my girl and her girlfriends. The boys take more risks as far as physical danger, whereas the girls seem to be careful. The girls are very interested in social situations and 'playing' like adults, but the boys are more interested in adventure, survival-type situations, and the wilderness. And finally, boys seem to bring the outside world into the house a lot more than girls do(1).

My boys went to a large pond to fish with their father, and came back happy and tired. They had managed to catch creyfish. They talked about their trip, put their gear(2) away, and then didn't really say anything else. The next morning I woke up to a humming(3) sound coming from downstairs. I went down and found, on the desk next to the computer, a large, plastic box half full of brown water. The hum was coming from an air pump(4) that had been placed inside (this was one that we had used in the past for gold fish). I looked inside. To my horror, I saw about five shiny, black creyfish sitting on top of each other on a rock. Their antenna were moving, their eyes were slimy, and when they saw me, they slid into the water. The smell that came up from the water was just like the stinky pond weed that they live in. I was not a happy camper(5). "Just how many days were you planning on keeping these creatures in the lounge?" I asked my boys with a frown. "I don't know," was their answer. Great! We've got two dogs, a cat, a mouse that sneezes all the time, and now some stinky, creepy wet things. As I put them outside under a tree, I asked myself, "What next? Frogs in the fridge? Slugs on the sofa? Beetles in the bathroom? Why don't I rename myself Noah, and open my front door to all the creatures of Wenatchee?" When I had calmed down, I told my boys that *they* had to look after the things in the box. I washed my hands, and sat down to watch television with my clean little girl.

1. The use of 'do' and 'does' at the end of a comparative sentence.

a. He reads a lot more than you do.

b. She eats a lot more than her husband does.

2. 'Gear' is a general word for all types of equipment, especially used for sports and hobbies.

a. After skiing, it takes a while to put all of the gear away.

b. The fishing gear had to be sprayed with water to wash off the stinky pond weed.

3. 'Humming' comes from the verb 'to hum'. It is a sound made by a human, animal, or device that is like a vibration. Someone 'hums' to music when they don't sing the words, but make the melody with their mouths closed.

a. He hummed happily while he worked in the garden.

b. I didn't know the lyrics, so I just hummed the tune.

4. An 'air pump' is a device which forces air to flow from one place to another, usually via a tube or pipe.

a. We need to find a high pressure air pump because my tires are flat.

b. We pumped air into the plastic mattress for a more comfortable camping experience.

5. 'Not a happy camper' is a jokey phrase often used in England to mean that a person was upset or angry.

a. He borrowed the car without asking permission; his mother was not a happy camper!

b. A stinky crayfish escaped and crawled across the carpet. I was not a happy camper!

You're all welcome to join my FACEBOOK page called Anna Fromacupofenglish. Questions? Comments? Do you need Skype lessons to improve your English? Let me know at acupofenglish@hotmail.com