Lovereading4kids.co.uk

Helping you choose books for children

0-5 5-7 7-9 9-12 12+

opening extract from

Girls Are Best

written by

Sandi Toksvig

published by

Random House

All text is copyright of the author and illustrator

please print off and read at your leisure.

First of all – why do we even need to show that Girls Are Best?

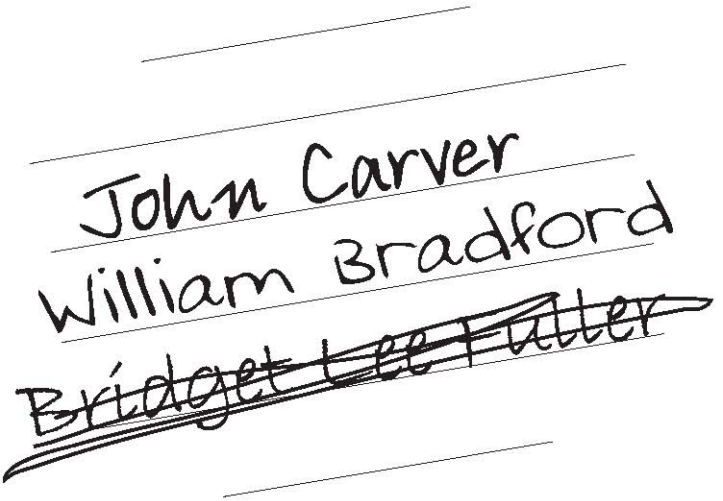
Well, mostly because girls are often forgotten.

History of everything





When the pilgrims landed in America, they wrote something called the Mayflower Compact. It set out the first laws of the new nation and 41 men signed it. The women who had travelled with them did not. Not even the midwife, Bridget Lee Fuller, who had delivered two babies at sea, thus actually helping to bring new life to the colonies, was allowed to put down her name.



Q. In how many countries in the world do women earn the same as men?

A. None



Too often history has seemed to be *his* story: full of a lot of men galloping about doing important things while presumably women stayed at home and made soup. The thing is (and try not to be shocked) – it's *not true.* Women have been fighting, leading, inventing, writing, painting and anything else you can think of since the beginning of time but often not getting the credit.

And it's not just the history. Sometimes we don't even know the basics . . .

Let's start with the stuff everybody knows.

Boys are bigger than girls, right?

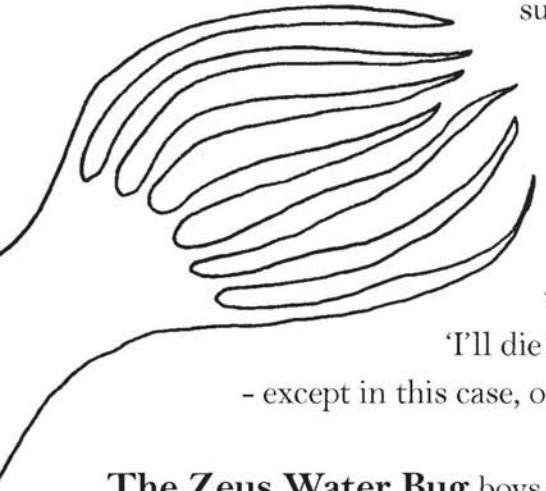
Not if you're a Triplewart Seadevil or a Zeus Water Bug.

A what?

I see I have your attention.

The Triplewart Seadevil is great. Well, if you're a girl. It's a kind of fish. At least the females look like a fish. The boys are so small they don't look like anything much. They don't even have a digestive system. The only way for a boy Triplewart to





survive is by finding a girl and clinging onto her for the rest of his life. It's a bit like a boyfriend who keeps saying, 'I'll die if you leave me' - except in this case, of course, it's true.

The Zeus Water Bug boys are so small they live in a little dip in the girl's back. How annoying would that be when you need a minute to yourself? The bug and the devil are not the only ones. There are female octupuses that are five times the size of the males, spiders so big they eat their boyfriends when they've finished with them, and female hippos who can eat a quarter of their own body weight in one go.



OK, so not all boys are bigger than girls, but they are stronger. Right?

Depends what you mean by strong.

The Olympic woman weight-lifter **Cheryl Haworth** can lift the equivalent of two fridges over her head.

THAT'S STRONG.



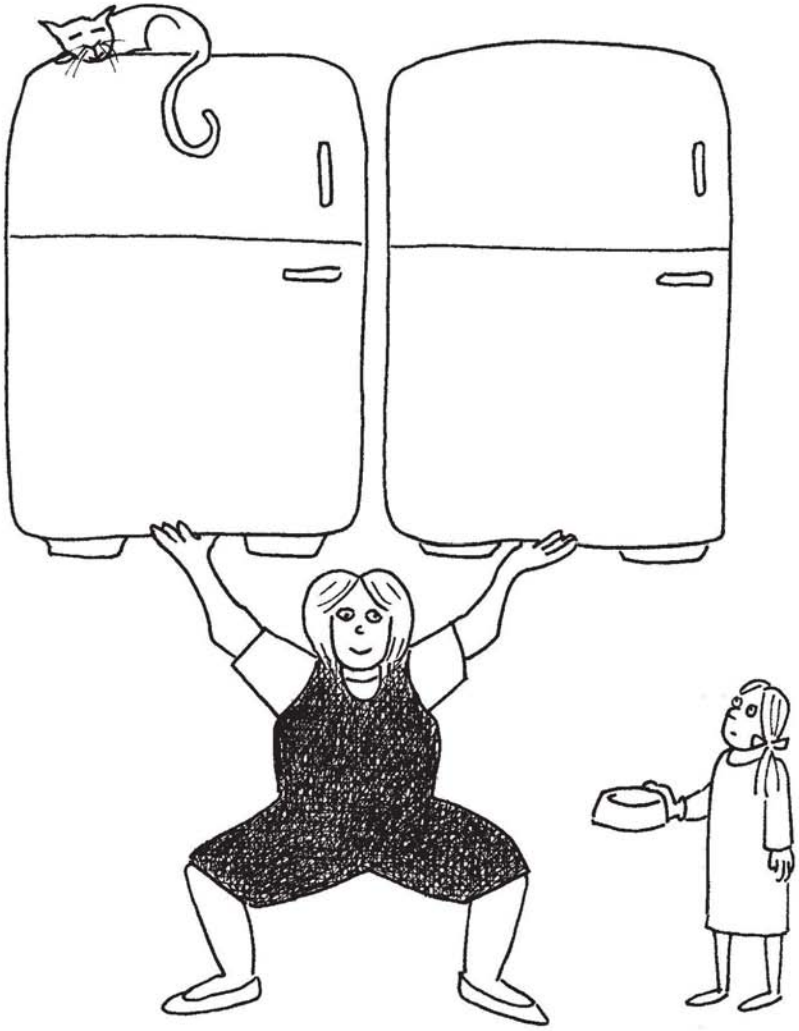
Usually boys *are* stronger on the outside because they turn food into

Muscle and Energy

Girls turn food into

Fat (ugh!)

But that means girls are stronger on the inside when it comes to . . .



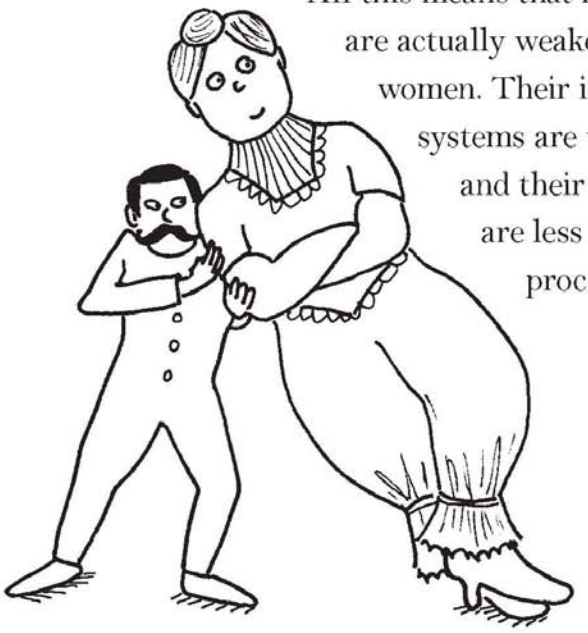
Surviving!

Girls sweat less than boys. They are well insulated by their fat so they are better at enduring extreme conditions. They also have more white blood cells and make antibodies faster than boys. This means they develop fewer infectious diseases and are usually sick for shorter periods. Sounds pretty strong to me.

A lot of it comes down to hormones

Testosterone
is the male sex hormone and probably the main reason for the difference between how long boys and girls live. Testosterone makes men more aggressive and competitive. This means they are more likely to die fighting or doing something dangerous. Testosterone also increases the levels of harmful cholesterol and makes boys more likely to suffer from heart disease or a stroke.

Oestrogen
is the female sex hormone. It lowers harmful cholesterol and raises 'good' cholesterol. It helps prevent heart disease and strokes and generally delays death.



All this means that men are actually weaker than women. Their immune systems are weaker, and their bodies are less able to process fat.

Boys may be able to lift heavy things but girls are generally fitter.

This means girls

Live longer!

Women have been living longer than men since at least the 1500s, even taking into account the risk of dying during childbirth.

Worldwide there are nine times as many women as men over 100.

Women outlive men in both rich and poor countries, often by about ten years.

Even in the animal kingdom girls can live longer. Ever see a pheasant in the road?

The male wild pheasant lives for about ten months while the female (who has to look after the kids) manages twice as long.

